



# **The Boy Is Gone: Conversations with a Mau Mau General (Africa in World History)**

*Laura Lee P. Huttenbach*

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A story with the power to change how people view the last years of colonialism in East Africa, *The Boy Is Gone* portrays the struggle for Kenyan independence in the words of a freedom fighter whose life spanned the twentieth century's most dramatic transformations. Born into an impoverished farm family in the Meru Highlands, Japhlet Thambu grew up wearing goatskins and lived to stand before his community dressed for business in a pressed suit, crisp tie, and freshly polished shoes. For most of the last four decades, however, he dressed for work in the primary school classroom and on his lush tea farm.

The General, as he came to be called from his leadership of the Mau Mau uprising sixty years ago, narrates his life story in conversation with Laura Lee Huttenbach, a young American who met him while backpacking in Kenya in 2006. A gifted storyteller with a keen appreciation for language and a sense of responsibility as a repository of his people's history, the General talks of his childhood in the voice of a young boy, his fight against the British in the voice of a soldier, and his long life in the voice of shrewd elder. While his life experiences are his alone, his story adds immeasurably to the long history of decolonization as it played out across Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

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