THE AGIKUYU CONCEPT OF THAHU AND ITS BEARING ON THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF SIN

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Arts at Kenyatta University

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DECLARATION:

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

[Signature]

WAKANYI-KAHINDI LYDIA
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:-

1. My loving parents, Mr. John Kahindi and Mrs. Theresia Kahindi, whose tireless efforts and self-denial enabled me to have a strong educational and moral background. What I am, is built upon the foundation they laid. My success is rooted in their hard work. May God bless my Mum and rest my late Dad's soul in eternal peace.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>O.I.</td>
<td>Oral information</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.P.K.</td>
<td>Church of the Province of Kenya (also known as the Anglican Church)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Fr.</td>
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ABSTRACT:

This study attempted to analyze the Agikuyu concept of thahu in relation to the Christian concept of sin thus drawing the similarities and differences. The term thahu is taken to mean the consequence of one's action against a prohibition. The prohibitions (migiro) and curses (irumi) are among the major causes of thahu. The Agikuyu concept of thahu is closely related to the Christian concept of sin in that both cause separation and alienation between the offenders and God and the rest of humanity.

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and gives a brief survey of the Agikuyu religiosity. The views expressed by various scholars on sin, taboo and thahu are reviewed.

Chapter two analyzes the relationship between thahu, kirumi and mugiro in terms of their causes and effects. The chapter also identifies and describes the major causes of thahu and the purification ceremonies. Chapter two ends with an assertion that thahu is not synonymous to mugiro and kirumi but mugiro and kirumi are among the causes of thahu.

The third chapter compares thahu and sin in terms of their causes and effects. Comparisons are drawn between the Agikuyu prohibitions and the law of Moses as outlined in the book of Leviticus. The theological concept of original sin is also compared to thahu. The chapter draws the conclusion that in both sin and thahu, separation and alienation are experienced by the offender and that the offender has to take the initiative to seek purification.
Chapter four highlights the views expressed by members of our contemporary Kenyan society concerning sin and thahu. The chapter as well outlines cases of thahu and sin viewed as causes of communal disasters in both the traditional and contemporary society. Chapter four also discusses the role played by parents, teachers and religious leaders in providing moral education for the youth today.

The fifth chapter is a conclusion which gives the major findings of the study. Thahu is related to mugiro and kirumi in terms of their causes and effects but the three terms are not synonymous. Thahu which is the consequence of one's action against a prohibition was a major means of enhancing moral uprightness among the Agikuyu. In both thahu and sin, the elements of disorder and disintegration are introduced and separation emphasized.
Acknowledgement:

This work has resulted from the generous contributions of many people, with whom I have interacted in my daily endeavours. These people have had a lot to offer for the enrichment of my experience and growth. The names mentioned here are a mere representation of many others to whom I will always be profoundly indebted and grateful.

I wish to record my debt of gratitude first to Kenyatta University for awarding me a scholarship to study for a Masters' degree. To the Teachers' Service Commission for granting me a study leave. Secondly, my debt of gratitude to my University supervisors, Dr. Ndirangu-Kihara and Dr. Wasswa Mpagi for their constructive criticism, patience and keen observations.

My heartfelt gratitude must go to my sisters and my brothers who have never let me down. I thank them for their everlasting love and support, and for their ability to continue thinking up incredible words of encouragement.

I have to thank Mrs. Alice Kigondu together with her sons and daughters for their efforts to introduce me to elders at the dawn of the fieldwork research. I also thank Wambui Kiburi, Mrs. Gladys Kariuki, Fr. Wamukami, and Fr. Kahurani, just to mention a few, for similar efforts.

I am indeed indebted to Mrs. Grace Maloba who typed this final manuscript. I must thank my friend and colleague, Kimani-wa-Njogu for proof-reading the handwritten draft of this work and for his wise suggestions. I wish to thank all my respondents for generously answering my questions.
However, the list would be incomplete without including my close friends, Wakimani Mukora, George Kahindi and Grace Wamue for their continued encouragement which gave me a hope when all seemed to rebell against me.

I must as well thank Fr. Wamugunda, Fr. Karanja and Fr. Wachege for their moral and prayerful support and for sharing my moments of distress, Finally, my thanks to Dr. Ongong'a for his continued encouragement and for proof-reading this work and making constructive comments.

It is hard to forget Lucy Wambui Njuguna, for sharing with me a part of the best of her life. Without her devotion in looking after my son, I would never have completed this work.
POSITION OF KIAMBU, MURANGA AND NYERI DISTRICTS IN KENYA
CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Agikuyu religiosity: A brief survey

The Agikuyu religion had two major components of beliefs, namely the belief in God and the belief in ancestral spirits. These two beliefs were complimentary. However, the attitudes towards these two beliefs were different.

Kenyatta (1938, 234) observes,

"The Agikuyu ....... attitude towards the ancestral spirits was not at all to be compared with their attitudes to the deity who was truly worshipped".

Kenyatta further elaborates that even the terms used during ceremonies to express the two beliefs were different. The Agikuyu used the term guthaithaiya Ngai meaning to worship or beseech God while the terms guitangira ngoma njohi or guthinjira ngoma were used to mean to pour libation or to offer sacrifice to the ancestral spirits.

The Agikuyu never worshipped the ancestral spirits, rather they communed with them. The spirits were not used as intermediaries, the Agikuyu approached God directly.

Kamuyu-wa-Kangethe (1981) further ascertains that the belief in God therefore remained as the major aspect of the Agikuyu religion. The Agikuyu believed that God is the creator of all that exists. God also provides man with all that he requires for his sustenance.

Gathigira (1942) strongly holds that the Agikuyu conceived God as neither man nor an animal. He further asserts that since God is a mysterious being, the Agikuyu had no carved images to
represent Him.

The pre-Christian Agikuyu community of faith had a monotheistic conception of God (see Kibicho, 1972). The main emphasis in all aspects of Agikuyu society was more on enhancing and maintaining the welfare of the family and the community than that of the individual.

In order to understand any people's religion, it is necessary to examine the people's religious actions. These are evidenced in their communal and individual rites. For the Agikuyu, these ceremonies and rites bound the group together for without them the group would be incohesive. As clearly expressed by Wilson (1971, 28 ff) the sacred permeates the whole life and therefore; there is no particular time set apart for religious activity. Individuals turn to God in the morning, when in need, at a time of illness, while starting on a journey, as a thanksgiving for a favour gained, when searching for a lost article and for a healthy family. Leakey (1952, 39) notes that in matters of religion, the emphasis was also on the communal approach to God. Strictly speaking, there could be no God of an individualistic antisocial person according to the Agikuyu belief. However, the individual who was at the same time in communion with the rest of the community could and did approach God alone in prayer whenever one felt the need to do so. Individual prayers were usually short and they could be supplication, intercession, thanksgiving or any other kind as need dictated.

For the Agikuyu prayer was usually in the form of libation, invocation, uttering a few words or a sacrifice made by a family. Prayers were mainly in the form of dialogue with God or communion with ancestors. These prayers were expressed as requests or
the sinner and God as well as his fellow men. It is only after repentance and forgiveness that one is re-admitted as a member of the group.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There has been gross misconception and misuse of the concept of thahu, equating it with taboos and curses. The misconceptions have not been corrected and ways of defining thahu, rendering it different from taboos and curses have not been formulated. Therefore thahu and taboo have been erroneously used synonymously. The moral significance of thahu among the Agikuyu and particularly the role played by thahu in enhancing social and religious harmony among the Agikuyu have not been evaluated.

The major problem of this investigation is to give a religious interpretation of the Agikuyu concept of thahu. The major concern being to analyse the role played by thahu and the beliefs related to it in the well-being of the Agikuyu. This objective will also lead towards an evaluation of the moral significance of thahu among the Agikuyu particularly in enhancing their religious harmony.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The major purpose of this investigation is to give a religious interpretation of the Agikuyu concept of thahu. The main concern being to evaluate the role played by thahu and the beliefs related to it in the well-being of the Agikuyu. This purpose will also lead towards an evaluation of the moral significance of thahu among the Agikuyu particularly in enhancing their social and religious harmony.

Scholars like Hobley (1967), Radin (1937) and Cagnolo (1933) have erroneously equated thahu to taboos and curses. Another purpose
of this study therefore is to formulate a way of defining thahu rendering it different from taboos and curses. To facilitate the formulation of such a definition certain definitions of the concept as given by various scholars as well as respondents have been analysed.

Yet another purpose of this study is to clarify the role played by the purification ceremonies in incorporating and reinstating the victim back as a member of the group. The study as well undertakes the task of showing how the Agikuyu concept of thahu relates to the Biblical concept of sin in terms of their roles of separating and alienating those who defile the set norms. In comparing thahu and sin, the study highlights on the major similarities and differences. The moral responsibility of the younger generation has been discussed in this study, by analysing the moral situation in the Agikuyu contemporary society.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study was necessitated by academic curiosity and a conviction that thahu and the beliefs related to it played a major role in controlling behaviour among the Agikuyu. Western scholars like Hobley (1967), Radin (1937) and Cagnolo (1933) who have researched on Agikuyu religious beliefs, viewed the Society as inferior and it's beliefs as savagery. The study therefore, intended to correct the presuppositions which these scholars had and thus give a less-biased picture in analysing the moral value and social significance of the belief in thahu. This study is intended to be a contribution to scholarly research as it attempts an analysis of the nature and significance of the Agikuyu concept of thahu both in the traditional and contemporary society.

In analysing the concept of thahu, the research clarifies how
the prohibitions whose violations caused thahu were formulated and who actually formulated these prohibitions. This supported or refute claims made by some scholars like Hobley (1967) and Radin (1937), that the traditional diviner–doctors were more interested in the material gains they got for performing the ritual purification ceremonies to cleanse the victims of thahu, than upholding the society's moral values. The study has thus show how the prohibitions were formulated and who actually formulated them.

Due to the fact that most cases of thahu were removable by ritual purification, the members could easily relax their beliefs and thus making thahu loose its moral meaning. The study hoped to find out how much value thahu, the beliefs attached to it and mugiro had as moral restraints among the Agikuyu.

The study is also significant in that it has attempted to show how the Agikuyu concept of thahu is related to taboos and curses particularly in analysing the actions, objects and events that cause thahu. This also renders thahu different from taboos and curses. In the past thahu has been erroneously equated to taboos and curses by some scholars, like Kenyatta (1938) and Hobley (1967).

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual orientation that informs this study is derived from Emile Durkheim's concept of social control. Durkheim (1915) applies the concept of taboos or interdictions to the scope of the sacred versus the profane. This application is adaptable in Agikuyu religious beliefs whereby the sacred denotes the observation of taboos and the profane implies contravention of taboos and hence the thahu condition. Furthermore, as regards the Biblical concept of sin, the
sacred points towards obedience of God’s will while the profane denotes disobedience and rebellion against God as depicted in sin.

Durkheim (1915, 268) argues that there is no religion without interdictions. In this study, the Agikuyu prohibitions (migiro) marks out the pitfalls in order to enhance social harmony among the community members. Similarly, in the Old Testament the Law of Moses and the book of Leviticus prescribe various interdictions. The contravention of these interdictions (taboos) has both material and spiritual repercussions viewed as punishments. The victims therefore have to undergo the prescribed purification ceremonies in order to be incorporated and reinstated as members of the community. Durkheim’s conception of social control is in the dimensions of culture, morals and religion. Similarly the Agikuyu conception of social control has a religious connotation expressed in terms of social customs. This conception can be further explained in God.

Durkheim identifies the family, the clan, the community, the diviner-doctors (Araguri) and the age-groups as agencies of social control. The family, clan and community informs the individuals about the taboos. The diviner-doctor reveals an unconfessed contravention, while they may punish by ex-communicating a member who defiles the set norms. The Agikuyu contemporary society holds the family, the Church, the school and the state as agencies of social control.

The techniques of social control according to Durkheim’s theory include ex-communication and punishment. Among the Agikuyu one who contravenes a taboo was prohibited from taking part in any religious ceremonies and the age-group could also excommunicate
such a person prior to cleansing. Punishment would be in the form of a fine (guthinjwo) whereby one gave a goat as an atonement for one’s thahu.

The purification rites were carried out in order to prevent thahu from spreading to others and also as a way of cleansing one who is already in the thahu condition. These prescribed rites were aimed at enhancing the essential separation between the sacred and the profane among the Agikuyu.

1.6: Area of Study:

The fieldwork research for this study was conducted mainly in Kiambu District. As stated in Kiambu District Development Plan (1984 - 1988), the District has an area of 2,448 square kilometres out of the total Central Province area of 13,233 square kilometres. The district is divided into seven administrative regions namely, Lari, Gatundu, Githunguri, Limuru, Kiambaa, Kikuyu and Juja. Kiambu district is bordered by the City of Nairobi to the south, Kajiado district to the south-East, Nakuru district to the West, Nyandarua district to the North-East, Murang'a district to the North and Machakos district to the East. In addition to Kiambu district the fieldwork research also took place in parts of Murang'a and Nyeri district. This area of study can be seen on a map on page ix, indicating the position of Kiambu, Muranga and Nyeri districts in Kenya.

1.7: Research Methodology:

Most of the fieldwork research was carried out between November 1986 and April 1987. Prior to the actual field research the researcher had planned to interview at least three elders from Murang'a district
and three from Nyeri to avoid biases of taking Kiambu district as the sole representative of the Agikuyu people. But time and finances could not allow. However, the researcher made an effort to interview one elder from Murang'a district and one from Nyeri to avoid such biases.

The method used in carrying out the field research was mainly oral interview using direct questions. The researcher asked questions and listened to the oral traditions as narrated by the elders. The interviews were recorded live on cassettes, preserved and later transcribed into English for easier reference. In some cases, however, the researcher had to write down the major points where the elders totally objected to the idea of being recorded on cassettes.

These interviews were conducted during the day, mostly on Sundays and public holidays depending on the elders' flexibility. The best time for the interviews could have been in the evenings since some of the elders were busy during the day but this was not possible due to lack of reliable means of transport and the researcher's personal security.

Out of the seven divisions in Kiambu district, the researcher interviewed a random sample of four elders from each division. Individual elders were interviewed on appointment and occasionally group interviews were arranged for out of necessity to cross-check the information.

At the dawn of the field-work research I was not familiar with most of the respondents. Through the contact of friends who introduced me to the elders they could identify in their home divisions. In some cases an elder could introduce the researcher to another after the interview. During the first meeting, appointments were made to
interview the elders on days of their own choice and convenience. Towards the end of the field research, the researcher shortlisted the respondents and concentrated mainly on the key respondents.

In addition to elders, the researcher interviewed the youth, clergymen, lay-leaders and members of the general public. The representatives of these groups were chosen at random and were interviewed in the following order. The youth were represented by four Kenyatta University undergraduate students and four students from Kenyan secondary schools. Two lay-leaders were interviewed plus six members of the clergy from both the C.P.K. and the Roman Catholic Churches. The researcher interviewed two respondents randomly picked to represent the views of the general public. All these respondents represented the modern views on thahu and sin.

1.8. Limitations of the Study:

One major limitation encountered in this study was that the Agikuyu religion like most traditional religions is not a documented religion. The ancestors left no written records of their religious practices. The cultural traditions of the Agikuyu have been handed down orally from generation to generation. The most predominant works available concerning the Agikuyu deal with history, migration, land tenure plus social and political systems. Apart from the above mentioned, and some few articles which appear in Anthropological journals, little systematic attention has been paid to the religious beliefs of the Agikuyu, hence the scarcity of sources. Mbiti (1969, 1) further notes,

"our written knowledge of traditional religions is comparatively little, though increasing, and comes chiefly from anthropologists
and sociologists. Practically nothing has been produced by theologians, describing or interpreting these religious theologically”.

A second major problem encountered in carrying out the field research was the time. The time allocated for the study was rather short. This made it impossible to carry out the field-work research in the entire Agikuyu-occupied region which is to a large extent the whole of Central Province and beyond. The researcher was also faced with a financial problem. The research funds allocated could hardly cater for the necessary travelling and subsistence needs. The researcher often had to substitute with personal pocket money.

Some of the elders who were supposed to have been interviewed during the field-work research were not handy either due to age, sickness, or poverty. Other elders had a desire to pose as being more knowledgeable than they actually were. Group interviews were organized to cater for such biases and to cross-check the information. The researcher was as well faced with a scarcity of elders most of whom are vanishing through death and leaving no records of their knowledge of traditions. Other elders turned out to be so commercial-minded that they were unwilling to give information freely for the thought that the information they gave would be published in books and hence make money for the researcher. One elder went to the extent of demanding a hundred shillings fee before he could give any information.

Furthermore, due to the fact that most of the elders have taken up Christianity as a religion, some of them have been so much influenced to the extent of considering certain traditional practices as being savagey. One such elder gave the Biblical story of the fall
of Adam and Eve while actually intending to narrate the myth on
the origin of the Agikuyu. Although this study may not systematically
and analytically exhaust the Agikuyu concept of thahu and its bearing
on the Biblical concept of sin, it does however deal with the central
themes concerning the beliefs in thahu and sin.

1.9 Research premises

The study was undertaken with the following assumptions which
acted as guidelines to the investigation of the problems.

That the contravention of taboos and curses results in a thahu
condition; that taboos and curses are not synonymous to thahu; that
thahu and the beliefs related to it acted as a basis for morality among
the Agikuyu; and that in both the Agikuyu concept of thahu and the
Biblical concept of sin, the elements of rebellion, impurity and
alienation are strongly implied.

1.10 Definition of principle terms

In the study the following terms are used with the meanings
given below in order to suit the purposes of this study. Other terms
appear in the glossary.

Agikuyu: refers to the ethnic group, the entire Kikuyu people.

Mugikuyu: refers to an individual member of the Agikuyu ethnic
group.

Gikuyu: refers to the language used by the Agikuyu people as well
as the region they occupy.

Thahu: the consequences of one's actions against a prohibition.

Thahu renders the victim morally and ritually impure.

Mathahu: the plural form of thahu
**Wihia:** is the Gikuyu language way of describing sin, in the Christian context.

**Mehia:** is the plural form of *wihia* (sins)

**Mugiro:** is taken to mean a ban or a prohibition (taboo)

**Migiro:** is the plural form of *mugiro* (taboos)

**Kirumi:** a curse, a ban imposed by an older person to a younger relative. In most cases the curse becomes effective after the announcer’s death.

**Ndahikio:** a ritual purification ceremony used to cleanse various types of *thahu*. Literally means to cause to vomit out the *thahu*.

**Elder:** a man or a woman who has successfully gone through the stages of the Agikuyu rites of passage, i.e. birth, naming, initiation and marriage. Such a person is usually assumed to bear a lot of knowledge concerning the Agikuyu customs, beliefs and practices. In this study the elders have been chosen depending on such knowledge.

**Ngai:** derived from *Mugai* one who divides or shares out. Gikuyu language way of referring to God the parent and creator.

**1.11: Review of related Literature:**

In the present study works by Western scholars centred on the theme of taboo have been reviewed because this theme comes closest to the Agikuyu concept of *thahu*. In addition, works on *thahu* have been reviewed and also works centred on the christian concept of sin. Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 133-136) defines taboo as a ritual prohibition which he further refers to as (p. 134), A rule of behaviour which is associated with a belief that an infraction will result in an
undesirable change in the ritual status of the person who fails to keep the rule.

Radcliffe Brown comes quite close to the Agikuyu concept of thahu in his definition of taboo. He further argues that after one has broken a prohibition the victim's status gets disturbed and this leads to some degree of misfortune. This misfortune may befall the victim alone or spread to affect his family, livestock and property. He concludes by asserting that taboos regulate social relationships and function as a moral code of the society.

In addition this study hopes to analyse the role played by thahu and the beliefs related to it in controlling the people's behaviour, as a moral code among the Agikuyu.

Radin (1937, 176-179) associates the origin of taboo with the priests and shamans in a society and argues that they develop these rules so that they may gain from the work of curing and cleansing those who break the rules. The study aims at finding out whether the diviner-doctors actually formulated the prohibitions among the Agikuyu.

Freud (1913, 29-31) sees taboo in connection with neurosis, taboos being the result of psychological conditions. He argues that taboo originated from ambivalent social attitudes which led men to establish prohibitions. Freud sees the concept of taboo being based on a forbidden action for which there exists a strong unconscious inclination. In line with this view, the researcher hopes to find out whether all members of the Agikuyu society were aware of the existence of all the prohibitions depending on who formulated them.

Howells (1962, 45-47) gives a sociological interpretation of taboo as something forbidden not by status but by convention. This
definition is quite close to the Agikuyu beliefs and can be equated to **mugiro** but not **thahu** which refers to the consequence of a contravened **mugiro**. This sociological interpretation is also in line with the Agikuyu conception of **mugiro** whereby the prohibitions were agreed upon by convention.

Hobley (1967, 58-68) defines **thahu** as a condition into which one falls when he accidentally becomes the victim of certain circumstances or intentionally performs certain acts which carry with them a kind of ill-luck or curse. Hobley further asserts that **thahu** results from contravention of a prohibition or curse. He, however, associates **thahu** with the curse of ancestors alone and argues that a person curses by invoking the powers of the ancestors. This view does not agree with the Agikuyu beliefs because according to them, **thahu** results from an ancestor's curse only if that ancestor had pronounced the prohibition while he was alive. Hobley erroneously identifies the spirits of departed ancestors as the major causes of the **thahu** condition. The present study aims at identifying more causes of **thahu**, as well as indicating the implications.

Leakey (1903, 1233-1240), attempts to make a distinction between **thahu** and taboo. He asserts that when one is under the influence of **thahu** visible signs of wasting away begin to appear. Leakey further notes that **thahu** can be contacted through the acts and agency of some other person other than the victim. Leakey briefly analyses some causes of **thahu**. This study will analyse more causes and elaborate on their consequences.

Durkheim (1915, 300) points out that

"Taboo is the word used in polynesian language to designate
the institution of virtue of which certain things are withdrawn from common use. It is also an adjective expressing the distinctive characteristics of these kinds of things".

Durkheim prefers to use the expression interdictions instead of taboo but also notes that the word taboo is so customary that it would show an excess of purism to prohibit it systematically.

He strongly ascertains that every religion has interdictions and they play a considerable part in social control. Durkheim further points out that the interdictions of contact are the original taboos and they rest upon the principle that the profane should never touch the sacred.

Kenyatta (1938, 38-40) defines thahu as taboo, a defilement and equates it with mugiro. He analyses several taboos and purification ceremonies, as well. One such ceremony is that of settling a land boundary dispute whereby (p.39)

"Elders uttered curses against anyone who should cunningly or maliciously remove the boundary mark of his neighbour."

Kenyatta also gives an account of the ritual fire lighting ceremony in a new hut. These ceremonies are, however, just a few among the many which the researcher hopes to analyse in detail.

Gathigira (1942, 73-80) defines thahu as anything that harms the person who does it. He further notes that there are numerous types as well as causes of thahu among the Agikuyu but he does not list them nor discuss them. He emphasizes on the fact that there is no thahu which is beyond cleansing through the ndahikio ceremonies. Gathigira gives a list of thirty six objects and events that cause thahu without analysing them in detail. However, he clearly asserts that
in every ethnic group, there are certain actions which people abstain from doing. Such actions, he notes help in upholding morals and reducing crime in any society.

Gatheru (1964, 18-20) narrates a case whereby one gets contaminated with thahu due to contact with menstrual blood. He also gives an account of the ritual purification ceremony undergone to cleanse such a case of thahu. Gatheru analyses only one cause of thahu and one cleansing ceremony, hence the view expressed by the researcher that the field under this study has not been given adequate attention, especially on the religious perspective.

Githige (1978, 76-85) emphasizes on the fact that it is possible for one to contact thahu unknowingly from other people. One such cause of thahu is the action of coming into contact with a person who has thahu. He gives a distinction between thahu, mugiro and kirumi, showing how the three are related. Githige's work deserves praise since he has made an effort to dismiss erroneous views held by scholars like Hobley, Radin and Benson. The researcher, however, notes that although Githige's approach is religious he analyses thahu only in connection with the Mau Mau oaths which is his major objective of study. This study therefore, apart from giving a religious analysis of thahu, also gives a comparative outlook in view of its relation to the christian concept of sin.

The Editors of New Catholic Encyclopaedia, (1967, 14: 236-250), point out that the notion of sin indicates most emphatically a disruption of what is religiously sanctioned or required. The editors further note (p. 238);

"In the Old Testament, the words used for sin have generally
to do with human relations. The most commonly used root "Hatta" means to miss the mark, morally to be deceived, fall short of the goal. In the goal is a person and hence it is failing towards someone, a violation of the bond uniting persons to one another."

Sin is therefore a personal failing as regards God, a falling short of the mark God sets for us. On a more theological outlook sin indicates defiance towards God. It denotes a transgression, a violation of other people's rights.

The editors also assert that in the New Testament, sin indicates deviation from the good. Sin implies lawlessness and inquity. In this sense, the one who sins deflects his christian vocation and communion with God and submits to the devil's domination.

Rahner (1970, 1575-1590), indicates that sin is hated by the Lord of the covenant and so it's most definite expression is in idolatry forbidden in the first commandment of the decalogue and denounced by the prophets. He further states that sinful man offends against what is demanded by his own and his neighbours being. He views sin as a refusal to commit one self in a history of salvation rather than a transgression of the law. He further explains that sin is not only setting up strange gods against the true God but also injustice, harshness, exploitation of his fellows as already put in the Old and New Testaments.

According to Encyclopedia Britanica (1973, 20: 556), sin is the name given to moral evil when considered from the religious point of view. The encyclopedia further states that the ancient Greeks viewed sin as a failure on the part of man to achieve his true self
expression and was mainly attributed to arrogance. Christianity views sin as deliberate violation of the will of God caused by man's pride, self-centredness and disobedience. The editors further state that theologians divide sin into actual and original. Actual sin referring to evil acts of thought, word or deed in ordinary usage. The latter refers to the vitiated condition in which man finds himself at birth, being a member of the sinful human race. The editors quote Genesis Chapter three to explain in detail the meaning of original sin where it is depicted as an inherited consequence of the first human sin.

Augustine (1958) strongly holds that the first parents were created in such a way that had they not sinned, they would not have experienced death. Nevertheless, these first sinners were so punished that all their descendants were to be subject to the same penalty of death.

Augustine further elaborates (1958, 269)

"Parent and offspring are identical in having the same human nature. Hence when the first couple were punished by the judgement of God, the whole human race which was to become Adam's posterity through the first woman was present in the first man".

Augustine further asserts that human nature is not as it was originally created but as it became after the first parents' sin and punishment. Man has by nature an immortal soul but man who is body as well as soul is capable of death. The death of the body occurs when the soul departs, while the death of the soul occurs when God leaves the soul. The soul therefore, may be dead long before the body dies and such is the condition of the soul of the wicked.

Augustine strongly holds that even baptismal regeneration does
not remove from us the evil of bodily death. It remains as an evil. The body of the first man was corrupted by his spiritual corruption, the body to his shame, becoming insubordinate to his soul.

Augustine (1958, 272) suggests that the mechanism for the transmission of original sin can be explained by stating that the seed of man's natural propagation which was corrupted by sin produced man of that same nature, the slave of death and the object of condemnation.

Augustine's doctrine of the unity of history is drawn from the conclusion that mankind is by nature one. Further, their unity of origin must indicate to them the duty of a concord of heart. Original sin brings the shattering of this unity and this concord, yet even so the fundamental division of the human race is a simple one. Men differ in nationality, language, race and tradition, but basically they are either good or bad and this division cuts across all the other differences and makes of fallen man not many communities but two, each of which has its own end and desire.

The fall of man was wrought by his free will and not by any evil in his nature. Augustine emphasizes that sin is insinuating, it tortures and is productive of circular motions. The temptation of man was to live according to himself to be his own good, to be as God. Man decided to become self-willed and therefore disobedient.

Haring (1967, 1: 339-345), points out that the incarnation of Christ is the first step made by God, gravely offended by sin towards the reconciliation of man the sinner. He further notes that the nature of sin in all its malice can be understood only in the light of the history of salvation which strongly holds the sanctity of God and the majesty
of his love. Haring further indicates that there are three primary characteristics of sin according to St. John (1 Jn 3: 4, 5:17). These portray sin as being first the loss of salvation and loss of God. Secondly, sin as opposition to the divine will as expressed in the law. Thirdly, sin as the violation of justice, owing to God, guilty. Haring concludes by asserting that sin in the Biblical sense is first the individual evil act, the transgression.

O'Connel (1967, 67-70), describes man as a moral being who is responsible and accountable and hence obligated. He further argues that sin is a religious reality, sin makes no sense apart from the presence of God and our obligation to him. Sin is our recurring refusal to accept the claims of the God of revelation upon ourselves. He concludes by asserting that sinful man ends up in a fractured, alienated state.

Harvey (1964, 220-223), defines actual sin as any act which includes thoughts as well as deeds done consciously and a deliberate violation of God's will as expressed in the law. He further notes that where there is no repentance, guilt is regarded as properly imputed to all actual sins. He goes on to define original sin as the universal and hereditary sinfulness of man since the fall of Adam from which man inherits both sin and guilt. Harvey concludes by stating the seven deadly sins which are pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth.

Macquarrie (1967, 318), strongly holds that the field where sin is committed is clearly the set of relations between man and man. He further quotes Matthew 25:44 and 1 John 4:20 as two possible fields of sinful action and consequently also as the theological and moral
connotations of sin. He further notes that our neighbour is as it were the mask behind which God hides and to fail in human relations is to fail God.

The editor further comments that in such important old Testament accounts of sin as Job: 13 and Psalms: 15, where sin is committed is clearly the set of relations between man and man. He finally emphasizes on the moral significance of sin and points out that sin being essentially a religious term would hardly be used seriously by someone who did not believe in God.

Menninger (1973, 18-22) defines sin as a transgression against the law of God, disobedience of the divine will, moral failure. He further asserts (p. 19):

"Sin is the failure to realize in conduct and character at least as fully as possible under existing circumstances, failure to do as one ought to towards one's fellow man".

The author goes on to demonstrate that the wrongness of a sinful act lies both in its non-conformity, its departure from the accepted, appropriate way of behaviour and in an implicitly aggressive quality, a ruthlessness. He in addition notes that the worst part of sin is the hurting breaking away from God and from the rest of humanity. In other words, a partial alienation or an act of rebellion. He finally concludes by noting that sin in Christian theology has been conceived as rebellion, estrangement or isolation and as error in performance.

Diaz, (1986, 2-5) strongly exalts Pope John Paul II's teachings that salvation means above all liberation from evil and in particular liberation from sin. The Pope further indicates as in Diaz (1986, 2),
"Sin is the principal and fundamental evil because it contains the rejection of God's will of the truth and holiness of God, of his fatherly goodness, as they are already revealed in the work of creation and above all the creation of the rational and free beings who are made in the image and likeness of the creator."

In the above cited article, sin is depicted as the obscure reality diffused abroad in the world created by God, it lies at the root of all evil in man and in all that is created. The Pope further explains that sin involves the deep deformation of creation. The mystery of redemption is joined in its very root in the reality of man's sin. In conclusion, the Pope clearly states that the history of salvation presupposes the fact of the existence of sin in the history of humanity created by God.

As a concluding remark on the concept of sin, it can be noted that, from a theological perspective, sin is regarded principally as an obstruction to purity. The sense of guilt and rebellion is emphasized. Throughout the scriptures, sin is depicted as the element in man that puts him at enmity with God. Sin is therefore, first and foremost an offence against God and against one's neighbour. According to Agikuyu beliefs on the other hand, thahu implies more emphatically an offence against other people in society. One is expected to live in harmony with these people. Hence by disrupting that order, the offender, acts against the supreme Being's wish.
CHAPTER TWO:

THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THAHU AND THE
PURIFICATION CEREMONIES

2.1 The relationship between Thahu, Mugiro and Kirumi

The concept of thahu as it applies to Agikuyu religious beliefs is closely related but not synonymous to mugiro and kirumi in terms of their causes and effects. This chapter analyses certain definitions of thahu as given by various respondents and scholars and attempts to formulate a more meaningful way of defining thahu rendering it different from mugiro and kirumi. It analyses as well, the major events, objects and actions that cause thahu and the major purification ceremonies administered to cleanse the victims of thahu.

Kahungura (O.L. 8th January 1987) explained that thahu is derived from guthaaha, a verb used to describe the deteriorating condition in one's health and wealth. He defined mugiro as that which is forbidden, feared, not allowed not normal and extra-ordinary. In this definition the unpleasant appearance and the lack of progress in one who has thahu and also the forbidding factor in mugiro are stressed.

Chege (O.L. 17th December 1986) defines thahu as, "something unusual, out of the ordinary, that which is forbidden not to be done". This definition implies that anything which was found to be unusual was regarded as thahu. The definition seems to be rather vague and ambiguous since unusual happenings in daily life are numerous and are not necessarily thahu. The definition also fails to give the moral significance of thahu and the fact of rebelling against the set norms or prohibitions.
Rugiri (O.I. 16th January, 1987), on the other hand, equates thahu with mugiro which he further defines as that which is forbidden. This definition is erroneous since thahu is the result of one's actions against that which is forbidden mugiro. The respondent further defined kirumi as:

"Spoken words of abuse, intended to cause bad luck, uttered by an older person forbidding certain types of food, manners and intermarriage with certain clans or the sale of land outside that family after his death".

Thahu, mugiro and kirumi are in one way or the other related in terms of their causes and effects. Mugiro primarily means a prohibition as stated by Benson, (1964: 112) in his dictionary which further defines mugiro as:

"a ban, a ritual prohibition, defilement, taboo, something forbidden, under threat of defilement".

In everyday usage, mugiro refers to a ban or a prohibition directed to a specific object or act which the majority in the society are not supposed to have or to do. Used in this context, mugiro implies a rule set for members in the society. When one breaks such a rule, several consequences may follow, for example, Karauni, (O.I. 17th January 1987) notes, one may fall sick or die, his animals may die and his family may also be affected. Hence, the view that mugiro itself cannot be equated with a defilement but the violation of a mugiro can cause a defilement.

The word kirumi is derived from the verb "ruma" which literally means to abuse. Benson, (1964: 409) defines this word as: a ban imposed by an ancestor.

"a ban imposed by an ancestor upon his descendants".
While Njeri (O.I. 10th January 1987) explained that as the Agikuyu say, "gutiga kirumi" which literally means to "leave a curse" implies to announce a prohibition which becomes a curse after the death of the announcer. Mugiro is therefore broader because as a rule it encompasses many people who may not necessarily have any blood relationship with each other. But Chege (O.I. 5th December 1986) gave the following example to elaborate the meaning of a curse:

"If the head of a family prohibits his family members from eating the fruits of a particular tree, the prohibition becomes a kind of mugiro (a ban) to his family members. But if the announcer happens to die before recalling that prohibition, that is before blessing the tree whose fruits he had banned, the prohibition lasts for ever and acquires the meaning of a curse."

This is why the Agikuyu had a common practice of requesting a dying person to recall the prohibitions he had announced during his lifetime. It was a widely practiced behaviour for elders to utter curses during their old age. The curses came mostly as a result of children and relatives ignoring, maltreating or neglecting the aged. The need to request an elder to recall the curses, reveals the power of the spoken words in both Mugiro and Kirumi whose effects survived the speaker unless recalled.

One's action against a prohibition, whether the prohibition is a mugiro or a kirumi, the act renders the doer into a thahu condition. This means that, the one who eats the fruits from a tree which has been banned by an elder, and the one who eats food from a pot which broke while the food was being mashed, both contact thahu. The two offenders become morally and ritually impure. Hence, thahu can be said to be the consequences of an act performed in contravention
of a mugiro or a Kirumi. In both cases, the acting against (contrary) to the set norms is emphasized. The offender also rebells against what has been set, and hence offends other members of society with whom he ought to have good relationships. This alienates the offender from fellow human beings and the Supreme being (God). Therefore once a person contacted thahu, he was faced with the danger of numerous misfortunes. In most cases, the victim withered away in illness or his livestock died, his crops withered and generally his welfare deteriorated.

As a concluding remark on this sub-section, it should be pointed out that thahu, disastrously affects the person who gets it. Thahu particularly ruins the one who acts contrary to a prohibition and keeps it secret. On the other hand, when one confesses that he has contravened against a prohibition, he is purified and his thahu cleansed immediately. It should be further noted that although thahu, mugiro and kirumi are related, regarding the three terms as synonymous is a misconception. It is indeed faulty to equate thahu with mugiro (taboo) in any analysis of the concepts.

2.2 The major causes of Thahu

The causes of thahu are many and cannot be adequately dealt with here. However, for the purposes of this study, the major ones will be analysed in detail. Among the events, actions, and objects that caused thahu, the following will be discussed in this section.

Spilling of human blood; thahu caused by a human being's death; contact with menstrual blood; incest and other sexual perversions; accidental causes of thahu; thahu caused by a third party. In addition
the second birth ceremony which is referred to in this study will be briefly discussed towards the end of this section.

Almost all contact with human blood was a cause of thahu. According to Durkheim (1915) human blood was regarded as a sacred liquid serving for pious uses only. For example, the blood which flowed during the initiation had a religious virtue. The blood united the initiate with the ancestors who were believed to be resting in the ground. The blood also united the initiate with the soil which was significantly held as the source of life. Among the Agikuyu, human blood signified a strong bond of brotherhood. Human blood had a holy connotation as sacred and essential for survival. If one spilt blood from a relative, (mundu wa rurira), both the offender and the offended contacted thahu. As expressed by Gathaci (O.I. 4th December 1986), whenever any two people were engaged in a fight, and one spilt the other's blood, both of them contacted thahu. The case whereby one spilt a relative's blood was, however, more serious than spilling a stranger's blood. The former case of thahu called for immediate purification.

If at any one time, the herdsboys fought and spilt blood from one another, they contacted thahu, and so did the livestock. The herdsboys' blood contaminated the entire herd. The researcher notes that this prohibition could have been introduced with an aim of disciplining the herdsboys. Since the herds boys spent long hours in the grazing fields daily, and they were always unsupervised, they could have always injured one another in the absence of such regulations. On the other hand, the prohibition could have been based on the fact that blood is viewed as a source of life, a gift from the
creator, and hence it ought not to be spilt carelessly or maliciously. However, although contact with human blood caused innumerable cases of thahu, a midwife never got contaminated with thahu. Probably because her reason for having contact with the patient's blood was a just one, aimed at saving a life.

The death of a human being caused thahu to most of the people who had an intimate relationship with the deceased. The thahu similarly affected all those who had physical contact with the corpse in connection to its disposal. The following examples illustrate this cause of thahu; Njeri (O.I. 9th January 1987) pointed out that, If a woman had a miscarriage or gave birth to a still-born child, she acquired thahu due to contact with the dead foetus. This form of thahu was confined to the woman alone but it was contagious. However, the thahu could only be transferred by a sexual act and not by any other human contact. This made it necessary to undergo purification prior to any sexual contact.

On the same note, the respondent further noted that a woman who bore a healthy and normal child, but the child happened to die before the second birth ceremony took place, contacted a serious case of thahu. The mother contacted the thahu because prior to the second birth ceremony, a child was identified with the mother alone. This condition of thahu was confined to the mother alone and could not affect any one else not even the husband unless they had sexual relationship prior to purification. Karauni (O.I. 29th January 1987) also asserted that, the death of a child who had undergone the second birth ceremony and had therefore ceased to be identified with the mother alone, caused thahu to both parents and to all the deceased's brothers and sisters.
This case of thahu also affected the deceased's brothers and sisters who were grown up and initiated but were unmarried and, therefore, shared the same hut with the deceased. In other words the death of a child who had undergone the second birth ceremony caused thahu to all the members of the dead child's nuclear family.

Gatoro (O.I. 6th January 1987) clearly remarked that the death of a married woman caused thahu to her husband and to all her unmarried children. But the thahu condition never spread to affect the deceased's co-wives and their children. On the other hand, the death of a married man caused thahu to his parents, all his wives and children and all of them required purification.

In addition, Njeri (O.I. 10th January 1987) pointed out that a human being's death caused thahu to all those who took part in the disposal of the corpse. This included even those who had no blood relationship with the deceased as long as they had a physical contact with the body. We would like to point out that this could have been one of the reasons why the Agikuyu avoided the disposal of a dead body. Instead they built a hut at the village edge and made a death-bed for one who was about to die. From that hut the corpse would be devoured by wild animals mostly hyenas. However, any rich man had to be buried.

Contact with menstrual blood is yet another major cause of thahu as elaborated in the following examples; Karauni (O.I. 17th January 1987) pointed out that if a man shared a bed with his wife overnight, and in the morning found out that her menstrual flow had commenced during the night, the couple contacted thahu and had to be purified immediately. Failure to be cleansed soon, would cause death within a short time. Probably, such a prohibition was intended
to make women more careful and hygienic in the way they handled themselves during their menstrual period.

However, to underscore another possibility of menstrual blood causing thahu, Wanjiku (O.I. 10th January 1987) had this to say:

"When a woman became impure due to contact with the menstrual blood of a cowife, or any other married woman, or any other girl apart from her own daughter, both would acquire thahu and had to be purified".

In the same way, if two unmarried girls belonging to different initiation guilds shared a bed and during the night, one of them started her menstrual flow, both became afflicted with a serious form of thahu and had to be equally purified. But if the two girls belonged to the same initiation guild, their thahu would be rather mild and would not require immediate purification. But this need was nevertheless provided for by the traditional practice which required girls to undergo a general purification ceremony before marriage, to cater for any possible defilement during their maidenhood.

A further example of thahu caused by contact with menstrual blood was given by Machara, (O.I. 12th January 1987). He said:

"When a man who still belonged to the warrior class shared a bed overnight with a girl in the restricted form of intercourse known as "nguiko" and the girl happened to start her menses and so contaminated the man, he alone acquired thahu and had to be purified".

A brief description of the above mentioned form of restricted intercourse nguiko is necessary at this point. It mainly involved the lovers fondling and caressing one another. The main aim of this relationship was the warmth of the breast but not a full experience
of sexual intercourse. For further details on nguiko, see also Kenyatta (1938, 157-160).

The rule of incest, along with other forms of sexual perversion were strictly observed by the Agikuyu. To clarify this point, Chege (O.I. 17th December 1986) strongly remarked that engaging in sexual intercourse with animals and homosexual relationships caused serious cases of thahu which called for immediate purification to ensure survival. However, as remarked by most respondents, extreme sexual perversions like homosexuality and having sexual relationships with animals was a very rare occurrence.

Nevertheless, incest was an occasional threat to the well being of the community. This is why Njeri, (O.I. 23rd December 1986) in her old age remarks bitterly that sexual relationships among blood relatives, whether close or distant caused lethal cases of thahu. If such cases were not immediately dealt with, the victims risked death. The horror of a parent having sexual relationship with either of the children or vice-versa has been condemned even by modern psychologists. Freud (1913) for example, discusses such a relationship under the oedipus complex.

Rape, though a rare phenomenon, was mentioned by several respondents as being a cause of thahu. One of them, Chege (O.I. 5th December 1986) reckoned that rape was a result of sheer lust. The offence caused a type of thahu. But this cause of thahu, just like menstrual contamination was probably a measure, intended to strengthen the people's moral uprightness. However, since polygamy was a widespread practice, one's sexual needs were almost always catered for except for those who just wanted to deviate. For the young people, the restricted form of intercourse, nguiko, ensured a healthy sexual development, see Kenyatta (1938).
The Agikuyu had numerous unnatural or accidental causes of thahu, which one had little or no control over. In other words, one could easily contact thahu even unwillingly through these causes. The following examples will elaborate further. Ruhwa (O.I. 21st December 1986) stated: If a woman gave birth to twins as her first borns, or her baby was born feet first, or her baby fell on the ground at birth, or any other similar unnatural events occurred during delivery, the woman contacted thahu.

Njeri (O.I. 23rd December 1986) notes that the Agikuyu, like many other ethnic groups considered the birth of twins as an unusual happening. Particularly when the twins were first borns, they sympathized with the young mother who had to bring up two babies together. In such a case, the midwife with her assistants would secretly suffocate one child (mostly the one who looked weaker) and inform the mother that she bore only one child. On the other hand, a baby falling on the ground at birth portrayed carelessness from the assistants and mismanagement from the midwife. If a woman contacted any of the above cited cases of thahu, her husband was faced with a great risk of contacting the thahu if he had a sexual relationship with her prior to purification.

On the same note, according to Njeri (O.I. 23rd December 1986) if a wife accidentally touched her husband's penis, the action caused thahu. This thahu was a source of potential danger to both the woman and her husband. It could make matters worse if the couple had sexual intercourse prior to cleaning. This measure could have resulted from the belief that the reproductive organs were a sacred weapon, a divine gift which deserved respect. However, most of the elders wouldn't discuss any reasons for such a cause of thahu. According to Kenyatta
male sexual organs were believed to carry the seeds of life which were sacred and God given.

Yet another accidental cause of thahu, if one broke a pot while mashing food, and her family members partook of that food, they all contacted thahu which could only be cleansed through a special kind of ritual known as ndahikio. Such a prohibition could have been reinforced with an aim of ensuring carefulness in handling pots. At the same time, breaking a pot in one's homestead caused thahu to the entire homestead. Similarly, when a wife was so much annoyed by her husband or a co-wife, she could break a pot as an expression of her anger. The action caused thahu to the entire homestead.

Thahu could also be caused by a third party as elaborated by the following examples; Gatoro (O.I. 6th January 1986) recalled that if a hyena defecated within a homestead courtyard or at the very entrance to the homestead, this caused thahu to all the inhabitants of that homestead. Furthermore, if a jackal barked in or near the homestead, this caused thahu to the homestead. Similarly, if a snake entered a hut and got killed inside, the action caused thahu to the entire homestead. The family head had to arrange for a purification ceremony immediately.

Yet another example of thahu caused by a third party is whereby an adult relieved himself within the confines of a homestead courtyard or a hut. This caused thahu to the inhabitants of that homestead but not to the person responsible. This cause of thahu, though it may seem unfair to the homestead's owner, implied that the owner had wronged the community in one way or the other.

It is necessary to discuss briefly the second birth ceremony which is referred to time and again in this study. The ceremony was
commonly referred to as "gucokia mwana ihu-ini ria nyina", which literally means to place the child back into the mother's womb. However, this expression was no more than a figure of speech, the significance of the ceremony was that the child was once more ceremoniously separated from its mother and the links that joined the two into one person were severed forever.

In short this ceremony as narrated by Ruhwa (O.I. 21st December 1986) involved the child's father slaughtering a fat ram assisted by other invited elders. After cutting up the meat, they also cut two raw hide strips (ngwaro) which they put aside together with the intestines and the stomach contents. Later on the rest of the meat was roasted and some joints boiled. Once the meat was ready some pieces were cut, placed on a half-calabash (kaihuri) and taken to the mother and child in the mother's hut. These two had to be the first ones to taste the meat followed by the midwife and later on the rest of the people could eat.

After eating, the midwife accompanied by some women went into the mother's hut and took with them the intestines, that had earlier been put aside. They made the mother to sit down with her legs apart and the child sat between her legs. The intestines were wound round the mother and the child symbolizing that the two were still one person. The midwife then using a splinter of muthakwa wood attempted to cut the intestines three times. On the fourth attempt she cut the intestines, as she called out the name of the child. At this juncture all the women ullulated cheering the birth of a child. The child was later washed with cold water and made to cry as a sign of being alive. Later the women took the two rawhide stripes and placed them on the "baby's" chest from the right shoulder to
the left armpit.

The following morning, the mother took the child to the fields to collect some foodstuffs just like she had done when the child was born. They returned home with some sweet potatoes, yams and arrowroots. That evening the mother cooked the food and invited her husband to share the meal with the family in the evening. After eating, the father sprinkled the child with the stomach contents and later than night he had ceremonial sex with his wife (the mother) to conclude the ceremony.

All the causes of thahu which have so far been discussed, mainly resulted from one's actions against a prohibition (mugiro). Most of these prohibitions were aimed at enhancing social harmony and moral uprightness. They gave the people a sense of direction by clearly stating what is wrong and what is right. These causes of thahu make it clear that thahu was more emphatically an offence against one's fellow man. Whereas sin is more of an offence against God and fellow man. It is clear that in traditional beliefs, the Supreme Being was viewed as the sole planner of social life. Hence, disrupting the social harmony by offending one's neighbour, directly offended the Supreme Being. This is in line with Durkheim's (1915) concept of taboo as a means of social control. After contravening a taboo one becomes profane until after purification.

2:3 The Purification Ceremonies

One of the most common and most widely used purification ceremony was ndahikio. It is derived from the verb gutahika which literally means to vomit or to cause to vomit out the thahu. The ndahikio ceremony varied considerably depending on the nature of the thahu being cleansed. Njeri (O.I. 23rd December 1986) gave a
detailed account of a ndahikio which she described as being more or less general due to the fact that it could be used to cleanse more than one case of thahu.

The respondent further noted that this type of ceremony always had to be carried out by a diviner–doctor. After being invited, the diviner–doctor arrived at the home of the person being purified accompanied by his assistant who carried his bag of paraphernalia (miano). The diviner–doctor brought with him some mikengeria (a type of creeping plant with small soft leaves) vines tied into two bunches. A virgin girl who had gone through the second birth ceremony was sent to the river to fetch some water in two calabashes. Two elders who had been invited slaughtered a ram or an ewe and put aside some of the blood on a banana leaf, together with some of the stomach contents. The diviner–doctor later mixed the blood, water, the stomach contents and some medicinal herbs into a half-calabash.

The one being cleansed was then made to sit on a stool in front of the diviner–doctor. The diviner–doctor dipped the two bunches of vines into the mixture in the half-calabash and placed them on the patient's lips who in turn spat out. This action was repeated several times with the diviner–doctor uttering the following words,

"vomit out all your mathahu, those you know and those you may have forgotten."

Later the diviner–doctor would place the two bunches of leaves at the patient's feet and lift them up to the head saying,

"I give you back your soul, I make you upright."

Afterwards the diviner–doctor ordered his assistant to carry the rest of the meat wrapped with the skin to eat it elsewhere.

Karauni (O.I. 17th January 1987) gave a second type of ndahikio
purification ceremony which was used to cleanse thahu caused by contact with a dead body. This form of ndahikio ceremony was performed to cleanse all the men who touched a dead body in connection with its burial or disposal. A virgin ewe, a virgin she-goat or a young ram was taken out into a bush by a diviner-doctor who was going to perform the ceremony accompanied by those who were to be purified and a few council elders. The elders slaughtered the animal, skinned and cut it up. They put aside the left fore-foot with the skin on, the second chamber of the stomach, the dorsal sac of rumen and the undigested stomach contents (taatha) contained in it and the third chamber of the stomach. The diviner-doctor took these items and together with those being cleansed made their way to the nearest stream. The diviner-doctor collected at least one leafy stem from each of the following nine plants, mucatha, uruti, coco, mahoroha, muraria, mutei, mukengeria, mucingiri, inagu, muthakwa and mukeu. He also collected roots of the creepers called muriira and kanyanja.

On arrival at the stream, the diviner-doctor dug a small shallow basin about ten feet away from the river bank. He lined the basin with banana leaves and using another banana leaf he drew water from the river to fill the basin. The diviner-doctor later emptied the stomach contents from the second chamber of stomach into the basin and gave the empty stomach to those being purified to cut strips, make a hole in each strip and slip one on to their right wrists.

Meanwhile the diviner-doctor took from his bag little gourd bottles containing the five medicinal powders, uumu, ng’ondu, ruthuko, mucanjamuka and kinoria. He put a little of each medicine into the water and stirred the mixture well. This done, he asked those who
were to be purified to sit round the basin in a semi-circle in order of seniority with the eldest one on the right hand side. They sat with their backs turned towards the direction of the homestead where they handled the corpse, i.e. ("hutatira mucii").

The diviner-doctor then took the foot and the third chamber of the stomach from the slaughtered animal and holding the foot in his right hand and the stomach chamber in his left, passed them round the seated patients, once clockwise and once anti-clockwise (guthiurura). He then dipped the foot and the chamber into the mixture in the basin and placed them on the lips of each patient saying,

"I cause you to vomit out the death", (ndagutahikia gikuu), as the patients spat in turn. The diviner-doctor repeated this process on all the patients and on completion, he threw the foot and the third chamber of the stomach over his shoulders saying,

"I throw away the uncleanness caused by death. - (nindate thahu wa gikuu)."

This done, the patients turned to face the homestead where they had touched the corpse and as they did so, the diviner-doctor tied the leafy twigs into two even bundles. Afterwards, he proceeded with the clockwise and anti-clockwise rounds around the patients. He then dipped the leafy bundles into the mixture in the basin and wiped each patient downwards twice and upwards twice. Finally he made the patients lick some ira powder (a medicinal powder which looks like chalk and was extracted from the ground like clay and salt), from his right thumb, he also smeared some on the bridges of their noses, Adam's apples, chests, navels, the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet. The ira powder signified purity and hence symbolize the purifying of the patients.
The patients were now cleansed. The diviner-doctor untied the bundles of twigs and scattered them, drained the basin and threw away the banana leaves. The cleansed patients returned straight to their homes while the diviner-doctor went back to the bush where the animal had been slaughtered to share the roasted meat with the elders.

Chege (O.I. 5th December 1986) gave an account of the following purification ceremony which was undertaken to cleanse the person who had spilt a relative's blood during a fight. The offender, had to obtain a small immature goat or sheep then made arrangements with the diviner-doctor and some senior status' council elders to fix a day for the ceremony.

On the appointed day, the animal was taken to a bush and slaughtered by the elders. As they pierced the animal to draw its blood, they caught some of it into a muthakwa leaf and put it aside. When they cut the animal up they removed the dorsal sac of the rumen which they cut up at once into fourteen strips each pierced with a small hole. They removed a little of the stomach contents and put them aside on a muthakwa leaf.

Next, the elders cut a piece of muthakwa wood to represent the weapon which had been used to draw blood from the injured person. One end of this muthakwa wood was smeared with some of the blood that had been put aside. The offender was then given this bit of wood with which he made attempts to hit the offended without actually doing so. As he did this, the senior elders would shout at him saying: "Hey you! you might injure your kinsman".

Afterwards the elders took the symbolic weapon and smeared it with some stomach contents to rub off the animal's blood. This
symbolic weapon was then rubbed with oil and thrown far away into the bush.

Later, both the offender and the offended had seven of the fourteen strips that had been cut from the animal's stomach chambers put on their fingers and toes with at least one on each arm and each foot. The elders then took the remaining blood on the muthakwa leaf and with it anointed the two patients on their foreheads, on top of each shoulder, on the navels, palms and ankles. After that, the two patients were rubbed with some raw fat on all the parts previously smeared with blood. This action symbolically cleansed away the blood.

A third purification ceremony being discussed in this study is the one which was administered to cleanse a woman who had accidentally touched her husband's penis with her hands. The ceremony was cited by many respondents but most elaborately by Njaga (O.L. 18th January 1987).

On realizing that such a thahu had been contacted the previous night, in the morning the husband sent for a diviner–doctor to cleanse both himself and his wife from this serious thahu. The husband provided a young ram to be slaughtered for the purification ceremony. The wife provided some castor oil from her oil bottle. Using this oil, the diviner–doctor mixed a paste with the magic powders of uumu, ng'ondu and kinoria. This paste was rubbed on the nose and forehead of the ram before being slaughtered.

The diviner–doctor then instructed the husband to sit outside the hut where addition the thahu had been incurred, with his wife on his left side and all the children who had been sleeping at the children's sleeping place in that hut when the thahu was incurred. The invited elders slaughtered the ram and with the instructions of
the diviner-doctor, they put aside the parts needed for the ceremony, which included the skin from the ram's penis, a strip of skin from the left foreleg, the right fore-foot, the second chamber of the stomach with its contents, some stomach contents from the main stomach and the intestines.

The diviner-doctor then dug a hole at the entrance to the woman's hut, lined it with banana leaves and poured into it the contents of the second chamber, and added the five medicinal powders. The diviner-doctor later placed the skin from the ram's penis on the second toe of the husband's right foot and the skin from the animal's foreleg on the hand with which the woman had touched her husband's penis.

The husband and wife later moved to sit on the woman's bed and while they were there, the wife pulled out the skin from the ram's penis out of the husband's toe. After this the couple sat outside the hut and together with all their children who had gone through the second birth ceremony, they underwent an ordinary ndahikio ceremony for general purification.

Njeri (O.I. 10th January 1987) gave an account of a purification ceremony which was carried out to cleanse both mother and child in a case where the child had been born out of a sexual relationship between blood relatives. Such a child usually grew weak, was always sickly and unhealthy. After the mother had confessed the wrongful act she had committed, a purification ceremony was arranged to cleanse the mother and the child. The male relative she had had sex with also had to be present.

On the appointed day, the elders slaughtered an ewe which had been provided by the lady's father. After cutting up the animal, from the large intestines, the elders made a fake penis. The man
who had committed the wrongful act with the lady in question, was then directed by the elders to make several attempts to place the fake penis between the lady's legs. As he did this, the elders shouted at him saying: "Hey you, you want to have sex with your own blood relative?"

The elders repeated this question several times as the man repeated the pretentious attempted act.

Afterwards, the lady and her child were sprinkled with a mixture of stomach contents and water which had been prepared by the elders. The child was also anointed with the oil obtained from that ewe's body. At the end of the ritual the rest of the meat was roasted and eaten by the participating elders. Certain unique types of purification ceremonies were administered through sexual act. The chief idea underlying purification by sexual intercourse was that by sexual contact, two people became more closely unified than by any other means. The contagion which was inherent in all forms of uncleanness was completely transferred from the affected person to the other party.

As elaborated by Wakang'u (O.I. 28th January 1987) a woman who gave birth to a child feet first or who had twins as her firstborns or gave birth to a child with six fingers or any other unnatural feature was required to have sexual intercourse with some other man other than her husband before she could resume normal relations with her husband.

The underlying idea was that the man called in to perform the act of purification could not be affected adversely by the uncleanness although it would pass to him by the act of sexual contact with the unclean woman. Having been passed to the stranger, the thahu was
neutralized whereas if the legal husband of the woman had sexual contact with her, the uncleanness would pass to him and it would become immediately active because he and his wife were legally one and the same person.

Most of the respondents had a similar narrative concerning the following ceremony used to cleanse a mother after a normal delivery. Muthoni (O.I. 6th December 1986) recalled that after a normal delivery the mother had to stay in seclusion for five days if the child was a boy or for four days if the child was a girl. Once the seclusion period was over, the purification ceremony was arranged and the major persons being cleansed were the mother, the child and the mid-wife. On the appointed day, all the women living in that homestead together with some invited neighbours joined hands in preparing food and gruel while one of them prepared fresh castor oil. The ceremony began early in the morning. The midwife had her head shaved by one of the elderly women. Later, the women who had been assisting the mother in her household duties during her seclusion period, swept the mother's hut very clean and collected all the rubbish including the leaves which had been spread on the ground at the time of birth and took all rubbish to the pit near the homestead's entrance. After this the mother had a bath and later washed her clothing, her sitting-stool and the skin sleeping mat from her bed.

At about mid-day when all preliminary preparations were over, the husband brought out a fat ram to be offered in the sacrifice known as "igongona ria muciairi" (the sacrifice for the one who has delivered). The husband had also invited some elders to assist him in slaughtering. The ram was held with its head facing the mother's hut and was
suffocated. It was then pierced to draw blood and the first blood was collected in a small half-guard (kaihuri) and was taken to the mother who dipped the first finger of her right hand into it and smeared the blood on the baby's lips. This act was performed so that ceremonially the baby for whom the sacrifice had been made was the first to partake of the slaughtered animal.

The slaughtered animal was then cut into pieces some of which were roasted and others boiled as directed by the elders. When the roast meat was ready, the father cut four pieces if the baby was a girl and five if it was a boy. These pieces of meat were placed in a half-calabash and sent to the mother's hut, who had to be the first to taste the meat. After she had tasted, the rest of the gathering proceeded to eat. All the elders who had partaken of this sacrificial meat, on returning to their homes slept in the men's hut and continued abstaining from sex until the baby's father informed them. The same abstainsion applied to the women who had been assisting the mother.

The following morning, the mother took the baby to the fields to collect some edibles (kumathithia mwana). With the baby securely covered under her cloak, the mother went either to a co-wife's field or a friend's but not to her own. On arrival, she first symbolically uprooted a handful of weeds in recognition of the fact that any woman who went to gather foodstuffs from the fields had to do some weeding prior to the gathering. Having done so, the mother dug up some sweet potatoes, arrow roots or yams and took them back home.

That evening, the mother cooked the foodstuffs she had collected and invited her husband to share the meal with the family in her hut. This was one of the rare occasions when the husband ate in the woman's hut. After the meal, the husband went back to his hut and had to
continue abstaining from sex. He could not have any sexual relationship with any woman or girl and the same case applied to all the men and women who had partaken of the sacrificial ram.

One month after the day of shaving, the husband and wife performed the concluding ceremony known as the sacrifice for ending the uncleanness of birth ("igongona ria gutinia miruru ya mwana"). This ceremony required the husband to sleep in the wife's hut (the recently delivered mother) and make love with her twice that night. In the morning the wife gave him water in a half-calabash with which he ceremoniously washed his face, hands, wrists and ankles. Having done so, the husband informed the elders that the ceremony had been duly completed so that they could resume their normal sex lives. The wife likewise informed her former attendants thus allowing them to resume normal sex lives.

This last part of the ceremony was aimed at cleansing the child who was unclean due to his contact with the birth blood. The mother also became unclean due to contact with her unclean child. This uncleanness was removed by means of ritual sex between the mother and the child's legal father. The father in this case contacted the thahu and once it was transferred to him it became neutralized and the child and mother were freed from it.

The Agikuyu also had a purification ceremony to cleanse an entire homestead after it encountered numerous disasters like illness, loss of livestock or poor crop yields. This ceremony commonly known as "kuohorwo kwa mucii" was given in detail by Warutere (O.I. 20th January 1987);

On arrival at the home being purified, the diviner-doctor found some council elders having already slaughtered a goat for the ceremony.
The diviner–doctor took the intestines and spread them out round the family members being cleansed.

"The diviner–doctor then cut some raw–hide ringlets (ngwaro) and placed two ringlets on both wrists of each family member".

Afterwards the family shared all the roast meat which could not be left overnight. The diviner–doctor later sprinkled the entire homestead with stomach contents. The fat which had been obtained from the goat was put away safely and after three days all the family members went to the river, bathed and threw away the rawhide ringlets and on returning home all smeared themselves with the fat which had been obtained from the goat. All the leaves which had been used for slaughtering on and the roasting platforms and any other rubbish swept in the homestead compound was burnt up in a big fire to complete the ceremony.

Njoki (O.I. 25th January 1987) described the ceremony for cleansing an entire homestead and all its inhabitants. Once the family head had found it necessary to have his homestead cleansed due to the various disasters that the homestead might have encountered, he made arrangements with the diviner–doctor and fixed a day for the ceremony.

On the appointed day, very early in the morning, two children, a boy and a girl who had gone through the second birth ceremony, were sent to the river to draw water in two small gourd bottles. Later in the morning the diviner–doctor arrived and with the help of a few invited elders, slaughtered a ram for the ceremonial purposes.

After cutting up the animal, they put aside the upper chamber of the stomach unpunctured. Later this chamber of the stomach was given to the boy and girl and led by the diviner–doctor they took
the chamber round the homestead clockwise and then anti-clockwise
four times. After this the chamber was punctured and its contents
were poured into a basin dug at the eldest wife's hut's doorstep and
lined with banana leaves. The water which had been drawn in the
morning and some medicinal herbs were added into the mixture.

Starting with the man, the family head, followed by the first
wife and then other wives in order of seniority and their children,
all underwent a ndahikio ceremony. After the ndahikio, all those
present ate the roasted meat and later burnt up all bones, rubbish
and the roasting platform in a bonfire lit near the homestead's gate.

This action of burning rubbish symbolized the burning up of
all the evils which had been causing disasters to that family. That
night all the family members spent the night in the homestead and
no visitor would spend the night there. The same night, the husband
(family head) had ceremonial sex with the eldest wife thus completing
the ceremony.

The last but not the least of the purification ceremonies to
be analysed in this study is the one used to cleanse livestock -
commonly known as guthiurura mahu. As told by Chege, (O.J. 17th
December 1986) a one-coloured goat was selected and taken around
the livestock by a small boy who had gone through the second birth
ceremony, as instructed by council elders. Later the goat was
slaughtered and cut up and its stomach contents were sprinkled upon
the animals and around the animals' pen.

Afterwards, the elders who were participating in the ceremony roasted
the meat and shared it among themselves and took none of it home.

It should also be noted here that precautionary measures were
taken against thahu. For example, people could protect themselves
from acquiring thahu by placing some rawhide stripes on one another. Most respondents expressed the view that to a large extent thahu controlled people and assisted in upholding morals among the Agikuyu. This also made the Agikuyu God-fearing since offending a fellow human being implied offending God, the creator. The prohibitions whose violations caused thahu were set up by elders of long ago by casting votes, agreed upon by consensus and were passed from one generation to the other by oral traditions.

As a concluding remark on this chapter, the researcher notes that thahu acted as a basis for morality among the Agikuyu. To a great extent thahu controlled the behaviour of persons within the society. Most of the rules in society were defined in terms of thahu. Stressing on this point, Mugweru, (O.I. 15th January 1987) said, "It was normally said that the Agikuyu government was based on thahu. There was an extent to which the youth could not go in their approach to elders. Women too had to observe their relationship with men. Thahu created boundaries for all men, women and children. Anyone who over-stepped these boundaries acquired thahu and had to pay a fine to those he had wronged and then be cleansed by a diviner-doctor. More often than not, one wronged those who were senior to him."

To sum up this chapter, let us once again point out that thahu is the consequence of either a broken mugiro or kirumi. It's worth noting that thahu resulting from a broken mugiro could be purified. Whereas the effects of a curse could also be purified, the curse itself remained since it was said to be everlasting. Ruhwa (O.I. 21st December 1986) remarked, "There was no permanent cure for an established curse."
The researcher finds it worth noting that a cursed person could hardly be cleansed. However, one had a chance to reconcile with the elder before his death and that way one could be blessed and the curse called off. But after the death of the announcer, the curse was believed to last.

According to the conception of Durkheim (1915, 266-280) the purification rites played a double role, namely to prevent the defilement from spreading to others and also as a way of cleansing one who has already been defiled. The Agikuyu viewed the purification rites as a way of cleansing the individual who had defiled and therefore incorporating the individual and reinstating him/her as a member of the community. The purification ceremonies also gave one an opportunity to denounce one's thahu.

The raw-hide strips which were often used in purification ceremonies signified unification, a bond between formerly unfriendly sides. According to Kenyatta (1938) the stripes also guaranteed one protection against misfortunes. The raw-hide stripes also symbolized oneness as in the case of mother and child.
CHAPTER THREE

COMPARISON OF THAHU AND SIN

3.1 The Agikuyu sense of Responsibility and Duty, Hospitality and Generosity.

A good number of respondents, particularly Mugweru, (O.I. 15th January 1987) stated that among the Agikuyu, responsibility and duty were controlled by the system of division of labour according to sex. From the homesteads to the fields and to the tending of domestic animals, every sphere of activity was clearly and systematically defined. Each member of the family unit knew perfectly well which tasks to perform in the economic productivity and distribution of the family resources so as to ensure the material prosperity of the group.

When putting up a new hut, for example, as expressed by Njaga (O.I. 18th January 1987),

"The heavy work of cutting timber and putting up the framework fell on the men, cutting and carrying the grass for thatching and plastering the walls with clay or cow-dung was the work of women. Men built fences around homesteads, gardens and cattle pens."

The entire housework naturally fell within the sphere of women's activities. They cooked, brought water from the river, washed utensils and fetched firewood from the forests and bushes.

Njeri (O.I. 23rd December 1986) noted,

"When cultivating new fields, men cleared the bush and cut down the big trees and also broke the virgin soil with digging sticks or hoes. Women came behind them preparing the ground for sowing seeds. Planting was shared by both sexes. Weeding
Cutting drains, water furrows and pruning banana plants as well as making paths and bridges was the work of men. Harvesting was done chiefly by women. Tending cattle, sheep and goats, slaughtering and distributing the meat and preparing the hides was entirely the duty of men as expressed by Njaga (O.I. 18th January 1987). On the other hand, dressmaking, pottery and weaving baskets was the women's profession. Whereas woodcarving, smiths' work, bee-keeping and hunting were men's occupations. Women took the responsibility of grinding corn and millet for making gruel. They also pounded sugar-cane or rather crashed it to extract the juice which was used by men for making beer.

Mugweru (O.I. 15th January 1987) noted that hospitality as a virtue was widely practiced among the Agikuyu. To elaborate this point he gave the following example,

"If one received unexpected guests during a meal, the guests automatically had to share that meal though their shares had not been included while preparing the meal. One never asked for food neither was the question of giving food to a visitor who arrived when others were at table debatable".

To elaborate further on Agikuyu hospitality, the researcher notes that the Agikuyu have a saying, "Maitho nimo mahoyaga" literally meaning that it is one's eyes that beg for something. The implication is that one's presence is enough to guarantee one a share of whatever is being eaten or drunk. This underlines the people's hospitality.

Generosity was also widely practiced among the Agikuyu, our respondent, Wakang'u (O.I. 12th January 1987) was keen to add that it was a common practice to take supplies to travellers' camps. Guests...
and strangers were received with open arms and hearts as a gesture of generosity. The respondent further notes,

"If an important, honoured person like a muthamaki (ruler) happened to be on a journey and arrived in one's compound at nightfall, he would be received warmly and a goat slaughtered for him, to share with members of his caravan plus a lot of food and gruel. The guests would also be provided with accommodation."

The Agikuyu viewed guests as a blessing. It was only in the homes of witches or wizards that neither received nor appreciated guests and strangers for fear of revealing their cunning ways of maliciously bewitching others.

Though the Agikuyu prohibited and condemned stealing, a hungry traveller had the right to get into anybody's garden to pluck and eat sugar-cane or fruits without any fear. He would only be trespassing and stealing if he carried any of the foodstuffs away. Similarly during famine, the mother of a young child had the right to get into anyone's garden and pluck enough bananas to feed the child. However, the mother had no right to take the whole bunch of bananas away but was allowed to return every day and pluck enough bananas to feed her child. The Agikuyu prohibition against stealing applies to Durkheim's elaboration of customs as a dimension of social control.

3.2 Functions of Mugiro as a Basis for Morality among the Agikuyu

Let us start by reminding ourselves that the Agikuyu concept of thahu denotes above all, ceremonial uncleanness which may be contacted by certain defaults, some grave and some trivial, but always with a moral significance. The undesirable ritual status results from the failure to observe the rules of avoidance clearly expressed in
the prohibitions (migiro or taboos). A victim of thahu is faced with the danger of falling ill or probably dying unless he/she is cleansed by the appropriate ritual remedies, which in all serious cases require the services of a diviner-doctor.

Wachira (O.I. 14th January 1987) clearly expressed,

"The prohibitions (migiro) whose violations caused thahu were agreed upon by concesus by the council of elders who casted votes concerning the things not to be done. The set norms were later passed down orally from parents to their children and from one generation to the next. Thus all the members of the Agikuyu society were made aware of the prohibitions".

The formulation of these prohibitions is seen to have been done by a fair method of casting votes.

Chege, (O.I. 1986), pointed out that the Agikuyu had a code of law based mainly on general principles rather than a detailed code of law. The Agikuyu have a saying, "gutiri watho tiga kuigua uhoro wa mundu na mundu uria ungi", which literally means there is no law except listening to disputes). This implies or rather supports the idea that the Agikuyu had no detailed code of law apart from listening to and settling disputes among the various people. The respondent further noted that every judgement had to conform to the principles set by the council of elders. Any person who refused to obey the law was excommunicated. This does not mean that the Agikuyu were punitive, ruthless or unsympathetic towards the offenders rather it means that no individual could selfishly exercise his rights at the expense of the community.

Gatoro, (O.I. 6th January 1987) expressed this clearly when he said,

"The injunction not to steal was greatly obeyed and the Agikuyu
were particularly honest people even prior to the coming of the missionaries. Theft was punished by burning the thief to death or through compensation in minor cases. In case of homicide, the murderer was either killed or his kinsfolk gave a son to the wronged party for adoption".

This expresses the profound sense of morality which the Agikuyu had. Since jails and bribes were unknown, the means to control crimes was thahu which resulted mainly from one's contravention of prohibitions.

Focussing now on the functions of mugiro as a moral restraint among the Agikuyu, Warutere (O.I. 13th January 1987) notes, "Mugiro aligned itself with the common social good by imposing social restrictions affecting all the members of society. Mugiro clearly showed everyone the correct path to follow by marking out the pitfalls. Mugiro provided the people with clear explanations for any misfortunes encountered and enhanced a sense of relief in knowing the source of the trouble".

Mugiro also supported the existing structure and knitted society together, by setting up a code of behaviour. The prohibitions essentially dictated discipline and punished carelessness. Mugiro as well helped the Agikuyu society to control its members by creating a common feeling of responsibility among members. Indeed, mugiro gradually enabled the Agikuyu society to mould a system of moral code. It would have been difficult to organize the Agikuyu society without the aid of mugiro. Mugiro in this context implies restriction, the forbidden and can be equated to taboo.

The views expressed by Durkheim (1915) that the notion of values as being internal in a society and not being imposed is applicable
to the Agikuyu society. Convention is a social convenience which smooths difficulties in social relations and serve the official aspect of social life, which is constantly in danger of being disturbed by personal feelings and reactions. In every society, however small, each member has his own will, interests or values and these must be accommodated to the purpose of the whole or to the mutual interests of contracting parties.

Durkheim therefore conceptualizes prohibitions, or taboos or interdictions as one major dimension of social control. This applies to the Agikuyu whereby the prohibitions regulated individuals behaviour and enhanced social harmony and controlled morality as well.

3:3 Similarities and differences between the Israelites' Law and the Agikuyu prohibitions

The Agikuyu had little or no conception of sin in the Christian sense of the term. They instead had a moral code mainly in the form of migiro. Impurity was incurred not by transgression but through certain acts contrary to the migiro some of which seem to have been accidental, and inevitable in the ordinary course of life. The ideas connected with this Agikuyu sense of ceremonial uncleanness are similar to those cited in the Old Testament particularly in the book of Leviticus. According to this book, a breach of any of the ten commandments was regarded as sin. The basis for the Israelites' law was the Mosaic convenant at Sinai whose stipulations were considered to merit the death penalty. If we view sin as an objective quasi-physical thing, then we can conclude that whenever it is committed inadvertently, its consequences cannot be avoided and so it is not sharply distinguished from defilement or uncleanness.
In Leviticus (15:19 ff), the law is stated concerning the unclean status of women. In the Israelite community, a woman was regarded as unclean whenever she had a discharge of blood during her monthly period. She remained unclean for seven days. Anyone who touched her during this period or any object she touched became unclean for seven days. The chapter further states that when her menstrual flow ceased, she remained unclean for seven days. On the eighth day, she had to take two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest who made a sin offering and a holocaust on her behalf.

Similarly, the Agikuyu regarded as unclean, a woman during her menstrual period and everybody avoided contact with her. As we have already mentioned in our consideration of the causes of thahu, any contact with a woman in that state caused thahu even to her own husband and called for purification. The menstrual blood could as well contaminate a fellow woman who contacted it. Contact with menstrual blood would as well cause thahu to a girl's unmarried partner or lover.

The book of Leviticus also analyses sexual impurities concerning men. When a man had a discharge from his body, that discharge was unclean and so everything that he touched or had contact with was unclean. After the man suffering from the discharge was cured, he had to allow seven days for his purification. He had to wash his clothes and his body in running water. On the eighth day he had to take two turtledoves and two young pigeons and go before Yahweh at the tent of meeting's entrance and give them to the priest to offer a holocaust and a sin offering on his behalf. Leviticus chapter twelve states clearly the unclean status of a woman after bearing a child. One who delivered a male child remained unclean for seven days. On
the eighth day the child was circumcised. The woman then continued
to purify herself for thirty three days during which she could not
touch any hallowed thing nor come to the sanctuary. If she bore
a female child, she remained unclean for two weeks after which she
continued with her purification for sixty-six days.

The chapter further states that after the purification, whether
the child was a male or a female the law required the mother to take
to the priest a lamb one year old for a burnt offering and a young
pigeon or a turtledove for sin offering. The priest offered them before
the Lord and made atonement in order to cleanse her from the flow
of her blood.

Similarly, the Agikuyu regarded a woman as unclean after
delivery. As clearly expressed by Njeri (O.l. 10th January 1987),
after a normal delivery the mother had to remain in seclusion for
five days if she had given birth to a male child or for four days if
she had given birth to a female child. When the seclusion period
was over, the family head appointed a day for the purification
ceremony.

On the appointed purification day, early in the morning the
midwife who had delivered the mother, had her head shaved by one
of the women in the homestead, after which she proceeded to shave
the mother and the child. The ceremony's second step took place
at around mid-day when the child's father with the help of a few
invited elders slaughtered a ram in a sacrifice known as "igongona
ria muciairi" - the sacrifice for the mother who has delivered. The
ram's meat was then cut up and roasted and some joints boiled
according to the elders' instructions. When the meat was ready, it
was shared by all who were present but the mother and child were
the first to taste the meat. All the men and women who had partaken of this sacrificial meat had to abstain from sex until further notice from the child's parents who would inform them once the ceremony was complete.

The morning following the day of shaving saw the mother take her child to the fields to symbolically collect some food-stuffs. That evening the mother cooked the food-stuffs and the meal was shared by the entire family inside the mother's hut.

One month after the day of shaving, the final step of this purification ceremony took place. The husband and wife performed the sacrifice for ending the uncleanness of birth, - ("igongona ria gutinia miruru va mwana"). This sacrifice took place at night and required the husband to sleep in the wife's hut (i.e. the recently delivered mother) and have sex with her twice that night. In the morning the husband ceremoniously washed his hands and feet and left the wife's hut. Later the husband informed all the elders who had partaken of the sacrificial ram that they were now free to resume their normal sexual routines. Likewise the wife informed her attendants about the completion of the purification.

The book of Leviticus also states that the Israelites had to observe the law concerning clean and unclean animals. The clean ones to be eaten and the unclean ones not to be eaten. As stated in Leviticus chapter eleven, the clean animals which the Israelites were allowed to eat were those with a cloven hoof divided into two parts, and those that are ruminants. The chapter, however, makes it clear that the camel was to be held as unclean because though it is a ruminant, it does not have a cloven hoof. The same case applies to the hare. Concerning the animals living in water, the law allowed the Israelites
to eat those with fins and scales and to hold as unclean those without. Anyone who touched the carcass of an unclean animal remained unclean until evening.

According to Agikuyu beliefs, certain animals were regarded as unclean, and anyone who ate their flesh or touched their carcass remained unclean until he sought purification. Several elders quoted in chapter two of this study, named the hare as an unclean animal for the Agikuyu. All other animals which do not chew the cud and whose hooves are not parted were also viewed as unclean.

The law of Moses also required the Israelites to abstain from adultery as stated in Leviticus (20:10 ff). Anyone who lay carnally with his neighbour's wife, both the adulter and the adulteress were to be put to death. This punishment shows how seriously the crime was regarded.

For the Agikuyu, as expressed by Gathaci, (O.L 4th December 1986) adultery was a very rare crime. Since a man was allowed to marry as many wives as he could, then there was always someone to satisfy his sexual needs. On receiving an honoured guest, and in most cases an age-mate, the family head would appoint one of his wives to spend the nights with the guest in her own hut. This practise apart from expressing hospitality, had a deeper connotation aimed at varying the breeds of the children so that some would survive in case the family was bewitched. The practise was also aimed at getting children from a rich family or a family of rulers (athamaki).

Among the young people, fornication and adultery were minimised by the wide practice of nguiko, a restricted form of sexual play that involved fondling and cuddling without any actual penetration. This form of sexual play was allowed for all the young people and for the
newly married young men who were still in the warriors class. These details were given by Gathaci, (O.I. 4th December 1986).

For the Israelites, the law also forbade homosexuality and beastiality as stated in (Leviticus 18:10-26). According to the law, a male was forbidden from lying with another male as a female. This was an abomination. A man was also forbidden from lying with a beast and a woman from giving herself to a beast. The law also forbade sexual relationships among blood relatives.

The Agikuyu also had prohibitions against homosexuality and beastiality and incest Ruhwa, (O.I. 21st December 1986) clearly expressed that engaging in sexual intercourse with animals and homosexual relationships caused serious cases of thahu which required immediate purification to ensure survival. The respondent, however remarked that such offences were very rare. The researcher notes that most of the respondents had never witnessed or heard about offenders who practised beastiality or homosexuality as they expressed during the oral Interviews. However, Chege (O.I. 17th December 1986) and Ruhwa (O.I. 21st December 1986) had heard about such offences when they were small boys.

Macharia (O.I. 12th January 1987) further stated,

"If a man deliberately had a sheep or goat suck his sexual organs for pleasure, such a man acquired a serious case of thahu and needed to seek purification soon and the animal victim killed".

The respondent further stated that any sexual relationships between blood relatives, whether distant or close ones, caused serious cases of thahu and the victims were faced with the danger of dying unless cleansed immediately.
As mentioned in the preceding chapter, contravention of a *mugiro*, (prohibition or taboo) is seen in this study to be the major cause of *thahu*. As a concluding remark on this section it should be noted that *thahu* renders a person unclean, putting him in a state of ritual badness in which the victim is exposed to all kinds of mundane and supra-mundane evils. *Thahu* also renders the victim into a state of moral impurity in the same way that sin does.

3:4 The Nature of Reality of Sin and *Thahu*

Palazzini, (1964: 190-195) expresses three different ways of regarding sin. These are magical, ethical and religious (p. 193) elaborates, Magical eliminates sin, ethics rehabilitates the sinner and religion placates God.

The author further remarks that in the old Testament, sin is attributed to division and enemity not only among individuals but also between the various ethnic groups and peoples. Palazzini quotes St. Paul where he says (193),

"Sin introduces an element of disorder and disintegration into the world subjecting creation to vanity, sowing enemity between heaven and earth, between Jew and Gentile whom Christ joins together in his blood levelling the walls of separation and gathering all into the kingdom between the various nations and individuals".

In St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he advises christians to remain as they were at the time of their calling. For those who were circumcised let them remain so and those who were not should not seek circumcision. Paul in this context was definitely contemplating on more than just the surgical operation. The converted Jew continued to be a Jew with his own appointed way of obedience. It appears
like the demand that Gentile christians be circumcised caused a problem among the Christians.

In the above mentioned Paul's letter to the Corinthians, i.e. (1 Cor. 7 : 19), Paul writes, For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but keeping the commandments of God.

From the Jewish point of view, this quotation is paradoxical. A Jew would reply that circumcision is one of the commandments and so everyone must be circumcised. It must be further noted that the commandment of circumcision is not one that arises in the Jewish oral tradition but it is firmly rooted in the Old Testament, (Gen. 17 : 10-14).

In Paul's view, it is possible to be circumcised and not to keep God's commandments and equally possible to keep God's commandments without being circumcised. Paul further points out that God's commandments are now summarized in the law of Christ. Keeping God's commandments means an obedience to the will of God as disclosed by his son, far more radical than the observance of any code whether ceremonial or moral could be. If one's life has been determined by the obedience of faith, conversion to or from Judaism becomes irrelevant. (cf. Gal. 2 : 3, : 2-12, 6 : 12 ff).

The Jews by insisting that the Gentiles be circumcised before being converted were discriminating against the Gentiles and therefore causing separation within the Church. Similarly, according to Agikuyu religious beliefs, thahu causes disorder due to the victims unwell-being if he is ill, and when thahu spreads to affect his entire homestead and family, disorder and disintegration are realized all the more. The researcher views that sin in Christianity and thahu in Agikuyu
religious beliefs cause a threefold separation. These are: separation from God, internal separation within the self and mutual separation between the individual and fellow human beings.

One is separated from God due to disobedience. After disobeying God's rule, the offender sets himself apart. One is also separated from fellow human beings since he cannot partake in any communal ritual or ceremony and is looked upon as an immoral person. This leads to excommunication. Internal self separation is caused within the self mainly by guilt conscience. The victim feels guilty and develops some self-reproach and self-blame.

Quite often the Agikuyu expressed a belief that sometimes sickness was caused by personal acts of defilement of taboos which resulted into the thahu condition. Similarly in the New Testament, there are some instances where Jesus healed disabled people by symbolically forgiving them their sins.

The Agikuyu strongly believed that thahu does not originate from without man but from within and, hence ndahikio, the major cleansing ceremony was meant to make the victim vomit out the thahu. In the New Testament particularly in Mark 7:14-15 and 20-23, Christ gives a similar connotation of sin being rooted from within man.

In the New Testament, salvation is depicted as being essentially a process of deliverance from evil and above all from sin. Sin is depicted as dangerous because it evokes the wrath of a God who therefore cannot be indifferent to it. Sin alienates man from God and in fact enslaves him. Similarly, according to Agikuyu beliefs thahu alienates the victim from God since one cannot take part in any religious ceremonies prior to cleansing. One who has thahu is
also viewed as a prisoner since he is bound to poor health conditions and makes little or no progress in his daily endeavours. The victim is further imprisoned by the fact that there are walls instead of bridges between him and his fellow human beings and he therefore cannot interact freely with them.

A phenomenological distinction in meaning between defilement and sin is necessary. According to Ricoeur (1967, 47-50); defilement is dominated by binding externally. Sin expresses seizure, possession and enslavement rather than contagion and contamination.

In the Old Testament, the prophets: Amos, Hosea and Isaiah announce the destruction of people by Yahweh because they have sinned. In these prophecies, sin is made known in the union of wrath and indignation. Ricoeur, further points out that the Hebrew Bible does not have any abstract word to express sin but has a bundle of concrete expressions each of which designate sin. These expressions are ordinarily borrowed from human relations. The expressions include words like omission, inquity, rebellion, injustice and disobedience. The consequences of sin as well as the action, thought and heart from which it springs are part of the sin. Sin therefore begins as a wicked intention, or a temptation which becomes a thought and later an action.

3.5 Actual and Original Sin as compared to Thahu

Harvey (1964, 220-223) defines Actual sin as any act which includes thoughts as well as deeds done in a conscious and deliberate violation of God's will as expressed in the revealed or natural law. Guilt is hence imputed to all actual sins where there is no repentance. This aspect of sin can be compared to personal acts committed against a certain mugiro and which causes thahu to the offender. The offender
in this case is well aware of and informed about the prohibition (mugiro).

Harvey further points out that original sin refers to the universal and hereditary sinfulness of man since the fall of Adam. Augustine (1958) attributes original sin to the first man, Adam. St. Augustine teaches that Adam was immune from all physical illness and was in a state of justification. In other words Adam was like a superman but he fell. The fall was entirely Adam's fault since God had given him every advantage and had given him only one prohibition that is, not to eat of the forbidden fruit and this was for man's own good.

Augustine identifies the major cause of the fall as pride. It was the desire for man to break away from his natural master. Man craved to become his own master. The gravity of the fall is that it resulted in the ruin of the entire human race. Through Adam's sin, the entire human race became a lost damned mass only capable of propagating sinners.

According to Augustine, due to the fall, human race becomes a fallen race, there is that stain of sin which is passed on from one person to the other. Augustine depicts sin as being contagious. He holds firmly on original sin and advocates for infant baptism since he holds that even infants are stained by the original sin. Augustine expresses the view that the tint of sin was propagated from parent to child, from generation to generation. He sees the essence of original sin as uniting us with Adam.

Cases of one being born in the thahu condition were cited by a few respondents, who seemed to equate these special cases of thahu with the Biblical concept of original sin as articulated by Augustine (1958). One such respondent, Karauni (O.I. 17th January 1987) stated
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that among the Agikuyu, it was possible for a child to be born in a thahu condition, if the mother contravened a taboo during pregnancy. Such a child could be cleansed only if the mother confessed her act. Similarly, a child born out of incest automatically contacted thahu though unwillingly and such a child grew very weak and could only be cleansed together with the mother if the mother confessed. Failure to confess would sometimes lead to the child's death. As explained in the preceding chapter, a child born out of incest usually grew thin and sickly and could only improve after the mother's confession, after which both mother and child would undergo the purification ceremony analysed in the preceding chapter. However, none of the above cited cases of one being born in the thahu condition can be equated with original sin. According to Augustine (1958) original sin is hereditary, every human being is born with that taint of original sin which was not the case with the Agikuyu. Harvey's (1964) conception of Actual sin is more equivalent to thahu because both involve a deliberate violation of the prohibitions.

3.6 The role played by Cleansing Ceremonies and Repentance

The major role played by the cleansing ceremonies is to incorporate the individual back into the group, and hence provide the individual with emotional support. The ceremonies bring back the individual who had been expelled. This is also the case with the Christian concept of forgiveness. The sense of guilt is wiped out after confession and repentance and the individual feels free to fellowship with the rest of the congregation.

In both the purification ceremonies and in forgiveness, the offender's initiative to confess and repent is emphasized. In Christian Theology as expressed by Haring (1974, 30), salvation is not at all
an exclusively supernatural concept. It also implies liberation, healing and homecoming to God in one's existential wholeness. Similarly, the Agikuyu believed that after undergoing a purification ceremony, the entire individual was cleansed wholly but had to avoid committing the thahu again. After being cleansed, the individual was free to fellowship with his fellowmen and to take part in rituals. The individual would also have communion with Ngai through sacrifice and prayers.

Another role played by the purification ceremonies and forgiveness is that of reinstating the offender. The sense of guilt is wiped out as one finds love and security among the members of the group. The purification ceremonies also placed the offender at peace with the ancestors. One who abided by the set social norms was regarded as both morally upright and well-behaved.

According to Christianity one cannot acquire salvation without repentance and forgiveness. Forgiveness is therefore viewed as a process of redemption and reconciliation. Forgiveness also plays the basic role of deliverance and rescue, primarily a rescue from sin. The work of salvation as presented in the New Testament consists of rescue, liberation and reconciliation. Hence forgiveness is the centre of salvation. Forgiveness, therefore, plays that major role of rescuing, liberating and reconciling the sinner. However, Luther (1950, 41-60). Luther (1950, 41-60) strongly argues that indulgences do not remove guilt. He gives a warning to mankind to be aware of those who say that indulgencies affect reconciliation with God. Luther also points out that apart from the many offences that man commits, the very nature of man is corrupt. Luther therefore perceives that the entire man is in need of forgiveness.

Certain purification ceremonies among the Agikuyu under the
title of "kuhorohia", were basically aimed at reconciliation. An example of such a ceremony is the one which was administered to reconcile two kinsmen after a fight. This ceremony has been discussed in detail in chapter two. The purification ceremonies also reconciled the offender with the ancestors and God.

In both the purification ceremonies and forgiveness, the important idea of freedom and emancipation is emphasised. However, the Agikuyu purification ceremonies differ with the Christian forgiveness because one is based on thahu and the other on original sin. Concerning the role played by the purification ceremonies, the findings are in line with Durkheim's (1915) conception of purification rites.

3.7 Significance of Taatha

The Agikuyu had various purification ceremonies as discussed in chapter two of this study. Some were designed for cleansing an individual while others were general and designed to cleanse an entire homestead of livestock. In all these purification ceremonies, several items (ingredients) were used. Of all these, the most commonly used was taatha, the undigested stomach contents. Alternatively, a sort of artificial taatha known as ng'ondu was made by pounding the leaves of certain selected plants into pulp. This alternative taatha was described by Wakang'u (O.I. 12th January 1987).

The significance of taatha in the purification ceremonies needs clarification. The reason for the wide use of these undigested stomach contents particularly those of a ram, ewe and in some instances a small immature he-goat is to be found in the Agikuyu conception of plants especially the food plants for sheep and goats. The Agikuyu divided all plants into two major categories one consisting of the peaceful plants (miti-mihoro) which included grasses and all none
poisonous plants with soft leaves and no thorns which made the food for sheep.

The second category were hot plants (miti mihiu kana miruru) which included plants with hard leaves and thorns as well as the poisonous and bitter ones. The stomach contents of mature he-goats and adult female-goats contained the leaves of all the thorny, bitter and poisonous plants which were used in ceremonies like swearing, cursing and taking oaths. Hence, the stomach contents of he-goats and adult female goats were never used at all for any purification ceremonies except occasionally in making certain magic powders.

The young immature goats of either sex, particularly when they were still too young to go out to graze ate only sweet potato vines and other soft leaves picked for them as fodder. The stomach contents of these young goats were used in emergency purification ceremonies for they ate the peaceful plants. Apart from sheep and goats, the Agikuyu also used the stomach contents of the tree hyrax which they believed lived exclusively on good plants.

As a concluding remark on thahu and sin, the researcher notes that in both thahu and sin, separation and alienation are experienced and disobedience underlined. Thahu seems to emphasize the offences against fellow human beings while sin emphasizes the offences against both God and fellow human beings. Whereas thahu is cleansed by purification ceremonies, sin is cleansed through repentance and forgiveness. In both thahu and sin the offenders initiative to seek purification is emphasized.
CHAPTER FOUR

VIEWS ON SIN AND THAHU IN OUR CONTEMPORARY KENYAN SOCIETY

This chapter highlights the views held by members of our contemporary Kenyan society concerning sin and thahu. The chapter attempts to find out whether the belief in the two concepts has any impact on social life today. These views were expressed by the youth, clergymen, lay-leaders and other members of the general public. The chapter further looks into how much thahu and sin are viewed as the major causes of communal disasters, both in the Agikuyu traditional society and in our contemporary Kenyan society. The disasters dealt with include drought, sickness and epidemics at the personal and communal levels. The chapter attempts to find out who holds the responsibility for providing the youth with moral education in contemporary society.

4.1 How Sin is viewed in Contemporary Kenyan Society

Some authors have given their definitions of sin in the contemporary aspect. As expressed by Rahner (1961) traditionally, sin implies guilt, answerability and by derivation, responsibility. Today, some form of behaviour still deserve the word sin. Hating one's brother, dishonouring one's parents, envying one's neighbour could be categorized as common sins today. Sin therefore remains in the sense of alienating oneself from God and from the rest of humanity.

Rahner (1961) further asserts that in Christian theology, sin has been conceived in three complimentary ways as rebellion, enstrangement or isolation and as error in performance. To elaborate
more on this, here is an example of a man who steals his neighbour's shirt. He offends God by acting contrary to His commandment. The offender is estranged by that action from his fellow men, since no one wants to be associated with a thief and his guilt conscience estranges him all the more.

As clearly stated by McCool, (1965, 39);

"In early Judaism, sin was synonymous to breaking the law, not the state's law but God's law. Particular forms of sin-crime were named in the Ten Commandments, in the book of Leviticus and the Talmud. In later years, the Catholic church canon law took over many of the Hebrew and Roman Law Sanctions".

But as time went by the Ten Commandments were less practised for being undemocratic or inappropriate for political use. Hence the civil law assumed the responsibility for identifying and dealing with many offences which had at one time been considered as sins. On the other hand, Menninger (1973, 3) defines sin as moral behaviour that violates the moral code or the individual conscience or both. Behaviour which pains or harms or destroys my neighbour or me.

The researcher feels that this definition suits our contemporary Kenyan society to a certain extent because offences against one's neighbour are hardly considered as sin. Some behaviour, once regarded as sinful has certainly disappeared. Adultery for example is technically a sin but for most people it is certainly not a crime.

A broader definition of sin, one which meets the needs of both believers and non-believers, is seen to be necessary. As stated by Hairing (1967, 340) Sin is transgression of the moral law of God, disobedience to the divine will and moral failure. Sin is failure to realize in conduct and character the moral ideal at least as fully
as possible under existing circumstances, failure to do as one ought
towards one's fellow human beings.

According to this definition, the wrongness of the sinful act lies more
in it's non-conformity, its departure from the accepted appropriate
way of behaviour, but in an implicitly aggressive quality. That breaking
away from God and from the rest of the humanity. A partial alienation
or an act of rebellion.

A number of scholars whose works have been reviewed in the
first chapter of this study express views on sin in contemporary society.
The study analytically explains and interprets some of those views.
Two major views which are dealt with here are; that sin has been
wiped out completely and forgotten; and that sin has been replaced
by crime and hence a new monitor.

As expressed by Rahner (1970, 87) Christian preaching has
encountered a self-understanding of man in which sin has been taken
for granted. Sin seems to have no place in modern thought. Rahner
further points out that the optimism of the nineteenth century which
saw industrial and social progress mainly as an experience of the
human condition and human failure has become a sort of obsession
in philosophy and above all in the novel, the theatre and the cinema.
Rahner concludes by remarking that mankind reacts with some
justification against the notion of sin which in earlier generations
was defined as deliberate transgression of the law of God. although
our Kenyan contemporary society has not gone to such an extreme,
the word sin is not readily used, and when it is used, its moral
implication is hardly taken seriously.

Menninger (1973, 1-10) emphasizes on the moral decline of
our times. Human beings continue to prosper and to develop
economically and technologically but not morally. Menninger further asserts that the disappearance of the word sin is being replaced by crime. However, he strongly argues that though the word sin is avoided, most people today suffer from a guilt conscience. They are guilty of the offences they commit against their neighbours let alone against God. Therefore, Menninger (1973, 2) asserts that many centuries have now passed since the Hebrew prophets preached about the importance of a moral code. They preached and warned and exhorted and died. Human beings have now become more numerous but scarcely more moral. Men and women are busy coming and going, getting and begetting, fighting and defending, creating and destroying and not a thought about their moral uprightness.

In our contemporary Kenyan society people continue to feel guilty due to those offences they commit against one another. The general attitude seems to be that of so what if it hurts my neighbour? As long as one is not caught or accused of a crime, life seems to continue smoothly.

Haring (1974: 29) warns that a man who does not consider God worthy of being recognized or adored inevitably chooses chaos of values. Such a man’s whole life and personal relationships are disturbed by this fundamental alienation. It seems like men today are content with gross error, they live in constant warfare of ignorance and call this monstrous evil, peace. They perform ritual murders of children, and secret ceremonies and frenzied orgies of unnatural cults, the purity of life and marriage is abandoned and a man treacherously murders his neighbour. All seems to be in chaos. The nemesis of sin always pursues the transgressions of the wicked.

Maina (O.I. 10th February 1987) clearly remarks,
"Many people today believe that the thoughts we constantly keep in our minds determine what we become or what we achieve."

This is practically why everyone who is successful does not allow negative thoughts to keep wandering in their minds. To elaborate further on this point, most of the members of our society who carry out their daily duties without malice, cunningness and are morally upright seem to have better chances of enjoying lasting success. A similar view is expressed by Kiekegaard (1957).

Kiongo (O.I. 8th February 1987) further pointed out on the same issue that the negative thoughts that hinder our progress include much of what goes against the Ten commandments. Do not steal, do not kill are some of the Ten Commandments, which generally make what we call moral law.

As clearly remarked by Mambo (O.I. 28th January 1987) the word sin seems to be disappearing. It was once a strong word, an ominous and serious word. The word was used to describe a central point in every morally-aware human being's lifespan and lifestyle. The respondent further noted that in our contemporary Kenyan society instead of the word sin, words like evil, disgraceful corrupt, prejudicial and harmful are readily used. The researcher holds the opinion that this is an exaggerated view on the contemporary Kenyan society. People still use the word sin but they hardly take it's implication and consequences seriously.

Nsope (O.I. 10th February 1987 asserts that our conscience always tells us what is wrong. According to this respondent,

"When a man acts against his conscience, he revolts against God and His plan for him - this is sin".
Hence there is a voice of conscience in each one of us, it is possible for the conscience to be wrong or to formulate evil and sinful thought. Our conscience is not always right and hence cannot be a measure of goodness.

Meade (O.L. 26th January 1987) pointed out that in our contemporary society moral transgressions have been split into the sinful to which the clergy, mediate, adjure and assess penances, and criminal for which the policeman the judge and the jailer are responsible. It can be noted here that the major difference between sin and crime is the professional management each of them receives. Both sin and crime involve a transgression and rebellion as well as violation of a prohibition. It is not possible to exhaust all the factors that caused the transformation of sins into crimes. Each year, new laws are passed and thus new crime possibilities created.

It has become a modern custom to legislate morally and to coerce virtue by law. The law took over only the great destructive sins. Crimes can also be viewed as sins. Though they have different monitors, one who commits a crime by violating the law, simultaneously rebells against God by acting against God's law.

The researcher holds the opinion that most of the respondents seemed to view sins as crimes. Whenever they do wrong, they fear being convicted in a law court more than the fact that it is a sin. Crimes here refer to the infractions of the laws of the state. Hence the responsibility for dealing with sin seems to be passing on from the church to the state. Therefore for most people sin seems to have acquired a new monitor and a new name.

Durbarle (1967) also notes that some behaviour, once regarded as sinful has certainly disappeared. Adultery for example is technically
a sin but for most people it is certainly not a crime. Another example is that moral law says that one should obey and honour one's parents. But if one does not it is very unlikely that the courts would do anything about it. However, one's conscience would be troubled all the same. This shows some decline in tradition as a means of social control.

It should be noted here that criminal wrongs may also be moral but many of them cannot be acted upon in court. But even when it is not punishable by law, moral wrongs trouble one's conscience. Here is an example to elaborate further on this point. A group of thugs collectively plan to take part in robbery with violance and in the course of the robbery they murder the victim of the attack. One member of the gang is arrested, taken to court and charged. The proceedings continue and the man is finally convicted to hang but he still withholds the names of other members of his gang. So they remain free men. They cannot be charged due to lack of evidence and yet they took part in the murder.

According to Menninger (1973, 130) sin is also viewed as collective responsibility. War is a great prototypical example of group sin. It is a massive violation of all ethics and all laws, a proposive and sanctioned campaign of destructiveness. Menninger (1973: 130) expresses that every gun that is made, every warship that is launched signifies a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. There are many people in our agriculturally productive country who go to bed hungry. People whose lives are meagre and miserable. Disease and starvation are good examples of collective sin in our contemporary society.

Disrespect for God, for parents, for seniority and for authority are a frequent part of revolution by the present young generation.
Socrates noted this as cited by Menninger (1973: 134) that our youth today love luxury they have bad manners, contempt for authority, disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food and tyrannize their teachers. This view could as well apply to our contemporary Kenyan society whereby the youth have become so carefree and have set their own ideals. It should be noted here that sin is not only against rules but mostly against people. It is the aggression (againstedness) that constitutes the designation, sin. According to some theologians pride is yet another common sin today. A virtue under certain circumstances, pride is considered by theologians as the basic form of sin. Synonyms for pride are vanity, egocentricity, arrogance, self-adoration, selfishness and self-love. All these are subject to contemporary condemnation. Maybe nobody calls them crimes yet but they are disliked. They all have an unpleasing quality which is striking contrast to that meaning of pride which makes it a brave and admirable virtue. The sin of pride according to Augustine (1958) most likely has its roots in the Adam - old ambition to be identified with or to become God.

Russel (1969, 11) expresses a similar argument concerning man's desire to be like God; every man would like to be God if it were possible, some few find it difficult to admit the impossibility. The sin of pride appears most conspicuously in a group pride in the form of ethnocentricity and racialism. This is where a certain group of people discriminate against others just because they are not born as members of their race or ethnic group.

Hairing argues that in the Bible the main decision of salvation is the choice between a saving solidarity in Christ and a destructive
solidarity in sin. The social aspect of sin is recognized. An individualistic developed in past centuries was actually conditioned. Those in authority whether civil or ecclesiastic always spoke "in the name of God" and therefore the ordinary citizens were allowed no real interest or responsibility in the social, religious or political realms.

Today human beings experience their dependence on one another and realize that we can save our world only by peaceful co-existence, dialogue and co-operation, biblical and liturgical renewal draws our attention much more to the Christian's responsibility towards his neighbour his community and indeed towards the whole creation.

4.2 Contemporary Beliefs in Thahu

Most members of the contemporary society seem to be sitting on the fence as concerns the way they perceive thahu and its consequences. Though the majority have embraced Christianity, deep down in their hearts, they have a thought on the concept of thahu. They may not necessarily observe the prohibitions but certain causes of thahu like the dying curse are still held with fear.

According to Nyawira (O.I. 16th January, 1987) a few of the youth today hold the opinion that thahu has almost been replaced by sin. Yet among the youth there are some who have no awareness whatsoever about the existence of either thahu or sin. To them there is only crime which is dealt with by the Police and the law but not the Church. It should, however, be noted that majority of the members of contemporary society believe in the dying curse. Even those who have acquired formal education and are christians work day and night to meet the demands of a dying elderly parent or relative to avoid being cursed. The dying curse is looked upon with fear and it is seen as having a destructive effect, to those who act contrary to it.
The few surviving elders hold the view that the present generation has no consideration for thahu as a moral value. Mugweru, (O.I. 15th January 1987) pointed out that the present generation contravene taboos, have no respect for parents and the aged. The respondent identified the influence of modernity as being the major cause of the moral decline. He further argued that today's generation lack love and brotherhood as portrayed in their endless endeavours to acquire as much wealth as possible not caring about others. The respondent further pointed out that due to this hunger for wealth, brothers rise against one another in quarrels in land issues and distribution of their parents' property.

Njaga (O.I. 18th January 1987) emphatically pointed out that in his opinion, the most grave thahu committed by today's generation is negligence of aged parents. Little or no attention is paid by working sons and daughters towards a sick aged parent. The respondent further noted,

"When the parent is dead, his children assemble to dress up the corpse in an expensive suit, a watch and shoes so that the body may be admired by friends who will attend the widely - announced funeral. Yet the poor parent hardly had enough to eat when he was alive. Not to mention the sickness which caused his death and which most likely his children had overlooked."

The respondent asserted that in such an expensive funeral, the children of the deceased's main aim is to show off their wealth and to make the world believe that they had a lot of concern for the parent during his lifetime. In this elder's view, even if the parent in the above cited case was a rich man and received all the necessary attention
from his sons and daughters, such an extravagant funeral would stil
be a show-off. Instead it should be made moderate and the rest of
the money donated to homes for destitute children and the aged,
or to the poor people.

Mambo (O.I. 28th January 1987) pointed out that the present
generation overlooks the taboos and all the prohibitions. In their
carefree attitudes, they break the Ten Commandments daily. In
his view, he portrayed a moral decline and an increase in sins. He
described the present generation as being "lukewarm" meaning that
they do not follow traditional beliefs since most of them have been
converted into Christianity and yet they do not observe the
Commandments which are the backbone of Christian beliefs. In most
cases, the young people are not made aware of the traditions. Some
parents are too busy to have time with their children. In such cases,
the children lack guidance and hence continue aimlessly in the world's
jig-saw puzzle. Today's youth are exposed to many things at a go.
Therefore they need counselling on what to adopt and when.

4.3 Thahu and sin viewed as causes of communal disasters and their
remedies.

In Agikuyu traditional society, the failure to have rain at the
expected time was interpreted with awe and fear. The prolonged
drought caused anxiety among the people. They anticipated that
probably their behaviour, disobedience or mathahu had annoyed Ngai
who in turn had decided to punish them through drought. As remarked
by Wakang'u (O.I. 16th January 1987), at such a time of drought, the
Agikuyu congregated and re-enacted their relationship to Ngai through
sacrifice and prayers appealing for help. As the drought prolonged,
the elders met and consulted the seers who would in turn give any
messages or instructions which they had received from Ngai as explanations to the causes of the drought. If the messages implied in any way that Ngai was displeased with the people for various reasons, the elders and seers then resolved to make a sacrifice to appease Ngai.

The first step in preparation for the sacrifice was to select a one coloured lamb with neither a spot nor a blemish. It's origin was also investigated to ensure its purity. The second step in the preparations was to select the elders who would lead the congregation in offering the sacrifice. The elders were selected from the fourth grade group of elders otherwise known as the religious sacrificial council. If women were to be permitted, they had to be those past the child-bearing age. The third group of participants were two children, a boy and a girl below eight years of age. The elders then proceeded to choose a suitable place for offering the sacrifice under one of the sacred trees.

A public proclamation was then made announcing the day of the ritual ceremony. Five days before the appointed day of sacrifice, and two days after the sacrifice, the Agikuyu took various precautions in order to make the day a peaceful one. No stranger would be allowed to come in or to depart from the community within those seven days. The Agikuyu as well avoided making long journeys especially those that involved crossing a river within the seven days.

On the appointed day of sacrifice, the congregation beseeched God and offered him the blood and fat of the lamb, honey-beer and milk. In addition to the sacrificial gifts, the congregation as well uttered prayers to Ngai praising Him and at the same time expressing their requests. The prayers were uttered while the congregation
stood at the base of the sacred tree facing towards Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya).

In our contemporary society, though drought is not necessarily viewed as being a punishment for the peoples' sins, it is not unusual to find Christians congregating in their Churches to pray for rain. Though there are no special prayers written down to be recited when praying for rain, there is a wide range of prayers catering for the needs of the faithful and one such need is rain. In the Catholic Church and the C.P.K. church for example, where the researcher attended services, after the recited prayers, a chance is given for the believers to pray for their needs and their good intentions.

Occasionally, when the drought continues for a long period, it is common to find Christians gathering to hold inter-denominational prayers for rain. Such gatherings were a common phenomenon in 1984 when Kenya experienced a drought.

Njaga (O.I. 20th January 1987) noted that the Agikuyu often interpreted sickness as an outward sign of thahu. Hence if one fell sick and after being given the known herbs did not improve, his relatives would consult a diviner-doctor to find out the cause of his prolonged illness. The Agikuyu also had a belief that illness is brought to the people by some kind of evil spirits particularly when the illness came in the form of an epidemic affecting a whole community.

After an outbreak of an epidemic or illness, the cause of which people could not clearly understand nor find any effective remedies on their wide range of herbal treatments, the elders of various grades met to consult seers and diviners to find out how they could relieve the people from their suffering. If the consultation reported that medical aid had failed, then physical force had to be applied against
the enemy.

As elaborated by Wakang'u (O.I. 12th January 1987), the elders decided that the only way to get rid of such a malady was to prepare a real fight with the evil spirits which had so unkindly brought suffering upon the community. The underlying belief was that if the evil spirits were defeated in the battle not only would they run away and take with them the illness but also they would be frightened and it would be unlikely that they would in future dare to cause misery to the people.

The respondent noted that evening was considered to be the best time to wage the war against the evil spirits. On the appointed evening, war horns were sounded from the various centres to signal the start of the battle against the malicious spirits. On hearing the war horns, the people came out of their homesteads armed with sticks, clubs and other weapons. The elders, however, cautioned the people to use only blunt weapons not to use spears, swords or knives for fear that if the spiritis' blood was shed on the land, its uncleanness would cause great calamity to the community.

The war horns were sounded once more to signal the people to start beating their sticks together in the rhythm characteristic of this ritual and at the same time shouting and screaming furiously as they moved slowly towards the river. On the way they beat shrubs along the side of the paths and examined the shrubs carefully to ensure that no malicious spirit was left behind hiding in the shrubs. Later, all the people assembled by the river-side to throw their sticks and clubs into the river. As they did so, they shouted victoriously and contemptuously saying, Evil spirits and your illness, we have crashed you. We now sink you into the river. Let the water drive you far
away from us. You will go for ever and never to come again.

The throwing of sticks and clubs into the river symbolized the throwing away of the evil spirits and the epidemic.

In our contemporary society, the outbreak of such an epidemic resorts to medical research. The victims would get emergency medical attention. The infected area would be quarantined immediately to prevent the spread of the disease to other areas. Due to the changes brought about by modernity, an outbreak of a disease cannot be interpreted as being caused by peoples' sins. However, believers would still include the epidemic in the list of their communal needs during prayers. The same case applies to personal illness, though it is not attributed to sin as its major cause believers still dedicate their prayers to the sick and they request God to grant them good health.

4.4 Parents and Teachers as moral Leaders Today

The family, which constitutes the basic school, plays a major role in providing the youth with moral education. In most cases the parents set the basic goals for their children before sending them to school. The parents also influence the children's way of life like in cases where the parents take the children to church and have them baptized. Most christian families set trends whereby prayers play an important role in their lives. The children in such families are likely to adopt such ways of life though it does not always follow. In some cases the children may turn out to be the opposite of what the parents are.

The most profound moral instructions that children receive comes from the parents. It is at home that the child is first made to distinguish
between right and wrong. Some children go to the extent of having their parents as their ideal people due to proper upbringing. These views were expressed by Kuria, (O.I. 23rd January 1987), a lay-leader in the C.P.K. Church.

In addition, the parents choose when and where to take their child to school, whom the child interacts with and the virtues for the child to achieve. All these factors form a foundation to the making of a morally upright child. In cases where the parents take their children to Church, the children have another chance of receiving moral guidance. The behaviour that a child picks from home is bound in most cases to stick throughout a lifetime. Apart from the parents, a child's peers also play a role in a child's character formation.

Karanja, (O.I. 3rd February 1987) pointed out that teachers have for a long time carried the responsibility of instructing the youth, not only in how things are but also in how things ought to be. Hence teachers need commendation and encouragement for providing moral instruction to children particularly those who receive none at home. But instead of approval in most cases the teachers only get reproach and neglect from society.

The teachers' dedication and idealism carry them through but sometimes they get very discouraged. Karanja further noted that sometimes teachers feel very much alone in trying to stem tides and divert currents. Occasionally the sense of isolation and conviction of failure become overwhelming.

Njoroge, (O.I. 21st January 1987), a lay-reader in the C.P.K. church also had the opinion that teachers are one of the best moral instrument left sound today. He expressed the view that teachers are essential in the faculty of morality as gap-closers. The teacher
becomes the ideal, the model person for many children whose parents fail to inspire them or cancel their positive influence by lack of attention, harshness, or outright neglect and rejection.

Teachers are well aware of the powerful determinants of character and ideals which they supply for the pupils particularly at the primary level, the most formative years of the child's life. But with each year the influence of the teacher diminishes as more experience, more acquaintance, more self-confidence and more peer-awareness develop. Loukes (1973) ascertains that a few teachers, however, choose to dishonour their professional ethics and instead of leading, they mislead the students. This is can be seen in cases where for example, a male teacher has an affair with a girl student or a female teacher with a boy-student. Such cases are a disgrace to the teaching profession and to society. The victims usually ignore their professional ethics. Instead of leading, guiding and counselling, such teachers end up misleading their students.

As clearly expressed by Nyawira (O.I. 30th January 1987).

"Fluctuations in the authority and popularity of the church have tended to let the brightest torch of moral leadership pass to the press, the radio and the television. Most of the young people today take their moral stance and guidance from articles, reports and editorials rather than from sermons."

The views of the above cited respondent, a youth representative seems to paint an extreme picture to which our contemporary society does not fit well. The church is still popular among the youth and though they may pretend, deep within themselves, most of them believe in and fear God. Even those who do not go to Church, in their private lives and particularly at a time of crisis, they turn to God through
individual prayers, on the other hand, the respondent's view is authentic since moral guidance is not expected to come from sermons only. People should learn to benefit from all available media.

Most clergymen expressed the opinion that people today prefer more practical methods of solving their problems. The methods include psychotherapies, diets, sensitivity groups and encounter groups. To elaborate further on this point, Wachege (O.J. 25th January 1987) pointed out as an example that most couples find it difficult to adopt to the naturally family planning method advocated by the Catholic Church, simply because they want quick solutions. Instead of the cumbersome method of reading and keeping charts, and taking temperatures, contraception offers a quick solution. Wachege further asserted that it has been established that some individuals who suffer from stress depression, phobia, and anxiety can be relieved by being listened to with interpretations, counsel and reassurance. In such cases then, the quick solutions are not applicable. The respondent in a concluding manner said, remarked that there are no psychiatrists or psychotherapists who have the quantitative opportunity to cure souls and mend minds which the preacher enjoys. The preacher also has a superb opportunity to do what a few psychiatrists can to prevent the development of chronic anxiety and depression.

Whether we go for the faster solutions or the gradual ones, there are almost daily reminders of our sins and the impending consequences made probable by them. Every day, there is the repeated message that a little cheating, stealing and bribing might as well be over-looked since, "it's being done everywhere". Yet, how is it as Socrates once wondered that men know what is good but keep on doing what is bad!!

Today, the church is seen only as a means of providing a suitable
environment but it is upon the individual to work out his/her ultimate salvation. The church seems to have loosened its attempts to enforce moral purity and instead emphasize more on personal responsibility of each adherent. The church is generally making attempts towards a liturgical revival seen in actions such as drumming, active participation of all the faithful, traditional tunes and the wide range of prayers. Pastoral psychology for catechists and renewed emphasis on social action are geared towards such a revival.

Looking at the role of the clergy in moral responsibility today, Kiongo (O.I. 22nd January 1987) noted that a major role of the clergy is to give their adherents reassurance about the existence of God, His mercifulness, His grace, His goodness, His expectations of mankind to forgive and to love, His sure forgiveness of repented sin and the assurance of life everlasting. Every week, believers listen to their shephards, men whom they regard as experts in the knowledge of right and wrong in daily life. Without such guidance most people would lack guidance of right and wrong. However, the effectiveness and the practicability of some shepherds' messages is debatable.

Nderito, (O.I. 29th January, 1987) asserted that the clergy's role as moral leaders involves administering the sacraments, calling sinners to turn to God in repentance and calling people towards a righteous living as they await eternal life. In addition, the clergy also undertakes guidance and counselling roles.

Nderito (O.I. 29th January, 1987) further points out that the state of division and spiritual disruption as it were, which is in the lot of humanity today is an evil for which all humanity is responsible. This evil has deep roots and unforseeable repurcussions which was already in Isaiah's lament in the old Testament (Isaiah 1:4, 21-23).
CHAPTER FIVE

5:1 CONCLUSION

One of the major findings of the present study is that thahu, mugiro and kirumi are related in terms of their causes and effects but the three terms are not synonymous. This study has ascertained that contrary to the writings of scholars like Hobley (1967) thahu cannot be equated with mugiro and kirumi. Instead evidence has shown that one's actions against a prohibition, whether the prohibition is a mugiro or kirumi, the act renders the doer into a thahu condition. Thahu therefore, is the consequence of an act performed in contravention of a mugiro or kirumi. The evidence further shows that once in the thahu condition, the victim becomes ritually and morally impure.

The study has sought to determine the significance of thahu and mugiro in upholding morals among the Agikuyu. In order to achieve this objective, the functions of mugiro as a basis for morality among the Agikuyu have been analysed. It has been emphasized that mugiro (the prohibitions) clearly showed every Mugikuyu the correct path to follow by marking out the pitfalls. Mugiro provided the people with clear explanations for any misfortunes encountered and enhanced a sense of relief in knowing the source of the trouble. The study further points out that mugiro gradually enabled the Agikuyu to mould a system of moral code. It has also been emphasized in this study that the Agikuyu had a code of law based on general principles. The findings that the Agikuyu greatly obeyed the injunction not to steal and that the Agikuyu were particularly honest people express the profound sense of morality which the Agikuyu had. Thahu was a major
means of controlling crime, jails and bribes being unknown. Thahu regulated behaviour in that people avoided contacting it by observing the prohibitions.

It has further been emphasized that the manner in which the prohibitions whose violation caused thahu were formulated was contrary to claims made by certain western scholars like Hobley (1967) that the diviner-doctors were more interested in the material gains they got for performing the purification ceremonies administered to cleanse the victims of thahu than the society's well being. The evidence available in this study shows that the prohibitions were agreed upon through consensus by the council elders who casted votes concerning the things not to be done. The set norms were later passed down orally from generation to generation. Hence the diviner-doctors played no role whatsoever in the formulation of these prohibitions.

Further, the fact that most cases of thahu could be cleansed by the purification ceremonies did not make the Agikuyu relax their morals. This is mainly because the Agikuyu avoided contact with the impurity and alienation brought about by thahu. They as well restrained from rebelling against God.

Comparisons drawn between sin and thahu show clearly that the major similarity between the two concepts is seen in the separation effect and alienation caused by sin and thahu to the offenders. The evidence further proves that certain events, actions and objects regarded as unclean by the Israelites as stated in the book of Leviticus were also regarded as unclean by the Agikuyu.

The major role played by the purification ceremonies is to incorporate the individual back into the group and in this way reinstating the individual and providing him with emotional support.
This significant role is also expressed in the Christian concept of forgiveness.

The study has finally sought to compare cases of thahu and sin viewed as the major causes of communal disasters in Agikuyu traditional society and its application today.

The major findings of this study as explained in the preceding pages can be summarized into the following statements; that it is faulty to equate thahu with mugiro and kirumi or to regard the three terms as synonymous. Secondly, thahu and mugiro acted as the basis for morality among the Agikuyu.

Thirdly, in both sin and thahu the elements of disorder and disintegration are introduced and separation is emphasized. The major contributions of this study to scholarly research is that it provides an analysis of the nature and significance of thahu and sin both in the Agikuyu traditional and contemporary society. It goes on to provide a rich resource of the theological view of various Agikuyu religious beliefs which are now faced with the danger of extinction. This study is hoped to have increased our understanding of some of the major principles that governed Agikuyu morality, and helped to enhance social harmony.

5.2 Contribution

The major contribution of this study to scholarly research is that it provides an analysis of the nature and significance of thahu and sin which the Agikuyu traditional and contemporary society. The study further provides a rich resource of the theological view of various Agikuyu religious beliefs which are now faced with danger of extinction. This study is hoped to have increased our understanding
of some of the major principles that governed Agikuyu morality and helped to enhance social harmony.

5.3 Future prospectus

The study raised some questions which require further research such as the responsibility for children's moral education today and the possibility of merging certain adaptable traditional aspects of worship with Christian aspects. A follow-up research is therefore recommended to compare with other ethnic groups and other religious groups' conception as well.
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Glossary

Agikuyu: refers to the ethnic group, the entire Kikuyu people.

Coco: A sweet smelling plant whose leaves and stem were used in purification ceremonies. It's bark was used in the fire-lighting ceremony in a new hut.

Elder: A man or woman who has successfully gone through the stages of the Agikuyu rites of passage i.e. birth, naming, initiation and marriage such a person is usually assumed to bear a lot of knowledge concerning the Agikuyu customs, beliefs and practices. In this study the elders were chosen depending on such knowledge.

Gikuyu: refers to the language used by the Agikuyu people as well as the region they occupy.

Inagu: (plural-managu): A weed with little white flowers and red berries. used as a herb. It's leaves were used as vegetables. It's leaves and stems were used in the ndahikio purification ceremony.

Ira: A white powder extracted from the ground like clay and salt. Used in various purification ceremonies.

Kanvania: A herb, a creeping species, with orange flowers and dark centres. It's stem was used to tie together bunches of leaves during ndahikio purification ceremony.

Kirumi: A curse, a ban imposed by an older person to a younger relative. In most cases the curse becomes effective after the announcer's death.
Mathau: The plural form of thahu (see thahu)

Mehia: sins plural form of Wihia.

Miano Name used for the container and the contents of the divining gourd used by the diviner–doctor.

Mucatha: A shrub with bitter tasting leaves and roots. It's leaves were boiled as a tonic for soup. It's leaves and stem were used during ndahikio purification ceremonies.

Mucanjamuka A medicinal powder, grounded from the bark of a sweet-smelling tree by the same name.

Mucingiri: A shrub - has sweet-smelling smoke. Yields a valuable fibre for making strings and cords. It's leaves and stem were used as medicinal herbs and in various purification ceremonies.

Muhoroha: A medicinal herb. It's leaves were used in ndahikio ceremonies.

Mukeu A tree whose bark was used as strings for tying firewood and it's leaves were used in making a fly-whisk in various purification ceremonies.

Mugikuyu: refers to an individual member of the Agikuyu ethnic group.

Mugiro: is taken to mean a ban or a prohibition, equivalent to taboo. Migiro is the plural form (taboos).

Mundu wa rurira: one's blood relative. Mostly a member of one's extended family.

Muraria: A herb, grows in the forests especially in cold zones. It's seed pods curl when touched.
Mutei: A woody herb with white flowers. It's leaves and stem were used as a fly-whisk during various purification ceremonies.

Muthakwa: A big woody shrub, has flattish heads and purple flowers. It's stem and leaves were used in various purification ceremonies.

Ngai: derived from Mugai, one who divides or shares out. Gikuyu language way of referring to God the parent and creator of all.

Ndahikio: a ritual purification ceremony used to cleanse various types of thahu. The word literally means to cause to vomit out thahu.

Ng'ondo: A mixture of pounded medicinal herbs used in various purification ceremonies. It was also used as a substitute for taatha (stomach contents) whenever a goat was not available for slaughter.

Ngwaro: Raw-hide strips cut in ringlets from a goat's skin, used in various ceremonies including purification and oathing. Rukwaro: is the singular form.

Thahu: The consequences of one's actions against a prohibition. Thahu renders the victim morally and ritually impure.

Uruti: A weed with purple flowers whose leaves and stem were used in various purification ceremonies especially Ndahikio.

Wibia: is the Gikuyu language way of describing sin, in the christian context.
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