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Seminario Scienze Umanistiche

## ***“Religious Imaging and Identity Conflict in the Context of Colonial East Africa (1840-1960)”***

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### **Abstract**

In 1884, Ludwig Kraft came to East Africa under the commissioning of the London based Church Missionary Society (CMS). Between 1884 and 1885, European powers completed the ‘scramble for Africa’ by reaching an agreement in the Berlin Conference. In 1950, Ghana became the first African state to acquire independence ushering a series of agitation militia movements on the continent. The Mau Mau Movement was popular and fierce in East Africa. Its uprising between 1952 and 1960 led to death of over 20,000 people, including African civilians, European settlers, British soldiers and police. The response of the British was not only hard-line military arrests and torture but also a soft-line imaging and propaganda. The missionary and the Christian Church became a necessary tool. The colonial government built the Saint James Anglican Memorial Church at the heart of Mau Mau conflict in Murang’a and dedicated it to “martyrs of the Massacre”. The Murang’a Murals, paintings that cover episodes in the story of Jesus Christ – Nativity, Baptism, Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, and Crucifixion – on the interior walls of the church building were Commissioned through an alliance between the Church Missionary Society and the Colonial Government represented by the Fort Hall (Murang’a) became a unique ‘Christian artistic statement’ depicting the contestation between African and European art, religion and cultural identity. The study focuses on the artist, Elimo Njau, the Muranga Murals message and the colonial contest for identity and representation that marked East African nationalities’ making.

### **Lecture preparatorie\***

Stephen Muoki Joshua, *“Copying puts God to Sleep”, the Story of Elimo Njau as a Christian artist in colonial East Africa*, 2025.

\*Tutti i materiali preparatori saranno inviati in formato PDF via e-mail dalla Segreteria agli studenti.

### **Bibliografia di approfondimento**

Margaret Wangui Gachihi, *Faith and Nationalism: Mau Mau and Christianity in Kikuyuland*, thesis submitted to University of Nairobi Department of History and Archaeology in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2014.