

Righting land wrongs with the pen: The leadership of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ken Saro Wiwa

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the leadership of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ken Saro Wiwa in the protection of indigenous communities' land rights in Kenya and Nigeria respectively. It uses a case study and 'leadership as process' approach to focus on events and actions by Ngugi and Saro Wiwa, alongside the Kamiriithu and Ogoni communities in 1976 – 1982 and 1990 - 1995, respectively. In the case of Kenya, the Kamiriithu community did not attain their land rights and other freedoms following the Ngugi-led activism. Instead, the Kenyan government turned to further repression of individual and collective rights. In Nigeria, Saro-Wiwa was hanged after a trial marred with irregularities. However, oil exploitation activities on land belonging to the Ogoni ceased. There has been progress in holding Shell legally accountable for environmental degradation and a study on the extent of damage done to the ecology has been undertaken. Both writers, despite different outcomes to their activism, played leadership roles in their communities' struggle for land rights. Their creative writing abilities and achievements played a role in their emergence as leaders and strategies for leadership.

Introduction

This article sets out to identify the leadership role that writers play in the assertion and protection of the indigenous people's rights over land as a natural resource. Two questions, guide the investigation, namely: how do creative writers emerge to lead indigenous communities and what are the results of their exercise of leadership? The paper looks at the two peculiar but related cases to understand the leadership role of creative writers in defending indigenous people's land rights. It considers the strategies adopted in each case and the outcomes of the leadership processes in each, including responses by the respective governments.

Chronologies of events and actions are built through the analysis of autobiographical and biographical texts by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ken Saro Wiwa. Other texts are referenced, to corroborate claims and accounts made by the subjects of the study. After establishing the facts, the study imposes the process based leadership perspective to yield insights into: the emergence of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ken Saro Wiwa as leaders, the strategies they adopted in

exercising leadership, the responses by their respective states to their activism and the outcomes of the two leadership processes. In each case, the scope of the study is limited to a particular time period. The Ngugi case is limited to the 1976-1982 period, when he was part of the Kamiriithu community centre's literacy and theatre projects. Similarly, the study limits its interest in the Saro Wiwa case to 1990-1995 when he contributed to the formation and activities of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

Existing work, specific to the role of African creative writers in society has concentrated on their intervention in and commentary on the politics of their countries and the consequences that have followed.¹ Some studies have considered the political content of writers' literary work.² The effects of governance on African writers' cultural practice have also received a lot of scholarly attention.³ To this body of work, this article adds a leadership approach to writers' interventions in politics, considering their actions through the lens of the exchange of influence between followers and leaders. This is a departure from scholarship that focuses on their individual capacities and actions, through the lens of person and position.⁴ The article contextualises Saro Wiwa and Ngugi's actions as constituents, in a process that involves other leaders, followers and actors. This forms part of the scholarly groundwork for future multi-disciplinary research about the role of creative writers in society, in a leadership perspective.

The article also contributes to the scholarship on natural resource management in Africa.⁵ Much of the existing work takes an economics approach.⁶ Abiodun Alao's work connects governance, natural resources and conflict in Africa.⁷ He categorises land as a natural resource and argues that indigenous communities in most cases seek to protect their interest in land, rather than the mineral or oil

¹ Ogungbesan, Kolawole (1974) 'Politics and the African Writer', *African Studies Review* Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 43-53, Ngugi, wa Thiong'o, (1981a), *Writers in Politics* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers) and Achebe, Chinua, (1983) *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers)

² Ngara, E (1985), *Art and ideology in the African novel: A study of the influence of Marxism on African writing* (Oxford: Heinemann) and Gikandi, Simon (1987), *Reading the African novel* (Oxford: James Currey)

³ Adebayo, Williams (1996), 'Literature in the time of tyranny: African writers and the crisis of governance', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 2, Saro-Wiwa, Ken (1995), *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (London: Penguin)

⁴ Grint, Keith (2010), *Leadership: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

⁵ Hanson, K, D'Alessandro, C., Owusu, F. eds., (2014), *Managing Africa's Natural Resources: Capacities for Development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan)

⁶ Isham, J., Woolcock, M, Pritchett, L, (2005) *The varieties of resource experience: Natural resource export structures and the political economy of economic growth*, (Washington: The World Bank)

⁷ Alao, Abiodun (2007), *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa: The Tragedy of Endowment*, (New York, University of Rochester Press)

resources found on or beneath it. The Alao thesis identifies several aspects to the nexus between land governance and conflicts in Africa, namely: land scarcity, contradictory legacies of plural land tenure systems emanating from pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence historical realities, boundary disputes by communities and their own states, land-tenant conflicts, contested land regulatory policies and the competition between the local claim by indigenous peoples over natural resources and the national claim over the same, among others.⁸

Cyril Obi argues that one of the causes of the Ogoni crisis of the early 1990s was the issue of natural land scarcity arising from environmental degradation.⁹ In Kamiriithu, like elsewhere in Kenya, the issue of forced migration and land acquisition by elites cooperating with international interests was endemic.¹⁰ The land regulatory policies adopted by post-independence governments in both Kenya and Nigeria allow the national government to compulsorily acquire land on the basis of over-riding public interest, which leads to conflicts in some areas. Examples of the immediate reasons for conflict include the non-payment of compensation for land compulsorily acquired and government led evictions of indigenous people from ancestral land.¹¹ Both Nigeria and Kenya were British colonies and inherited Western legal tenure systems at independence leading to a pluralistic land management legal regime.¹²

Kenya was however a settler economy, compared to Nigeria, raising specific challenges. On its part, Nigeria became an extractive colony when oil was discovered, which also raises peculiar challenges. These can be seen from one of the core concerns by MOSOP regarding the demarcation of boundaries, which disadvantage them against other ethnic groups. The Ogoni struggle also lies within the land boundary disputes category.¹³ Alao states that the Ogoni story, demonstrates the 'role of enigmatic leadership in the struggle for recognition of minority rights'.¹⁴ This article picks cue from Alao's identification of the leadership aspect to natural resource governance. Saro Wiwa's literary abilities and achievements provide a point of convergence between the Ogoni case and the Kamiriithu case in a context of indigenous people's struggles for land rights.

⁸ Alao (2007), p. 64

⁹ Obi, Cyril (2005), *Environmental Movements in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Political Ecology of Power and Conflict* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development), p. 7

¹⁰ Alao (2007), p. 64

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 87

¹² *Ibid*, p. 67

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 69

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 190

The article is structured into five sections. The next section lays out the leadership conceptual framework that is employed in the study, referencing work by Olonisakin, Grint, Galtung, French and Raven, Northhouse, Pierce and Newstrom, and Albert Murphy among others.¹⁵ The third section analyses the leadership process of Kamiriithu community's struggle for land rights. The fourth section turns to Nigeria, and analyses the 1990s Ogoni crisis through a leadership framework. The last part presents preliminary conclusions, presented as assumptions for further inquiry in future research.

Leadership as a conceptual framework

Keith Grint has summarised the many perspectives to leadership into four categories, namely: person, position, results and process-based leadership.¹⁶ Person-based leadership views individuals as the providers of leadership based on their traits and personalities.¹⁷ Position-based leadership considers office-bearers as deriving their leadership from their mandates.¹⁸ Results-based leadership ignores both the personality and position, to look at the outcome, to determine leadership. Process-based leadership on the other hand looks at leadership as a continuous interaction between the led and the leaders while seeking to attain a mutual purpose.¹⁹ Process-based leadership is not determined by particular traits, nor does it vest in an office designation. It is not merely about the attainment of results, but the course of attaining the results. Leadership is the journey than the destination. Whereas the previous three dimensions focus on the leaders, process-based approach focusses on 'leadership'. This study follows the fourth perspective in approaching leadership as a process.

Peter G Northouse defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences and is influenced by a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.²⁰ The process-based approach to leadership provides an opportunity to interrogate how leaders gain influence, how followers respond to it, and how this leads to attaining the set group objectives. Looking at leadership as a process

¹⁵ Olonisakin (2015), Grint (2010), Galtung, Johan (1971), 'A Structural Theory of Imperialism', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 13, No.2, French, John and Raven, Bertram (1959), 'The Bases of Social Power', In *Studies in Social Power*, D. Cartwright, Ed., pp. 150-167, (Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research), Northouse, Peter (2010), *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage), Pierce, J L and J W Newstrom (2008), *Leaders and the Leadership. Process: Readings, self-Assessments and Applications*, (New York: McGraw-Hill and Irwin) and Murphy, Albert (1941), "A Study of the Leadership Process", *American Sociological Review*, Vol 6, pp. 674-687

¹⁶ Grint (2010)

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Northouse (2010), p. 3

enables us to see the ways in which followers and leaders affect each other. Achievement of the set mission is not credited to an individual but to both followers and leaders, because it is a result of their interaction.

Influence is at the intersection between leaders and followers. Leadership is primarily about influence. To lead is to influence others. To follow is to be influenced. Those who aspire to lead in specific situations and contexts assert influence, which is in turn accepted by followers. Followers exercise agency by accepting the influence. When a number of individuals assert influence, it can be accepted or rejected. In opting for one idea over another, followers exchange influence over who emerges as the leader and subsequently the strategies the group adopts to achieve their common goal. The existence of a shared objective between the followers and their leader/s is a necessary element for a leadership process. This objective emerges from a context, and a particular situation. A leader in a specific situation can indeed become irrelevant in the face of changed circumstances.²¹ A study of leadership is thus a study of the movement of influence in specific situations. From the context, a situational approach analyses the immediate circumstances that inform the emergence of individual X as a leader and their acceptance by followers.²²

Power and Influence

Northouse suggests two broad types of leadership, namely assigned and emergent leadership. He defines assigned leadership as that which derives from one's designated position in an organisation, or a different setting. Emergent leadership on the other hand, is the relationship that develops between certain individuals in a setting and other members of the group.²³ Northouse's distinction between assigned and emergent leadership illustrates the centrality of influence to leadership.

Assigned leadership can be compared to Grint's person and position dimensions to leadership. It takes for granted the fact that the leader already has influence over followers while emergent leadership focusses on how one gains and asserts influence and how it is received by followers. Emergent leadership is thus analogous to process-based leadership. Assigned leadership is however not necessarily in conflict with emergent leadership. It is the source of leadership that differs. Assigned leaders gain their influence and positions before a situation onto which they impose their leadership. They pre-exist the situation. Emergent

²¹ Murphy (1941)

²² Murphy, Pierce and Newstrom (2008), p. 4

²³ Northouse (2010), p. 5

leaders come after the situation. The situation pre-exists the leaders. Leaders emerge following the dynamics involved in handling the situation.

From an emergent leadership perspective, an assigned leader may rise as a leader in a given situation. Because the starting point is the situation, rather than the designations of individuals in a group, emergent leaders do not have to always be the assigned leaders. It is possible for an ordinary member of a group, without a formal designated position to emerge as a leader because of their influence on the group. But sometimes, assigned leaders can also become emergent leaders simultaneously.

The centrality of Influence to leadership can't be overemphasised. Scientifically, influence can be understood through a study of power dynamics in a group. Power can be defined as the ability to affect others. Northouse identifies two major kinds of power, namely: personal and position power.²⁴ He connects position power to assigned leadership, deriving from the designations individuals hold in groups. Personal power on the other hand, is based on the personality and skills an individual has. One may be able to affect others because of the position they hold, while another affects others because of who they are, or how they are perceived. Northouse adds that followers grant their leaders this power because they believe that they have something of value.²⁵ They allow themselves to be affected.

French and Raven on their hand, outline five bases of social power.²⁶ These include: referent, expert, legitimate, reward and coercive power. Referent power is the ability to affect others because they are attracted to the powerful.²⁷ Expert power on its part derives from one's skill and know-how.²⁸ On the other hand, legitimate power is based on the mandate one has, which gives them authority over others.²⁹ Reward power on its part derives from one's ability to provide incentives to those who are affected by their actions.³⁰ Lastly, coercive power is the ability to influence others through the threat of and / or punishment.³¹

What Northouse calls position power includes legitimate, reward and coercive power.³² To an extent, it is tied to the position one holds that comes with the

²⁴ Northouse (2010)

²⁵ Northouse (2010)

²⁶ French and Raven (1959)

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Ibid*

³² Northouse (2010), p. 13

authority to direct, reward and punish. Personal power on the other hand includes expert and referent power.³³ It is independent of one's position or lack thereof. It is tied to one's person. The use of coercion is understood as a lack of leadership, in the process-based approach. Individuals who use coercion do so, pursuant to selfish interests than a mutual purpose with followers.³⁴ Where followers share interest in the group endeavour, it is unnecessary to coerce them.

To understand the emergence of leaders in the two case studies, this research uses French and Raven's theorisation of power to trace the movement of influence between followers and leaders in the chosen contexts and situations. What forms of power lead to the emergence of leaders in various stages of the crises under investigation?

Leadership Effectiveness and Outcomes

Change in behaviour, Galtung writes, is a result of influencing attitudes in a given context.³⁵ New circumstances emerge from the exchange of influence between leaders and followers in a situation in a given context. Whether the change that emerges is desirable or undesirable is irrelevant. Understanding the effectiveness of, or lack thereof, leadership is a value-neutral exercise. A group's leadership process is effective when they attain their mutual purpose and is ineffective when they do not. Ideally, given the thematic occupations of this article, an effective leadership process is where the indigenous communities in question attain their land rights and justice.

Modifying the analytical framework proposed by Olonisakin in 'Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Effective Peacemaking and Human Security in Africa', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Vol 37, No 1*, the article uses a three-layered analysis to study the leadership processes of the Ogoni crisis from 1990 to 1995 and the Kamiriithu experience from 1976 to 1982. The first layer is the location of the case study in a specific historical and thematic context and a chronological study of the specific situation. The second layer focusses on the interactions in the two communities to identify the points at which the subjects emerge as leaders and how they exchange influence throughout the select periods. Finally, the outcomes of the processes are outlined.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Kamirithu Community

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9

³⁵ Galtung (1971)

There is a wide range of scholarship about the Kamiriithu experience and Ngugi's work as an activist. Ngugi himself has theorised about his experience as a struggle for public space in Kenya.³⁶ He has also analysed the Kamiriithu experience through the Marxist class analysis of imperial capitalism.³⁷ He cites the period as the reason for his resolve to write in his mother tongue.³⁸ While recognising all these perspectives, the land dimension to the Kamiriithu theatre activities of the 1976-1982 period merits study.

In Alao's analysis of the nexus between land governance and conflict, indigenous people in Kenya suffer from artificial scarcity of land, due to forced migration and displacement as well as land acquisition schemes by the inheritance elite in cohorts with international capital.³⁹ Kenya at independence maintained the colonial land tenure system that privileges land ownership practices introduced alongside exploitative colonial regimes.⁴⁰ The country also has a problem of contested landlord-tenant relationships.⁴¹ In Kenya, the central government has legal authority to compulsorily acquire land on the basis of overriding public interest.⁴² Government sponsored evictions of indigenous people from their land are commonplace in Kenyan history, from the early days of British colonialism to successive post-independence regimes.⁴³

Looking at the Kamiriithu production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* from the perspective of indigenous people fighting for land rights puts the 1976 – 1982 crisis in the context of Kenya's national land question. Kamiriithu as a village is evidence of the forced displacement of indigenous Kenyans during the colonial regime. Kamiriithu village was created in 1952 as a measure by the colonial government to deal with the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), also known as mau.⁴⁴ The name Kamiriithu is derived from 'miriithu', which means a pool of water, resistant to drought.⁴⁵ Lands near the village were forcibly acquired by British settlers in the 1920s, who constructed a railway to separate the stolen lands from Kamiriithu. Ngugi's family were forcibly settled in Kamiriithu in 1955, after

³⁶ Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o (1998), *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and State in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

³⁷ Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o (1983) *Barrel of A Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neocolonial Kenya* (London: New Beacon Books)

³⁸ Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers)

³⁹ Alao (2007), p. 64

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 67

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 69

⁴² Alao (2007), p. 87

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 88

⁴⁴ Ngugi (1986) pp. 34 - 35

⁴⁵ Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o (1981b), *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers), pp. 72 - 3

the destruction of their ancestral village by the British colonial government.⁴⁶ Kamiriithu thus joined other many new emergency villages set up to isolate the Mau Mau fighters from the indigenous people.

Kamiriithu was later turned into a permanent village in 1957 through land consolidation policies and the enclosure system, aimed at providing land to an African middle class, and creating reservoirs for African cheap labour.⁴⁷ In this newly planned Kamiriithu, four acres of land were identified for a youth centre. A mud-barrack structure was constructed but later isolated in 1974 when the Limuru Area Council was disbanded.⁴⁸ Life returned to the centre in 1976 when the University of Nairobi Traveling Theatre staged some plays, including *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* on the grounds of the centre. Given this background, land was bound to emerge as a core concern in Kamiriithu when the KCECC engaged in theatre activities.⁴⁹ *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, written and produced by the Kamiriithu community can be read as a peasant commentary on land injustice in post-independence Kenya.⁵⁰

At the core of the play, is Kiguunda's (a peasant character) title deed, which is lost, through trickery to Ahab wa Kioi, a member of the neo-colonial landed inheritance elite class.⁵¹ The play contains several flash backs to the periods in Kenyan history in which the indigenous people lost their land to colonial settlers and to the resistance of colonial injustice by Mau Mau.⁵² The play also shows how the post-independence legal system is used by the inheritance elite to rob peasants of their land. Kiguunda stands no chance in the 'formal' court of law against Ahab wa Kioi, who is not only powerful, but also benefits from the inherent injustice of the country's land law against indigenous people.⁵³

Kamiriithu will marry when they want

A village woman one Sunday morning came to the home of Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Kamiriithu village and asked him if he could assist in teaching at the village youth centre.⁵⁴ After three other times, consecutively asking the same question. For her insistence, and as a follow up to his avowed focus in revolutionary theatre, following the writing of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, with

⁴⁶ Ngugi (1981b), pp. 73-4

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 74

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 75

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 74

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 52

⁵¹ Ngugi wa Miiri and Wa Thiong'o Ngugi (1980), *I Will Marry When I Want* (London: Heinemann Educational Books)

⁵² Ngugi and Wa Miiri (1980)

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Ngugi (1986), p. 34

Micere Mugo, Ngugi accepted the challenge.⁵⁵ He joined the new management committee for Kamiriithu youth centre, comprising of concerned villagers, among them peasant farmers and lower rank workers. The committee changed the centre's name to Kamiriithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre (KCECC) to represent a new ambitious vision.⁵⁶ Ngugi was elected as chairman of the centre's cultural committee and Ngugi wa Mirii, also from the University of Nairobi, the chairman of the education committee.

In December 1976, the two Ngugis were asked to produce a working script for a drama project for KCECC. The outline of a working script for *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was presented to the membership in April 1977 who discussed it and contributed new aspects. On June 5, 1977, rehearsals and reading of the final script started. The KCECC membership built an open air theatre with an open auditorium and a closed dressing room. On October 2, 1977, the first show was staged at the new Kamiriithu open air theatre. The date was symbolic, as 25 years earlier, it had been on the same date that the Mau Mau started armed rebellion against British imperialism.⁵⁷ The process of producing *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was participatory and involved the exchange of influence. The educated and uneducated mutually influenced each other to achieve a common goal. Ngugi writes:

'I learnt a lot. I had been delegated to the role of a messenger and a porter running errands here and there. But I also had time to observe things. I saw how the people had appropriated the text, improving on the language and episodes and metaphors, so that the play which was finally put on to a fee-paying audience on Sunday October 2 1977, was a far cry from the tentative awkward efforts originally put together by Ngugi and myself. I felt one with the people. I shared in their rediscovery of their collective strength and abilities, and in their joyous feeling that they could accomplish anything – even transform the whole village and their lives without a single Harambee of charity – and I could feel the way the actors were communicating their joyous sense of a new power to their audience who too went home with gladdened hearts'.⁵⁸

Throughout the process of re-organising the KCECC and executing the *Ngaahika Ndeenda* project, Ngugi combined both emergent and assigned leadership. He emerged as a leader at the point when he accepted the challenge the village woman put before him, to teach at the youth centre. In the given situation, of the

⁵⁵ Gikandi, Simon (1989), 'On Culture and the State: The Writings of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), pp. 148-156

⁵⁶ Ngugi (1981b), p. 75

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 76

⁵⁸ Ngugi (1981b), p. 78

need for emancipation of the village, he asserted influence, which was accepted by his election to the KCECC management committee, and later as the head of the cultural committee. At that point, his emergent leadership turned into assigned leadership. Even if he was already an assigned leader as chair of the cultural committee, when Ngugi was asked to draft the script outline with Wa Mirii, he emerged again as a leader given his specific skills-set to execute the task at hand. In taking on the task to write the play script outline, Ngugi's assigned leadership met emergent leadership.

Throughout the process of reading the play, discussing the draft, auditions, construction of the open air theatre, rehearsals and eventual production, Ngugi as leader (both assigned and emergent) was able to connect with followers. He was able to express a 'revolutionary spirit' by being part of the revolution. He learnt a lot from the villagers who participated, which shows the exchange of influence between him and his followers. In using theatre as a tool for political intervention, collectively, Ngugi and the KCECC membership partook in a leadership process.⁵⁹

At the beginning of 1976, as a famous professor from the village, who at this point had written a total of eight books, Ngugi has referent power over the villagers that led to the woman's request.⁶⁰ He was also teaching at the University of Nairobi, at the time, adding to his appeal as an intellectual. With his colleagues from the university who were also involved in KCECC, Ngugi had expert power, as well. He was specifically asked to head the cultural committee because of his cultural expertise as a playwright. He was also asked, alongside Wa Mirii to write the draft script outline because of the same expert power. Other intellectuals in the KCECC, like Dr. Kimani Gecau were also asked to play roles, aligned with their expert power. Gecau was the director for *Ngaahika Ndeenda*.⁶¹ Having been elected and appointed to various positions, Ngugi, Wa Mirii and Gecau also had legitimate power in the group.

Despite the various forms of power possessed by the intellectuals in KCECC, the followers were central to the direction the group took. It was a suggestion of the members that the group undertake theatre activities.⁶² The followers exercised influence in deciding what they wanted to do, which met with the required skills-set from the intellectuals, formed a mutual purpose. The KCECC's new theatre

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 77

⁶⁰ Ngugi's pre 1977 books include: *The Black Hermit* (1963), *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *This Time Tomorrow* (1970), *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics* (1972) and *Secret Lives, and Other Stories* (1976), and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, (1976 with Micere Githae Mugo).

⁶¹ Ngugi (1986), p. 35

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 76

programme, supplementing the existing literacy one is an example of the mutuality between the followers and leaders of the group. The construction of the open air theatre on the centre's four acres of space, with an auditorium and raised stage in 1977, further illustrates the exchange of influence between the followers and the leaders.⁶³ At a personal level, the process of producing *Ngaahika Ndeenda* influenced Ngugi's later trajectory as a writer. It was the turning point as regards his choice later, to write creatively only in his indigenous language.⁶⁴

Ngugi and other intellectuals involved in the Kamiriithu project were also followers in a way. It was from the peasants that the professors learnt history, language and life they had no access to.⁶⁵ The educated young also shared the skills acquired through Western instruction. Villagers also contributed to the production of the play by sharing their real life experiences of forceful displacement during colonial and post-independence times. The audiences who came to watch the rehearsals and the final production contributed comments that enriched the performance.⁶⁶ Through this exchange of influence, addressing land injustice emerged as a mutual purpose of the project, organically through a participatory process.⁶⁷

The play opened for the public on October 2, 1977.⁶⁸ The play's sequence starts with the reason for Ahab wa Kioi's visit to a peasant, Kiguunda's homestead and explores the period of Mau Mau armed struggle against imperialism, through independence, and returns to the purpose of the elite land lord's visit.⁶⁹ It was a success. Thousands of peasants and workers, from Kamiriithu and beyond came to watch the play. It changed the zeitgeist as people began to call themselves by the names of the characters of the play, and to identify people in the village who played the roles of the neo-colonial elite class.⁷⁰ The play's success can among other reasons be attributed to the fact that the play articulated the land grievances of the peasant and working class of Kamiriithu and beyond.

Ngugi emerged as a leader, alongside Wa Miiri, Gecau, for the specific skills they brought to bear in the group, were granted position power through election and assignment of tasks and had referent power because of their status as intellectuals. They held positions but also had personal power. These forms of

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 42

⁶⁴ Jussawalla, Feroza, 'The Language of Struggle', *Transition*, No. 54 (1991), pp. 142-154

⁶⁵ Ngugi (1986), p. 45, p. 60

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 54 - 56

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 57

⁶⁸ Ngugi (1981b), p. 76

⁶⁹ Ngugi (1986), p. 53

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 58

power enabled them to influence the villagers, who in turn accepted this influence and contributed ideas and physical efforts that led to the coalescence of a mutual purpose of the group. Land emerged as a core issue from the script outline written by Ngugi and Wa Miiri and the additions to it made by the peasants. Through theatre, the KCECC articulated their grievances over land. Ngugi references Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed as having inspired them.⁷¹ Theatre of the oppressed is about people using theatre to change their lives. The influence of the KCECC as a group extended beyond Kamiriithu. Other villages in other parts of the country were inspired to engage in cultural production after *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, for example the Vihiga Cultural Festival in Western Kenya, Gikaambura village in Kikuyu and another one in Kanyaariri.⁷²

Table 1: Power and Influence Analysis: KCECC Case

Activity/Power Base	Year	Referent	Expert	Legitimate	Reward	Coercive
		Personal		Position		
Village woman asks Ngugi to teach at youth centre	1976	Y	Y	X	X	X
Ngugi joins Kamiriithu youth centre management		Y	Y	Y	X	X
The Ngugis appointed as chairs of KCECC sub committees		Y	Y	Y	X	X
The Ngugis research and write script for the play outline	1977	Y	Y	Y	X	X
Kimani Gecau directs the play production		Y	Y	Y	X	X
Communal building of the open air theatre		Y	X	Y	X	X
Group preparation and performance of the play		Y	Y	Y	X	X

Key: X – absent Y – Present

The state response to Kamiriithu theatre activities

Ngaahika Ndeenda showed for a few weeks and on 16 November 1977, the KCECC's license to stage the play was withdrawn by the state in the interest of public security.⁷³ The play itself was banned the next day. On 31, December,

⁷¹ Ngugi (1986)

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 60, Ngugi (1981b), p. 78

⁷³ Ngugi (1986), p. 58, Ngugi (1981b), p. 79

1977, Ngugi was detained at Kamiti maximum prison.⁷⁴ He spent one year in illegal detention. When he was released, he found out that he had been stripped of his university teaching job at the University of Nairobi.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the KCECC was re-grouping to stage a new play Ngugi had written, titled *Mother, Sing for Me*. The play was set in the early colonial decades (1920s) and revolved around forcible displacement of indigenous communities from land. The group was denied access to the national theatre.⁷⁶ Even when the group shifted to the University of Nairobi for rehearsals, which were watched by an estimate of 10,000 people, they were followed and stopped by the state on February 25, 1982.

On March 11, the same year, Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre and all theatre activities were banned in Kamiriithu. The next day, truckloads of armed police razed the Kamiriithu open air theatre to the ground.⁷⁷ The destruction of Kamiriithu's open air theatre was televised to the nation.⁷⁸ The Moi regime engaged in increased repression after *Ngaahika Ndeenda*.⁷⁹ In 1982, the core of the KCECC intellectual leadership all left Kenya.⁸⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o sought asylum in the UK.⁸¹ Ngugi wa Miiri and Kimani Gecau fled to Zimbabwe.⁸²

The separation between leaders and their followers greatly affected the group dynamics and leadership process of Kamiriithu. The exchange of influence was impossible across distance and time. *Ngaahika Ndeenda* had been powerful because of its effectiveness in engaging the residents of Kamiriithu. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, for example despite its content being related to that of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, was written in English and without direct peasant contribution and did not attain the same level of influence.⁸³

Further, the KCECC limited its land activism to theatre, which worked against them in the long run. Limiting the focus of the group to cultural production affected their ability to attain land justice. Given the change in circumstances, the KCECC as a group, and Ngugi as one of the leaders did not respond accordingly to the new situation of state repression. Ngugi's focus on artistic production shone

⁷⁴ Ngugi (1981b), p. 47, 80

⁷⁵ Ngugi (1986), p. 62, Gikandi (1989)

⁷⁶ Ngugi (1986), p. 58

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 59

⁷⁸ Ngugi (1998)

⁷⁹ Ngugi (1986), p. 61, Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ, Gĩchingiri (1999), Kenyan Theatre after Kamĩrĩĩthũ, *TDR* (1988-), Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), pp. 72-93

⁸⁰ Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ (1999)

⁸¹ Gikandi (1989)

⁸² Ngugi (1986), p. 62, Ngugi (1998), p. 105

⁸³ Ngugi, (1998) pp. 66 - 67

on the entire group as he led them onto another theatre project after his release from prison. In any case, the initiation and writing of *Mother, Sing for Me*, was not as participatory as that of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. The move to the national theatre, also alienated the play from its immediate context. Worse still, Ngugi's one year detention had given rise to a new movement for individual civil liberties, not necessarily land justice. With time, focus shifted to Ngugi's person and the rights of the political detainees, rather than the Kamiriithu group. Ngugi's and his supporters' focus on individual and cultural expression rights negatively affected the leader – follower relations in Kamiriithu. The exchange of influence between the leaders and the led that was the strength of Kamiriithu was obstructed by the focus on individual rights. When the Ngugis and Gecae, as prominent leaders of the movement were exiled, the back of Kamiriithu was broken.

The leadership process in the Kamiriithu case, judged on its ability to attain land justice for peasants and indigenous peoples was not effective. The individuals who had emerged as leaders lost their influence in the absence of regular interactions with followers. Ngugi's later personal commitment to individual rights and democracy did not translate into the followership around land justice that his engagement in Kamiriithu theatre had attracted. Without active followership and a mutual purpose emerging out of the interaction between leaders and followers, there is no leadership process.

Table 2: Major Dates and Events in the KCECC case

Year	Event
1895	Territory known as Kenya declared the East Africa protectorate
1920	Kenya categorised as colony by UK
October 2, 1952	Kenya Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau) launches rebellion against colonialism
1955	Kamiriithu village established as an emergency settlement
1963	Kenya gains independence
1975	Kamiriithu population estimated at 10,000 people
1976	Ngugi publishes <i>The Trial of Dedan Kimathi</i> (written with Micere Mugo)
	Woman invites Ngugi wa Thiong'o to teach adult literacy to youths
	Ngugi joins Kamiriithu Youth Centre management committee
	Theatre programme added to Kamiriithu Youth Centre and Ngugi asked to chair the cultural committee

	Kamiriithu Youth Centre renamed as Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, Ngugi wa Mirii asked to chair literacy committee
December 1976	Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wa Mirii assigned to write play outline
April, 1977	First draft of play outline presented
June, 1977	Play reading and discussions as well as rehearsals begin
September 1977	KCECC members build open air theatre
October 2, 1977	Ngaahika Ndeenda play opens to the public
November 16, 1977	Kamiriithu theatre outlawed by withdrawal of licence
December 31, 1977	Ngugi wa Thiong'o detained at Kamiti Maximum Prison
December 1978	Ngugi wa Thiong'o released from prison
November 1981	KCECC group tries to reconvene to produce <i>Mother, Sing for Me</i>
November 7, 14, 15, 1981	Auditions for <i>Mother, Sing for Me</i>
February 15, 1982	KCECC members physically barred from accessing theatre to rehearse
February 19, 1982	Scheduled date for the performance of <i>Mother, Sing for Me</i> at National Theatre (Police obstructs the rehearsals) Shifting play rehearsals to the University of Nairobi
February 25, 1982	University of Nairobi ordered to stop hosting <i>Mother, Sing for Me</i> rehearsals
March 11, 1982	KCECC declared illegal and theatre activities banned
March 12, 1982	Kamiriithu theatre razed to the ground by 3 truckloads of police
1982	Ngugi, Wa Miiri and Gecau go into exile
February 1984	President Moi visits Kamiriithu. Announces polytechnic on former KCECC space

Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni land rights struggle

Prospecting for oil in Nigeria started as early as 1908, led by a German company, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation, although viable quantities of the resource were not discovered until 1956.⁸⁴ The Ogoni in colonial times were administered as part of Opobo (1908 – 1947), Rivers Province (1947 – 1951) and the Eastern

⁸⁴ Alao (2007), p. 161

Nigeria region.⁸⁵ In 1958, oil deposits were discovered in Ogoniland.⁸⁶ Located in the Niger Delta region, the Ogoni are one of many minority ethnic groups in Nigeria, who own the biggest share of the country's oil deposits. The numerous ethnic minority oil producing communities, including Ogonis, Ogbas, Andonis, Egbemas, Ikwemes, Engennes, Ekpeyes, Obolos, Urhobos, Isokos, Itsekeris among others are scattered all over eight states, namely Rivers, Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Abia and Ondo states.⁸⁷ Overall, the Niger Delta occupies 70,000 square kilometres of land with twenty different ethnic groups.⁸⁸ The Ogoni are 500,000 strong, and are separated among three sub-ethnic groups, namely Khana, Gokana and Eleme.⁸⁹ The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) however recognises six Ogoni kingdoms.⁹⁰

Oil extraction in the Ogoni area was dominated by the Nigerian National Petroleum Co. (NNPC), in partnership with multinational oil companies, like Shell and Chevron.⁹¹ Since the 1970s, there have been complaints against Shell for oil spillages and other environmentally disastrous activities in Ogoniland. In 1971, Ogoni landlords pushed for reparations from Shell after a blow-out on Shell's Bomu Oilwell.⁹² Before the discovery and exploitation of the resource, the Niger Delta region generally was known for its food production.⁹³ By 1990, oil was being mined by Shell at seven oil fields in Ogoniland namely: Bomu, Bodo West, Tai, Korokoro, Yorla, Lubara Creek and Afam.⁹⁴

Oil revenue sharing between the federal and regional governments had reduced to 1.5% proceeds going to state governments in 1990.⁹⁵ By 1990, Ogoniland had lost its reputation and ability to produce food for itself.⁹⁶ Nigeria on the other hand, in 2004 was Africa's largest oil producer and the seventh in the world. The resource in 2004 accounted for 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of federal government revenue.⁹⁷ Although some research on the Ogoni concentrates on revenue sharing and environmental effects of oil extraction, land is at the centre of the conflict between the Ogoni and the Nigerian state and oil

⁸⁵ Saro Wiwa, Ken (1995), *A Month and a Day* (London: Penguin), p. 67

⁸⁶ Wiwa, Ken (2000), In *The Shadow Of A Saint, A Son's Journey To Understand His Father's Legacy* (London: Doubleday), p. 62, Obi (2005)

⁸⁷ Alao (2007), p. 162

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 189

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 190

⁹⁰ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 66

⁹¹ Alao (2007), p. 162, 190

⁹² Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 80, Obi (2005), p. 7 – 8

⁹³ Wiwa (2000), p. 64

⁹⁴ Ken Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 67

⁹⁵ Wiwa (2000), p. 61, Alao (2007), p. 173, Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 55

⁹⁶ Wiwa (2000), p. 64

⁹⁷ Alao (2007), p. 161

companies on the other hand.⁹⁸ The laying of pipes without consultation of the local people for example, is primarily a land use dispute.⁹⁹ The Ogoni are aggrieved that they own the land and so have a right to be consulted and compensated before the laying of oil pipes. Oil spills also render the land incapable of supporting farming.¹⁰⁰

MOSOP was formed as a vehicle through which to demand the cleaning up of the Ogoni environment, bargain for compensation for land degradation and fairer rents for land use by oil companies.¹⁰¹ The word 'land' appears four times in the original text of the Ogoni Bill of Rights.¹⁰² Article 15 of the bill specifically laments: 'that the search for oil has caused severe land and food shortages in Ogoni, one of the most densely populated areas of Africa'.¹⁰³ In several of Saro Wiwa's speeches, he made reference to land. In a keynote address to the Kagote club on December 26, 1990, he complained: 'Land is in very short supply in Ogoni and what is available to us is no longer enough to feed our teeming population'.¹⁰⁴ In a speech to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Saro Wiwa argued that: 'Incidental to and indeed compounding the ecological devastation is the political marginalisation and complete oppression of the Ogoni and especially the denial of their rights, including land rights'.¹⁰⁵ The struggle for self-determination is primarily a struggle for control over land.

Alao argues that oil-related conflicts, involving indigenous minority peoples are over matters of land ownership and use.¹⁰⁶ The local populations argue that despite hosting oil sites and suffering adverse effects for it, their locales do not have infrastructures and are the most under-developed parts of the country.¹⁰⁷ Saro Wiwa has labelled this problem as black on black colonialism.¹⁰⁸ Ethnic majorities that control natural resources do not originate from areas where the natural resources are located.¹⁰⁹ In Nigeria's case, the oil refineries are located in

⁹⁸ Obi, Cyril (1999), 'Globalisation and Environmental Conflict in Africa', *Afr. j. polit. sci.* (1999), Vol. 4 No. 1, 40-62

⁹⁹ Wiwa (2000), p. 62

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International (2005), 'Oil & Injustice in Nigeria: Ken Saro-Wiwa', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 32, No. 106, Africa from SAPs to PRSP: Plus Ça Change Plus C'est la Meme Chose (Dec., 2005), pp. 636-637

¹⁰¹ Wiwa (2000), p. 63

¹⁰² Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 67

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 68

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 74

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 96

¹⁰⁶ Alao (2007), p. 170

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 172, Nixon, Rob (1996), 'Pipe Dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Environmental Justice, And Micro-Minority Rights', *Black Renaissance* 1:1 [Fall 1996]

¹⁰⁸ McIntyre, J.A (1996), 'The Writer as Agitator: Ken Saro-Wiwa', *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1996), pp. 295-311

¹⁰⁹ Alao (2007), p. 173, Obi (2005), p. 7

the northern part of the country that has produced a big percentage of Nigerian national leaders yet they have no oil extraction activities there.

MOSOP pushed for political autonomy of the Ogoni as an indigenous minority group with their own political unit, as a state, to have control over the economic benefits of the resources on their land.¹¹⁰ By 1990, when MOSOP was formed, several secession attempts had been made in the Delta. In 1966, Isaac Boro led a group seeking to secede from Nigeria.¹¹¹ MOSOP's position in the 1990s was against secession, Saro Wiwa having fought against Biafra in the 1967 – 1970 secessionist war.¹¹² MOSOP's demands were:

- (a) the right to self-determination as a distinct people in the Nigerian Federation
- (b) adequate representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions
- (c) the right to use a fair proportion of the economic resources of their land for their development
- (d) the right to control their environment.¹¹³

These demands formed the core of the crisis that pitted the Ogoni people on one hand and the Government of Nigeria, with multinational companies on the other.

The Writer as Leader

Although Saro Wiwa's writing about the Ogoni situation went as far back as April 1968, when he issued a pamphlet titled *The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow*, 1990 is the turning point in his thinking about the struggle.¹¹⁴ MOSOP was formed in 1990 and between 1990 and when he was hanged, Saro Wiwa published more than four titles.¹¹⁵ MOSOP's original objective was to attract the attention of government and Shell to the Ogoni grievances.¹¹⁶ After receiving no response to their demands presented in October 1990 in the Ogoni Bill of Rights, MOSOP devised other strategies to achieve their goals. Saro Wiwa combined his writing skills with a set of strategies that framed the Ogoni struggle as a human rights one, combining a minority indigenous people's struggle with that for

¹¹⁰ Alao (2007), p. 175

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 178

¹¹² Obi (2005), p. 7

¹¹³ Saro Wiwa, Ken (1996), 'Final Statement to the Ogoni Civil Disturbances Tribunal', *Social Justice*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (66), *Environmental Victims* (Winter 1996), pp. 7-8

¹¹⁴ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 49

¹¹⁵ These include *Mr B is Dead* (1991), *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy* (1992), *A Forest of Flowers: Short Stories* (1995) and *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (1995).

¹¹⁶ Alao (2007), p. 190

environmental justice.¹¹⁷ He invested in the study of non-violent mobilisation, reading about Mahatma Ghandi's Satyagraha and about Martin Luther King's nonviolent civil rights movement strategies.¹¹⁸

Although widely acknowledged as the leader of MOSOP, Saro Wiwa was not always the organisation's president. He remained engaged in creative and non-creative writing, even at the heat of the struggle, publishing *The Singing Anthill*, a collection of Ogoni folktales in 1991.¹¹⁹ His leadership was more emergent than assigned. His power was more personal (referent and expert) than position-based (legitimate). He wrote:

'I had made up my mind that I would not head the organisation; I thought that I would best serve it and the Ogoni people by writing and propagating its ideology as well as doing the press work.¹²⁰

Saro Wiwa was, at the start of MOSOP elected as publicity secretary of the steering committee. His leadership was therefore also assigned to some extent and his power legitimate.

Saro Wiwa's work outside Nigeria, to popularise the Ogoni cause, before international media and organisations is an example of blurred lines between assigned and emergent leadership.¹²¹ Intellectually, he led MOSOP's human rights and environmental justice campaign and was the more recognisable face of the struggle. He spearheaded the addition of an addendum to the Ogoni Bill of Rights in August 1991, on celebrating its first anniversary, to include an appeal to the international community.¹²² He labelled the disaster facing the Ogoni as genocide in a speech to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous peoples in 1992.¹²³ He highlighted the culpability of multinational companies in the degradation of the environment and abuse of indigenous people's rights, which attracted some international organisations to the Ogoni side.¹²⁴ Such international networks and organisations included the World Council of Churches, Greenpeace, Survival International, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO), The Body Shop, Abroad and Friends of the Earth,

¹¹⁷ Boyd, William (1995), Introduction, in Saro Wiwa, Ken, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (London: Penguin), Nixon, Rob (2002), 'The Hidden Lives of Oil', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 5, 2002, B7-9, Obi (2005), p. 9

¹¹⁸ Wiwa (2000), p. 62, 67, McIntyre (1996), p. 296

¹¹⁹ Wiwa (2000), p. 67

¹²⁰ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 78

¹²¹ Wiwa (2000), p. 66

¹²² Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 89

¹²³ Wiwa (2000), p. 66, Nixon (2002)

¹²⁴ Alao (2007), p. 190

among others.¹²⁵ Technically, this work went beyond the narrow duties of a publicity secretary.

The turn to international human rights and environmental justice activism was an effective strategy to achieve the mutual purpose of the leadership and followership of the Ogoni people.¹²⁶ The more visible the Ogoni plight became internationally, the more pressure was put on the Nigerian state and the oil companies to respond to the Ogoni demands. Reflecting on previous strategies, Saro Wiwa wrote:

‘What I had neglected to do was to organise the people to protect their environment. The Ogoni Bill of Rights which I had written and presented to the chiefs and leaders for adoption in August 1990 before I left for the United States was strong on environmental protection’.¹²⁷

The Ogoni had always been disgruntled by their treatment by the Nigerian state and oil companies, but until they mobilised around environmental justice, their case had not come to international notice.¹²⁸ Saro Wiwa’s own involvement in directly organising and mobilising the Ogoni beyond writing did not start with MOSOP. In 1971, he had tried to set up the Ogoni Development Association (ODA) which collapsed as soon as it was formed.¹²⁹ His assertion of influence at that point in time was rejected by followers. He unsuccessfully contested for electoral office in 1973 and 1977, once again reinforcing the rejection of his influence by the Ogoni people.¹³⁰

The lessons of his previous failure came in handy in 1990. He started mobilising the Ogoni by organising seminars under the Ogoni Central Union, which he presided over.¹³¹ These seminars provided him with the opportunity to connect with followers. He followed up the seminars with consultations with Kagote, a group of the Ogoni elite and the Ogoni Klub, its equivalent for young professionals. He had become more strategic in winning the trust of the elite who had been influential in his political failures of the 1970s. These overtures were assertions of influence.

¹²⁵ Alao (2007), p. 189, Wiwa (2000), p. 66, McIntyre (1996), Nixon (1996)

¹²⁶ Nixon (1996)

¹²⁷ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 80

¹²⁸ Nixon (2002)

¹²⁹ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 51

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 55-6

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 65

In a meeting held at Bori, on August 26, 1990, the bill that Saro Wiwa had written alone, was approved by the union.¹³² It was agreed that each Ogoni kingdom would be represented by six signatories, to ensure collective ownership of the document.¹³³ The Babbe, Eleme, Gokana Ken-Khana, Nyo-Khana and Tai were all represented, but Eleme kingdom were unable to sign because of a change in leadership at the kingdom level. Saro Wiwa's assertion of influence had been accepted by followers at this point. He had emerged as a leader, with acceptance and trust from the followership, with a common goal, enshrined in the bill of rights. To further ensure mutuality of purpose between leader and followers, each signatory contributed to the cost of publishing the bill of rights.

Besides mobilising the Ogoni, Saro Wiwa and MOSOP widened their networks locally and regionally to include other groups suffering the same fate. Saro Wiwa was influential in the formation of the Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF).¹³⁴ He represented both MOSOP and EMIROAF at the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) in Geneva, among other international networks.¹³⁵ The UNPO connection equipped Saro Wiwa with skills to navigate the UN bureaucracy and make the Ogoni issue visible internationally. EMIROAF also widened his followership to include other indigenous minority peoples suffering the same problems.¹³⁶ There was a clarity of purpose in the Ogoni struggle. Saro Wiwa wrote:

'I sorted out at the back of my mind the two facets of the case: the complete devastation of the environment by the oil companies prospecting for and mining oil in Ogoni, notably Shell and Chevron: the political marginalisation and economic strangulation of the Ogoni, which was the responsibility of succeeding administrations in the country'.¹³⁷

This clarity of purpose was important in determining the success of the MOSOP campaign. It made it easy for allies to put pressure on particular institutions to the benefit of the Ogoni.

Saro Wiwa's writing was instrumental in his leadership. On his trips overseas, he carried with him his books, which were about the Ogoni struggle. In one of such trips to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, he deposited copies of the Ogoni Bill of Rights and his book, *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy*, to

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 66

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 110

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 92

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 93 - 4

¹³⁶ McIntyre (1996), p. 298

¹³⁷ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 80

the working group's secretariat.¹³⁸ His skills-set was crucial for the campaigning nature of the task at hand.

The climax for the Ogoni struggle came in December 1992 when Shell was given an ultimatum to leave Ogoniland.¹³⁹ A demand notice for reparations and compensation was sent on December 3, 1992 which was ignored.¹⁴⁰ MOSOP mobilised for a mammoth rally scheduled for 4th, January 1993, to celebrate the United Nations Year of the World's indigenous Populations.¹⁴¹ The protest, attended by more than 300,000 Ogoni people was peaceful.¹⁴² The leader and the followers were in tune. Saro Wiwa was at the peak of his referent power. Hundreds of Ogoni children all wanted to have a glance on him, revealing the admiration with which he was treated.¹⁴³ Through the mass education and mobilisation campaigns that followed the protest, Saro Wiwa's influence reached the entire Ogoni population. On December 27, 1992, Saro Wiwa was honoured by the Kagote Club with the first Ogoni National Merit Award.¹⁴⁴ Even when he was in prison, facing charges that would end up with his hanging, Saro Wiwa was elected as president of MOSOP. Of the many reasons that pushed Shell to cease operations in Ogoniland in 1993, was Saro Wiwa's and MOSOP's clear headed leadership of the Ogoni people.¹⁴⁵

Table 3: Power and Influence Analysis: MOSOP Case

Activity / Power Base	Year	Referent	Expert	Legitimate	Reward	Coercive
		Personal		Position		
Saro Wiwa contests to represent Ogoniland	1970s	X	X	X	X	X
Saro Wiwa drafts Ogoni Bills of Rights	1990	X	Y	Y	X	X
Saro Wiwa elected publicity secretary of MOSOP		X	Y	Y	X	X
Saro Wiwa mobilises and addresses rally on Ogoni day	1993	Y	Y	Y	X	X

Key: Y – Present X – Absent

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 97

¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch (1995)

¹⁴⁰ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 104

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 105

¹⁴² Pegg, Scott (2000), 'Ken Saro-Wiwa: Assessing the Multiple Legacies of a Literary Interventionist', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4, NGO Futures: Beyond Aid (Aug., 2000), pp. 701 - 708

¹⁴³ Saro Wiwa (1995), p. 133

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 109

¹⁴⁵ Boyd (1995)

4.2. Clampdown on the Ogoni

The Nigerian state response to the popular protests and mobilisation campaign was repressive. MOSOP activists were arbitrarily detained in the period following January 1993. Saro Wiwa was arrested in April and June 1993, on false charges. In addition, on April 28, 1993, Willbros, a Shell contractor destroyed crops in Ogoni villages. This led to more protests by the Ogoni and shooting by security forces, injuring eleven people in the process.¹⁴⁶ The violence against the Ogoni continued, engineered through clashes with other ethnic groups. In 1993, the Ogoni clashed with the Okrika resulting in the loss of property. In the same year, the Andoni attacked the Ogoni and killed 438 among them, forcing others to migrate.¹⁴⁷ This systematic violent crackdown on the Ogoni continued in 1994. By the end of 1995, there had been 2000 Ogoni deaths from state engineered violence.¹⁴⁸

On May 21, 1994, an intra-Ogoni riot led to the death of four Ogoni elders.¹⁴⁹ A day after their death, Saro Wiwa was arrested. He was convicted, sentenced and executed, alongside eight others.¹⁵⁰ His detention, conviction, sentencing and hanging led to more focus on the Ogoni cause. The international environmental and human rights community coalesced around the case to call for justice for the Ogoni.¹⁵¹ Allies that supported the Ogoni people on the international level included International PEN, The Ogoni Foundation, Amnesty International and Greenpeace among others.¹⁵²

Other outcomes of the leadership process involving Saro Wiwa, besides repression and violence have been court settlements in favour of ethnic minority groups. In 2000, a Nigerian court ordered Shell to pay \$40 million to a local community for environmental degradation.¹⁵³ The Saro Wiwa family and MOSOP sued Shell in the United States and other countries and have been successful in their legal claims.¹⁵⁴ There has been progress as regards the cleaning up of Ogoniland. A UN Environmental Program (UNEP) report quantified the damage that has been done to the land and what it would take to clean it up.¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch (1995)

¹⁴⁷ Alao (2007), p. 187

¹⁴⁸ Boyd (1995), Nixon (1996), Pegg (2000), p. 701

¹⁴⁹ Alao (2007), p. 187

¹⁵⁰ Boyd (1995), McIntyre (1996), Pegg (2000), p. 701

¹⁵¹ Obi (1999), p. 41

¹⁵² Boyd (1995)

¹⁵³ Alao (2007), p. 176

¹⁵⁴ *Wiwa v Royal Dutch Petroleum, Wiwa v Anderson and Wiwa v Shell Petroleum Development Company*

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Environment Programme (2011), *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland Report*

Nigerian Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) also admitted that there is an adverse impact on the environment caused by Shell and Chevron's oil extraction activities.¹⁵⁶

Alao's description of the Ogoni leadership as enlightened is accurate. In as far as the struggle over land is concerned, the Ogoni people were successful to an extent. They paralysed Shell activities in their area to the point of the company ceasing extraction activities.¹⁵⁷ The relative success of the Ogoni struggle came as a result of a combination of factors. Besides Ken Saro Wiwa's literary abilities and achievements, he diversified his skills and strategies to include mainstream human rights advocacy and activism. He framed the Ogoni struggle in a collective narrative as a struggle of the Ogoni people, rather than his own personal struggle. He engaged the Ogoni as much and this continuous exchange of influence between the leader and the followers ensured continued mutuality of purpose and action. This can be seen from his death. Because of the process-based approach to leadership, the physical elimination of the leader proved more dangerous to the Nigerian state and its accomplices, Shell and Chevron.¹⁵⁸ The new situation that emerged after the death of Ken Saro Wiwa was of increased violence and repression from the state.¹⁵⁹

Table 4: Major Dates and Events in the MOSOP case

Year	Event
1908 - 1947	Ogoni administered as part of Opobo by British colonial government
1908	Oil prospecting in Ogoni land by German company
1947	Ogoni placed under Rivers Province under the Ogoni Native Authority ordinance
1951	Ogoni placed under Eastern Nigeria regional administration
1958	Oil found in Ogoni land
1960	Nigeria gains independence
1967	Ogoni put under Rivers state
1967 - 1970	Biafra war
April 1968	Ken Saro Wiwa publishes pamphlet: The Ogoni Nationality
1970	Ogoni chiefs complain about Shell's oil spillages
August 26, 1990	Ogoni Bill of Rights approved and signed by Ogoni Central Union
October 1990	Ogoni Bill of Rights sent to Government and published

¹⁵⁶ Alao (2007), p. 177

¹⁵⁷ Obi (1999), p. 41, Nixon (1996),

¹⁵⁸ Obi (1999), p. 41

¹⁵⁹ Amnesty International (2005)

1990	MOSOP formed
1990	Saro Wiwa elected MOSOP spokesperson
August 1991	Ogoni Bill of Rights amended to appeal to international community
July 1992	Saro Wiwa addresses UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
1992	Arrests of Saro Wiwa and other activists and detention without trial
December, 1992	Shell given 30 days ultimatum to vacate Ogoniland
January 4, 1993	300,000 Ogoni protest march (Year of Indigenous Peoples)
Feb – Mar, 1993	Mass education and mobilisation in all Ogoni kingdoms
1993	Shell ceases operations in Ogoniland
May 21, 1994	4 Ogoni leaders killed
May 22, 1994	Saro Wiwa arrested on charges of incitement to murder
Nov 2, 1995	Saro Wiwa and eight others sentenced to death
Nov 10, 1995	Saro Wiwa hanged at 54 years old, with eight others

Creative Writers, Influence and Leadership

The article has established that creative writing ability and achievement are related to leadership. There are however other variables that affect the effectiveness of a leadership process, beyond the talent and skill of the creative writer. Creative writers' referent power plays a role in their emergence as leaders, but how this influence turns into strategy is important for the effectiveness of the leadership process. The expert power that creative writers have is important for their emergence as leaders, and sometimes also leads to assigned leadership within groups. The ability of leaders to adjust methods according to the change in situations is the determining factor for the effectiveness or failure of a leadership process. Both Saro Wiwa and Ngugi emerge as leaders partly because of their writing ability and achievement. Although Saro Wiwa did not yet have referent power at the point of emergence (compared to Ngugi), his skills as a writer (expert power) played a role in his assertion of influence among the Ogoni.

However, literary talent, skill and achievement alone is not enough as a strategy for attaining set goals and objectives of a struggle for land rights. Saro Wiwa diversified his arsenal of strategies to include mass mobilisation, human rights campaigning and advocacy which yielded fruits for the Ogoni, while Ngugi continued to focus on theatre production, which, blocked by the state with the banning of *Mother, Sing for me*, scattered the movement he had been part of, with the intellectual leaders pushed into exile. This reinforces the thinking that

leadership is dynamic. Leaders must adjust their strategies with change of circumstances or they lose followership.

It is important for a leadership process to have a clarity of purpose. Under Saro Wiwa's leadership, MOSOP had clear objectives and demands that they addressed to specific identifiable entities. The Kamiriithu community's activism on the other hand was general and vague. It was easier for allies to find where they fitted in the Ogoni struggle, and clear positions from which to advocate than for Kamiriithu, as regards land. When Ngugi was arrested, calling for his release, became a clearer purpose for his networks to weigh in. This is one suggestion for the relative ineffectiveness of KCECC's land struggle leadership process.

Both case studies illustrate the primacy of emergent leadership. Although Saro Wiwa was not the president of MOSOP for a number of years, he was considered its figurehead because of his influence in the group. Similarly, Ngugi was not the chairman of KCECC, yet he has been the renowned face of the community's efforts. Assigned leadership is however not entirely irrelevant as both Saro Wiwa and Ngugi at various points held positions from which they exercised influence. The legitimate power deriving from positions however complemented the expert and referent power the two had in their respective communities.

In both cases, the governments of the day responded to the struggles by the indigenous communities for land rights with repression and violence. The Kamiriithu open air theatre was physically destroyed by the state security services, while a reign of terror was launched against the Ogoni people by the Nigerian security services. Both leaders, Ngugi and Saro Wiwa were arrested and detained for their work in their communities. While Saro Wiwa ended up being convicted, sentenced and executed in a discredited trial, Ngugi fled to exile.

Whereas the human rights language and activism, especially on the international level benefitted the Ogoni cause, it did the opposite for the Kamiriithu cause. The human rights campaigning strategy for MOSOP benefitted the collective of the Ogoni as indigenous minority peoples. In the Kamiriithu case, the human rights approach focussed on Ngugi wa Thiong'o as an individual. Once he was released from detention, this attention fizzled out. At one level, these are two different contexts. At another level, the different results from applying the same approach reveal the dangers of the leadership as person perspective as compared to leadership as process. The Ngugi case for human rights focussed on the person, while the Ogoni human rights case included both followers and leaders.

To varying degrees, the Ogoni leadership process was more effective than the Kamiriithu leadership process. In Ogoni, MOSOP managed to paralyse Shell's operations and to date steps have been taken, including quantifying the damage

on the land and mapping the cleaning exercise needed. Reparations have been paid to some extent through court settlements to the Ogoni people for the violation of their rights. The same can't be said of the Kamiriithu community. The land tenure system in Kenya generally and in Kamiriithu specifically remains capitalist with peasants and workers deprived of land, in favour of the inheritance post-independence elite and multinational businesses.

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