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The Worlds of Gikuyu Mythology : a Structural Analysis

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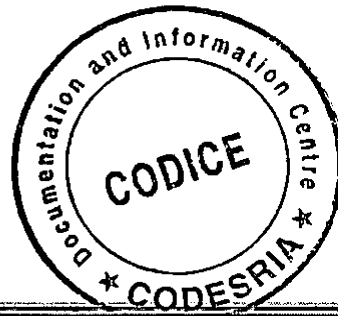
THE WORLDS OF GIKUYU MYTHOLOGY: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS.

A PhD Dissertation

By
Michael Wainaina.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.

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DECLARATION:

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a Degree in any other University or for any other award.

CANDIDATE: Michael Wainaina Mwaura

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We confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

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2nd supervisor

NAME: Prof. Francis Imbuga

SIGNITURE: ....

DATE: ....

DEDICATION

Another one,

Dedicated to my mother:
The first wonder of my world,
The greatest of all Mortals.

For Dorcas Kemunto and the Future...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of writing this thesis, I have received invaluable assistance from several individuals to whom I shall remain grateful.

My profound thanks go to my supervisors Dr. Muigai Wa-Gachanja and Prof Francis Imbuga. Dr Wa-Gachanja has tirelessly worked with me in my graduate career. An individual of immense goodwill he has with an unparalleled sense of duty, guided me throughout the writing of this thesis. He has been at hand to offer moral and collegial support and I have always felt that I can trust and count on him whenever external factors have threatened to destruct my endeavour. I do extend the same gratitude to Prof Imbuga, a scholar whom I have greatly admired throughout the writing of this thesis, for his steadfastness as a source of constant inspiration, and a reliable beacon of light in his penchant for rigour. I am convinced that this work may not have been possible without the input of these two individuals. By exhibiting the virtues of real African elders, they have become the centrepiece of my scholarly development.

A debt of gratitude to Prof. George Eshiwani for his support and concern for my progress in the writing of this dissertation. Thank you.

v

Abstract

This study addresses the methodological and definitional shortcomings in mythological analysis. Divesting the typological definition of "myth", that sees myth as one type of story as opposed to another, we define myth as any tale in the Gikuyu community. In addition to this, we adopt a methodology that seeks not only the structural unity of Gikuyu mythology but also recognises the potential for signification of delineated mythological structures. We proceed from the postulate that myth is like language whose various constituent elements, (phonemes) combine to make meaning. Corresponding elements in mythology are called mythemes. Taking the worlds of Gikuyu Mythology as the mythology's mythemes, we in the study test the hypothesis that the structural model of the transformational relationships of the worlds of Gikuyu mythology is related to Gikuyu society and culture and it thus provides a basis for analysis of the mythology.

Using a corpus of twenty purposefully sampled myths, we proceed to identify the worlds of Gikuyu mythology. We have then constructed a structural model showing how these worlds relate. Through the transformational relationships of these worlds we have discovered that Gikuyu mythology expresses two imaginative domains in Gikuyu modes

of thought. These are Existential imagination, represented by a vertical axis on the structural model and the other is the Moral imagination represented by a horizontal axis. We have proceeded to relate these two axes to the Gikuyu society and culture, with insights from the latter adduced from extensive and detailed ethnographic data.

The hypothesis formulated for this study has thus been sustained. With it, our definition and method have proved productive.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Analysis: In this study the term specifically refers to the academic search for purpose and meaning of the Gikuyu mythology within the parameters of our derived system.

Existential imagination: The concept of being and the attendant practices associated with the creation and sustenance of life among the Gikuyu.

Model: Simplified construct description of the system of Gikuyu mythology derived from the transformational relations between its identifiable worlds. The word schema shall be used to mean the same as the term model as defined for this study.

Modes of thought: The cognitive processes through which the Gikuyu aspire to understand and control their cultural and natural environment.

Moral imagination: The concept of right and wrong and the attendant practices regulating the relations, rights, duties and privileges of individuals and groups of individuals among the Gikuyu.

Myth.   Traditional oral tale. NB; since the definition of myth is central to this study, our conception of what it is, is

discussed in more details in the background to the problem.

Mythology: The complete corpus of Gikuyu myths.

System: This will refer to the process in which a group of things or parts work together as a whole. In the context of this study it will refer to the process in which various tales of the Gikuyu mythology work together as a unified whole.

Transformational group: This refers to a complete self- regulating entity that accounts for different phenomena by changing its features while retaining a systematic structure. This term is used to refer to our conception of Gikuyu mythology.

Transformational relations: This refers to the process in which different features in a transformational group connect and influence each other. In regard to this study the features are the worlds of the Gikuyu mythology.

Worlds: This term refers to spheres of activity/existence in regard to Gikuyu mythology.

NB; Part of the task of this study is to define and systematise this concept. A more comprehensive definition of the term is thus derived and stated in the section on literature review.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In <u>Structuralist Poetics</u>, Jonathan Culler (1975) tells us: "... the institution of mythology leads an uncertain existence and few could be said to have assimilated its system" (P:50). This study has sought to address this "uncertain existence" with particular regard to the analysis of Gikuyu mythology. The study challenges (a), the exclusiveness of the conventional definition of myth and (b), the atomistic approaches to its interpretation. These, the study postulates, seem to be outstanding factors in mythological studies which contribute to the lack of a unified system through which mythology can be understood and hence its "uncertain existence". Thus this study has been undertaken with the view of addressing these outstanding issues, in order to provide a systematic structural model through which the Gikuyu mythology can be interpreted and hence "assimilated" or understood.

Background to the Problem

Our search for a unified model of interpretation of Gikuyu mythology takes into account two pertinent issues in mythological study. The first one is the issue of definition and the second is the issue of the method of analysis.

What is a Myth?

This study does not purport to provide an answer to this question. Views on what myth is differ greatly among scholars and it is rather difficult come up with an all-embracing definition. What we have done is to briefly highlight the issue of definition of myth as it has been dealt with by several scholars in order to provide a working definition for our study and advance our thesis.

Addressing this issue, Ake Hultkrautz (Quoted in Dundes, ed; 1984:152) says: "what a myth is, and how its function shall be determined are questions which have been discussed for more than 100 years by representatives from different disciplines..." But as Hultkrautz notes: " it's obvious that the term "myth" does not mean the same for all categories of scholars" (Ibid). This means that there does not seem to be a consensus on the definition of myth.

Yet, myth, defined as a tale about gods and other supernatural figures, explaining causes of natural and other phenomena , which commands an awed acceptance from the tellers and their society , seems to be the generally accepted definition which has so far guided the study of folklore in Kenya. One thing we note about this definition is that it is exclusive and typological. It portrays myth as a certain type of tale as opposed to another. In this study, we argue that when considered in folklore study, this type of definition is not binding; that is, it is neither conclusive nor theoretically superior, and it also has a constricting and thus a negative influence on the study of folklore.

Consequently, several folklorists have challenged this typological definition of myth and for good reason. For instance, the Finnish Folklorist Lauri Honko (1984) has noted that the first thing that one realises in trying to grasp the semantic implications of myth is that it can cover an extremely wide field. By considering the different ways in which the term is used he notes:

> ...it is clear that myth can encompass everything from a simple minded, fictitious, even mendacious impression to an absolutely true and sacred account, the reality of which far outweighs anything that ordinary everyday life can offer. (Quoted in Dundes; eds 1984:41)

He thus correctly concludes that it would appear to be without justification to give a normative recommendation of what myth is. Kirk(1984), another authority on theory of myth, concurs with Honko when he says:

> the looseness of the term 'myth' itself and its wide range of applications in common usage ...together with the failure of specialists to offer acceptable special definitions, suggest that it's a diverse phenomenon that is likely to have different motives and applications ...*Any general theory that artificially* [typologically] *restricts its probable multiformity....or denies it altogether is likely to be incorrect*" (Emphasis mine)(Quoted in Dundes ed. 1984:55)

Kirk suggests that giving a fixed typological definition may have no justification and indeed may be misleading. He extends his argument further:

> Formalistic definitions (e.g. 'myths are tales that are believed to be true or 'myths are tales that are set outside historical time') are favored by folklorists in particular and *once again tend to exclude important blocs of prima facie mythological material for no particular reason.* (Emphasis mine)(Ibid)

He goes on to make a similar comment about this approach as used by anthropologists:

> There is however, a different and in some ways more specific basic definition that is much favored by anthropologists at present; it is that "myths are sacred tales." That does not exclude the idea of their being traditional tales, but it goes much further in accepting one kind of traditional tale. In my opinion this added exclusiveness has no advantages (Ibid p57).

The point here is that an exclusive definition of myth offers no particular advantages to an analyst. Thus we have two sides to this contentious issue. On the one side are those who ascribe a typological definition to the term myth and use it to "differentiate" myth from "other" tales and on the other side those who do not recognise such a categorisation or at least appreciate the complexity of the issue and point out the shortcomings of a typological definition. In this study we recognise this issue and at the same time realise that the problem involved demands a separate investigation. This study does not therefore seek to settle this debate or to essentialise its concerns. It is at this juncture that Honko's advice on the basis for seeking an operational definition of myth becomes relevant to our study. He says:

> it will continue to be the task of every scholar to give the concept an operative definition i.e. to give it a content which most effectively and consistently serves the ends which his own particular research situation demands (Ibid p52)

Our particular research situation as concerns the thesis of this study demands that we move away from the constraining atomism of the earlier stated widely accepted typological definition. Therefore in seeking a definition for the purposes of this study, we combine several definitions which we think will provide a wide basis for a more comprehensive approach to Gikuyu mythology.

Isidore Okpewho (1983:69) defines myth as:

> That quality of fancy, which informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of the human mind at varying degrees of intensity. In that sense we are free to call any narrative of the oral tradition a myth.

Joseph Margolis (in Righter, 1975:6) defines myth as:

> A schema of the imagination, which, independently of the scientific status of the proposition it may subtend, is capable of effectively organising our way of viewing portions of the external world in accord with its distinctions.

Finally Cassirer (in Righter 1975:5) defines myth as " an autonomous form of the human spirit, with its own structure, function, expression... with unity of feeling".

From these three definitions we have isolated certain characteristics of myth which have guided our definition and methodological approach in this study. First, from Okepwho's definition, we deduce that "any narrative of the oral tradition (is) a myth". This is consistent with Kirk's definition when he asserts: "It seems that "traditional oral tale" is the only safe basis for a broad definition of myth." (Ibid p57). Thus, the term myth in this study refers to <u>all</u> tales from the Gikuyu community be they 'myth', legend, ogre tales, fables or animal tales. Texts from all these categories have been sampled.

From Righter's definition, this study takes mythology, "as a schema of the imagination" and seeks to show the potential of this schema in "effectively organising [Gikuyu] way of viewing portions of [their] external world in accord with its distinctions". This has been done by foregrounding Gikuyu mythology " as an autonomous form with its own structure, function [purpose] and expression."

The second pertinent issue in this study is the methodologies of interpreting mythology. This issue is articulated by Claude Levi-Strauss (1970:5) when he says:

> The study of myths raises a methodological problem in that it cannot be carried out according to the Cartesian principle of breaking down the difficulty into as many parts as maybe necessary for finding a solution. There is no real end to mythological analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking down process has been completed.

We here note that as a result of formalist and functionalist approaches, the available studies on the Gikuyu mythology have followed a procedure of "breaking down the difficulty" - the mythology - "into as many parts" - sub genres, functions and themes as it is thought "necessary for finding a solution". We have argued that such approaches do not provide any systematic 'hidden unity'- a system through which the mythology can be "grasped". For mythological

analysis to exhibit unity, Levi-Strauss stresses the need to see the structure of myth in terms of the structure of language. First, it should be seen as a self-contained structure, whose various constituent units should be seen as existing in a transversal/transformational relationship with one another. These constituent units derive their meaning only in relation to one another. Whereas in linguistics these units are variously called phonemes, morphemes and sememes, Levi- Strauss proposes the term mythemes for the units of myth. Secondly, myth should be seen as exhibiting a tendency towards binary differentiation of ideas and values for example hot/cold raw/cooked low/high and so on. It then must be shown how these differentiations are actualised by the society from which the mythology is taken for any meaningful interpretation to take place. This inclusion of the society reveals an emphasis on ethnographic support for myth analysis.

Thus in undertaking this study, we have taken the worlds of the Gikuyu mythology, provisionally defined as mythological sphere(s) of existence/activity, as the mythology's mythemes. We have then sought binary differentiations from the transformational relationships of these mythemes. Consequently we have interpreted the mythology, showing how these differentiations are actualised in Gikuyu Society and culture.

Stated another way, we have taken the binary differentiations exhibited by the transformational relationships between the worlds of the Gikuyu mythology as the basis for probing "its structure, function [purpose] and expression" (Righter 1975:6). Proceeding from the above and in relation to analyses of myth, this study should be seen not as a continuation but, from a Levi-Straussian view:

> ...a different handling of the same material, a new attack on the same problems, in the hope that it will bring out hitherto blurred or unnoticed features by means of different lighting or by different colouring. (Levis-Strauss, 1970:4).

The expectation is that this enterprise would not only rescue Gikuyu mythology from Culler's stated "uncertain existence" (1975: 50) which characterises the institution of mythology, but would also point to a different direction for future mythological studies.

Statement of the Problem

As will be shown in the literature review, studies of Gikuyu mythology are typological and atomistic. First, rather than attempt analysis on the whole mythology, they concentrate on folktales. Secondly, the approaches involve breaking down individual tales into functions, themes and motifs. This atomistic approach does not seek unity in the material of mythology, thus leading to a confusing situation where phenomena in mythology can be interpreted to mean anything. Studies concentrating on certain types of tales to the exclusion of others, and/or those that proceed by the breaking down of individual tales, constitute the study of what Richard Chase calls paramyth:

> The danger is to seize upon one facet of myth, one ghost precipitated from the artistic whole, and suppose that this is the myth or the explanation of myth: - A philosophical concept, a moral allegory, a symbol seized upon, cut off from the living whole - this is what I should call paramyth.... to see one form in the whole to the exclusion of others is to see a paramyth.
> (Chase 1949, Quoted in Okpewho 1983:219).

This study has sought to move away from this "paramyth" and uses a more comprehensive approach that recognises the unity in Gikuyu mythology.

Furthermore, the issue of the worlds of mythology, especially as it appertains to Gikuyu mythology, has hitherto been unsystematic and amorphous. The potential of the worlds to provide a basis for an analytical/interpretive model of the mythology has not been acknowledged much less explored. This study acknowledges and explores this potentiality.

Consequently, our problem was to analyse Gikuyu mythology by relating a structural model, constructed from the transformational relationship of its worlds, to the Gikuyu culture and society. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: What are the worlds of Gikuyu mythology? How do these worlds relate to each other and to the world of Gikuyu experience? What transformational structures accrue from this relationship? How do the patterns revealed in these structures relate to Gikuyu society and culture and what meanings do they portend?

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

1. Identify the spatial, temporal and phenomenal variables in representative texts of Gikuyu mythology.

2. Identify the worlds of Gikuyu mythology.

3. Construct a structural model, from its identifiable worlds showing the transformational relations between these worlds.

4. Interprete Gikuyu mythology by relating the structural model identified in (3) above to Gikuyu society and culture and demonstrate the role of mythology in organising and mediating cultural modes of thought and practices.

Research Hypothesis

This study is guided by, and tests the following hypothesis:

The structural model of the Gikuyu mythology derived from the transformational relationships of its identifiable worlds is related to Gikuyu society and culture and thus provides the basis for the analysis of the mythology.

Research Assumptions

1. In mythological behaviour the mind is invariably guided by a system of binary differentiation.

2. The model of relations (code) that enables two people to mythologically understand each other operates at a more or less unconscious level.

Justification and Significance of the Study

Several factors have necessitated the undertaking of this study. As indicated earlier, previous researches into Gikuyu mythology have been greatly hampered by defining some tales as being fundamentally different from others. These studies have tended to concentrate on the folktales so that Gikuyu 'myths' and legends are seldom included in analyses. We posit that the understanding of Gikuyu mythology is at the present hampered by typological biases. Our study takes Gikuyu mythology as comprising all tale "types" and avoids those biases by analysing texts from the "complete" corpus.

Partly due to these definitional shortcomings and also due to the constraints of atomistic theoretical approaches, that is, those that deal with tales individually, meaningful relations are not sought between tales and across the entire mythology, even in studies that claim to be "structural". "The notion of structure" Jean Piaget tells us "is comprised of three key ideas: the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation and the idea of self-regulation" (Piaget 1970). The danger in some strands of structuralism is to assume a systematic completeness where one does not exist. As Scholes (1975) notes, this is exactly the assumption in operation when individual tales are structurally regarded

as "closed" and finished objects in order to be treated systematically. This study is cognizant of this serious methodological shortcoming and has addressed it. Its justification thus lies in methodologically approaching mythology as a transformational 'whole' and a self-regulated system. By seeking fundamental relations between all types of tales in Gikuyu mythology, we appreciate the fact that a myth cannot satisfactorily be interpreted individually, since each myth taken separately "exists as the limited application of a pattern, which is gradually revealed by the relations of reciprocal intelligibility discerned between several other myths" (Levi-Strauss, 1970:13).

Past experience shows that the understanding of folkloristic material is hampered or facilitated by the theoretical approaches in vogue. An illustrative case is the evolutionist movement whose premises, as Finnegan (1970) notes, advanced misconceptions that led to detrimental conclusions about African folklore. More recently, especially in the Kenyan case, there has been a growing influence of formalist, atomistic approaches in the study of folklore, approaches which (a) make typological distinctions between tales and break down tales into themes and motifs, (b) isolate structures without seeking the logic behind these structures nor relating them to the cultures from

which the stories are taken, and (c) never seek generic relations across the "subgenres" of the narrative tradition. Wa-Gachanja (1987), Kabira and Mutahi (1988) and Kabaji (1991), are cases in point. The efforts of these scholars need to be supplemented if only to avoid a situation where formalism will be said to hamper the understanding and interpretation of folkloristic material. Therefore these formalistic studies need to be augmented with wholistic approaches for a balanced understanding of folklore. The significance of this study in this regard is that it expands the present understanding of folklore studies by advocating and using a 'wholistic' approach to the study of myth.

This study will also prove helpful to scholars of mythology by providing a fresh insight through a different methodological approach. We hope that the study will be significant, not only in offering a basis of comparison between different African cultures, but also by making it possible to compare African mythology with contemporary verbal and performative art.

Theoretical Framework.

After examining the various extant approaches to the study of folklore in Africa, three theoretical traditions emerge (Okpewho 1983: l-36). These are: **the ethnological tradition** that deals with the matter or content of myths, to which Evolutionists and Functionalists belong; **the cognitionist tradition** that deals with the myth-making mind to which the Psychoanalysts, the Structuralists and the Symbolists belong; and finally **the taxonomist tradition** that deals with the formal composition and geographical spread of mythical materials, to which the Diffusionists and Formalists belong. We shall briefly discuss the tenets of each of these schools of thought as a first step towards devising a suitable theoretical framework for this study.

Evolutionism was largely inspired by Charles Darwin's ideas about the origins and survival of biological species. Folklore scholars who were influenced by these ideas saw in traditional tales the remnants of an earlier world-view or set of ideas about man and his environment. Evolutionism concludes that the nature of man is universal and that all societies develop similar traits even if they are geographically remote to each other. The theory takes the viewpoint that all societies progress from primitivity towards a European-like civilisation.

The theory is divided into Euhemerism, Solarism and Naturalism. Euhemerism, which was popularized by David Hume holds that "all tales, especially of the heroic kind, primarily have to do with antecedent historical personalities and their experiences" Okpewho (1983:2). Solarism was propounded and championed by the brothers Jacob and Wilheim Grimm, and Max Muller. Muller advanced the "Aryan hypothesis" contending that all European languages descended from some extinct common language that has been spoken by Aryans --an ancient dusky race of men who occupied India from central Asia. According to the hypothesis, what we know as the basis of western culture had been brought from India to Europe by persistent streams of Aryan descended people moving westwards. The result of these migrations was that the parent Aryan language, and the mythology that it supported splintered into different offshoots. Muller believed that the original myths and their relationships might be recovered by means of a philosophical analysis based on the recognized laws of linguistic change. When he finally put the myths through such an analysis, he found that they were simply ancient Aryan statements about the sun which had, by a "disease of language" lost their meaning to later generations. For their persistence in seeing the sun, the moon and

other heavenly bodies behind every tale, Muller and his followers were dubbed solarists.

But the solarist zeal waned when James Frazer (1911-1936) discovered that both the age-old rituals in honour of divinities across nations had a strictly agrarian import. This position came to be known as naturalism.

While Evolutionism has been of some value to research in African mythology, for instance the euhemeristic reading of major figures in Yoruba traditional pantheon, { Babalola (1966:4-7), Raa (1969:24-53), Soyinka (1976: 12)}, it has its shortcomings. For instance, due to Evolutionism's assumption of unilinear development of human societies, African folklore was seen as survival of materials from "early" man. Thus Africans were seen as primitive people among whom there could still be found traces of the earlier stages of unilinear human condition.

Functionalism is the other theoretical approach under the ethnological tradition. Its main proponents were Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown. According to this approach, myths are a means through which social, cultural and spiritual needs of a community are satisfied. Myths operate within a social structure and cultural activity must have a

utilitarian value for its people. Malinowski (1926: 133) defined function as "the part which (an anthropological fact) plays within the integral system of culture" and "the manner in which they are related to each other within the system". His contemporary Radcliffe-Brown (1935:397) defines it as "the function of any recurrent activity…the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity". What this means is that everything a society does has a practical use for its citizens and a specific place within the fabric of social norms, such a fabric – the sum total of needs individually and collectively – is known as the functional unity of the society.

> Functionalism is therefore a theory which examines the peculiar network of needs in any society and the way in which this network ensures the contentment and survival of the social system (Okpewho.1983: 21).

The question the theory seeks to answer is: "What do myths serve in the community of origin?" And, "Why has the material been preserved?"

From the ethnological tradition, we shall briefly discuss the cognitionist tradition. This is where the Psychoanalysts and the Symbolists belong. The psychoanalytic approach was propounded by Sigmund Freud and

later expanded by his protégé Carl Jung. It has been popularised in folklore analysis by Alan Dundes. Psychoanalysis considers myth as an expression of an unrevealed scheme of a creative artist's mind. Freud (1933) observes that the creative mind gets its material from fantasies and dreams revealed through art. This is the premise that Dundes has used in folklore analysis. He contends that through folklore, what cannot be said openly is explored. Psychoanalysis focuses on subconscious constructs in the mythmaker's mind.

Like the psychoanalysts, symbolists are cognitionists who are interested in the cultural quality of symbolisation, "which myth as well as language performs in the mental construction of our world of things" (Cassirer, 1953:14-15). Symbolists are "united in the understanding that a symbol is a perceptible object used in reflecting or representing an abstract idea or less perceptible object" (Okpewho, 1983:27). Through this understanding, symbolist scholars like Cassirer quoted above have developed a "philosophy of symbolic forms."

Diffusionism, also called the historical – geographical theory is in the taxonomist tradition in folklore study and emphasises the relationship between and among narratives from different societies. It seeks to

prove that there must have been some contact between the peoples who use this material, either historically or geographically. According to Okpewho (1983), the theory is associated with Theodor Benfey, Emmanuel Cosquin and Julius and Kearle Krohn. Unlike evolutionism discussed earlier, diffusionism negates the concept that similar tales could have emanated from different societies without contact. The diffusionist explanation for the variations in what appears to be one tale from different societies is that the host community assimilated the tale and infused it with their own materials to fit the tale into their cultural milieu.

The next approach is formalism. Formalism identifies the motifs in narratives and seeks to analyse the inter-character relationships in facilitating plots. Rather than looking at one tale, formalism is concerned with the form of groups of tales falling into a scheme.

All the approaches discussed above have been used variously in the study of folklore materials. Researchers have used these approaches according to the demands of their research. While we appreciate their place in the study of myth the demands of this study are best served by structuralism.

The acknowledged doyen of structuralism is the French scholar Claude Levi-Strauss. Structuralism occupies a central place among the approaches discussed above since it encompasses the concerns of the three traditions as shown in Fig 1 below.
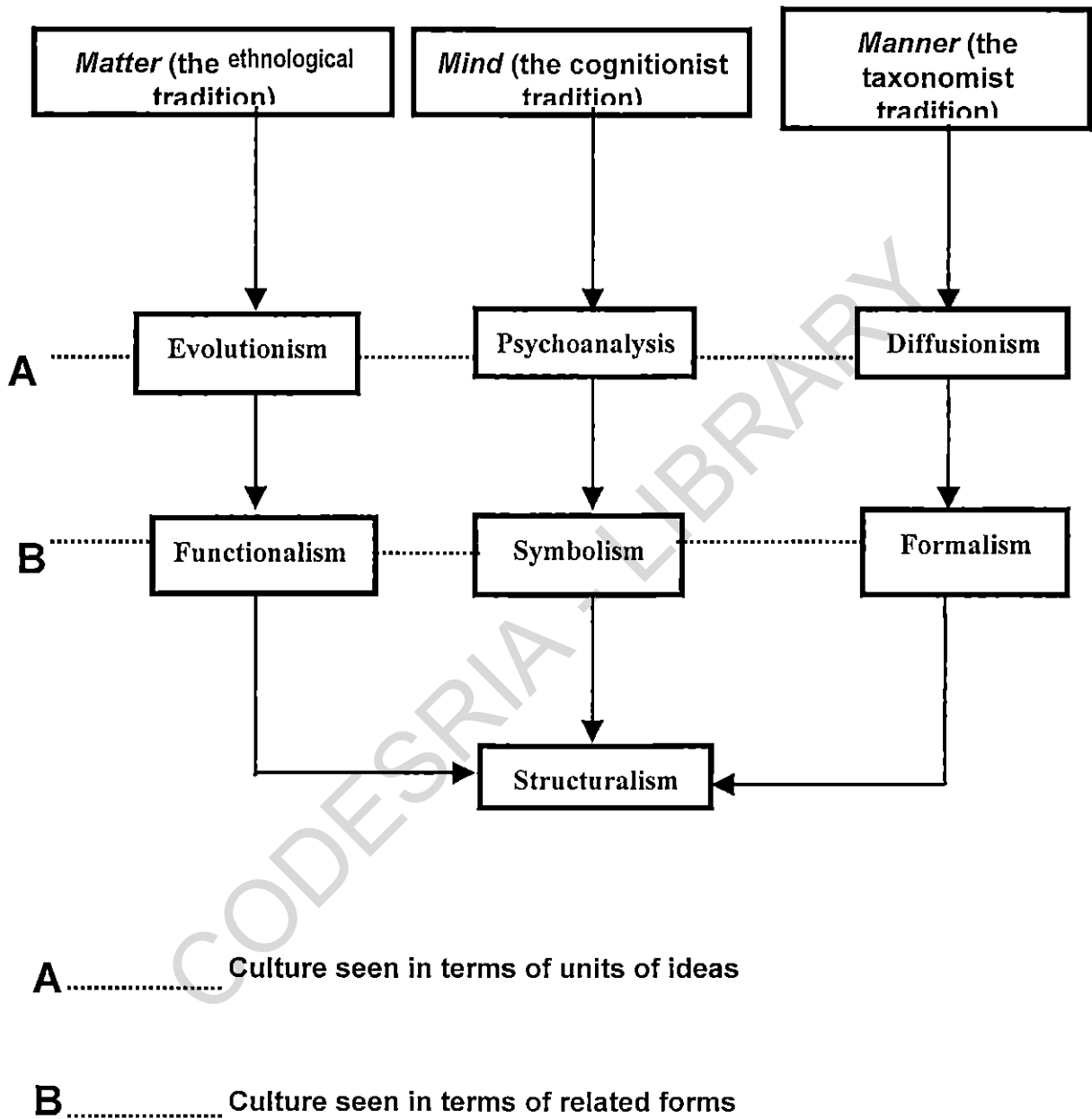
Fig. 1. How the Schools of thought Relate. (Adapted From Okpewho 1983:266)

According to Okpewho (1983:266), the central position accorded to structuralism as illustrated in Fig.1 is significant. This is because like evolutionists, psychoanalysts and evolutionists in (A) who saw culture in terms of independent units of ideas, Levi-Straussian structuralism is to a large extent influenced by the universalist premise of a common frame of human understanding. But it is also important to note that Levi-Strauss' research was equally influenced by a tendency to see how the universal psychological unity is realised in related forms of social life - an aspect found in (B). Also, in his analysis of myth, he combines an exploration of formal composition (a taxonomist approach), with a probe in the ethnographic background (an ethnological approach). However, and most importantly, Levi-Strauss is basically interested in seeing myths as an illustration of the basic human tendency towards binary classification. Therefore, as indicated in Fig.1, he belongs to the cognitionist camp.

Levi-Straussian structuralism takes an undifferentiated view of human cultural activity seeking "generic distinctions more within the body of the material itself than on the basis of the advertised views of the society in which it is found" (Okpewho, 1983:52). This strand of structuralism claims a privileged place in literary study because it seeks to establish a

model of the system of literature itself as the external reference for the

individual works it considers. As Scholes correctly notes:

> By moving from the study of language to the study of literature [mythology] and seeking to define the principles of structuration that operate not only through the individual works but through the relationship among works over the whole field of literature [mythology] structuralism has tried - and is trying - to establish for literary studies a basis that is as scientific as possible. (1974:10).

Scholes further explains that at the heart of the idea of this structuralism

"is the idea of system; a complete, self-regulating entity that adapts to

new conditions by transforming its features while retaining its

systematic structure"(Ibid). In particular, it seeks to explore the

relationship between the system of literature (mythology) and the

culture of which it is part. While appreciating that there are other

approaches, we have adopted structuralism for this study and it has

enabled us to look at individual myths, groups of myths and the whole

of Gikuyu mythology as a related system within the larger system of

Gikuyu culture.

This Levi-Straussian method borrows three seminal aspects from

linguistics. First, in linguistic behaviour, the mind is invariably guided by

a system of binary differentiation "whether this is in terms of the

acquisition of lexical competence (hot/cold) or in the development of

rhetorical discourse along lines of similarity (metaphor) or association (metonymy) between ideas" (Levi-Strauss 1968). Secondly, in communication between two people, for the message to be meaningful, there has to be a code of understanding at least common to both of them. This code operates at a more or less unconscious level and guarantees that there is a system through which the units of communication are processed. Thirdly, there is only a random relationship between word (signifier) and the thing it means (signified). These ideas are applied to analysis of myth with the assumption that myth is in some ways like language. First, myth, is seen as having constituent units -mythemes- which derive meanings only in relation to one another, and secondly in exhibiting a tendency towards binary differentiation. Again Levi-Strauss (1966) sees social and cultural communication as generally guided by some kind of abstract, supraconscious system into which that society members' behaviour automatically fit. Using this kind of reasoning, Levi-Strauss comes up with several rules for myth analysis which are summarised below and which we have adopted for this study.

The first is that a myth must never be interpreted individually but in relation to other myths. The formal analysis of each text allows us to fix

the number and nature of variables it uses. All the myths can therefore be arranged in a logical order. The second rule is that a group of myths must never be interpreted alone but by reference to other groups of myths, which, taken together, portray the mythology as a transformational group. Thirdly, a myth must never be interpreted at one level only. Every myth consists of an interrelation of several explanatory levels. The numerous versions that may at times exist are not all situated on the same level of mythological thought. And finally, a group of myths must never be interpreted alone but by reference to the ethnography of societies in which they originate. Each version provides a particular image of reality, that is, social and economic relations, technical activities, and ethnographic observation must decide whether this image corresponds to facts.

This approach has thus given us the basis of searching for the various constituent units (worlds) of Gikuyu mythology ("myth", legend, ogre tales, human tales and fables), which we have taken as existing in a transformational /transversal relationship. It has also given us the basis for seeking support from Gikuyu ethnography in the analysis and interpretation of the mythology. Freedman (1979) outlines the unique provisions of this approach, which have made it useful in this study.

The method has enabled us to marry the concept of structure to the notion of transformation, such that our task has been:

> ...to delineate structures, to transform them by manipulating their internal relations and to establish a set of realised transformations within the body of existing ethnographic knowledge (Freedman 1979:80).

By such means, Freedman notes, infinite contingency is brought down to a limited base of necessary principles by putting the emphasis on the deduction of structures from observable reality (myth) and by locating them below the level of consciousness of the men among whom they work. It is not how people see their reality that is so important, but rather how what they see and how they act can be accounted for by deeper layers of reality they can scarcely know. It is a theory that traces all possibilities of cultural reality (but rejects the charge of reducing them) to the basic mechanism of human thought. It is, therefore, in the last analysis, about the architecture of the mind. We have started from cultural and social variety (individual myths) and have arrived at mental unity. Though acknowledging the shortcomings of this Levi-Straussian

method, Okpewho (1983:44) notes that the method unites:

> a concern for the vivid details of life, [from ethnological tradition] with an interest in the abstract structure of activity [taxonomy] in the search for the basis of human behaviour [cognition]. *It has thus provided by far the most challenging approach to an understanding of the most fundamental issues in cultural scholarship.* (Italics mine)

In adopting this method we have recognised its great potential contribution to the study of folklore. Its central tenets have guided our conceptual/analytical underpinnings as shown in the conceptual/analytical framework outlined in Figure 2.

Fig 2. Conceptual/Analytical Framework.
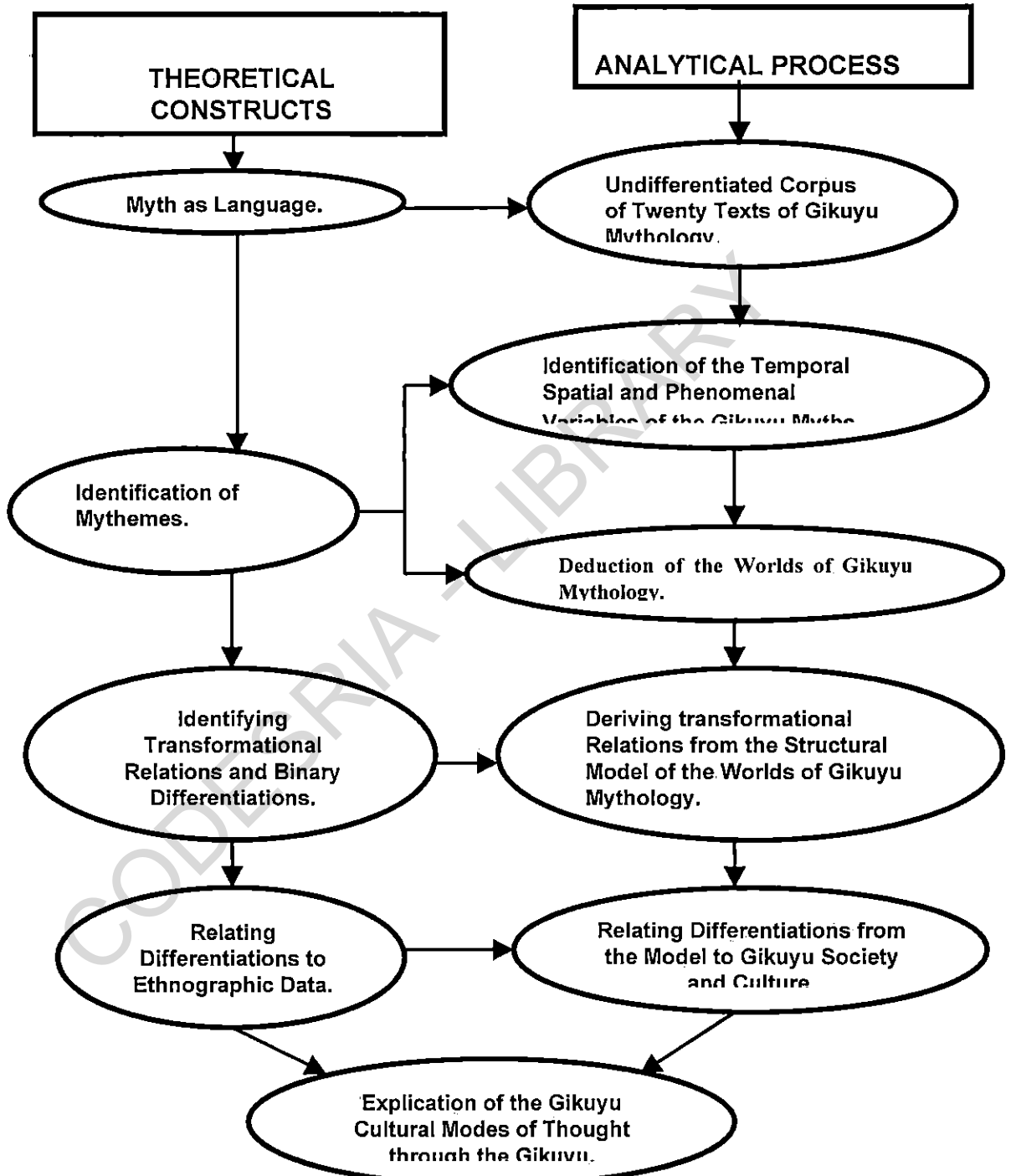
Fig 2. Conceptual/Analytical Framework.

The provisions of the structuralist approach as outlined above provide us with the requisite analytical tools for this study. However, we hasten to note that not every tenet of this approach has been adopted. The theory has been used cautiously such that while we are truthful to its basic tenets and have avoided undermining its original concerns, we have tried to be vigilant so that the theory does not oversimplify the issues and concerns central to this study.

Literature Review

Our literature search showed that a study that puts into account the pertinent issues of definition and method of analysing Gikuyu mythology, has not been undertaken. However, to crystallise our problem and refine our method, we have reviewed several relevant works. The review is in three sections. Firstly, we have presented a critical appraisal of the focus of the present analyses on the Gikuyu mythology. Secondly, we have reviewed the way the issue of the worlds of mythology has been treated with the view of first, highlighting its centrality in understanding myth, and secondly of spelling out a working definition of the term. Thirdly, we have reviewed critiques of the contributions and shorcomings of the Levi-Straussian method showing how the method has been improved to particularly suit our study.

Wa-Gachanja (1987) presents the most extensive effort to analyse the Gikuyu folklore to date. The study provides a survey of the works on the Gikuyu narrative that have appeared since the missionary era. This survey is of importance to our study in that it supports the observation that "although there is plenty of material collected from the Gikuyu people, there has not been any attempt to analyse the Gikuyu folktale" (1987:5). Since, as earlier stated, Wa-Gachanja (1987) can be said to

represent the most extensive endeavour to address this analytical lacuna in the Gikuyu mythology, it has been reviewed here, not only to be representative of other such efforts, but also to foreground the outstanding issues in approaching the Gikuyu mythology: issues which our study has addressed. By addressing the outstanding issues arising from his work, we have been able to expand the existing knowledge of the mythology.

Wa-Gachanja's objective was to investigate whether the Gikuyu oral narrative has an identifiable structure. He does this by using the Proppian method. Proppian structures or 'functions' are delineated in the tales and meaning is given using a psychoanalytic theoretical conception, which is both convincing and exhaustive. This study goes beyond the findings of Wa-Gachanja's work by alternatively using the delineated structures of the mythological material under analysis as a basis for meaning. As noted earlier, we recognise that the search for meaning in myth must involve the relating of mythological structures to cultural realities. By using an approach that recognises the figurative implications of the mythological structures, and thus their interpretive significance, this study has endeavoured to avoid a situation where we

would have been forced to seek an alternative approach other than structuralism in the search for meaning.

Wa-Gachanja's analysis is done under the headings "Problems of existence", "The ogre and monsters" and " The Hyena/Hare Dyad." The author cautions against the dangers that such categories might portend and further states that such a classification, "is purely for convenience for discussing the stories' cultural and psychological implications- not for the sake of structural typology" (p47). Wa-Gachanja's point of caution has leads to three issues which this study has picked up from. First, his approach does not claim to provide a 'structural typology' that is a unified system through which the corpus of Gikuyu mythology can be understood. Secondly because these categories are "purely for convenience' they inevitably favour certain mythological phenomena over others. For example, there is no evidence that the Hyena/Hare Dyad is of more significance than, say, the animal/man or, the Ogre/Animal relationship. Thirdly, the author concedes that these categories are chosen "according to the very methods, theories and striking incidents which we have from the beginning insisted are wrong" (p47). Proceeding from these issues, this study has sought to (a), search for unity, providing a system through which Gikuyu mythology

can be understood, (b) avoid favouring certain mythological phenomena over others and (c) avoid methods, theories and striking incidences which give an analyst the arbitrary freedom to select those aspects of myth which are important to the message one wants to underscore.

Meaning and themes in Wa-Gachanja (1987) are inferred from "cultural categories" which are defined as the major cultural themes that appear in each episode and in the story as a whole. These "cultural categories" are identified using a criterion of what each tale " seems to deal with"(p47). In this regard Levi-Strauss (1970:342) is instructive when he notes:

> It is pointless to discover in myths certain semantic levels *that are thought to be more important than others...* The myths treated this way will be reduced to platitudes or the level we imagine we have singled out will elude our grasp and automatically resume its place in a system involving a multiplicity of levels. Then and only then can the part be fitted into a figurative interpretation, through the operation of a whole capable of fulfilling this function. (Emphasis mine).

Instead of using such categories, this study uses " a system involving a multiplicity of levels" by taking Gikuyu mythology as a transformational group so that we have sought transformational relations between all

elements of the mythology ensuring that these " are fitted into a figurative interpretation through the operations of a whole".

Coming to the issue of worlds of mythology, two quotations have helped us in focusing on how the issue is dealt with in the study of Gikuyu mythology. Wa-Gachanja (1987:52) notes:

> The folk story transports the audience to an ancient world; it transports them to a past when animals and men mingled, talked, and understood one another. It takes them to a world in which outrages occur and frightening things happen. Ogres eat children and threaten to devastate whole families. Monsters ravage whole villages killing people and their livestock. That deliberate attempt to transport the audience to the world of fantasy, fear and wonder symbolises that the performers and the audience are leaving the world of ordinary reality.

Later on in the study, the author talks of "a world of spirits" which he refers to as an "unknown world," which he says is opposed to the "familiar world". Further still, he talks about the "outer world" which he says symbolises "the real world of men and women".

Kabira (1983:26) also talks of the worlds of the Gikuyu folktales as follows:

> Fantasy plays a very important role in these narratives. It can be argued, as it has already been done, that the world of oral narratives is by nature a world of fantasy. Some people have even argued that it is a world of wishful thinking, a world of illusions, an ideal world, a world into which the audience and the narrator escape within the period of narrative.

From the two quotations above it can be observed that a definition of worlds is not given. In addition, the apparent unrestrained proliferation of vocabulary and idiom to describe the worlds of mythology as given by the two authors, that is, ancient world, world of outrages, world of fantasy, world of ordinary reality, world of spirits, unknown world, familiar world, outer world, the real world, world of wishful thinking, world of illusions, ideal world, makes the issue of the worlds quite amorphous.

Soyinka (1975) and Luthi (1987) also touch on the issue of the worlds of mythology. The issue is however as amorphous as in the works of the two Kenyan folklorists quoted above. Soyinka (1975) talks of the "Ideal essence world" and "The material world", and between them identifies what he calls "the fourth area of existence... the dark continuum of transition where occurs the intra-transmutation of the

"Ideal essence world and materiality" (p26). Later on, Soyinka talks of "animal world", "spirit world" and "primal inner world". These terms, as in the earlier cases, only serve to compound the issue of the worlds.

Luthi (1987) says:

> the fairy tale hero being isolated thus enters effortlessly into fruitful contact with distant worlds, with worlds above and below, with nature and with individual figures of our world (p138).

Zahan (1969) (quoted in Okpewho 1983 pp 42-44), identifies a "divine world" and a "human world" and the existence between these worlds of a "no-man's land" in which the communication between God and man is transformed. He works with tales dealing with the origin of life and death. Though the issue is more satisfactorily dealt with in Zahan's paper, a definition is not given and only one tale type is considered. These shortcomings notwithstanding, insights drawn from these authors have been important in our working out a definition of worlds as discussed below. Our study has not only provided a definition of worlds but also used them as mythemes so as to provide a system through which the Gikuyu mythology can be understood.

In working out a definition for the term 'worlds', we have first critically questioned the terms used by the writers quoted above. We notice that

time, space and phenomena are important aspects in deriving the term
'worlds'. These aspects are shown in the Table. 1 below.

Table 1. Aspects derived from terms referring to worlds.

Aspect	Terms used by authors quoted
Time	➤ Ancient world ➤ Past world
Space	➤ Outer world ➤ Distant worlds ➤ Worlds above and below
Phenomena (action and character)	World of outrages, World of ordinary reality, Unknown world, Familiar world, World of spirits, The real world of men and women, Animal world, Divine world, Human world, World of illusions and Ideal world.

We are therefore able to deduce that in defining worlds of myth,
temporal, spatial and phenomenal relations are important. Levi-Strauss
(1970) has also been significant in our devising a working definition of

worlds. He tells us that a myth is diachronic as a historical account of the past and it is synchronic and temporally reversible as an instrument of interpretation of the present or the future. He goes on to say that the constituents of myth are relations and *it is only as bundles that those relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce meaning.* This, coupled with the important aspects discussed above has given us the basis of deriving a working definition of worlds and thus expanding the provisional definition given in the section on definition of terms. Thus in this study a world is defined as *a synchronic bundle of temporal, spatial and phenomenal relations, which together constitute an independent sphere of existence: independent in as much as at least one of these relational units is in a diachronic opposition with at least one other such relation in any other bundle of such relations, where the later would be understood to constitute other-worldliness.*

Finally, Scholes (1974), Culler (1975) and Okpewho (1983), have been instructive as critiques of the Levi-Straussian method and have enabled us to adapt it so that it is particularly suited for this study. Scholes (1974) makes a justified criticism of Levi-Strauss especially how the latter chooses and organises his mythemes in the essay "Structural study of myth"(1968). Scholes, however, admits that the reduction of a

mythical narrative into relational units called mythemes is the least controversial part of Levi-Strauss' analytical procedure. We have therefore adopted this notion as discussed above. Nevertheless, Scholes remarks that in the arrangement of the mythemes, Levi-Strauss arbitrarily adjusts his categories " with an unscientific elan that dismays his professional colleagues." Culler (1975) has also noted this apparent fact. For our study, the definition of the worlds derived above gives a fixed reference point from which the worlds have been identified and related. Ours has been an empirical approach that has sought to move away from the Levi-Straussian arbitrariness in identifying and arranging the mythemes. Okpewho (1983) has helped us to expand the definition of myth to include all the tales in Gikuyu mythology. This has been necessitated by the fact that Levi-Strauss has himself used the typological definition of myth, which we have sought to move away from. Therefore he only uses "folktales" in his analysis "to complete or explain myth," and as he says, its (folktales) use "does not constitute an obbligato accompaniment of the myth in a musician's sense of the term". (1970:4). By adopting Okpewho's notion of myth our study has taken the so-called "folktale" as constituting "an obligatto (compulsory) accompaniment of the myth." This is a significant departure which helps

us to ensure that the theoretical approach does not oversimplify the issues of central concern to this study.

METHODOLOGY

This is an analytical study which has been designed to address the lacuna particularly in the analysis of (Gikuyu) mythology. Several authors have identified this lacuna. Finnegan (1970:315-318)) expressed concern that the emphasis in African oral literature has been on the collection of the material and not on the analysis of the material itself. Orewa (1966), Crowley (1970) and Wa-Gachanja (1987) have expressed similar sentiments. Thus this study has been undertaken by analysing twenty texts from Gikuyu mythology sampled from library and archival collections. We have arrived at the number twenty by considering issues of space, manageability and the need for an exhaustive analysis. A smaller sample would compromise analysis while a larger one would prove cumbersome with no additional theoretical or pragmatic advantages. As we have consistently argued, this study has not admitted typological differentiation of tales. All "types" of tales, "myth", legends, ogre tales and fables have been included in the analysis by purposive sampling. Since this study is premised on the assumption of a generic unity of mythology, the implied challenge for the methodology has been to sample stories collected by different collectors, from different narrators, in different places and at different periods. As Levi-Strauss has urged, to gain legitimacy, structural

analysis should "demonstrate that myths from widely divergent sources can be seen objectively as a set" (1970:8).

Subsequently, we started by randomly sampling nine collections which had at least one Gikuyu myth. These were Routledge (1910), Cagnolo (1933), Kenyatta (1938), Beecher (1944), Kabira (1983), Adagala and Kabira (1985), Kabira and Mutahi (1988), Mwangi (1988), Miruka (1994), and Bukenya, Gachanja and Nandwa (1997). All the Gikuyu myths were read and re-read and then sampled using several criteria.

The first was the criterion of inclusiveness. All the "types" of tales, "myth", legend and folktales had to be included in the sample. We used our foreknowledge of folklore to select all tale "types" for analysis. The second criterion was based on variants. For pragmatic reasons, we tried as much as possible to avoid sampling variants of what appeared to be the same myth in terms of character, plot and action. This ensured a diverse sample for a more extensive analysis. The third criterion was length and clarity. The long, detailed texts were given priority over the short or abridged ones. This was more so in situations where we had several variants of the same myth.

Since this study recognises the unity of myth and avoids favouring any tale "types" over others, and/or using such a criterion as "striking incidences" to categorise the myths, all the sampled texts were arranged in alphabetical order for initial analysis particularly for the second chapter of this thesis. We have followed this order up to the end of the chapter where the myths themselves have fallen into a "natural" order according to our derived analytical paradigms. Thus it is only from that point that we have followed groupings which have become immanent through the systematic analysis in this chapter.

Thus, through the analysis of individual myths, we have been able to group them, identifying the world each group represents. We have proceeded to construct a structural model of these worlds and related that model to Gikuyu society and culture. This relationship has been established through the use of detailed and extensive materials on Gikuyu ethnography. This material has been collected through library search. Accounts of traditional Gikuyu society given by travellers and explorers, missionaries, colonial administrators, African neo-African writers and researchers have been utilized. We have, however, remained aware of the racial and historical biases of some of the early writers on Gikuyu ethnography, especially the missionaries and the

travellers/explorers. Comparative reading of this material has enabled us to have a relatively accurate grasp of the traditional Gikuyu culture and society and has enriched our interpretation.

While Levi-Strauss assumes that myth is like language in several ways, he gives one major characteristic in which myth differs from language, one which has important implications for our methodology. This is that unlike poetry, which operates on the primary level of language, myth operates at the secondary level, which transcends considerations of style and idiom. In Levi-Strauss' words:

> Whatever our ignorance of the language and culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader anywhere in the world …myth is the part of language where the formula traduttore, tradittore [translator equals traitor] reaches its lowest truth value. (1968:206) C.S. Lewis has made almost the same observation about mythical forms when he says: It is true that such a story can hardly reach us except in words-but this is logically accidental. If some perfected art of mime or silent film or serial pictures could make it clear with no words at all, it would still affect us the same way (1965:41)

It is due to this kind of reasoning that the sample of this study includes only the English translations of the myths. However some of the texts have been transliterated rather than translated from vernacular. This does not however apply to all the sampled texts. While the urge would be to "correct" the affected texts, we are keenly aware that any

manipulation of the texts may be seen as "tampering", to make them more amenable to our thesis. Since our concern for the productiveness of our method and the legitimacy of our thesis are cardinal, we have resisted the urge to "correct" the syntactical and graphical presentation of the affected texts in order to obviate questioning of the authenticity of our analysis.

The analysis in this study progresses in three closely related stages that are concomitant with the stated objectives of the study. We have started by tackling the first objective in Chapter Two. In this chapter we have analysed individual myths in terms of their temporal, spatial and phenomenal variables. After determining these factors for each myth, we have linked the tales which belong to the same sphere of activity into groups thus attaining the first objective. We have then proceeded to the second and third objective in Chapter Three. Here we have identified the worlds represented by each group of tales as identified in Chapter Two, and constructed a structural model from the transformational relationship of these worlds. We have then used this model to explore Gikuyu culture and modes of thought and practicesin Chapter Four in line with the fourth objective of this study. Chapter Five

contains the conclusion, where we give the implications of our study to both the study of mythology and cultural studies.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

For pragmatic as well as theoretical reasons, this study has only used the mythology in Gikuyu culture. This is because the researcher is familiar with the Gikuyu language and culture. In addition, this type of study cannot deal effectively at this stage with mythology from two or more cultures. Culler (1975) deals with this issue, and gives us the importance of the cultural delimitation, if such an enterprise is to achieve its goals. He distinguishes between three different analytical situations. One, given two myths with similar meaning or function, it should be possible to establish relations between them-as done by Zahan (1969). He has dealt with tales which are similar in that they deal with the origin of life and death. These have been taken mainly from H. Abrahamson's <u>Origin of death,</u> 1975. According to Okpewho (1983), he has relied largely on Henry Junod's works on Southern African cultures and beliefs for ethnographic information. Two, when several myths are taken from the same culture, and information about the distinctions used in the culture is available, one also has grounds for comparison –that is what we have done in this study. He goes on to say:

But when, as is so often the case, Levi-Strauss compares two myths from different cultures and claims to derive their meaning from the relations between them, his analysis may become problematic indeed. There is no *a priori* reason to think that the myths have anything to do with one another (Culler, 1975:47)

Thus we have not dealt with mythology from any other culture together with the Gikuyu mythology, since "there is no *a priori* reason to think that the myths [of any other cultural group] have anything to do with [the Gikuyu mythology]". Comparison is only possible once the fundamental mythemes of the Gikuyu mythology have been delineated and accounted for in interpretation, and also the same is done for the mythology of the culture to be compared to the Gikuyu one.

For reasons of space and manageability, only twenty myths have been considered. While a larger corpus would, in theory, seem more expedient, we in practice should and have been able to produce an account of the system from a limited corpus. Since "the total body of myth belonging to a given community is comparable to its speech", the above delimitation makes sense because "experience proves that a linguist can work out the grammar of a given language from a remarkably small number of sentences, compared to all those he might in theory have collected". (Levi-Strauss, 1970:7).

Performance and the artist are not the concern of this study. These areas have not only been investigated in Gikuyu mythology by Wa-Gachanja (1987) and Kabira (1983), but also these as aspects of context have been subsumed in the wider cultural context in which we have interpreted the mythology. This study has concentrated on myth as a schema of imagination and is solely devoted to reconstructing this schema and accounting for it. The study has thus remained focused on the establishment of a model through which Gikuyu mythology has been analysed. It is only through such focusing that we may rescue Gikuyu mythology from Culler's " uncertain existence".

CHAPTER TWO

The Temporal, Spatial And Phenomenal Variables Of The Myths.

Introduction

This chapter opens with the description of individual myths, an exercise which will enable us to identify the worlds of the mythology in the subsequent chapter. Thence we shall concern ourselves with the description aimed at achieving the first objective stated in Chapter One, that is identifying the temporal, spatial and phenomenal elements of each of the texts in the sample. For the description in the present chapter, we duly recognise the implications of rule (i) given in our theoretical framework viz.: A myth must never be interpreted individually but in relation with other myths. The formal analysis allows us to fix the number of variables/elements that the myth uses. All the texts/versions can therefore be arranged in a logical order. In our description, the temporal, spatial and phenomenal relations of the myths shall constitute the said variables. After identifying these variables for each text, we shall indicate the link that every text has with others in the sample so that at the end of this chapter, we shall be able to arrange all the texts

in a logical order according to their similarities and differences. The description of each text has been presented in three steps.

The first step is entitled **Synopsis**: A synopsis of the story being described has been given for the sake of readability and textual cohesion.

The second step is entitled **Analysis**. Each text has been analysed in terms of its temporal, spatial and phenomenal variables. This is accompanied by a tabulated summary of these variables for each text. The third step is entitled **link**. Here we shall show the link between the myth under analysis and other stories in the sample, which will have already been analysed.

In identifying these variables we shall proceed in a descriptive manner and our technique shall be observational rather than prescriptive. In the words of Levi-Strauss (1963: 280), we shall duly recognise that:

> on the observational level, the main - one could almost say the only - rule is that all the facts should be carefully observed and described, without allowing any theoretical preconception to decide whether some are more important than others.

This is the most fruitful and objective method because using preconceived paradigms may lead to unjustified valuation of certain variables over others. Thus at this point in our analysis we shall proceed tentatively, taking all the manifestations of the temporal, spatial and phenomenal variables to be admissible provided there is textual evidence.

We shall however heed as a check, principles which Levi-Strauss (1963:211) emphasizes as constituting reliable bases for any kind of structural analysis.   These are "unity of solution, economy of explanation and ability to reconstruct the whole from the fragment, as well as later stages from previous ones".

Analysis of individual myths

Myth 1: Children left in the Old Homestead.

Synopsis

A man has five wives and the first wife gives birth to two children. After these two births, the woman fails to bear any more children. Similar fate befalls the other four wives: none could produce a child. Distressed by this state of affairs, the man consults a diviner who advises him to slay his two children in order to activate the fertility of his

wives. Naturally, the man finds the diviner's solution untenable and seeks the opinion of other diviners who, to his chagrin, give him the same diagnosis and prescription. The man, however, horrified at the thought of killing his children decides to move away from his homestead, abandoning the two children. The two children are later discovered by two young men who had been grazing livestock around the now overgrown ruins where the children had been left. The two children are rescued, ritually cleansed and fed. They are adopted by one of the herdsmen, and they live with him until they become adults. They later discover that they are not blood relations of their adopted families and set out in search of their original relatives. They eventually find their original family living in a prosperous homestead. They are reunited and incorporated into the life of their original family.

Analysis:

The phenomena that are depicted in this story are indisputably lifelike. At the beginning of the story, we are introduced to a family - a man and five wives and two children. The conflict in this story revolves around this human family. The other characters introduced later in the story are also human characters acting in accordance with human nature. The action of the story revolves around certain identifiable cultural practices. These include marriage,

childbirth, divination and grazing. In a nutshell, we do not have unlifelike characters or any non-human action described in this story. We can, therefore, say that this story belongs to a determinable cultural setting - in a temporal realm that can be placed in the present in relation to Gikuyu traditional society. The action in the story is as it may have occurred in the traditional Gikuyu society. We can also conclude that the tale belongs to the natural terrestrial space. In terms of character and action, the story depicts the actions and reactions of normal human beings interacting in an identifiable cultural setting.

Title: Children left in the old - Homestead	
Temporal variable	Present determinable cultural time.
Spatial variable	Terrestrial natural space.
Phenomena	Characters; ⇒ Human characters exhibiting human reactions within an identifiable cultural context Action: ⇒ Natural and lifelike

Table 2: Summary of myth 1.

Link:

This being the first story, the question of linkage does not arise. But as we proceed to the subsequent myths it is important to bear in mind the variables employed in this myth so as to be able to recognise other myths with similar variables. We now proceed to the description of the next myth.

Myth 2: The Elephant and the Thrush

Synopsis:

Elephants decide to go and eat white chalk. One elephant leaves its child at home because the child cannot walk. On their way, the elephants meet the children of the thrush and ask them in turns to whom they belong. The children say they belong to the thrush. When the elephant which had left its child at home comes, it crushes the children of the thrush to death. Thrush comes back and finds her children dead. She identifies the unmistakable footprints of the elephants and waits for them as they return from chalk eating. Thrush demands to see each elephant's foot and she finally identifies the elephant who had killed her children. In retribution Thrush enters the culpable elephant's stomach through the anus and tears at her intestines until the elephant dies. The carcass of the dead elephant is

devoured by the hyenas while the child of this dead elephant is left mourning its mother.

Analysis:

In this myth we are in a setting where animals are given human characteristics. While the practice of elephants going to eat white chalk may be a normal phenomenon with the common elephants in the wild as explained in the tale, the action of the elephants talking to the children of the thrush and the children talking back removes the story from the realistic realm to the fantastic or imaginary. The story reaches its height of fancy when we are told that the thrush entered the elephant's stomach through the anus and started tearing its inside to pieces. In fact the little bird is said to be conversing with the other elephants while doing this: "little bird where are you"; and the bird replies "I am in the intestines, I am harvesting, I am going to tear everything". The actions of the elephants and the thrush do not reflect the wild animals that we know but reflect the actions of characters at the level of metaphor, where animals are imbued with humanlike qualities. Thus while we may accept the existence of elephants and the thrush, as identifiable animal species in nature, their actions as given in the tale defy anything lifelike. Thus all the variables must be seen as being

controlled by this quality of fancy in the story. The tale thus belongs to a timeless, spaceless, metaphorical sphere of activity.

Title: The Elephant and the Thrush.	
Temporal variable.	Timeless: Indeterminate, time
Spatial variable.	Spaceless: Indeterminate space.
Phenomena.	Characters: ⇒ Identifiable natural animals. Action: ⇒ Fanciful unlifelike actions.

Table 3; Summary of myth 2.

Link:

It is evident that all the variables identified in this story differ from those identified in the previous tale. The reader will recall that when a text differs in at least one variable from the other texts, then such a text shall be said to belong to an independent sphere of existence/activity. We can thus conclude that the two tales already discussed belong to two independent spheres of activity since they differ in all the variables. Thus we proceed to the analysis of the third tale having noted that there is no apparent link at this level between the two tales already analysed.

Myth 3: The girls and the ogre.

Synopsis:

This is a story about five girls who fall in love with a charismatic young man. The girls follow the man towards his home after a dance. On the way, four of the girls discover the man had an extra mouth hidden by the hair at the back of his head. Thus they realise that the man is a disguised ogre and they beat a quick retreat. The fifth girl naively walks all the way to the man's abode. On reaching there, the ogre's other captives warn her that the man is an ogre and so she decides to flee. The ogre pursues her until she is near her home but her brother meets her and kills the ogre, thus rescuing the girl.

Analysis:

This story introduces new phenomena which we have not encountered before. This is in the character and actions of the ogre. According to the tale, the ogre is a creature with a mouth at the back of its head. Also, it has cannibalistic tendencies, as we are told that it pursued the last remaining girl keenly "because its food had ran away." From our knowledge of life, we do know that such a creature cannot be human. We do not know of any animal with the characteristics and qualities of

this creature. We can only surmise that it is a different sort of creature not known in nature, which can only claim a preternatural, fanciful existence. We can therefore say that it is a fictitious creature and in the context of myth making, we can call it *mythical*, where this word is used to denote phenomenon, which only exists in myths. Phenomenon in this tale can thus be described as mythical since our understanding of the tale has to be seen in line with this mythical creature. It is also logical to conclude that human beings who are in contact with such a creature cannot claim any natural existence. They are as mythical as the creature itself. The reasoning behind this conclusion is that it would be inconceivable for real lifelike human beings like those in myth 1 to interact on one to one level with a mythical creature. We can thus conclude that all the characters in the myth inhabit a fictitious mythical land, in mythical space and time.

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Title: The girls and the ogre	
Temporal variable	Timeless; mythical
Spatial variable	Spaceless; mythical
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ An ogre: A non-human, non-animal, mythical principle character. Mythical Human beings; Action: ⇒ Fanciful activity; unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations.

Table 3:Summary of myth 3.

Link

This story seems to introduce new variables which cannot be matched with the variables identified in the previous two stories. It differs in all aspects with the first story and differs in nature of the phenomenon with the second story. This story thus seems to project another independent sphere of activity. With three stories, apparently depicting three independent spheres of activity, we proceed to the analysis of the fourth.

Myth 4: The Hare and The Elephant

Synopsis:

During a high jump competition for all animals, the elephant is unable to jump like the other animals, due to his obesity and heavy tusks. Hare suggests that he cuts off some flesh in his back, a proposition to which elephant agrees. The elephant is able to jump but then Hare runs away with his flesh. The Elephant sends Hyena to collect its meat but Hyena is duped and killed by Hare. Elephant sends other animal emissaries to Hare, but Hare manages to dupe all of them and never returns the Elephant's flesh.

Analysis

The characters that we may immediately recognise as wild animals are involved in actions that we do not normally attribute to animals. They are not only involved in a high jump competition but they are also conversing like human beings. The action gets more fanciful when the elephant's flesh is cut so that it can be able to jump and Hare mischievously disappears with the elephant's flesh. The involvement of other animals distinguishable as animals of the wild, that is, the Hyena, the Anti-Bear and the Leopard only extend the fanciful play in the tale.

Thus this tale belongs to a timeless, fanciful setting, under these fanciful phenomena.

Title: The Hare and the elephant.	
Temporal variable	Timeless; fanciful setting
Spatial variable	Spaceless - fanciful
Phenomena	Characters: $\Rightarrow$ Identifiable Animals of the wild Action: $\Rightarrow$ Fanciful

Table 5: Summary of myth 4.

Link

This myth has variables similar to those in "The Elephant and the Thrush", discussed previously. These two tales can be said to belong to the same category since none of their variables differ in any way. These stories not only belong together but they also differ in terms of their sphere of activity with all other tales which have been previously discussed. With only these two stories so far linked we proceed to the fifth.

Myth 5: The Hyena and the Calf

Synopsis:

A young calf is tethered behind a hut and forgotten by the owners in a deserted homestead. Famine has forced the owners to abandon the homestead to search for food elsewhere. When the family is leaving a young boy is asked to untether the calf but he forgets to do so. A hungry wandering hyena finds the calf. He has been asking God to provide him with some food. When he sees the calf, he in a haughtily manner questions God's providence saying that God had played no role in his finding the calf. The hyena decides to eat the leather strap tethering the calf first. As soon as it bites the strap, it breaks in two and the calf bolts. The hyena is left dejected since its belated efforts to catch up with the calf are fruitless. He is left regretting why he had questioned God's providence in the first place

Analysis:

The situation introduced at the beginning of the tale is agreeably lifelike. A family ravaged by famine decides to abandon their homestead. The young son is told by the father to lead the cattle and forgets to untether the calf. This provides us with a realistic situation which depicts a conceivable predicament emanating from human error. The encounter between the hyena and the calf is no less lifelike. It is indeed likely that the hyena having found the calf and being a cowardly and greedy animal decided to eat the strap first. The whole situation is given a pious orientation with the hyena attempting to question the providence of God. But this pious strain does not remove the story from the realm of the conceivable and the possible. The escape of the calf can be logically explained in spite of this strain. The kicking and jumping calf could not have wasted any time after the strap broke. The same pious strain is again invoked when we see the hyena regretting its earlier cynical attitude regarding the providence of God. In traditional society it was indeed common knowledge that unattended animals are vulnerable to marauding wild animals. We can then conclude that the tale belongs to a determinable temporal present, terrestrial space and lifelike phenomena both in action and character.

Title: The Hyena and the Calf	
Temporal variable	Present determinable setting
Spatial variable	Terrestrial setting
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human characters acting in line with human nature. ⇒ Animal characters in line with animal nature Action: ⇒ Lifelike and realistic

Table 6a: Summary of myth 5.

Link

In myths 2 and 4, "The Elephant and the Thrush" and "The Hare and the Elephant", we came across animal characters which demonstrated unnatural activity. These two myths are thus linked and we have said that they belong to the same sphere of activity. In Myth 5, we have animal characters as in myths 2 and 4 above. But in myth 5, the animals are acting in consistency with animal behaviour. Also the human beings who are depicted in this story act in a lifelike manner and

they do not relate to the animals in any fanciful manner. It willl be remembered that we have come across these realistic human characters in Myth 1 "Children left in the old homestead". But, we shall also note that Myth 1 and myths 2 and 4 are not linked. Our conclusion is that the story of "The Hyena and the calf" straddles across two spheres of activity: the sphere represented by Myth 1 on the one hand, and the sphere represented in Myths 2 and 4 on the other. But again while the human phenomenon in "The Hyena and the Calf" maps with the human phenomenon in Myth 1- "The children left in the old homestead", the animal phenomenon, represented by the animal characters in "The Hyena and the Calf" - differs with the animal phenomenon in Myths 2 and 4. This is due to the fact that the animal characters in myths 2 and 4 are fanciful while the animal characters in myth 5 are realistic and lifelike. Myth 5 thus lacks the quality of fancy that characterises myths 2 and 4. Thus though it seems that myths 2, 4 and 5 are in the same sphere of activity, due to the presence of animal characters, Myth 5 differs from the other two in this quality of fancy. To foreground this difference, we can tabulate this finding as follows.

Title	Character	Nature of phenomena
The elephant and the thrush;(2)	Wild-animals	Fanciful
The Hare and the Elephant;(4)	Wild-animals	Fanciful
The Hyena and the Calf;(5)	Wild-animal	Realistic/Lifelike

Table 6b: Difference between myth 2,4 and 5.

It would also seem that Myth (5) has a higher degree of complexity as pointed out in the rule stated above, since it straddles two spheres of existence/activity and yet has exceptions of its own. The implications of this apparent complexity will become clear as we proceed with the analyses. Suffice here to say that this apparent complexity is by no means fortuitous; it is central in understanding how the whole corpus of myths relate. We turn our attention to the analysis of the next myth.

Myth 6: Karithong'o.

Synopsis:

A group of seven men go hunting buffaloes. After a long search they spot a buffalo and make it their target. When they get near in the hope

of cornering the animal, they discover that the buffalo is actually an old man. The old man welcomes them and offers to accommodate them for the night and to show them where to find buffaloes the following day. On arrival at his abode this old man offers the young men milk and blood, the latter of which he had collected in a calabash after piercing himself on the leg. All the men take the milk and the blood except the young man called Karithong'o, the mono-eyed one, who is suspicious of the blood. Each of the other men drop dead after taking the milk and the blood. Karithong'o pours his share of the blood into the fire but a drop splashes onto his leg. He edges himself between his dead comrades and pretends to be asleep. The old man comes in and is excited at the sight of the dead men, and the meal awaiting him. Karithong'o realises that the old man is an ogre. He waits until the ogre has gone away and makes for an escape. When the ogre returns and finds Karithong'o gone, he pursues him calling on the drop of his blood which had splashed on Karithong'o's leg. Karithong'o cuts the portion of his body where the blood had splashed, and which by then is answering to the calls of the ogre. The chase aborts. Later on the ogre turns himself into a beautiful girl and goes in pursuit of Karithong'o. It is discovered and burnt in the house where it had gone to get Karithong'o. Later a big gourd grows on the spot where the ogre had been burnt. It

is destroyed but one piece remains. This piece threatens to starve Karithong'o's young brother by demanding his food from him. The piece is once again discovered and thrown into the deepest part of the biggest river.

Analysis:

We once again come across the cannibalistic mythical creature - the ogre capable of turning himself into many things, in pursuit of human beings. The actions described in this story belong to the fantastic realm and so do the characters. Human beings who live together or come into contact with such a preter-natural creature are themselves as imaginary, more or less like the creature itself. But we have to note that human beings per se are not fanciful creatures like the ogre, but in this case they are rendered fanciful in action and situations as victims of the mythical ogre. Therefore, though both types of characters are fanciful, the ogre stands at a higher degree of fancy because it defies anything lifelike and is strictly speaking what we have earlier refered to as a mythical creature. The actions attributed to the ogre are also excessively fantastic. In this particular story it turns itself into several things - first from a buffalo into an old man, from an old man into a beautiful girl, then from a beautiful girl it is burnt to ashes; from which it

again regenerates as a gourd, and still retains its cannibalistic tendencies even as a small piece of this gourd. The nature of the ogre thus compels us to put the myth in a timeless indeterminable temporal realm, indeterminate spatial realm and fanciful phenomena.

Title: Karithong'o.	
Temporal variable	Timeless; mythical
Spatial variable	Spaceless; mythical
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ An ogre: A non-human, non-animal mythical principle character. ⇒ : Fanciful Humans Action: ⇒ Unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations.

Table 7: Summary of myth 6.

Link

This story links perfectly with myth 3. "The girls and the ogre". The two myths employ the same variables, temporarily, spatially and in terms of

phenomena. They also deal with fanciful human characters in the same predicament of being victims of the cannibalistic mythic monster. Thus the two stories belong to the same sphere of activity, as we proceed to the analysis of the next myth.

Myth 7: The leopard and the antelope

Synopsis:

In his hunting excursion, leopard gets stuck in mud. His enemy, Antelope chances to pass by and leopard implores him to help him out of the mud, with assurances that he would be safe even when the leopard is out of the mud. Leopard reneges on his promise after being helped. A struggle ensues during the course of which Hare comes onto the scene. He decides to act as a judge, whereupon he advises the leopard to resume the original position so as to enable him to gauge the whole situation. As soon as the leopard is safely tucked back in the mud, Hare and Antelope go away. When Leopard finally comes out of the mud, he goes in pursuit of Antelope and Hare. He eventually catches up with Hare who dupes him using monkey as bait. Hare is off the hook with Leopard but enters into a vendetta with Monkey. When Monkey catches up with him, he again escapes by using girls as bait.

When the young girls catch up with him, Hare again eludes capture by duping an old man. Hare is never caught.

Analysis:

We again meet animal characters in the tale, all of whom are acting beyond what we would consider natural animal behaviour. The tale starts with a confrontation between the leopard and the antelope. Then Hare comes into the picture and features as the principal character in the rest of the tale. We can claim a verifiable existence for the animals mentioned: Leopard, Antelope, Hare and Monkey. We however recognise that their actions have been projected into the fanciful and thus these would have to be seen metaphorically and not literally. The unique aspect of this story is the interaction between animals and human beings. The hare exhibits his antics to human beings - first to the young girls and then to the old man. This interaction is in the realm of the fanciful. Thus in terms of its variables, this story has a phenomenon depicting two types of characters, animals and human beings, projected into the fanciful. Thus the story belongs to a fanciful, timeless, spaceless sphere of activity.

Title: The leopard and the antelope	
Temporal variable	Timeless - indeterminate
Spatial variable	Spaceless- indeterminate
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Animal characters - Fanciful ⇒ Human characters- Fanciful Action: ⇒ Fanciful interaction between the animal characters and between animals and humans.

Table 8:Summary of myth 7.

Link

This is another instance of a tale that straddles two previously identified domains. The animal characters and their actions are comparable to the animal characters and actions of myth 2 and 4. There is however a slight difference in this tale in that the animals not only interact in an unlifelike manner amongst themselves but they also interact with human characters, thus rendering the human beings in this myth unlifelike. We have come across human beings who are lifelike in myth

1 and 5, and those who are not lifelike in myth 3and 6 in earlier analyses. The human beings in this tale, by virtue of their unrealistic portrayal, belong in the later category where we have unrealistic human beings interacting with the ogre. This tale therefore has a link with myths 2 and 4 in regard to unrealistic animal characters and myth 3 and 6 in relation to unrealistic human characters.

Myth 8: Maara's dead father.

Synopsis:

Maara, an only child to a poor old man looks after his old father after the death of his mother. Eventually Maara's father dies despite his desperate attempts to keep him alive and well. Very early in the morning, Maara takes out the body of his dead father and puts it on the path used by the village cows when they are going out to graze. Maara claims that his father was actually alive and had been killed by the stampeding cows. The issue is taken to the village elders who demand that Maara be compensated. He is compensated and becomes a very wealthy man.

Analysis:

When a Gikuyu wants to make an appointment with another, the phrase "let us meet at the time Maara threw away his father" may and is often used. The interlocutor will understand that the appointment is fixed for very early in the morning, earlier than sunrise since in Gikuyu society it is understood that Maara threw away his dead father "very early before anybody was up and before the sun had come up from the East". This may or may not have anything to do with the lifelike situation depicted in this tale. It is however clear that the events portrayed in this myth are understandably lifelike. The human beings are real, the action is realistic and there is all indication that the action is set within an identifiable cultural setting.

Title: Maara's dead father	
Temporal variable	Present determinable cultural time
Spatial variable	Terrestrial natural space
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human characters Action: ⇒ Realistic and lifelike

Table 9:Summary of myth 8.

Link

This story maps to myth1; "Children left in the old homestead" without qualification.

Myth 9: Manga and his father:

Synopsis:

A man marries a woman and they migrate to the land of ogres whereupon the man becomes an ogre. They get a son named Manga who is also an ogre. One day, while the ogres were away, the woman's sister comes to visit but she is advised by the sister to go away since her husband and son are ogres and she may be eaten. On the way

back to Gikuyuland, she shelters from heavy rains under a tree. She is found there by the two ogres (father and son) and is eaten. Inside the woman's womb they find two fetuses. Manga carries the two fetuses found in the womb back to his own mother and tells her to cook them for him. Realising what has happened, the mother secretively saves the babies and cooks doves instead for the son. She nurtures the two babies until they become strong young men. She then gets them swords and spears and they train in warfare. When the boys are fully trained, she tricks the ogres into being pegged to the ground. The two young men come out and they slay the ogres. The woman and the two young men together with their flock return to Gikuyuland.

Analysis:

We once again encounter the cannibalistic ogre and its unnatural desire to devour human beings. The difference between this myth and the other of this nature is that in this story, the ogre was once a human being. There is also an explicit reference to Gikuyuland and the land of the ogres. But as we have argued before, the presence of the ogre is the controlling factor in all the stories in which it occurs. Since it is a mythical creature with no parallel in nature, it cannot be taken as a metaphorical representation of any creature known to man. This sets

the phenomena of the ogre myths apart from the other myths where the ogre does not feature.

Title: Manga and his father	
Temporal variable	Timeless - indeterminate
Spatial variable	Spaceless
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ An ogre; -non-human, non-animal mythical principle character. ⇒ Fanciful human beings Action: ⇒ Unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations

Table 10:Summary of myth 9.

Link

Due to the presence of the ogre this tale maps onto myths 3 and 6 without adjustments or qualifications.

Myth 10: The father's gourd

Synopsis:

A man prohibits his daughters from using a particular gourd to draw water. The girls would, however, from time to time, steal the gourd and use it. One time, one of the young girls takes the gourd with her to the river but when she puts it under water the gourd is swept away by the water. She follows the gourd down the river and comes across goats that are slaughtering and eating themselves. The goats beseech her to slaughter them, and roast them and have some meat in return. She slaughters them and roasts them but refuses to eat any. She proceeds downstream and finds various foods that are preparing themselves. She accepts their plea to cook them but she never eats any. On moving on she reaches an inhabited subterranean abode. She tells the people what has happened. The following morning she is shown a gourd and another container into which she is told to put her head. She complies and when she pulls out her head, she is decorated with necklaces and earrings. She is given back her gourd and told to return to her people. Her stepsister, out of sheer jealousy, decides to try the same thing. When she gets to the food that is preparing and eating itself - she prepares and eats it. She in fact does the opposite of what the first girl does. When she gets to the subterranean abode, instead of

being decorated she is infected with smallpox and scabies. On returning to her home, the people are horrified by her diseased appearance. Her family, terrified by her illness, decides to abandon her in the homestead and take off to another place. But they unwittingly take the wrong girl since they left at night. The first girl was left alone and lived in the homestead incognito until she is discovered by a man and gets married to him.

Analysis:

The tale starts with a strain analogous to real life. This remains so until the first girl puts the gourd underwater and the river carries it away. Her attempt to follow the gourd downstream takes her to a magical subterranean sphere of activity where animals are slaughtering themselves and eating themselves and food is cooking and eating itself. Further, she finds an abode of "human beings." These human beings again seem to possess magical powers as shown by their treatment of the two girls. The fact that they live in this abode of magic also seems to suggest their unnatural abode. The first girl seems to be able to invoke the magical powers even after she has left this subterranean abode. In the story we are told that the girl made magical garments from the skin of an antelope which she used to disguise herself. When

she went to the river, she would tell the garments to come off and they would come off. When she had finished bathing she would tell the clothes to come back on and they would. Thus the phenomena of this story are in the realm of fancy. The characters, though they are identifiable human beings, are involved in actions which are not lifelike. This ability to exhibit magical qualities seems to have been gained in a subterranean sphere to which the girls are led by the gourd. Thus the spatial variable in this story is manifested in a subterranean sphere.

Title: The father's gourd	
Temporal variable	Timeless - indeterminate
Spatial variable	Subterranean - fanciful
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human beings engaged in fanciful actions ⇒ Subterranean beings with-human form Action: ⇒ Fanciful

Table 11: Summary of myth 10.

Link

This story, though it has some variables that we have already encountered, differs from all previously analysed ones in that it possesses the subterranean spatial realm. Thus according to our operational definition, this tale belongs to an independent sphere of activity from all other tales analysed above. It however shares the quality of fancy with several other tales and utilises human beings in imaginary settings, with fanciful actions as in myths 3, 6, 7 and 9. There is also the presence of an animal character, an antelope, which is again rendered fancifully since it possesses a skin with magical qualities. We have encountered such wild animals in myths 2, 4 and 7. Therefore, we note that while this story may belong to an independent sphere of activity, on account of its subterranean spatial element, it shares some variables with these other stories. We now turn to the analysis of myth 11.

Myth 11: Nyaga and Wamweru

Synopsis

A man decides to adorn his daughter after the death of her mother. This invokes jealousy from his other wife and her daughter. The two collude to bury the girl who had been adorned by the father. When the

father enquires about the whereabouts of the girl, they tell him that she had been sent on an errand and has not come back. After waiting for her to no avail, he decides to move his family from this place where the misfortune has occurred. Sometimes later, the brother discovers the buried girl. She is rescued and re-integrated into the family. The treachery of the stepmother and the stepsister is discovered. The stepmother is transformed into a hyena and the daughter into a fox.

Analysis:

Human beings are again rendered fancifully through actions which are unlifelike. This fact is more evident in evaluating the kind of punishment meted out to the girl and her mother- where they are turned into wild animals. Thus in the same story, we have fanciful wild animals which have come into being through the unnatural transformation of human beings. Thus phenomena in this story are rendered fancifully both in character and action. Consequently, time and space are indeterminate.

Title; Nyaga and Wamweru.	
Temporal variable	Timeless - indeterminate
Spatial variable	Spaceless- indeterminate
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Fanciful human beings ⇒ Fanciful wild animals Action: ⇒ Fanciful

Table 12a: Summary of myth 11

Link

We have encountered human beings fancifully rendered in myths 3, 6, 7, 9 and 10. Thus the human characters in the myth can be equated to humans in other myths. The transformation of these human beings into animals brings these human characters into significant relationship with the sphere of fanciful wild animals. We have encountered these kinds of wild animals in myths 3, 4, 6 and 7. This tale straddles two previously identified independent spheres of activity that is, human fanciful sphere and the fanciful sphere of wild animals. This straddling

can be represented as shown in Table 12b below. The implications of this straddling will become clear as our analysis progresses.

Myth 11	Spheres of activity	Congruencies
Nyaga and Wamweru	Fanciful human sphere	Shared with myths 3, 6, 7 and 9
	Fanciful animal sphere	Shared with myths 2, 4, 6 and 7

Table 12b: Congruencies of myth 11.

Myth 12: The she-goat

Synopsis:

A boy goes to herd goats and a particular pregnant she-goat talks to him. The she-goat later runs away from the herd and gives birth in an anteater's hole. The goat would go away and come later calling the children out to suckle by means of a song. At one time an ogre mimics the mother goat but the kids recognise the deep voice and refuse to come out. The ogre gets advice from a medicineman about how to make his voice soft like that of the mother goat. After several failures, the ogre finally manages to soften his voice, comes to the hole, calls out and eats the kids. Mother goat moves away and gives birth to two

boys who grew hidden away by the mother. Later, the mother meets an ogre and they get married. They give birth to a son who is also an ogre. When the other two sons grow up they kill the ogres. Before it dies the ogre tells the two sons where all the other children are hidden. It is slashed and the children come out and are reunited with the others.

Analysis:

The mythical ogre is again the principle character in this story. There are other characters, principally the mother goat which has human characteristics and does not only talk like a human being but also gives birth to human beings. As we have seen earlier, the presence of an ogre places a myth in a particular scale of fancy, since the ogre, in this myth for instance, unlike the human beings or the she-goat has got no parallel in natural existence. So while we may say that human beings and the goat are rendered fancifully, we have to see the ogre as a mythical creation - one that only exists in myths.

Title: The she-goat	
Temporal variable	Timeless
Spatial variable	Spaceless
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ An ogre - A non-human, non-animal mythical principal character. ⇒ Fanciful human beings and goats Action: ⇒ Unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations

Table 13: Summary of myth 12.

Link

This myth is doubtlessly linked to myth 3, 6 and 9 by the nature of having an ogre as a principal character. There is also the participation of fanciful animal characters, an element encountered in other stories which do not have the ogre as the principal character. The controlling principle, however, is the presence of an ogre which puts this myth in the same sphere of activity as all previously analysed tales with the ogre as the principal character.

Myth 13: The Squirrel

Synopsis:

A man's goats graze in the squirrel's garden thus destroying his crops while he is out herding. When the squirrel finds this out he duly demands compensation. The man offers the best goats in the herd but the squirrel refuses the offer. He instead chooses for himself the weakest and most miserable looking goat to the dismay of the man. The squirrel feeds the goat very well until it becomes quite fat. He eventually decides to slaughter this goat and goes out in search of other animals to help him do it. He finally settles on the leopard. The leopard angers the squirrel in the process of slaughtering the goat since the leopard drinks all the blood alone. The squirrel in revenge decides to swindle the leopard off his share of the goat. Denigrated and deranged the leopard vows revenge. He banishes the squirrel from drinking water from all the wells and rivers since they all belonged to him. Meanwhile he places all other animals to guard the waters in turns. The squirrel turns to disguising himself to gain access to the water. The leopard discovers that the squirrel is disguising himself in order to gain access to the waters. He goes on guard himself and catches the squirrel. He ties the squirrel into a parcel and takes him to his mother whom he tells to cook the parcel without opening it. Out of

curiosity, she unties the parcel and the squirrel is frees. The squirrel then ties up the leopard's mother and cooks her. The leopard eats her on his return as the squirrel runs away. On realising what has happened, the leopard hangs himself. The squirrel takes over the leopard's prosperous home. He hangs the leopard's dead body outside the homestead to scare away the marauding hyenas. However, the greedy animals wouldn't keep off the homestead since the squirrel was frequently slaughtering the many animals that the leopard had had. One day the squirrel invites Hyena to share some meat. At night, he ties the hyena to the dead leopard and when he wakes him up, the hyena bolts away in flight while the leopard "follows" him. The hyena eventually falls in a hole and dies.

Analysis

The principal actors in this myth are recognisable wild animals. A human being appears only once at the beginning of the myth. He is, however, a fanciful human being since he is conversing with the squirrel. The animals on their part are metaphorical since they act like human beings - rearing goats, making invitations and acting out of such reactions as jealousy and vengeance. It should however be noted that wild animals in this myth "domesticate" goats. So there is a sense in

which domestic animals play more or less the same role they play in real life. The temporal, spatial and phenomenal variables on the whole are to be seen in the light of the fanciful rendering. The tale thus belongs to a timeless, spaceless, fanciful sphere of activity.

Title: The squirrel	
Temporal variable	Timeless - indeterminate
Spatial variable	Spaceless- indeterminate
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Fanciful Human characters ⇒ Fanciful animal characters Action: ⇒ Unlifelike/fanciful

Table 14: Summary of myth 13.

Link

This myth can be likened to myths 2, 4 and 7 in terms of its sphere of activity. It presents no variable different from all other myths that have been analysed so far. We thus move on to the analysis of the next myth.

Myth 14: The Communal origin.

Synopsis:

Gikuyu, the founder of the Gikuyu tribe is called by Mugai (the divider of the universe) and he is given his share of land. Mugai makes a big mountain which he calls Kiri-Nyaga and makes it his resting place. Gikuyu is shown all the beautiful land that now belongs to him. He is also given a wife Mumbi, with whom he bears nine daughters: Wacera, Wanjiku, Wairimu, Wambui, Wangare, Wanjiru, Wangui, Nyambura, Waithera. Disturbed by the lack of male heirs, Gikuyu sacrifices to Mugai as earlier instructed and Mugai provides nine young men to marry the nine girls. They multiply, with the nine small families living together under the leadership of their founders, Gikuyu and Mumbi. However, the families grow larger and it is decided that each daughter summons her descendants and forms a clan under her name. This marks the beginning of the nine <u>Mihiriga</u> (clans) of the Gikuyu people,

named after the nine daughters. The names of the clans are, *Aceera,*

Agaciku, Airimu, Ambui, Angare, Anjiru, Angui, Ethaga, Aitherandu.

The people continue to live under one collective name of <u>Ruriri rwa</u>

<u>mbari ya mumbi</u> (people of Mumbi's lineage).

As time progresses the matriarchal system becomes oppressive and

the men decide to overthrow this system and institute a patriarchal

system. They manage to do this and change the name to <u>Ruriri rwa</u>

<u>mbari ya Gikuyu</u> (people of Gikuyu's lineage) but the clan names

remain as they were originally, following fierce protestations from the

women. Thus the nine main clans of the Gikuyu tribe are still known by

the names of the nine Gikuyu daughters who are the founders of the

Gikuyu clan system.

Analysis

The myth explains the genesis of the Gikuyu people, their land, their

clans and the patriarchal system. The activities are set in the primordial

sphere of existence when God set into motion the forces of nature and

human life. God features as the principal character going about the

business of creation and informing the original man about the scheme

of things giving instructions and provisions for the system and the

perpetuation of communal life. The tale traces the reality of the clan

lineage which is the basic kinship structure in Gikuyuland to the original family. The community has been able to sustain and perpetuate itself through the clan lineage. Thus the tale utilises traditional cultural phenomena as a basis of excursion into the communal past during the infancy of time and space. Divine characters intermingle with human characters and the action is largely divinely instituted.

Title: Communal origin.	
Temporal variable	Past-determinable temporal setting
Spatial variable	Natural space -Terrestrial, actual
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ God is the principal character Explains the progeny of the people and the land and tribal kinship Actions ⇒ Divinely instituted actions and linked with Gikuyu cultural realities

Table 15: Summary of myth 14.

Link

This myth belongs to a unique sphere of action since temporarily it belongs to a past determinable setting, which is accentuated by divinely instituted phenomena. The past temporal variable differs from all the other myths that we have analysed so far. Also none of the action in the previous myths can be said to be divine. Thus there is no noticeable link at this level of analysis between this myth and any other myth that we have already analysed. But certainty lies in the fact that this myth constitutes an independent sphere of activity, characterised by such variables as a past temporal setting and divine characters and actions. Meanwhile we proceed to the analysis of the next myth.

Myth 15: Wacici.

Synopsis:

Wacici, a very beautiful girl is thrown into an ant-hole by her female friends who are jealous of her. The ant-hole is so deep that Wacici cannot come out. However, she does not die. A brother who loves Wacici very much discovers her in the ant hole and rescues her. The girls' crime is deliberated by the elders. Since the girls are young and Wacici is not dead, the elders decide that there is no need of punishing

the culprits. Wacici grows up healthy and beautiful and when she becomes a woman, she is married.

Analysis

The characters in this story are human beings acting in line with human actions and motivations. The throwing of one of their own into an ant-hole is seen as being motivated by jealousy. The boy who discovers Wacici and mobilises for her rescue is a brother who is said to have loved her very much and he discovers her while grazing. The explanation of Wacici's stay in the ant hole is within the confines of natural reality "we are told that she had not stayed for very many days in the ant hole. She had not stayed long enough to die from hunger or otherwise. She was, however, in shock. This is a realistic description of such an ordeal. The myth avoids any strain towards the fanciful and remains within conceivable reality. This is further borne out by the fact that Wacici's ordeal is taken up by the elders of the land and the girls are pardoned. The action is taken as childish impropriety which did not amount to much. The elders argue that a child is like any other. This story remains within the realm of recognizable cultural reality, in terms of phenomena, space and time.

Title: Wacici	
Temporal variable	Present determinable time
Spatial variable	Terrestrial natural space
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human characters exhibiting human motivations and reactions within a realistic cultural context. Action: ⇒ Realistic and lifelike.

Table 16: Summary of myth 15.

Link

It is evident that the variables of this myth are congruent to those of myth 1 "Children left in the old homestead." and myth 8 - "Maara's dead father." The three myths can thus be said to belong to the same sphere of activity.

Myth 16: Wacu

Synopsis:

A despised wife, Wacu, goes to work in the shamba as the husband holds a banquet for the favourite wife. A hawk carries away a hot morsel from the banquet, gets scolded and drops it coincidentally in the garden where Wacu had gone to till the soil. She thus gets a share of what she had been originally denied.

Analysis:

The characters in this story are both animals and human beings. But they are acting within conceivable lifelike parameters. The interaction between animals and human beings in this story does not open itself to any fanciful play. Character and action remain true to life.

Title: Wacu.	
Temporal variable	Present -Determinable time
Spatial variable	Terrestial natural space
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human characters acting in line with human nature ⇒ Animal characters acting in line with animal nature. Action: ⇒ Lifelike/realistic

Table 17: Summary of myth 16.

Link

The variables employed in the story are similar to those of myth 5 "The hyena and the calf."

Myth 17: Wagaciairi.

Synopsis:

A man goes to the forges and leaves behind a pregnant wife. He stays there for a long time and the wife gives birth in his absence. An ogre comes into the homestead and volunteers to help the woman. It starts mistreating her and nearly starves her to death and there is a possibility that it will eventually eat her. The woman sends a dove to the forges with a message about her situation. The husband gets the message from the bird and comes home. He lies in wait for the ogre and spears it to death.

Analysis

The ogre whom we have encountered before in other stories is the principal character in this myth. This time it tries to starve a mother and her newborn baby to death. There is no description of the ogre that is given in the myth and there seems to be an unstated assumption that the audience would be conversant with the ogre. As we have already stated, this ogre belongs to a mythical realm. Due to this mythical nature of the ogre, all other characters who appear in this myth are in a fanciful mode.

Title: Wagaciairi.	
Temporal variable	Timeless .
Spatial variable	Spaceless
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ An ogre - a non-human, non-animal mythical principal character ⇒ Fanciful human beings and animals Action ⇒ : Unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations

Table 18: Summary of myth 17

Link

This myth is to be related with myths 3, 6 and 12. The presence of the ogre binds the myths.

Myth 18: The Story of Wanjiru.

Synopsis:

A famine ravages Gikuyuland and decimates the cattle and the goats. Human beings are also in danger and decide to sacrifice a beautiful girl to God. She is brought to a very big river and as she submerges, heavy rains fall on the land. In the subterranean abode, the girl Wanjiru finds the people who had died before her. She is given a lot of cows and goats and returns to her people who rejoice very much on seeing her.

Analysis:

This story is initially set in "Gikuyu land" where, in order to save people, a girl named Wanjiru is sacrificed for rain. It is then that the spatial setting of the myth changes from the terrestrial to the subterranean sphere as the girl submerges to the underworld. It is also explicitly stated that the girl meets and communes with the people who had died before her and is miraculously returned to a terrestrial existence. Thus the action in the tale involves a transition from a terrestrial to a subterranean sphere of activity and back. It employs the quality of fancy which places it in indeterminate time.

Title: The story of Wanjiru	
Temporal variable	Timeless indeterminate
Spatial variable	Terrestrial - fanciful Subterranean.
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human beings rendered in a fanciful mode ⇒ Spirits Action: ⇒ Fanciful

Table 19: Summary of myth 18.

Link

This myth has similarities with myth 10 "My father's gourd". It involves transmigration to a subterranean spatial setting and the communion with the inhabitants of this underworld who in this story are said to be the spirits of the departed.

Myth 19 The Woman with a wound in her leg.

Synopsis:

A woman has a putrescent wound in her leg and is advised by a medicineman that the wound can only be healed by a hair from the head of an ogre. Her daughter, concerned about her mother's illness, journeys to the land of ogres to get the needed hair. She meets with small ogres on the way and says she is Mwengeca's - the biggest ogre's - visitor. She is stopped so many times by other ogres that she starts getting desperate. Momentarily, she sees a huge forest approaching her. This was the biggest ogre, Mwengeca. The girl introduces herself as Mwengeca's visitor and she is taken to the ogre's home. Here she is advised by human bones to disguise herself and run away as the ogre would eat her. Having picked the needed hair, she disguises herself and starts the journey back home. She takes the hair home and heals her mother's wound. Later the ogres discover that their human meal has disappeared and they start eating each other. Only one ogre called Karithong'o remains and he also eats himself until only a log remains. After a period of time, a woman in search of firewood picks this log and puts it in her hearth. This log demands food from the youngest child who sits on that side of the fireplace. The child becomes skinny by the day and due to this unfortunate occurrence, the

family moves from this place and goes away after burning down the house. A big gourd grows in the place and a man uses it to ferment beer. The gourd would swallow the children sent to inspect the beer until the man discovers this and slashes the gourd open and all the children come out.

Analysis:

The ogre again is the principal character in this story. As previously stated, it becomes the controlling factor due to its preternatural nature. Thus this myth belongs to a timeless, spaceless mythical sphere of activity both in character and action.

Title: The woman with a wound on her leg	
Temporal variable	Timeless
Spatial variable	Spaceless
Phenomena	Character: An ogre - ⇒ A non-human, non-animal mythical principal character ⇒ Fanciful human beings Action: ⇒ Unnatural cannibalistic actions and motivations

Table 20: Summary of myth 19.

Link

The story by the presence of the ogre is linked to myths 3, 6, 9, 12 and 17. We thus proceed to the discussion of the last myth in our sample.

Myth 20: Women and their animals:

Synopsis:

In the beginning God gives some animals to men and others to women. The women take to slaughtering their animals with wooden knives and

spears. Due to the extreme pain inflicted on the animals, they run away to the bush and become wild animals. They, at the same time, select their own chiefs and leaders and defend themselves against being captured by human beings. The women try to petition God to let them have their animals back but to no avail. Seeing the predicament of the women, men decide to consult God on what to do to avoid the same disaster. God then gives them advice on how to make iron tools which are much more efficient than the wooden ones used by the women. Thus the men were able to retain their animals which remain domesticated up to this day.

Analysis:

This myth is a narration of events that took place in the infancy of nature and human culture. The cultural reality of the existence of two types of animals, wild and domestic, is traced back to the past when man and God used to commune. Thus the tale uses identifiable cultural reality as a basis of an excursion into the past. Thus the temporal setting of the myth can be determined as the past, on a terrestrial spatial setting and realistic phenomena.

Title: Women and their animals.	
Temporal variable	Past
Spatial variable	Terrestrial
Phenomena	Characters: ⇒ Human characters interacting with God ⇒ Wild animals are separated from the domestic animals becoming an "independent" entity. Action: ⇒ Divinely instituted.

Table 21: Summary of myth 20.

Link

The temporal variable of past is shared with myth 14 and not with any other myth in our sample. Thus these two myths belong to the same sphere of activity.

With the analysis of individual myths complete, we are now in a position to proceed to the next stage in our study. This will involve arranging the myths in a logical order, according to similarities and differences

evinced by the analysis above. The reader will recall that our sample was arranged in alphabetical order since there was no way of telling which tales belong together. The only method of doing that prior to the analysis above would have been by using striking incidences or conventional typologies, which as we have consistently argued, are inadequate since they are based on unjustifiable assumptions. By using the linkages identified above, we are now justified to make a catalogue of myths that belong to the same group on the basis that they are attributable to the same sphere of activity. Such a catalogue is given below.

Group	Myth No.	Title of Myth	Variables			
			Temporal	Spatial	Phenomenal	
					Character	Action
1	1	Children left in the old homestead	Present	Terrestrial	Human	Real
	8	Maara's dead father	Present	Terrestrial	Human	Real
	15	Wacici	Present	Terrestrial	Human	Real
	16	Wacu	Present	Terrestrial	Human	Real
	11	Nyaga & Wamweru	Timeless	Spaceless	Human	Fancy
	10	The father's gourd	Timeless	Spaceless	Human	Fancy
	18	The story of Wanjiru	Timeless	Spaceless	Human	Fancy
2	5	The hyena and the calf	Present	Terrestrial	Animal	Real
	16	Wacu	Present	Terrestrial	Animal	Real
	2	The elephant and the thrush	Timeless	Spaceless	Animal	Fancy
	4	The hare and the elephant	Timeless	Spaceless	Animal	Fancy
	7	The leopard and the antelope	Timeless	Spaceless	Animal	Fancy
	13	The squirrel	Timeless	Spaceless	Animal	Fancy
3	3	The girls and the ogre	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
	6	Karithong'o	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
	9	Manga Manga and his father	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
	12	The she-goat	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
	17	Wagaciairi	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
	19	The woman with a wound on her leg	Timeless	Spaceless	Ogre	Fancy
4	10	The father's gourd	Timeless	Subterranean	Human	Fancy
	18	The story of Wanjiru	Timeless/ present	Subterranean	Human Spirits	Fancy/ Real
5	14	The tribal origin	Past	Terrestrial	God/ Human	Real
	20	Women & their animals	Past	Terrestrial	God/ Human/ Animal	Real

Table 22: A Catalogue of all the Twenty Texts of Gikuyu Mythology showing how the Myths are Linked through the Identified Variables.

We have been able to bring the texts into five related groups according to spatial, temporal and phenomenal variables. Thus we have objective (a) of our study attained. We have done this in line with the earlier stated rule that a myth must never be interpreted individually but in relation to other myths. We have been able to show relationships between individual myths. This is the first step towards identifying the worlds of the mythology. With our sample reduced to these five groups of similar texts, we proceed to the next level of analysis of our study.

CHAPTER THREE

The Structural Model of the World's of Gikuyu Mythology

Introduction

In this chapter, we shall put into use the data deduced in the previous chapter to tackle the second and third objectives of this study. These are: identifying the worlds of Gikuyu mythology and constructing a structural model, from the identified worlds depicting the mythology as a transformational group.

Identification of Worlds and Construction of a Model

From the catalogue identified in Chapter Two, it will be noted that the myths categorised in each group belong to the same "sphere of activity/existence." This, it will be remembered is the phrase that we have used to describe a "world" as defined for this study. Now that all the individual tales belonging to the same sphere of existence/activity have been identified, we are in a position to identify the worlds. Since there are five groups of tales belonging to the same "sphere of existence" that is to say - there are five spheres of existence/activity, we

are justified to say that there are five worlds. Thus in the discussions of the chapter we shall make an explanation on each group and identify the worlds it represents. We shall also show how the worlds are related to each other. When all the worlds are thus related, we will have shown how all myths are related. In other words, we will have presented the complete corpus of Gikuyu mythology as a transformational group.

Group 1: Human World

We shall notice that the myths in this group bear a common relationship in terms of human characters. Human beings feature uniformly as the principal characters in these myths. We shall however notice that myths 1, 8, 15 and 16 portray realistic life-like phenomena while myths 11 and 10, in the same group portray fanciful phenomena. Thus in representing the world that these tales belong to, we shall have to take into account this shift.

Since all the myths share the Human phenomena, we shall be justified to construct a world representing all the tales and call it a Human world - HW
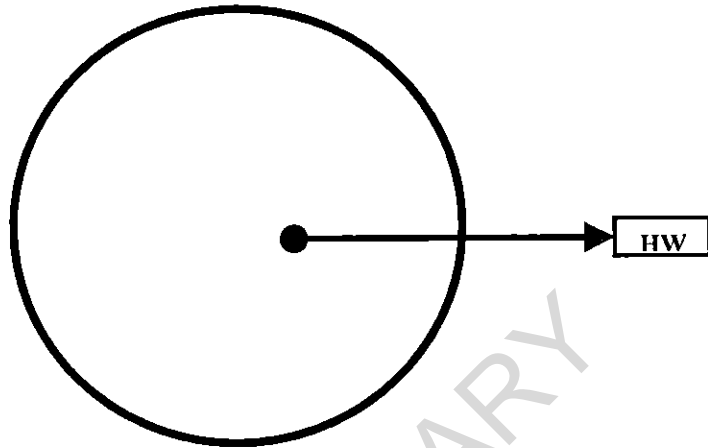
Fig 3. Human world.

To put into account the fact that there is some phenomenon in this human world which has been fancifully rendered and thus affected some variables in the myths, we need to show this quality of fancy in the construction. Thus, part of this Human World (HW) shall be plus Fancy, that is, HW (+F). We shall represent this by putting a shaded area in the identified human world. Shading represents the quality of fancy in the construction.
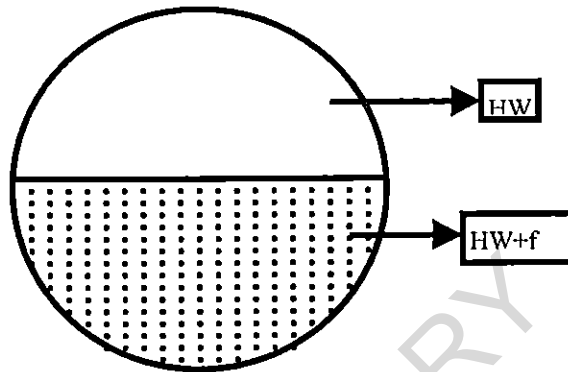
Fig 3b. Human world showing the quality of fancy.

Group 2: Animal world

It will be noted that all the tales in this group share the animal principal

character phenomena. In terms of phenomena again - myths 5 and 16

are realistic and lifelike while myths 2, 4, 7 and 13 are fanciful. We are

again justified in constructing an Animal world (AW) and providing for

the animal world plus fancy AW (+F)
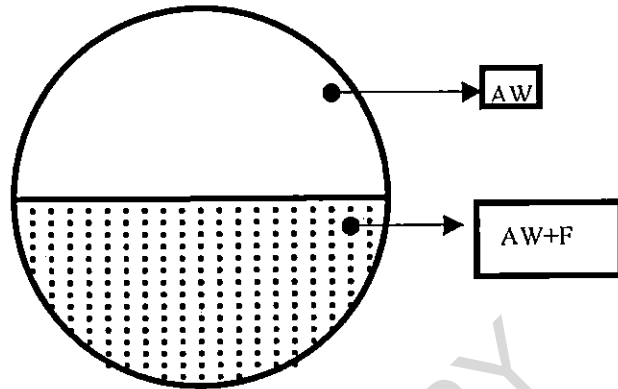
Fig 4. Animal world showing the quality of fancy.

Group 3 Ogre World

Notable in this group is that the myths share many variables in common. The predominant factor however is the phenomenon represented by the ogre. Due to the presence of this character all the tales in this group are fanciful and they belong to a timeless, spaceless sphere of activity. With these properties we are again justified constructing an ogre world OW which is completely fanciful. Thus the whole of this world will be shaded as follows.
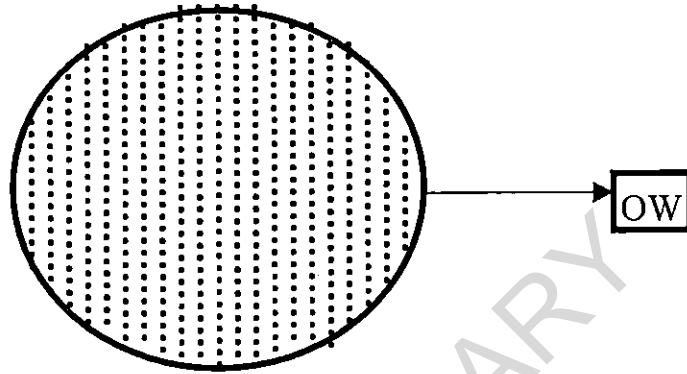
Fig 5. Ogre world.

Group 4 Subterranean World

The myths in this group are set apart from all other groups by the subterranean spatial variable. However, in myth 18, it is explicitly stated that the character goes to the land of the people who had died before her, which coincides with the subterranean abode of the spirits of the dead in Gikuyu traditional beliefs. This will be addressed in detail in subsequent discussions. The actions of the myths are fanciful. Given these two scenarios, we are justified to construct a subterranean world - SW and provide for the quality of fancy in a subteranean world plus fancy -SW (+F) as follows.
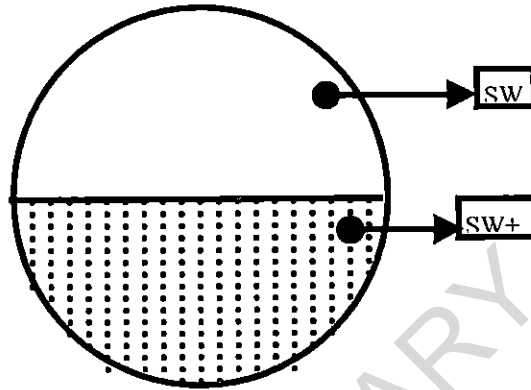
Fig 6. Subterranean world showing the quality of fancy.

Group 5. Past World.

The myths in this group depict an independent sphere of activity, distinguished from the other groups by the fact that the myths in this group belong to a past temporal setting. The myths depict a phenomenon which is all real. This world does not in any way constitute any fancy. We are thus justified to construct a past world - PW- which does not have the section of fancy.
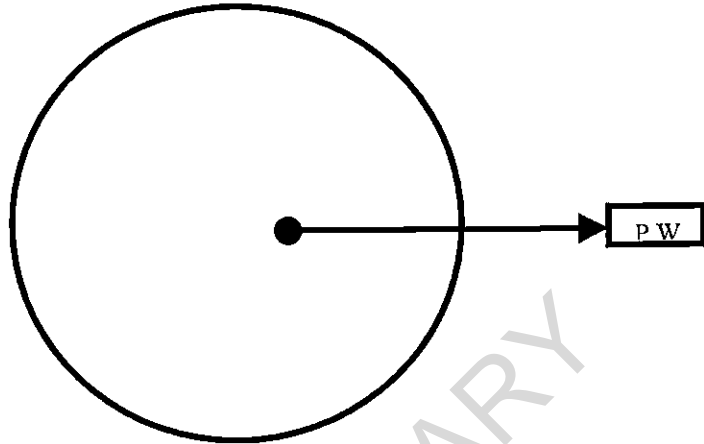
Fig 7. Past world.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Gikuyu mythology constitutes

five identifiable worlds. These are the Human world, Animal world,

Subterranean world, Ogre world and Past World. Having identified

these worlds, it remains to show how they are related by constructing a

structural model which will depict this relationship.

The Model of Relations between the Identified Worlds

Owing to our premise that the Gikuyu mythology constitutes a

transformational group, the search for the structural relationship of the

five identified worlds can start at any point, a process which will bring

us to a construct of interrelationships of all the worlds. Put in another

way, since all these worlds are related, starting at any one point should

operationally lead us to others. In this case we propose to start where we have stopped, that is, from the past world.

This past world represents the beginning of time and creation. It stands in a mythologically significant opposition to the present world. The only world that exhibits the present temporal setting is the Human world. Since the human beings of this world trace their descent and genesis to this past world, there is a temporal binary opposition of Past/Present which marks the relationships between these two worlds.

We then come to the present human world. One should remember that myths 5 and 6 straddle two spheres of activity, that is, animal and human, and we noted in the analysis of individual myths that this straddling is significant. We have also noted that myth 13, "The squirrel" straddles the human fanciful realm and the Animal fanciful realm. The same straddling has also been identified in myth 18 - "The story of Wanjiru" and myth 10 - "My father's gourd", where we have noted that these myths straddle the fanciful human realm and the subterranean realm. Finally, we have shown that by utilising fanciful human beings, the ogre myths then are to be linked to the model through the fanciful human realm. Through these connections, we shall

be justified to construct a structural model showing the relationships that pertain to all the identified worlds of Gikuyu mythology as follows.
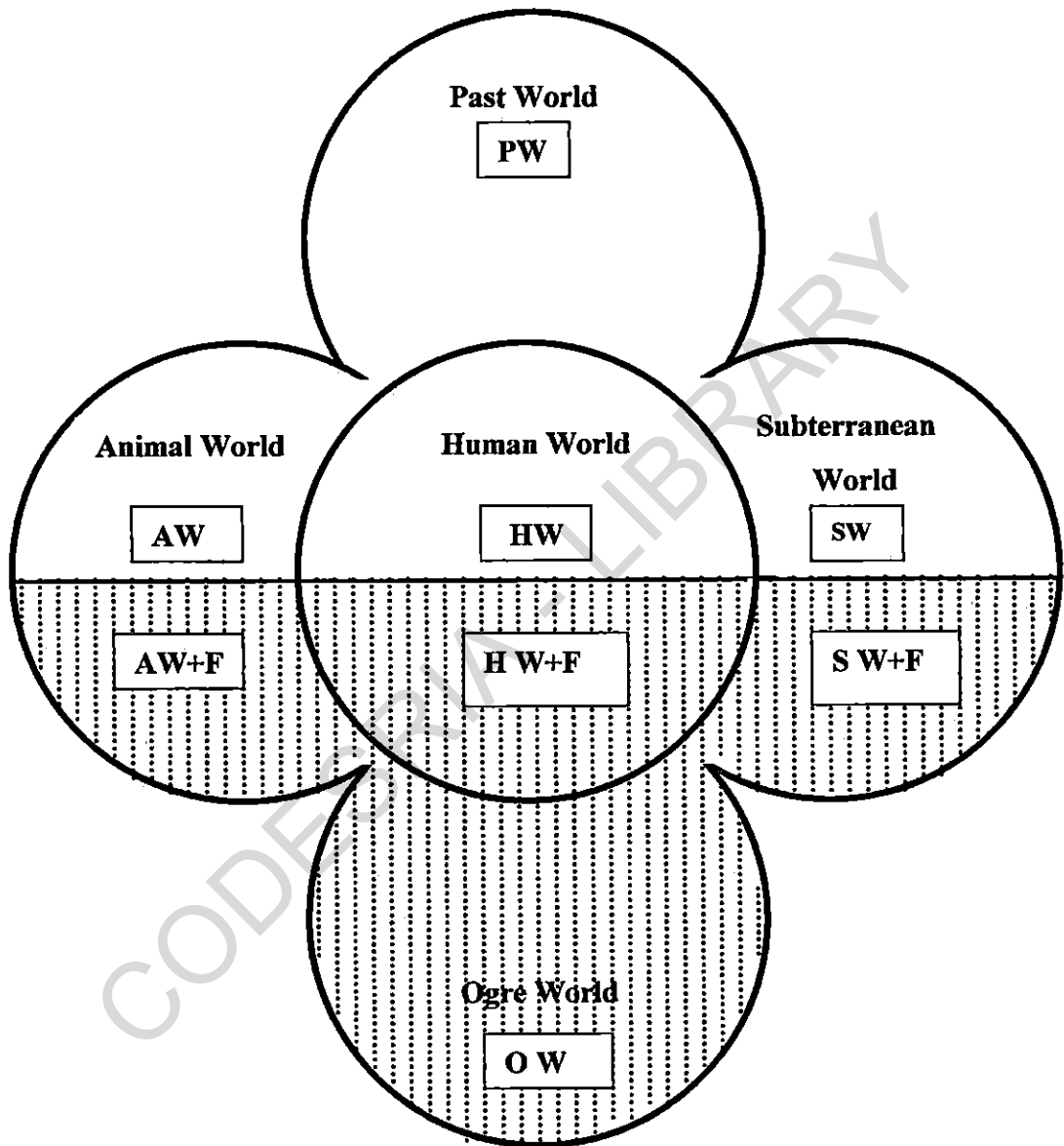
Fig. 8. **The Relationships between the Five Worlds of Gikuyu Mythology.**

It is clear that we can show the position of each group and hence each tale in the structural model of the worlds derived above. It is also immediately clear that the quality of fancy identified in the discussion above manifests itself in the above structure as a continuum, that is, all the realms of fancy come together as one big realm of fancy in the model. Thus the implications of rule two, derived in the theoretical framework above becomes manifest: A group of myths must not be interpreted alone, but by reference to other groups of myths, which taken together portray the mythology as a transformational group. All the worlds identified can be fitted together logically to present a unified system.

It is to be remembered that this model is to be related to Gikuyu society and culture. It is thus expedient to ask ourselves how at this level this model can be related to what we already know about African societies in general and Gikuyu society in particular. We shall thus get into some preliminary explanation in order to make the model more intelligible by contextualising it with regard to culture. As we have noted in the theoretical framework, ethnographic material must demonstrate whether the image projected by the myth corresponds to facts.

Contextualising the Model

The Past/Present binary differentiation identified above presents the most immediate link to traditional thought in relation to our analysis. This link is to be found between this mythological differentiation and J. S. Mbiti's well-known view regarding the African concept of time. Mbiti (1969) contends that in general, Africans do not have the concept of future in their traditional metaphysics. This view was based on his analysis of general African languages and myths. He found that these lacked the concept of future and had abundant reference to the past. He thus concluded:

> according to traditional concepts, time is a two-dimensional phenomena, with a long past, a present and virtually no future. The linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past, present and infinite future is practically foreign to African thinking (Mbiti,1969: 17).

As Mugambi (1989: 135) notes, "Mbiti has been criticised by some African scholars for equating African myths with African philosophy". However, our analysis above, which has come up with a past/present differentiation, suggests that Mbiti's schematization of African time has some mythological basis. Thus we need a further discussion of Mbiti's view as a means of providing further insights into our derived model since Mbiti himself reckons that the concept of time is the key to

reaching some understanding of the African World view. Given that our ultimate aim is to relate this model to Gikuyu culture and modes of thought, we cannot take the identified relationship between Mbiti's view and our model for granted.

Mbiti postulates that the future in African thought is virtually non-existent. In all the myths that we have analysed we can concur with Mbiti that the future seems to be non-existent in Gikuyu modes of thought. On temporal terms we have only been able to identify past and present. Mbiti proposes the Swahili terms *zamani* and *sasa* to avoid confusion through associations with the English words. A further discussion of these terms will reveal their relevance to our model and ultimately to our analysis.

Sasa is the most meaningful period of the individual according to Mbiti (1969: 22ff). This is because the individual has a personal recollection of the events of the phenomena of this period or he is about to experience them. This is the time period when African people are most conscious of their existence and within which they project themselves both into the short future and mainly into the past (*zamani*). *Sasa* is in itself a complete or full-time dimension, with its own short future, a

dynamic present and an experienced past. This is significant to understanding our model since the designated present human world in the stories is without fancy, that is, it is realistic and portrays the characters in their cultural and natural mode. This *sasa* period is evidenced by the discussion of the tales in Group 1. The "present" temporal setting - Mbiti's *sasa* - is marked by AW and HW and SW in our structural model. (See the contextualised model -Figure 9.)

Turning to *zamani*, Mbiti says that it is not limited to what in English is called the past. It also has its own "past", "present" and "future" but on a wider scale. He thus calls it the macro-time or the big time. *Zamani* overlays with *sasa* and the two are not separable. This assertion is in agreement with our structural model since the Human world (HW) which is in the *sasa* time frame comes directly below the past world (PW) in the *zamani* time frame. According to Mbiti *sasa* feeds or disappears into the *zamani*. Again this is in agreement with our model and is represented by the arrow AX. Mbiti says that before events become incorporated into the *zamani* "they have to become realised or actualised within the *sasa* dimension" (p23). When this has taken place then the events move backwards from the *sasa* into the *zamani*. Thus in Gikuyu thinking the events described in myths 14- "Tribal origin" and

20-"Women and their animals" did once take place in a **sasa** but have moved back into **zamani**. According to "Women and their animals" it is also at this time that the animal world was separated from the Human world and the animals went to live in the jungle setting up their own system of government. This is shown by peripheral relation (i) in Fig 9.

This process of moving into the **zamani** is again explained by Mbiti and it has certain implications for our model in that the Present/Past opposition and the life/death oppositions identified are linked and mediated.

The process of death removes a person gradually from the **sasa** to the **zamani**. After the physical death, the individual continues to exist in the **sasa** period and does not immediately disappear from it. According to our schema, it means that when a person leaves the human world (HW), he goes into the Subterranean world which is still in the **sasa** period. The existence of a subteranean world, which is an abode of the spirits of the dead is a strong belief among traditional Gikuyu. Leakey (1977: 1104-1105) explains that the Gikuyu referred to the spirits as "aria me thi" - (Those who are underground). He goes on to explain that according to Gikuyu beliefs, when a person dies, his or her spirit

goes to dwell in a "country" in the bowels of the earth. The path to the spirit world was by way of a "mûri wa mûkongoe" (the root of the mukongoe tree). Mukongoe was a mythical, invisible tree, and any deep natural holes or fissures were referred to as "roots of the mukongoe" and they were supposed to lead straight down to the spirit country. Thus the subterranean world identified in our myths was recognised by the Gikuyu as the spirit world. When one goes into this world, he is remembered by relatives and friends who knew him. These are what Mbiti calls the "Living dead". He goes on to explain that if the living dead are suddenly forgotten, this means that they are cast out of the *sasa* period and are in effect excommunicated. This is shown by the peripheral relation (ii) in Fig 9. Thus human beings have access to the *zamani* through the process of death via the subterranean spirit world.

The implication of this is that African History, as Mbiti concludes, moves backward from *sasa* period to the *zamani*- from the moment of intense experience to the point beyond which nothing can go. In traditional African thought, there is no concept of history moving forward towards a future climax. The centre of gravity for human thought is the *zamani* period towards which *sasa* moves. African peoples expect human

history to continue forever, in the rhythm of moving from the *sasa* to the *zamani* and there is nothing to suggest that this rhythm shall ever come to an end. This reasoning enables us to confirm that the position of the Human world of sasa at the centre of our model is significant. Further confirmation of the significance of this position is to be found in Mbiti's explanation of the African ontology that "it is an extremely anthropocentric ontology in the sense that everything is seen in terms of its relation to man" (1969: 17-16). This idea is re-emphasised in Mbiti(1975:34-44). He goes on to explain that expressed anthropologically, God is the originator and sustainer of man, the spirits explain the destiny of man; man is the centre of this ontology, the Animals, plants and the natural phenomena and objects constitute the environment in which man lives, providing a means of existence and if need be, man establishes a mythical relationship with them. The implication of this to our model is that everything must be explained in relation to the human world at the centre. Thus, every projection from the furthest points of the model marked ABCD must converge at the centre X, (See model on page 134). The idea of an anthropocentric ontology as advanced by Mbiti is sustainable through this model. All the other worlds are to be understood as they relate to the Human world at the centre. Symmetrically, the model can be understood

through the two axes that pass through the centre X. These are the vertical axis AXB and the horizontal axis CXD. As it shall become clear, these two axes are the basis of our understanding of the relationship between Gikuyu mythology on the one side, and Gikuyu culture and modes of thought and practice on the other.

Since his outlook is anthropological and religious, Mbiti's concepts have a limited application to the understanding of mythology. This fact is noted by Okpewho (1983: 65) when he says that while we may accept Mbiti's schematization discussed above, we must emphasize the poetic or fanciful realm which is central to mythological study. Our analysis above has enabled us to show the place of this poetic/fanciful mode in Gikuyu mythology. This is shown by the shaded area below the CXD horizontal axis. The areas above this axis represent what is understood to be realistic phenomena in relation to the mythology. This demarcation is mitigated not just by our understanding of the nature of myth but also by the Gikuyu understanding of their own mythology. In their study of the Gikuyu oral narrative Kabira and Mutahi (1988) contend that the Gikuyu distinguish between Ng'ano - narratives and Ng'ano cia Marimu - ogre tales or fictitious tales. The latter refer to fictional tales and there need not be an ogre for the tales to be fictional.

In our model, the sections AW+F, HW+F, and SW+F represent these non-ogre fictional tales. Ng'ano on the other hand are considered to be factual and in our model are represented by the non-shaded section above the CXD horizontal axis. This traditional classification is thus duly recognisable in our model. With these preliminary issues on the African concept of time and the Gikuyu understanding of mythology, the raw model can be improved as follows.
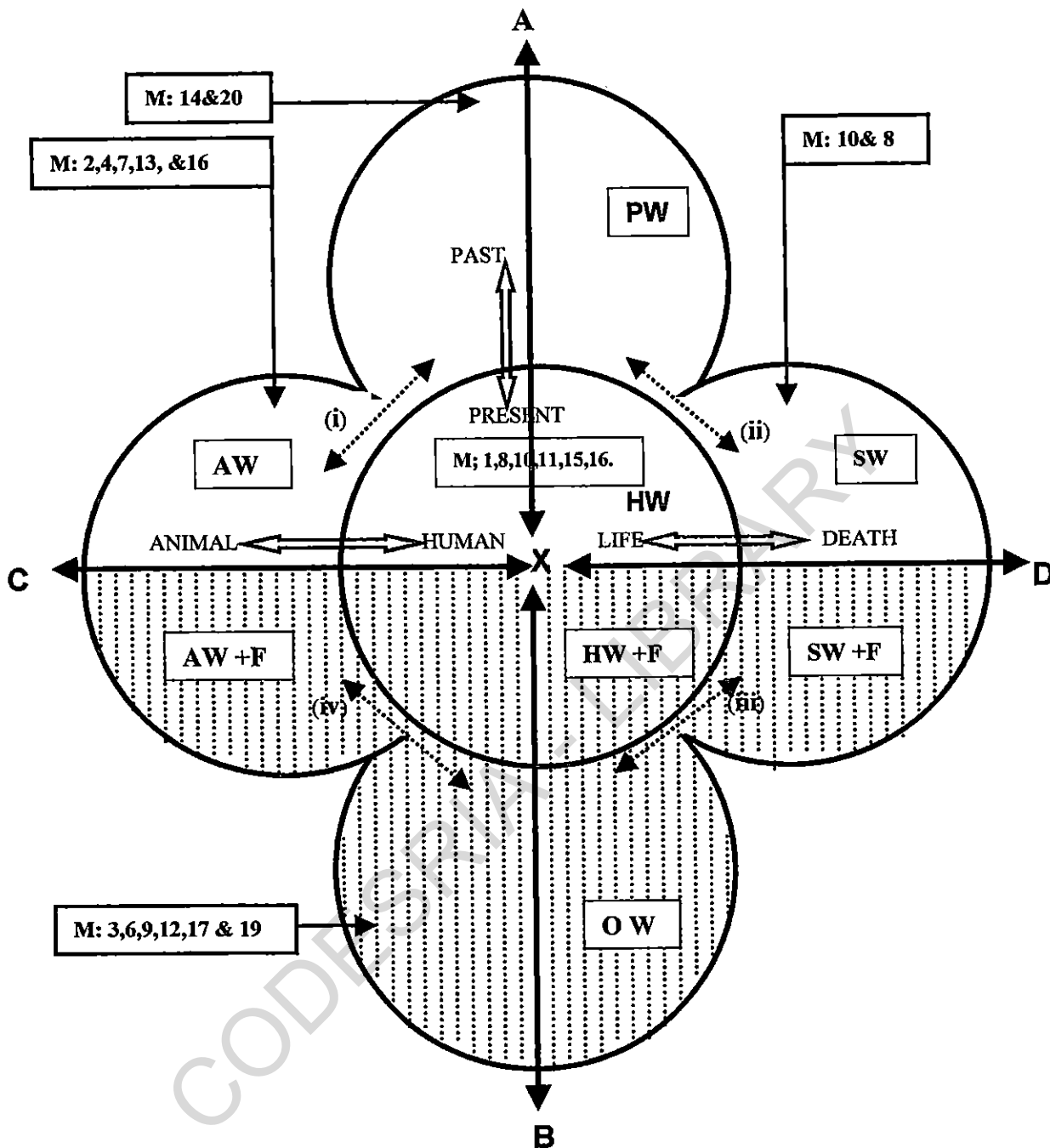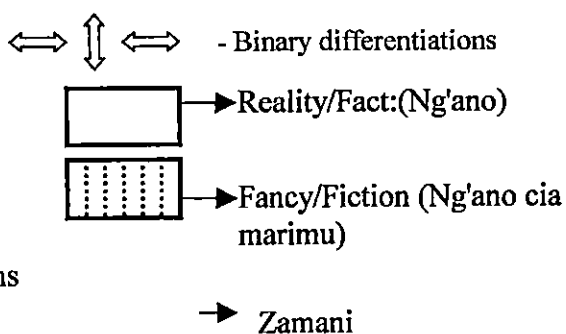
Fig. 9. The Structural Model, showing the Transformational/Transversal relationships of the Worlds of Gikuyu Mythology.

This is the structural model that is going to guide our discussion of the relationship between Gikuyu mythology and Gikuyu culture and society. Several salient features of this model are worth noting.

First, the model has been systematically developed from all the tale "types" of Gikuyu mythology. Thus the model represents a systematic underlying structure of Gikuyu mythology. This brings us back to the definitions of myth that have been given in the introduction, and which we have adopted for this study. Okpewho's definition states that myth "informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of the human mind at varying degrees of intensity" (Okpewho, 1983:69)." Margolis sees myth as "a schema of the imagination..." (in Righter 1975:6), while Cassirer talks of "an autonomous form of the human spirit with its own structure, fiction ... expression ... with unity of feeling"(Ibid, p5).

These definitions show that the model that we have deduced above shows the autonomous form of mythology and foregrounds the mythology's structure and unity of feeling. This is self-evident in our schema - which according to Margolis is "a schema of the imagination" which "informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of the human mind" (Okpewho) Thus, in trying to understand how this model works,

we must take it as a systematic schema of the imagination which informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of the Gikuyu mind. We are thus interested in finding out how this schema of imagination helps the Gikuyu effectively organise their way of viewing the external world, their society and culture in accordance with the distinction, propositions, and structures that are presented in this schema.

The ultimate validity of this schema is its ability to explain concrete social and cultural reality as it existed among the Gikuyu people. The complicated nature of this task calls to mind the analogy given by Levi-Strauss (1976) with regard to the efficacy of models in explaining socio-cultural phenomena. He says that the ultimate proof of the molecular structure of matter is provided by the electronic microscope, which enables us to see actual molecules. He goes on to argue that this achievement does not alter the fact that henceforth the molecule will not become any more visible to the naked eye. Similarly, he argues that it is hopeless to expect structural analysis to change our way of perceiving concrete social relations.

Structural analysis only makes it possible to explain it better. He says that the advantage of a model is that:

> If the structure can be seen it will not be at the earlier empirical level, *but at a deeper one previously neglected : that of those unconscious categories which we may hope to reach by bringing together domains [myths] which at the first sight appear disconnected to the observers:* on the other hand, the social system as it actually works, and on the other hand the manner in which *through their myths ... men try to hide or to justify the discrepancies between their society and the ideal image of which they harbor* (Levi-Strauss 1976:80) (Italics mine)

The individual Gikuyu myths, which may at first sight appear disconnected to the casual observer, have through the above analyses been reorganised into a coherent structural model, which we call a schema of the imagination, through which we seek to explore Gikuyu culture and modes of thought and practices.

This schema as has been noted projects two symmetrical axes AXB and CXD, (See P.134). Each axis represents a particular imaginative mode in Gikuyu modes of thought and we shall use them as our basis of excursion into the Gikuyu culture and society. Having attained objectives two and three in this chapter, we proceed to the next chapter in which we shall engage in a discussion aimed at achieving our fourth and last objective.

CHAPTER FOUR

Relating the Structural Model of the Worlds of Gikuyu Mythology to Gikuyu Culture, Modes of Thought and Practices.

Introduction

This is the interpretive chapter where we shall engage in discussions aimed at achieving our last objective which is to: interpret Gikuyu mythology by relating the structural model (already identified) to Gikuyu modes of thought, thereby demonstrating the role of Gikuyu mythology in organising and mediating cultural modes of thought and practices. We shall be guided by rules three and four derived on Page 28 in the theoretical framework. Rule three states that a myth must never be interpreted at one level only, since every single myth consists of an interrelation of several explanatory levels. The numerous versions which may exist at the same time are not all situated on the same level of mythological thought. In this regard, we have already put in place the sampled myths in an order that varies according to the variables that each tale uses. We shall proceed to show, not only how myths at an individual level represent a certain image of reality, but also how at

another level and in relation with other myths, a particular myth helps in presenting a deeper reality. Rule four states that a group of myths must never be interpreted alone but with reference to the ethnography of the society in which they originate. Since each version provides a particular image of reality, ethnographic observation must decide whether this image corresponds to the facts. Thus the discussion of this interpretive chapter will incorporate extensive and detailed material on Gikuyu ethnography to support the images projected in the schema of mythological imagination derived above.

This schema on P.134 presents several levels from which we can approach the explication of the mythology. We have shown the place of individual myths in the derived worlds and the relationships of the worlds. Taking the human world at the centre of the schema we have identified two axis, AXB and CXD each of which as earlier stated, represents a particular imaginative construct in Gikuyu modes of thought. Our explication in the sub-section below starts with the AXB axis which we posit represents existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought.

Existential Imagination in Gikuyu Modes of Thought and Practice.

With the human cultural world at the centre, the vertical axis AXB has the ancient past world of creation on the one end, and the imaginary world of the ogres on the other end. Stated in temporal terms, there is a past/present binary opposition between the ancient past world and the human cultural world. Stated in terms of the principal characters in the myths from which these worlds emanate, we have a, God ---- Human ---Ogre continuum on this axis. To understand this continuum and the meaning it portends in Gikuyu modes of thought, we need to examine in detail the first relationship in the continuum which is the God/human relationship. We need to foreground the Gikuyu understanding of the community's position in relation to God and the past. Stated in terms of our schema above, we need to show how the AX relationship was realised in Gikuyu culture. It is only then that we will be able to explain why this past world stands in opposition to the imaginary ogre with the human world in the middle.

From mythical accounts recorded by several writers, we can accurately deduce the Gikuyu conception of their past, God, and their relationship to the two. Kenyatta (1938: 3-8) gives an account of the ethnic origin, an account which we have used for this study. Similar accounts of this

legend have been variously given by Beecher, (1944), Kenyatta, (1966: 1-5): 2), Deegan, Eds. (1972: 5), Abbott, (1974: 10), Leakey, (1977: 48-51), Muriuki,(1994: 47) and Wanjohi (1997). Several observations can be made from these accounts in general and Kenyatta's account in particular. The Gikuyu did not only have a concept of the supreme being but also believed that he is the creator Mumbi and divider of the universe (Mugai), who out of his benevolence gave the Agikuyu, through their original ancestor, Gikuyu, their share of land with rains, rivers, forests and all the gifts of nature. He is thus lord of nature with the ability to give out or divide the provisions of nature to anyone he wishes. He is also the architect of the ethnic lineage since he gave the original man a wife - Mumbi - again meaning moulder or creator. The woman was the means by which the lineage would come into being. Other names of God, which seem to suggest his central place as creator and sustainer of life, are given by Kibicho (1972). In his study of the Gikuyu conception of God, he writes that God was referred to as "Gethuri" - the great elder. This name emphasises God's wisdom, his love and his care of the community as his children and it indicates that the Gikuyu could approach him, like an elder in trust and confidence without fear. The name "Murungu" which was also used for God seems to suggest his otherness, "mystery, power and mercy of God all

combined" (Kibicho, 1972: 58). There is yet another name Nyene - ultimate owner of all things and all men and Mwene - Nyaga - which means the owner or possessor of all brightness or the sun and the snow on Mt. Kenya, - the greatest and the most important of his holy abodes. This signifies that God is the owner of brightness in the sense of awe-inspiring beauty, majesty, glory and holiness. The Gikuyu people have always believed in the Almighty God, the creator and ruler of all men and all things, as Kibicho (1972: 7) correctly notes:

> This belief in God was almost axiomatic and the existence of God was never seriously questioned - Atheism to the Gikuyu was not only unknown but inconceivable. It would be tantamount to denying that one had a mother and a father.

Deriving from this, it is not surprising that this belief in God was an indivisible part of the Gikuyu religio-political and social life. The Gikuyu thus trace their religio-political and social institutions right from this divine foundation of their community. As a result, they believed in the sacredness of the land, homes, mountains, especially Mt. Kirinyaga and certain trees under which sacrifices and prayers to God were offered. Kibicho concludes that the "holy character of these things as well as the *sacredness of life in general which the Gikuyu emphasized both in creed and in practice* is seen as deriving from the sacred origin" (Ibid p.9) (Italics mine).

It is thus clear that the Gikuyu held community life as sacred and sacrosanct. In fact life in its different forms and especially human life was a "means of God's self manifestation". (Ibid p.14). Life was considered as being the greatest and most important way in which God manifests his presence and his benevolent power. This belief was also connected with the Gikuyu belief that what God desired most for humanity was the enhancement of life in the community. It was also this belief which led the Gikuyu to regard as sacred those things most closely connected with procreation, maintenance and enhancement of life first for the individual and secondly and most importantly for the community. These things included land/soil, planting and harvesting, blood, sex, marriage, birth and initiation. The basic sacredness which was being guarded in all these less forms was that of human life and its well-being "for Gikuyu regarded life as God's greatest gift and greatest sign of his benevolent presence and power" (Ibid. p15). Understanding this Gikuyu conceptualisation of God and life, in regard to the individual and the community is the first step towards comprehending existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought.

Let us now go back to the binary differentiations as identified through the relationship of the other worlds of Gikuyu mythology to the human

world (HW). In the differentiations past/present, animal/human, life/death and reality/fancy, the human world (HW) is marked by, present-human-life-reality. This means that the ultimate reality of human culture as lived in the human world was life. This life is traced back to the past world where it was instituted by God and is perpetuated according to his purposes. The perpetuation of this life was the ultimate reality in human culture, and thus was at the centre of existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought. According to the creation myth God had given several provisions for the task of perpetuation of life and human existence. One of the greatest provisions for this purpose was land. Thus land is intricately connected with the past, God and his beneficent qualities. This among other things is the rationale for the XA relationship (See P.134) in the schema above. Man's present existence was, in Gikuyu existential imagination, guaranteed by God in the past through the provision of land. It is therefore imperative that we delve into the Gikuyu understanding of the concept of land as one of the provisions for the sustenance of life and the community. Kenyatta (1938) remarks that in studying Gikuyu ethnic organisation, it is necessary to take into consideration land tenure "as the most important factor in social, political, religious and economic life of the tribe" (p.21). He goes on to explain that as agriculturists, the

Gikuyu people depended entirely on land for their survival. Land supplied them with the material needs of life, through which spiritual and mental contentment is achieved. Communion with the ancestral spirits is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the community are buried. The Gikuyu consider the soil as the mother of the community, for the reason that the mother bears her burden for about eight or nine moons while the child is in her womb and then for a short period of suckling:

> But it is the soil that feeds the child through a lifetime; and again after death it is the soil that nurses the spirits of the dead for eternity. Thus the earth is the most sacred thing above all that dwell in or on it. Among the Gikuyu, the soil is especially honoured and an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth (Ibid.).

The importance of land in Gikuyu existential imagination with regard to its sustenance of life and perpetuation of the community is also dealt with by Kerschew (1972:193-197). She explains that to the Gikuyu, land is permanent. It is not only the place where the ancestors are buried, as explained by Kenyatta quoted above, *"but is itself the prime ancestor.* It is consequently part of the totality of relationships and creates its own" (p193) (Italics mine). Thus the relationship between men who own the land and the land itself is a <u>Mbari</u> -(lineage) - relationship. The land as ancestor has given birth to the group of men

who own the land and who are <u>ene a Githaka</u> - (owners of the land). These men created a <u>mbari</u> - (lineage) - with land as the ancestral father - <u>baba</u> - to whom all the men are <u>muriu</u> - (sons). This conceptualisation of the relationship between land and men can be linked to the description given above of the term given to the descendants of Gikuyu and Mumbi-in the myth of creation. The term <u>Mbari ya Gikuyu na Mumbi</u>, -the lineage of Gikuyu and Mumbi - refers to the whole community as they relate to their "prime ancestor", the land of <u>Mukurwe wa Gathanga</u> which was given to them by God. Therefore, every Mugikuyu as a descendant of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the ancestral couple, "can claim to belong to the <u>mbari</u> [lineage] of Gikuyu and Mumbi with consequent right to own land within Kikuyu country" (Ibid. p196).

This whole discussion leads us to the understanding that land as the "prime ancestor" is an integral part of Gikuyu selfhood, perpetuation and sustenance of life. It is also central in the relationship with human ancestors and to God. Land was the greatest link between cultural present and a glorious divine past. It was the ultimate connection between life as experienced by the community in a cultural setting of *sasa* and life as a concept representing divine human destiny as

instituted by God in the *zamani*. This is the relationship represented by the AX axis in our schema, (See P. 134).

The implications of this relationship in Gikuyu mythology can be shown in the nature and position of the ogre world. In terms of position, it is evident from the schema that the ogre world is in opposition to the past glorious world. This opposition is significant in relation to the concept of land discussed above due to the notable fact that the victims of the ogres are more often than not alienated from their land. They, either by choice, guile, or accident, stray away from their land. This land is in some myths overtly referred to as Gikuyu land. Victims of the ogre move away from this land and find themselves in the "land of ogres". This is essentially the case in myth 3- "The Girls and the ogre". The five girls follow the ogre to its land where they are threatened with death. The one girl who follows the ogre up to its abode is only spared when she decides, "to go back to where she had come from." (Line, 22). In the myth "Karithong'o", the seven young men go on a hunting mission and wander away so far that they find themselves in the "land of ogres". It is here that six of them are killed and only one survives and returns to the land of his people. In myth 9, "Manga and his father", this transference is given explicitly in the beginning of the tale: "Once a man

did this, he married a woman. After marrying a woman, they left their place in Gikuyuland and went to the "land of the ogres". When they reached that land, the man became an ogre" (Lines 1-4). In the same story, a sister of the woman whose husband had turned into an ogre makes the same journey to the "land of ogres." The excerpt is worth quoting at length:

> Now this woman had left a sister at home in Gikuyuland. Now the sister heard stories that her sister and her husband went to become ogres. "There is your sister who went, they went to become ogres. She would ask, "people who were not ogres, how do they become ogres?" She could keep hearing the story. Once she said she would go looking for her sister. She started off and went, she had a baby and was expecting another - so she went, went and arrived in the sister's place (lines 21-27).

It is evident that the sister had to travel a long distance to reach the "land of ogres" where her sister and the husband had gone. It is also significant in this story that after the woman is rescued from her husband and the son who were ogres, she "and her children took all the goats and cattle and went back to Gikuyuland" (Lines, 194-195).

The same alienation from land can be noted in myth 12 "The she-goat". When the she-goat is beaten for its abnormal behaviour, it leaves and goes away to the "land of ogres", where it is exposed to the cannibalistic actions of the ogre. There is all the indication that this

goat is a symbolic representation of human beings because on its giving birth a second time, it brings forth not goats but human beings who finally overcome the ogres. The same trend of alienation from land can be noted in myth 19, The woman with a wound in her leg." Since the wound in the woman's leg can only be treated by a hair from the big ogre's head, the young girl journeys from Gikuyuland to the "land of ogres" to acquire the needed hair.

Using our understanding of the concept of land among the Gikuyu, we are now in a position to explain the mythological opposition between the past world and the world of ogres on the AXB vertical axis (See P.134). The ogre stands in opposition to the concept of life, its creation, perpetuation and sustenance as divinely instituted and provided for by God in the past world. The ogre world is thus a threat not just to life in the present but also to the past world and "the prime ancestor" -land that supports life in the community. Thus the movements described in the myths above represents the worst form of alienation in Gikuyu existential imagination. When individuals are uprooted from their land, "the prime ancestor", they are subjected to the fatal malevolent forces which in Gikuyu mythology are represented by the ogre and its world. Being in Gikuyu land offers one the security and protection of being a

beneficiary of God's benevolent life sustaining provisions. Since it stands in opposition to this provision, the "land of the ogres" represents the worst form of alienation and the greatest threat to the life of the community.

Seen in terms of existential imagination, the fact that there is a "land of ogres" does not mean that the Gikuyu believe in the physical existence of this land. As our previous discussions and the schema on P.134 show, this land is mythical - it only exists in Gikuyu imagination. Since land is the *sine qua non* of existence, there can never be any form of existence without land in their modes of thought. Existence for the Gikuyu emanates from and is sustained by the land. The "land of ogres" is a product of this reasoning, that is, if ogres *exist*, then they must have land as far as the Gikuyu are concerned. Seen symbolically, this land is antithetical to Gikuyuland and represents alienation and death. It represents the horrible eventuality of extinction of the people since it is improvident and leads to death. As shown in the myths discussed, outside Gikuyuland lies death and destruction. The point here is that there can be no providence outside God's provision which in his benevolence and wisdom he has extended to the people. Land represents this divine providence and there can be no life outside this

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land. If the Gikuyu society is to sustain and perpetuate itself and to function as a unit the people have to remain within the communal land, the ultimate sign of divine providence. To function as a unit, the community had to remain closed. As Beecher (1944) correctly notes, the cultural pattern whose principal feature was the ultimate interaction of creed and custom; the alliance of the sacred and the profane in one functional whole:

> ...was dependent for its continuance on tribal isolation. The presiding deity was a purely tribal God, the mythology was founded on covenants said to have been made in the days of tribal origin and ethnicity was conceived in terms of tribal heaven (Beecher 1944:14).

Since land defined this origin and eternity - "the tribal heaven", then leaving the land is synonymous to leaving the community, the ancestors and God. This could lead the community to a sorry and dangerous state signified by the dangers and distress of the ogre world. Thus through Gikuyu mythology the whole community was instructed on the supremacy of the community, bound together and sustained by their land. There was security in the knowledge that this land had come directly from God through the ancestors and remained the vital link to this past and to God and his providence. This point is put eloquently by Wamue (1988) in her study of the Agikuyu customs and the religious

significance of Tiiri (soil) in the Mau Mau struggle. She notes that the Agikuyu survival and protection both spiritually and physically lay in Tiiri. The religious concept of Tiiri was used to protect them from natural calamities and disasters are symbolised by the world of ogres in Gikuyu mythology. This kind of protection depended on the smooth harmony of the people, ancestors and God through the prime ancestor, Tiiri. It was sacred and was used in many religious rituals. It was not only a physical supporter of the people but it also acted as a daily revelation of God, creating a firm continuum from *zamani* to the *sasa* in the schema of imagination above.

Thus going to the "land of ogres" symbolises a disastrous delinking of *zamani* and *sasa* : a delinking which had to be avoided or supressed at all costs. We shall see how this delinking was avoided or suppressed. But we first discuss other ways in which the opposition between the ogre world and the provident world of **zamani** is manifested in Gikuyu existential imagination.

Returning to the myth of tribal origin, we are told that God not only gave Gikuyu, the original man, land. He also gave him a woman-Mumbi – a name which we have noted means moulder or creator. As can be

deduced from the name, she represents fertility both symbolically and functionally. She begets nine daughters who become the mothers of the nine clans. The Gikuyu kinship system is based on these clans founded by the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. As Cagnolo (1933: 21) correctly notes, the relationship between the different clans:

> ...was not one of servitude or privileges as with Indian castes but all of them equally co-operate to one social and national whole. This clan system was one of the most important social systems of Gikuyuland.

All writers of Gikuyu ethnography argue that the kinship system based on <u>mihiriga</u> (clans) and the age grade system (<u>Mariika</u> singular <u>riika</u>) were the most important systems in Gikuyu socio-political and religious organisation. Kan'gethe (1981: 53) sums up this reality aptly when he says:

> In general the Agikuyu society was based on two basic systems. The kinship system embraced all those who were related by blood. Land was generally owned by those people who were related to each other by blood. The age-grade system encompassed all the people whose bond of unity was the initiation rite [more on the age-grade system is discussed later].

Deegan, eds; (1972:21), expresses a similar point when he says that the "Gikuyu tradition also stresses two other social relationships. One is the clan. The other is the agegroup".

After the whole community, the next broader unit in Gikuyu existential imagination is the Muhiriga (clan) each of which can trace its origin to one of the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Although allegiance to the land related subclan (Mbari) and the extended family (Nyumba) is strong, allegiance to the clan was given a big premium in Gikuyu life and as Leakey (1977:49) notes, "every single Kikuyu knows which of the main nine clans he belongs to". Even today, it is not impossible to trace one's clan. This writer belongs to the Ethaga clan founded by Mumbi's daughter, Nyambura. The point we are putting forward is that women, symbolising fertility and continuity of the tribe occupy a very central place in Gikuyu existential imagination. Like the original mother, Mumbi, the progenitor of the community, and her nine daughters, the progenitors of the nine clans, women in Gikuyu society are seen in terms of their fertility. They thus hold a central role in the continuation of the community from the *zamani* to the *sasa*. Kenyatta (1966) records that the Gikuyu have a saying that there can be no friendship with one who seeks to deprive one of land, women and cattle. For the Gikuyu hold that without these three, the nation is dead.

The earth as discussed earlier is the mother who:

> … supplies both men and women with the material comfort of life and during their infancy *they receive the nourishment of mother earth through the breast of a woman* (Kenyatta 1966:22).[Italics mine]

Women and their ability to bear and nurture children thus hold a very important role in Gikuyu society and culture. Underscoring the same point Lambert (1956:41) correctly notes that, for the Gikuyu, land owned by the clan means a place to live forever, girls are the means by which the clan perpetuates itself and cows, by providing calves, provide the means of getting the goats to get the girls. He concurs with Kenyatta in that the perpetuation of the clan depends on these three things. To the Agikuyu these are <u>indo cia mindi na mindi</u> (things of forever and ever) and no communal laws can come between two clans concerned with mutual arrangement for their own perpetuation.

Both writers impress upon the importance of cattle and goats in Gikuyu existential imagination. In addition goats appear alongside land and women. To understand the place of goats in the whole set-up - we again need to go back to the same myth of tribal origin. There indeed may seem to be a contradiction in that we are pressing the importance of women and yet the myth says that the men organised and overthrew

women from leadership. This leads to what may seem to be a much more contradictory situation of female names for clans in a society where women are overthrown and the society consequently organised on male principles. The same myth provides suggestive leads towards understanding of the psychology of masculinity and femininity and the place of goats in Gikuyu modes of thought. Women are symbolised as powerful creators or moulders, the primal centre of the tribe. The myth, as Abbot(1974) correctly notes, presents males initially content under the control of the powerful creator women whose position is in line with divine providence for life and continuity of the nation. But as time goes on in the primal world, given in the myth, and as the baby and the young boy grow into youth and adulthood, they (men) increasingly regard women as arbitrary and unjust (lines 100-110 of Myth 14). They consequently become bent on the goal of asserting their independence from the women, - their mothers and the mothers of the community. Men do this by organising themselves in agegroups and through the strength of assertive male action of impregnating the women. They establish a separation from the powerful mothers (lines 112-129 of Myth 14) and immediately begin to masculinise what was before feminine including the female identity of the tribe and the organisation of lineages (lines 131-135 of Myth 14). Their efforts at self assertion are stopped

short of the successful completion when the women fiercely threatened

to murder all their male children if the male carried through their plans

to change the names of the clans (lines 135-143 of Myth 14). Thus

male assertion is ultimately dangerous for it threatens life itself. Thus in

the Gikuyu community, despite this coup d'etat, women remain the

symbolic and functional centre of fertility around which men and the

whole community are ultimately dependent. But now that the men had

taken over the reins of leadership of the tribe, they also had a stake in

the continuation and perpetuation of the tribe. This is where the goats

come in to unite the female principle of fertility and creativity to the male

principle of virility and permanency. This uniting is done through a very

complex system of male/female interrelationships within several

Nyumba (families). These Nyumba relationships were created through

descent with both males and females being members of a nyumba (a

family). Kerschew (1972) goes into very enlightening details about the

uniting of the male and female principle through the concept of nyumba

and goats in perpetuating life among the Gikuyu. She says that behind

the relationship within a nyumba and between one nyumba and others

are certain ideas which are central in Gikuyu modes of thought. The

Gikuyu see the world both as permanent and as continuous. Men by

making the society patriarchal in overthrowing the matrilocal relations

are the link between permanence and continuity. During their life they have to ensure continuity; at their death they assure permanence by becoming one with the land and the ancestors. Continuity in life is reached through the birth of a grandson, who, with his grandfather, is mundu umwe (the same person) thus continuing the cycle of the generations. This is because a grandson in Gikuyu society is named after the grandfather.

Men however cannot reach continuity by themselves. Since they cannot give birth, they cannot create. This is reserved for women who were needed to bring forth the new members of the group. The closest link between a man and a woman was the link between a brother and a sister who as muru wa maitu (brother) and mwari wa maitu (sister) to each other could claim precisely the same antecedent ancestors. The same close link would pertain between a man and his wife - a muthuri and his muka, - who in the next generation would be the precedent of a set of sons and daughters, linked as muru wa maitu and mwari wa maitu to each other. In the same way that individuals with a common ancestor are mundu umwe, so a brother and a sister are mundu umwe "they are each other, but one of them, the male represents the permanent principle, the other, the female is him, but in creative form"

(Ibid. p198). The same relationship pertains to a married couple who through their children become <u>mundu umwe</u> representing both the continuous principle and the creative principle.

But then men cannot marry their sisters. Therefore, they have to look for wives outside their <u>nyumba</u> - the family of their grandfather. To receive wives from another <u>nyumba</u> they must have <u>mburi</u> (goats) but in the ideal and often the real situation these goats are provided by the <u>ruracio</u> (bride price) which another nyumba has given for receiving one's sister as a wife. In a very real sense, therefore, a sister (S) provides a wife (W) for his brother (B) and this is instrumental in creating for his brother a son (N). (A term in Gikuyu often used by a brother for a sister from whose <u>ruracio</u> (brideprice) he hopes to acquire a wife is "<u>ici ni mburi ciakwa</u>" (she is my goats)). This son (N) belonging to a brother (B) will also receive <u>ruracio</u> from his sister (S2) and will again acquire a wife (W2). This wife will bear a son (N2), who is <u>mundu umwe</u> with the brother (B) who started the exchange and who is this third generation son's grandfather or <u>Guka</u>. This grandfather (B) and the grandson (N2) will share a name. Thus (B) achieves continuity through his grandson (N2). And so the cycle is completed and continuity achieved. At the same time, the grandson (N2) on reaching

marriageable age will reopen the cycle by acquiring a wife (W3) through paying goats acquired from a sister's (S3) <u>ruracio</u> and continue life while his grandfather will find permanence in death.

Thus, goats are very important in the Gikuyu concept of continuity and permanence of life. As we have seen they are closely related with the acquisition of a wife - the fertility and creative principle in Gikuyu existential imagination. In line with this central position, the greatest duty and pride of a woman in Gikuyu society is to bear children, since these are the raw materials with which the community perpetuates itself. Thus bearing children and continuing the tribe is the Gikuyu woman's *raison d'être*. It is for this reason that being a <u>thaata</u> (barren woman) is the worst misfortune that could befall a Gikuyu woman. Cagnolo (1933), Kenyatta (1938) and Leakey (1977) among others are emphatic on this point. Leakey (1977) notes that of all the misfortunes that could befall a Kikuyu woman, the worst was the curse of sterility. A woman who failed, for whatever reason, to get a husband could always find some man to be her lover and the physical father of her children. But a woman who failed to have babies or even conceive was the object of spite from other women and of pity to her friends. "She was utterly miserable. In fact if every possible remedy had been tried and

the last hope failed, such a woman committed suicide" (Leakey 1977,

541-542). Cagnolo echoes the same sentiments when he says:

> to be childless is the worst fate for a Kikuyu woman. She is regarded as a useless creature, one who has failed in the one thing expected of her. Seldom is she tolerated at home, in most cases the husband endeavors to return her to her parents and to obtain repayment of dowry paid by him before marriage (Cagnolo 1933: 59).

Writing on this same issue Kenyatta (1938: 164) notes that the desire to

have children is deep-rooted in the hearts of both man and woman and

entering into a matrimonial union they regard the procreation of children

as their first and most sacred duty. A childless marriage in a Gikuyu

community is practically a failure, for children bring joy not only to their

parents but also to the clan as a whole.

It is thus very clear from the above discussion that in Gikuyu modes of

thought, women, children and goats occupied a cardinal position

particularly in existential terms.

The discussion above on the importance of women and children in

Gikuyu existential imagination puts us in a better position to delve

further into the opposition between the past world of providence and the

ogre world. The providence of God to the community reaches the

people through land as we have discussed earlier and women, who as symbols of fertility and creativity bear children. On the other hand, the ogre does not just alienate people from their land but_*it exclusively attacks women and children - the symbols of continuity and perpetuation of the tribe.* In the myth 14,"The girls and the ogre" the ogre entices five girls who follow it to its abode. In Karithong'o the ogre starves Karithong'o's youngest brother. The same thing happens in myth 9 "Manga and his father" where the two ogres not only eat the woman's sister, but they also take the twins in her womb with the intention of eating them. Myth 12 "The she-goat" presents a situation where children are being safeguarded from the ogre but to no avail. Even when the she-goat moves away and begets two other children they have to be kept hidden away from the ogres. The popular "Wagaciairi", Myth 17, is probably the best example of the woman and the child as the victims of the ogre. The ogre comes into the house of the newly delivered woman and starves her. The woman and her child remain at the mercy of the ogre with the fear that the ogre will eventually eat them. The girl who goes to get the hair of an ogre to cure her mother instantly becomes the target of the ogre and is at risk of being eaten. This is in myth 19 "The woman with a wound on her leg". It is in the same myth where a big gourd - remnants of the ogre -

grows and starts eating the children of its owner. By attacking women and their children the ogre destroys the fertility and creativity that the community depends on for continuity. Thus it stands in complete opposition to the past world of providence and continuity. While the past world represents the providence of God and communal immortality, the ogre world represents absolute malevolence and communal mortality. The opposition in terms of the AXB axis is presented in Fig 10 below.

God: Absolute Benevolence
(Pro Life)
Communal Immortality.

X *Man*

Ogre: Absolute malevolence
(Anti-life)
Communal mortality
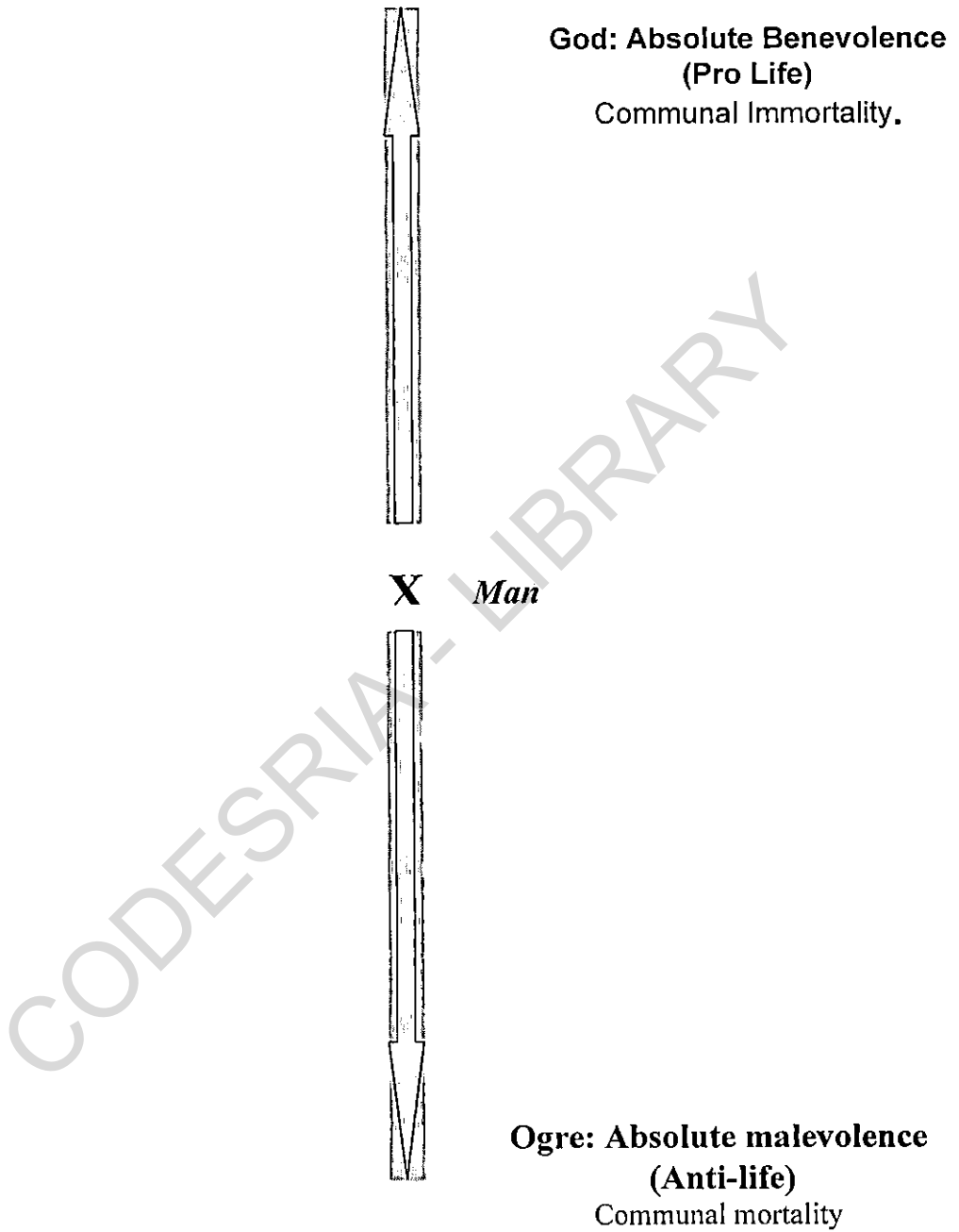
Fig. 10. The God/Ogre duality in Gikuyu existential imagination

The character of God and the phenomena of the past world are contrasted with the character of the ogre and the phenomena of the ogre world. The God/ogre duality can be characterised by oppositions like pro-life/anti-life, providence/improvidence, creativity/ destruction, continuity/decimation and fertility/infertility. Thus in Gikuyu existential imagination, the ogre stands for extinction and decimation of the community. Ogre stories represent an enactment of the apocalypse in Gikuyu modes of thought. The duel between man and the ogre is nothing short of a cultural Armageddon. Alienation from land and the decimation of women and children, represented by the actions of the ogre represent a state of non-being, a state that the Gikuyu refer to as Muthiro - the end/extinction. By conceptualising the ogre in this manner the statement that "annihilation at the hands of a monster that devours one (the ogre) is a threatening form of death, more threatening than death itself" Wa-Gachanja (1987: 104) reaches its highest truth-value. This statement becomes more significant when we consider that in our model "death" as in Gikuyu modes of thought does not even fall on the AXB axis which we are now discussing but falls under the CXB axis (See P.134 of the Thesis). The "death" signified by the ogres is a different sort of death, and in terms of our analysis translates to the extinction of the whole tribe, "Muthiro"a state of non-being.

What remains now is to show how this concept of "Muthiro" - extinction - was neutralised in Gikuyu culture. We thus proceed to investigate what in the Gikuyu culture constituted "Muthiro". We shall also show the role of God in situations that constituted "Muthiro"

In Gikuyu tradition, there is a saying that "Ngai ndagiagiagwo" (God must never be pestered), Kenyatta (1938: 238). Various writers concur that God was approached only in times of dire need for the community and was never pestered with what the Gikuyu termed as small or trivial problems. Routledge (1910: 237) says that the Agikuyu only turned to God in times of drought or great distress. Cagnolo also concurs that the "Supreme Being is believed to be good per se and generally he is not invoked" (Cagnolo 1933: 27). He gives instances when the Supreme Being was invoked, that is, during public calamities, epidemics, drought and mortalities. Beecher (1944) is even more specific about this fact and writes that although the high God is the presiding deity over all religious activities, supplication to him and rendering of thanks is only made in connection with the major religious observances. His blessing is only invoked on activities of major tribal importance. Litanies were offered in times of great epidemics, and when there was famine in the land through lack of rain. Again,

stressing the point that God was not pestered or invoked over "trivialities" (Gathigira, 1930) also mentions epidemics and famine as occurrences that warranted supplication to God.

Having established that God is in the *zamani* world, the question which arises is how this supplication to avert communal catastrophe in Gikuyuland was done. The Gikuyu practice of supplication to God can be traced back to instructions given to Gikuyu the original man by God himself. In the myth of tribal origin, Gikuyu, distressed by the lack of male heirs calls upon God to help him. God instructs him to take a lamb and a kid from his flock and kill them under the big <u>Mukuyu</u> tree. He should then pour the blood and the fat of the two animals on the trunk of the tree, then burn the meat under the tree as a sacrifice to God the benefactor (Lines, 23-29 of myth13). When Gikuyu went to the sacred tree after the sacrifice he found the nine young men. Thus supplication to God as the community's benefactor in times of great distress is done through sacrificing a goat.

This brings us back to the importance of goats in Gikuyu existential imagination. We learn that they are not only important for acquiring wives for the continuity of the community but also for supplication to

God when this continuity is threatened by catastrophic phenomena. This fact points us to the integral role that domestic animals play in Gikuyu existential imagination

The Gikuyu differentiate, in a very distinctive way, between wild animals and domestic animals. In myth 20 "Women and their animals", we are told how wild animals were separated from domestic animals. All animals were domestic animals until women's animals ran away to the jungle and became wild animals. This separation is shown by the peripheral relation (I) in the model on page 134. It should therefore be noted that the Gikuyu make a distinction between <u>Mahiu</u> - domestic animals - and <u>Nyamu cia Githaka</u> - wild animals. Variously, <u>Mahiu</u> are referred to as <u>indo cia thakame</u> - blood things. This differentiation between wild animals and domestic animals is accounted for by our schema above. The animal world (AW) refers specifically to wild animals and lies on the CXD axis which represents a different signification in Gikuyu modes of thought. The domestic animals feature prominently in our present discussion of the AXB axis representing existential imagination; *Ipso facto*, domestic animals must be seen as playing a key role in Gikuyu existential imagination. In Gikuyu culture,

domestic animals had a very critical role. Gathigira (1933:12) is quite categorical in this regard when he says:

> The reason why domestic animals are of great importance is that they are used to pay dowry during marriages and they provide clothes. It's domestic animals that provided meat, and goats for sacrifice were picked from domestic animals; again when one wanted to purchase something substantial like land, it was imperative that he gave a certain number of goats; while the purchase of smaller items was done using goats-skins. (Quotation is translated from Gikuyu by researcher).

Evidently, domestic animals especially goats facilitated in the acquisition of those things which were at the heart of Gikuyu existential imagination, namely women, who were the creators of life and perpetrators of the community; land, the sustainer of that life and for supplication to God when that life was threatened. In neutralising the devastating effect of the malevolent forces of nature, human beings in the human world relied on goats to make the needed connection to the supreme benefactor - God.

It is now clear that the Gikuyu in their real cultural setting - Human world (HW)- had a deep-seated understanding and appreciation of the devastating effects of epidemics, famine and conquest - the malevolent forces that threatened the community with annihilation -Muthiro -which

we have argued was mythologically represented by the mythical ogre world.

We have also seen that this phenomenon was neutralised, in the real world by supplication to God. But in the ogre myths, this symbolically malevolent ogre was destroyed by young men. It may therefore seem inconclusive when we contend that the Gikuyu sought the intervention of God in calamities represented by the ogre, while the ogre in their mythology was destroyed not by God but by young men. But a closer investigation into the status and position of the young men - Aanake - in Gikuyu culture and society, will reveal that the above scenario does not constitute a conceptual or an analytical hiatus, but can be perfectly mitigated in Gikuyu existential imagination.

The Gikuyu held the Aanake (sing: mwanake) in very high esteem. Cagnolo(1933:97) says that :

> mothers and families are generally proud of having a mwanake at home. The lad on his part is filled with a good conceit of himself and becomes so proud that the (sic) calls himself Kyenyo Kya Ngai - a small part of God .

Indeed the whole Gikuyu community regarded a mwanake as so and the phrase "mwanake ni kienyu kia Ngai" - A young man is a piece of God" - is widely used to refer to Aanake - young men - in Gikuyu

society. Thus the young men who kill the ogres in the mythology function in league with God in Gikuyu existential imagination. This is borne out first by the myth of creation and second by the roles that the Aanake played in Gikuyu culture and society.

In the myth of communal origin, we are told that the original parents of the tribe had nine daughters and no sons. This was a very worrisome situation for Gikuyu the father of the community. On sacrificing to God, He provided him with nine young men to marry his nine daughters so as to propagate the community. Thus these young men were "a piece of God" in the sense that unlike the nine girls born out of the union between Gikuyu and Mumbi, these were directly provided by God himself.

The functions of young men in Gikuyu society also make the description "a piece of God" quite apt. They worked alongside God in those matters that were close to Gikuyu existential imagination. When it came to the issue of land, which we argue was the pinion of the fabric of Gikuyu society, it is the young men who broke up virgin land for cultivation. It was through them that the land provided by God became productive, marking another way in which they were - "a piece of God."

This difficult role that <u>Aanake</u> played as pioneers in virgin land is well described by Mwaniki (1974). He explains that such pioneers had to overcome the elements of danger emanating from human foes and wild animals. The clearing of forests was an arduous task, demanding a high degree of co-operation and industry by each pioneer group. Understandably, "the picture of frontiersmen painted by folklore is that of men of courage, resourcefulness and hard work, in short the type of hero that any good Kikuyu was exhorted to emulate."(Mwaniki 1974:112) Thus, the pioneers were the focus of esteem, which in time turned to veneration. In mythology this was the kind of image that young men cut when they were cast against the devouring ogres and defeated them.

The other area in which young men acted in league with God to alleviate the communal catastrophe symbolised by ogres was through warfare. Again Cagnolo (1933:100) notes that "the class of the Aanake is acknowledged and respected by all as the defence force of the country". The objective of any invading force would of course be to annex land and despoil women, the two most important facets of Gikuyu existence. Protecting the very pillars of Gikuyu communal existence, which can be traced directly to God's providence, again

qualified the Aanake to be "a piece of God." This shows that this class of Aanake was central in mediating the absolute benevolence/absolute malevolence (God/ogre) opposition identified above by acting as God's executors. This brings us to the point that the fact that the ogre was killed by a young man is neither coincidental for the mythology nor contradictory for our analyses.

Having identified the centrality of the image of the ogre in Gikuyu existential imagination, we are thus at a better position to explain the salient features of an ogre tale. We notice two things regarding the ogre which enhance its symbolic representation of malevolent forces that threaten the tribe with extinction. One, *it takes several guises* and two *it is not easily destroyed.* These two attributes should be seen as complementary. In one of the myths with the ogre as the central character, the ogre takes the guise of a young handsome man albeit with a mouth at the back. In another story, the ogre appears initially as a buffalo, then as an old man, thereafter as a log and eventually as a gourd. In myth 9 "Manga Manga, and his father", the ogre was initially a human being. In myth 19 "The woman with a wound in her leg", different ogres are encountered but the main ogre, Mwengeca, is as big as a forest and even has an antelope grazing on his head. The ability

of the ogre to take these many guises enables it to be extraordinarily resilient to destruction. The ogre is such that even when it is cut into small pieces, a single piece of the mutilated ogre is capable of as much damage as the "whole" ogre. The ability to destroy is the last attribute that the ogre loses after it has lost everything else. In myth 6 "Karithong'o", for instance, we see the ogre surviving as a piece of a gourd, and starving Karithong'o's youngest brother. In myth 19, when the ogre is burnt , it reappears as a gourd which has grown out of the ashes. The gourd continues with a spate of destruction which is the sole mission of an ogre. In our context these two qualities of the ogre signify that the battle against the sinister forces of nature that threaten the very existence of the community "is an eternal struggle that can never be completely won" (Wa-Gachanja, 1987: 111), or that it must be won continuously as long as and in order that mankind continues to exist. Life must continuously be reclaimed from the jaws of annihilation, -- famine, disease, conquest or natural disasters. This is because man has no supernatural power to cause a total cessation of these catastrophic phenomena which threaten his very existence. He must therefore struggle as often as is necessary to counteract these forces without giving up. This intermittent struggle is an end in itself. For as long as humans are ready to stand up to the many guises of resilience

from the ogre (read calamities), their existence is guaranteed. The very nature of the ogre tales bears this out. This is because by its very nature, the ogre can reappear as many times as the repertoire of a narrator may accommodate. The destructive quality will always remain even after the most exhaustive efforts at destroying the ogre have been summoned. So even when the ogre is cut into pieces, these pieces can regroup and become as destructive as the original ogre. Thus in theory, an ogre is indestructible and an ogre tale can go on *ad infinitum*. In practice an ogre tale will come to an end only when a narrator wants it to. This symbolically shows that the calamities that threaten human existence, though daunting are subordinated to the human will. Humans counteract them because they want to, and they prevail out of sheer willpower. This is the message that the nature of the ogre tale puts across to the listener.

The nature of the ogre myths opens itself to further investigation when we pursue the point that the ogre is essentially symbolic. In his study of the Gikuyu folkstory, Wa-Gachanja (1987) declares that "it is common knowledge that the Gikuyu people did not believe in the existence of ogres and monsters that frequently feature in their folktales" (p103). Thus in our discussion of the ogre and what it stands for, we cannot fail

to trace it to the psychological level where we delve into its significance to the "symbolistic or configurative powers of the human mind" Okpewho (1983: 69), as quoted in the introduction, (See P.6 of the dissertation). Knowing what we now know about the ogre, we would be justified to assert that the destruction of the ogre provided a form of communal psychological release for the existential fears that haunted the community. The ogre tales provided a re-enactment of calamities in historical memory, experienced in reality or imagined, which caused a build up of emotions of fear and terror. Thus the destruction of the ogre provided a cathartic effect, leading to the purgation of such pent up emotions. This leads us to the observation that in every ogre tale, the ogre is foredoomed and nothing short of its destruction would be satisfactory. If man must survive, then the calamities that threaten him with extinction must be overcome and there can be no compromise on this. The malevolence of the ogre must be crushed and the benevolence of God, authored in the beginning of time (in the *zamani*), must reign as a life-giving heritage in the *sasa*. This is the psychological assurance to be inferred in the destruction of the ogre. In this sense, a myth with an ogre as the

principal character fits Richard Chase's definition of:

> an esthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural forces into a manageable collaboration with the objective [i.e., experienced] facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind (Quoted in Murray, 1960 : 278).

The "sense of reality" mentioned above could be pushed further in relation to the psychological effect of the ogre stories. In some stories, the damage caused by the ogre is greater than the mere devouring of human beings. For instance, in myth 19 "The woman with a wound in the leg", the ogre has swallowed all the children by the time it is discovered. Of significance is the fact that when the ogre is slashed open, all the children come out. In the light of our understanding of the symbol of the ogre, this signifies the reclaiming of the community from the destructive calamities. The assurance here is that with children, the community will always rebuild itself after calamity.

From our analysis above, two more remarks need to be made regarding the ogre. The first is that the victim of the ogre is always a human being and not an animal or any other object. This is apparent in the schema above. The wild animals and the spirits belong to the horizontal axis CXD (See P.134) and there is only the peripheral relationships (iii) and

(iv) between them and the ogre world. There is only a peripheral relationship because in the myths, the encounter between ogres, wild animals and spirits is at best peripheral and largely inconsequential. This can be shown in such occurrences as an ogre initially taking the appearance of a buffallo to lure the seven young men as in myth 6 "Karithong'o" or the ogre being told to put its tongue on the line of safari-ants as in myth 12, "The she-goat" or, Mwengeca the largest ogre in myth 19 "The woman with a wound in her leg", telling the girl to give it the antelope she found grazing on its head. The point to be noted is that these glimpses are peripheral to the essence of the ogre discussed above. The same can be said about the relationship between the ogre world and the world of spirits. There is no mythological evidence to justify any substantive link between these two. However, Bukenya and Nandwa (1983) quoting J.S. Mbiti's Akamba stories (1966) say that ogres are the spirits of the people who died so long ago that they cannot be remembered anymore but now only appear in stories. They inhabit "a spirit world" which is the exact copy of the physical one and live like ordinary people in the caves. However, the evidence adduced above shows that "the spirit world" in Gikuyu modes of thought is a separate entity from the "ogre world" and therefore this conceptualisation is not applicable to Gikuyu mythology. In the

peripheral relationship (iii) in the model on page 134, we appreciate that the ogres may exhibit some qualities that may be similar to those of spirits. For instance, like spirits, ogres are ubiquitous, have greater powers than human beings, instill fear in people and readily discover human secrets. But this relationship must not be too strongly stated and pushed further than just mere semblance of characteristics which again is peripheral if not inconsequential. It must be remembered that since Gikuyu ontology is anthropocentric, that is, it has man at the centre, any mythological relation which is to be given significance must have a direct bearing on the human world at the centre of the model above. The implication of this is clear; the relation (iii) between the ogre world and the spirit world, and (iv) between the ogre world and the animal world in the model on page 134, are peripheral to our understanding of Gikuyu mythology and have little or no bearing on Gikuyu modes of thought.

Finally, in discussions of the image of the ogre, many writers are wont to describe the ogre in such terms as cruel, unkind, inhuman, inconsiderate, foolish and lazy. Our analysis above shows that while such descriptions may not be incorrect, they are inadequate in that they understate the essence of the ogre in our appreciation of mythology.

Such descriptions do not go to the core of the nature of the ogre as discussed above. The ogre is quintessentially anti-life and stands for the annihilation of human and communal life. Such popularly accepted qualities are secondary to this quintessential image. If the ogre has these qualities, it only has them in order that it may fulfil its anti-life function. It will not have fulfilled its function if it was only shown to exhibit these minor qualities per se. Indeed, the ogre must always be anti-life because it cannot be anything else - it is either this or nothing. If we say that these minor qualities are admissible, we shall at once be confronted with some desirable qualities in a system of binary differentiation which are evidently exhibited by the ogre. Thus, positive qualities like helpful, kind, considerate, industrious, and clever would also become admissible. There is textual evidence to show that the ogre has these qualities. For instance in myth 6 "Karithong'o" the ogre is "helpful and kind" when it offers to help the young men who are stranded in the forest. It also offers them accommodation and food. In myth 12 "The she-goat" the ogre shows the positive quality of "perseverance" when it puts its tongue on the line of safari-ants without crying out in pain. In this same myth the ogre is shown to have a lot of cows and goats, a mark of wealth and industry. The same qualities of hard work, kindness and generosity are exhibited by the ogres in myth 9

"Manga and his father" who are shown to have a lot of goats which they generously slaughter for the woman upon request. The same can be said for the ogre in myth 17 "Wagaciairi" who comes to "help" the newly delivered mother and dutifully does the hard jobs like collecting firewood. In "The woman with a wound in her leg", the hair from the ogres head is actually curative and it cures the girls' mother of the putrescent wound. This shows that if the ogre has been described as cruel, unkind, inconsiderate and lazy, the reverse is also true, the ogre is helpful, kind, considerate and hardworking. That is why we are asserting that; these glimpses of virtue and vice are of little or no consequence when we become aware of the essence of the ogre. The ogre's kindness or unkindness, laziness or industry, helpfulness or cruelty, folly or wit, perseverance or lack of it are not important to its function in mythology. The ogre in Gikuyu mythology must be conceptualised in relation to existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought. There is no other way of fully appreciating the ogre, least of all through these minor qualities. If the ogre must be understood for what it is, then it must be seen as representing the annihilation and extinction of the whole tribe, as the symbol "of a threatening form of death, more threatening than death itself" to borrow Wa-Gachanja's term.

We have so far discussed those factors at the centre of existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought. We have shown that this imagination is represented by the God/ogre, pro-life/anti-life opposition represented by the AXB vertical axis on the structural model of Gikuyu mythology (See P.134). We have shown how this opposition is manifested in and resolved for the human world, at the centre of this axis. This was the first sub-section of this interpretive chapter where we are discussing the relationship between our derived structural model to Gikuyu society and culture. As we have noted earlier, the model gives two axes, which represent particular imaginative postulates in Gikuyu modes of thought. In the next sub-section, we tackle the horizontal axis - CXD in our schema on page 134 which represents another postulate in Gikuyu modes of thought and practice.

Moral Imagination in Gikuyu Modes of Thought

We now turn our attention to the horizontal CXD axis on our schema
(See P.134). This axis will enable us to explore moral imagination in
Gikuyu modes of thought. It involves the animal world on the one side
and the spirit world on the other side with the human world in the
middle, since, as we have already pointed out any significant
relationship must have the human world at the centre. Apart from
discussing what this axis stands for, we shall show how it relates to the
vertical axis AXB. To understand this axis we shall proceed, as in the
previous sub-section, by supplementing information from the tales
represented on this axis and from which in turn we derived the worlds
from, with extensive and detailed ethnographic material.

We have already pointed out the mythological separation between wild
animals and domestic animals represented by the peripheral relation (i)
in the schema. We have seen that in the Gikuyu thinking the wild
animals constitute a separate entity. Myth 20, "Women and their
animals" explains that when they went to the jungle, the wild animals
set up what we may call an independent "jungledom". They selected
their chiefs and leaders and defended themselves from being captured
by human beings (lines 13-16 of myth 20). This animal world, as a

separate sphere of existence is at a certain level amenable to metaphorical rendering. This is shown by the animal world plus fancy AW (+F) section in our schema (See P.134). This section consists of four myths from our sample namely myth 2 "The elephant and the thrush", myth 4 "The hare and the elephant", myth 7, "The Leopard and the antelope" and myth 13, "The squirrel". Several trends are noticeable in these myths. First, these myths pit the small animals with the big animals. For instance, in "The elephant and the thrush" the elephant, arguably the largest animal in the wild, is pitted against the thrush, a tiny songbird. The elephant has crushed the children of the thrush and the tiny bird gets even by killing the huge elephant. In "The hare and the elephant" the tiny hare is pitted against the elephant. The hare dupes the elephant and runs away with its flesh. In an effort to get its flesh back, the elephant sends other jungle animals, all of whom are duped by the cunning hare. The Hare finally escapes without ever returning the elephant's flesh. In "The leopard and the antelope", the hare dupes the leopard, the monkey, some young girls and eventually an old man, again with impunity. The squirrel in a myth of the same title goes on a spree of duping and harassing other big animals in very heinous practical jokes with fatal results.

The second point to note is that the culprits, the hare and the squirrel in our case are never punished. In "The elephant and the thrush" it is the small animal that punishes the big one. These small animals triumph over the big ones using wit, intelligence and bravado. These seem to be the accepted ingredients of triumph, the exercise of which gives the weak, small animals an unequalled degree of licence and freedom.

The third point to note about these stories is the extent to which the actions are pushed. They are hyperbolical, as the actions go to extremes in terms of brutality and cruelty. In fact the only rule in these myths seem to be that there is no rule - anything goes. The elephant crushes the children of the thrush in a very crude manner. On its part, the thrush enters the elephant's stomach through the anus and tears its inside until the elephant dies. In another story, the hare cheats the elephant and cuts off its flesh and then steals it. He equally cheats the emissaries of the elephant and kills them. The squirrel likewise goes on a fatal spree of playing crude practical jokes on other animals. It promises them meat and throws rocks on them crushing them to death. Death is casually peddled from all directions in a wanton if not an utterly ridiculous and crass manner.

Judging from the three points made above, viz. the triumph of small weak animals over big strong ones, license on the part of the small animals, and the extremes of action in the -animal- to- animal -dealings, it may seem that the small/weak vs. the big/strong animal metaphor represents a deeply entrenched dichotomy in Gikuyu modes of thought. The point to pursue then would be to investigate the Gikuyu society and culture to see whether in the real human world, dichotomies such as the one represented in the small/weak vs. big /strong animals metaphor existed.

We have shown that the Gikuyu system of kinship through clans - mihiriga is central to Gikuyu existential imagination and corresponds to the vertical axis in our schema. This kinship system according to many researchers and writers on Gikuyu ethnography went hand in hand with the Mariika (singular- riika) - age grade system. While the Mihiriga system was kinship based and embraced all those who were related by blood and traced their existence to one of the original daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi - the Mariika system "encompassed all those people whose bond of unity was the initiation rite" (Kang'ethe, 1981: 53). Gathigira writes that the Gikuyu had put a lot of premium on these two

systems and had a saying "there can be no coming out of a clan or age grade" (translated from Gikuyu) (Gathigira, 1933: 4).

One of the translations of the term <u>riika,</u> which is age-grade, gives an idea of what this system was all about: *grades, grading and gradation.* Since this is the system upon which the social-political organisation of Gikuyu culture was based, we postulate that it is the controlling principle of the moral orientation of the Gikuyu as a cultural group. We use the word moral to denote the principles governing the concept of right and wrong behaviour in regulating the relations, duties, rights and privileges of individuals and groups of individuals in and across the gradations of Gikuyu traditional society. The conceptualisation and operation of these principles among the people is what we are referring to as the moral imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought.

We proceed to discuss how the concept of <u>Mariika</u> (age-grades) affected the individual, intra-group and inter-group relations in Gikuyu society and culture.

It is clear that the central rite which seems to have been the controlling one in the formation of agegrades was the circumcision rite. Mwaniki

(1974: 118-119) explains that, compared to the various ceremonies that every Gikuyu underwent from birth to death, none was more significant than initiation. Its importance was underscored by the fact that it was the basic prerequisite for the attainment of full adult social status.

Routledge (1910:154) also writes:

> The festivals and rites associated with both marriage and death hold but a small place in Gikuyu imagination compared to that *greatest of all ceremonies* whereby the boy becomes a man and the girl a woman (Emphasis mine).

Initiation confirmed social status and the erstwhile youths became full members of the community. Mwaniki further writes that among themselves, the members of an ageset demanded and encouraged co-operation, solidarity and mutual help as a result of which an age-group exhibited a strong sense of comradeship and fraternal egalitarianism. Indeed the riika mates looked upon each other as actual blood brothers or sisters depending upon their sex and behaved accordingly. The spirit of comradeship was so strong among riika brothers that it occasionally led to a sharing of wives.

As a result of customs associated with this rite, Gathigira (1933) explains that the whole community was divided into many status-based groups. The origin and basis of this status being the circumcision rite.

There were young uncircumcised boys Tuhii twa Njoya and older yet uncircumcised boys called ihii cia Njama. When a young boy from Njoya status wanted to join the Njama status, he must pay a certain fee to the boys of the older group. Then the boy who has thus paid will be given a new name signifying the change of status. When the boys from the Njama status wanted to get circumcised, they had to pay fees to the circumcised young men Aanake to be allowed to go through the initiation ceremony. Even after initiation, they only joined a junior warrior grade and were called Aanake Muumo, literally meaning young men who have just come out. These as Leakey (1977) explains, were simply members of a junior initiated group and were not entitled to the normal privileges of the warrior class as a whole until again they paid the requisite fees. Meanwhile, they were provided with the means to buy spears, swords and shields "but they could not use any of these or parade with them in public without risking attack by the senior warriors." (Leakey, 1977:712). In the event of a raid into the Gikuyu country by the enemy, they could arm themselves for the emergency but they could not wander around the country armed, as this would have been tantamount to declaring equality with seniors.

The same status based system was also practised among the girls. Young girls who had just been circumcised were also a separate group from the older circumcised ones and of course from the younger uncircumcised ones. Even while eating, girls from different groups did not mix. The older ones used to eat at the fireplace where the food was cooked. The younger newly circumcised ones used to eat at the kweru - the place where goats used to sleep, while the uncircumcised used to stay in the thegi, a sort of store where their mothers used to keep calabashes and pots or at the Kiriri, the place where children used to sleep.

The same status-based dichotomies seem to have held even for old men with families. There were grades for men who had circumcised children and junior ones for those who had not. Those junior men had to prepare beer for their seniors so that once their children got circumcised, they would be allowed to join the senior grade. When the men who had prepared this beer for their seniors had their children circumcised, they would join the seniors and eat with them, while those who had not would be treated like beggars. It was virtually impossible to become a member of the highest ruling council - Muthuri wa Kiama -

if one did not have circumcised children and had paid the necessary fees.

For the womenfolk, the same circumcision based status prevailed. Those with circumcised children were called <u>Nyakinyua</u> and those without were called <u>Kang'ei</u>. Before one rose to the <u>Nyakinyua</u> grade, apart from the requirements that they have circumcised children, she needed to prepare a big feast called <u>Ihanda</u> for the senior <u>Nyakinyua</u> to be allowed to share the privileges of this senior grade. The <u>Nyakinyua</u> were equated with the senior male council and indeed constituted a council called <u>Njama ya Atumia</u> with judicial powers over the women folk.

The point we are pressing here is that the dichotomy of weak/strong, small/big, junior/senior - that is evident in the animal myths was pervasive and deeply entrenched in Gikuyu modes of thought and particularly their moral imagination. Inter-personal and inter-group relations were founded on sentiments emanating from these senior-junior dichotomies. The dichotomy, as our discussion above shows, was to be found across the whole community - among both the young and the old and among the menfolk as well as the womenfolk. Thus by

projection, all members of the community identified in some way or the other, depending on their status in life and their aspirations, with the weak/small animals in these tales. Thus the triumph of the small and weak over the big and strong was of great psychological significance, since they helped members of the community to expunge feelings of inferiority and oppression obviously generated by their belonging to a certain custom regulated status which demeaned them. Behind the facade of unity and the egalitarian image in which traditional African societies are cast, there existed in Gikuyu society, individual groups with status and privileges which other groups did not have or could not have. Thus the point where the small in the tales are pitted against the strong and the small triumph, makes psychological sense in Gikuyu moral imagination and that is why the small animals are never punished. Since the weak and junior individuals and groups in this status based morality identified with the weak and small animals - then punishing these animals would be tantamount to punishing oneself. It would be expected that living in such a stratified society produced feelings of resentment, anxiety, jealousy, spite and pressure among the members of the community. Since this morality was sanctioned by the society, these feelings would not be expressed without the risk of one upsetting the accepted norms in society. This kind of revulsion would

then be expressed and expurgated when the members of the society would identify with the weak animals as they wrecked havoc on the strong. In the words of Evans Pritchard (1967:30) "the animals act and talk like persons because people are animals behind the masks social convention makes them wear." They wish to revolt against these conventions and thus these animals represent the people behind the mask of convention. The animals represent the people "in desire, in feelings, in imagination" (Ibid.) and their repressed unconscious.

While this latter point may have been expressed elsewhere by psychoanalytic folklorists like Bettelheim (1977) Dundes (1980) (1997), it is important to trace the origins of such repressed feelings to societal structures and conventions. This is so especially in Gikuyu mythology. It is thus important to note that according to our analysis the feelings that are produced, repressed and expurgated through the actions and the triumph of weak animals originate from and are a product of societal structures and not simply a product of human nature. It is also important to note that, the same society that sanctioned such seemingly tyrannical status based morality, also provided its members with the means to attain the highest status in this same society. In this regard, these animal tales not only provided individuals with a means of

psychological release from undesirable repressed feelings but also

provided them with the modus operandi of achieving the highest status

as provided by the society. We shall remember that these small/weak

animals triumph over the big/strong animals through wit, intelligence

and bravado. Further analysis will show that these played a very

central role in Gikuyu moral imagination. These qualities as expressed

in the animal tales provided the junior members with the means to

aspire to and acquire the highest status on the land. This will be

demonstrated by a discussion of the modes of Gikuyu government and

jurisprudence.

Noting the uniqueness of Gikuyu government and jurisprudence,

Cagnolo says that it is doubtful if amongst all the governments of the

civilised and semi-civilised world, there is a government similar to that of

the Gikuyu community:

> It is not monarchical because there are not a number of little
> states, neither is it republican nor oligarchial (sic) because
> though the ruling class is the elders, they are so numerous that
> such definition would not be suitable. To our way of thinking their
> government is best described as government of agreement
> (Cagnolo, 1933: 119).

He goes on to explain that in the ruling class are to be found men "with

outstanding oratorial (sic) ability" (p120) physical strength, and wealth,

who are willingly acknowledged as leaders in each zone. They are not autocratic but are advisors who synchronise the common idea. It is important to note that on the moral plane it was only the elders as Cavicchi (1977: 17) explains, who had the right and duty to preserve and interpret the tradition, make rules for new contingencies, direct military defense and offence, administer justice and generally regulate the conduct of the affairs of the community. "Tradition originated from authority and rests with authority, namely those persons who by nature and by agreement are vested with the responsibility of caring after the welfare of others." (Ibid. p70). We need to understand this process of Gikuyu government alongside the *modus operandi* of the animals in the myths in order to characterise the requirements of acquiring such high status or eldership in the Gikuyu society and culture. We have already noted that intelligence and bravado, propelled the small weak animals to triumph. A closer analysis of Gikuyu society shows that the same qualities propelled an individual through the grades to the highest office as described by Cagnolo and Cavicchi above.

The account given by Kenyatta (1966: 11-13) gives a clear idea of a lifelong process in which wit, intelligence, tact and bravado would propel one to the coveted eldership whatever one's background. He argues

that a leader's qualifications were based on merit and inheritance was

out of the question. If one through his own ability could convince the

nation that he was wise and courageous, there was nothing to prevent

him from being judged capable of such a high office:

> The remarkable point to note about the Gikuyu system of
> chieftainship is that it started from the bottom and worked
> upwards, instead of travelling from the top and travelling
> downwards (Ibid).

The best evidence as Kenyatta (1966) explains is that a group of small

boys of their own accord would always select one of themselves as a

leader based on his proven intelligence, bravado and tact. It was then

the duty of such a boy to discipline and guide the group in the best way

possible, always acting in accordance with the group rules. The

members on their part made a point of obeying the leader of their own

choice and giving him due respect. In their dances and games the

leader was the master of ceremony with full powers to punish anyone

who acted contrary to the recognised rules of his particular group. He

might be the smallest boy among them but no one, not even the biggest

would dare disobey him; to offend the leader or to defy him would be

taken as an offence against the whole group and the offender would

have to face them all. Such groups would form their own courts of

justice, with judges selected from among themselves and, in imitation of

their elders they would hold sessions under a tree and hence punish or

fine any offender. The system of selecting an intelligent and tactful

leader to act for his fellows was carried from childhood to adult life. The

boy who performed his duties of such leadership with wit and tact might

carry that position on into warriorship and then into the final goal of

eldership.

Wit and intelligence also seems to have been the controlling principle in

Gikuyu jurisprudence. There were general assemblies, as Kenyatta

goes on to explain, to discuss communal affairs in which both criminal

and civil cases would be decided, "and here the people who were most

intelligent and *outspoken* would be noticed and given the respect which

was their due" (Kenyatta 1966:14) (Emphasis mine). In recording the

same peculiar judicial process, Cagnolo (1933: 148) says that in

traditional Gikuyu society, there were no professional advocates. Both

the plaintiff and the accused would plead their own case as best as they

could and judgement would largely depend on their own *skill* and

plausibility at putting their case which would be packed with a string of

proverbs. Elders would be the judges and:

> ...amongst these are some gifted with *intelligence and excellent oratorial*(sic*) powers. These have been eminent since boyhood at singing, in general conversation and have a reputation for common sense.* Growing old they bring with them the respect of the people and *are known as clever advocates.* They do not compete with each other as proceedings are always communal, nevertheless everyone knows that if so and so is on his side, the case will take the desired course (Emphasis mine).

It is therefore clear that wit, intelligence, tact and bravado were the principles upon which individuals could make their way into leadership and dominance in Gikuyu moral imagination. Cagnolo (1933:213) is in no doubt as to where this kind of reverence for intelligence, wit, and the ability to use it constructively for the society came from. He thus correctly notes that the inherited wisdom of the Gikuyu is best revealed in his language, proverbs, legends and fables. He notes:

> even though the Kikuyu did not possess books on ethics, psychology or other high flown theories of modern science, they *possess a rich inheritance of common sense which is handed down in oral tradition* from father to son told by grandfathers to the young people in the evenings when the moon is shining, *in the form of endless proverbs and stories which are so popular among the Eastern peoples* (Emphasis mine).

Thus Cagnolo correctly attributes the Gikuyu intelligence, wisdom and commonsense, at the centre of their governance and jurisprudence, to Gikuyu mythology.

This discussion ultimately brings us to the other role of the animal myths in Gikuyu moral imagination. We have already pointed out that the first role is provision of a safety valve to expurgate negative repressed feelings produced by the pressures of a status-based morality. Here we can see that the small animals did not only help in this regard, but they also epitomised wisdom, wit and bravado - the qualities most coveted in the culture. Thus, the other reason why the small animals could not be punished in the myths was that they were seen as cultural heroes. Each individual could identify with the weak/small but witty and intelligent animals in the stories because they possessed the skills that would propel any member of the community to a revered position whatever their present status. Just as the weak/small animals emerged on top by exercising these qualities, it remained a possibility for every member of the community to reach the highest social status through the same *modus operandi*. Thus although the society was stratified and an individual would necessarily occupy a junior position at some point in life, the triumph of the weak/small but witty and intelligent animals pointed to the potential of eventual social recognition for every one.

Thus these animals did not only represent the internalised undesirable feelings generated by a deeply stratified society, but they also represented the externalised, and desired qualities of social dominance. These animal stories provided the people with the means to expurgate the undesirable feelings and imbibe the desired ones. These were at once the means of externalising and projecting the repressions in the unconscious mind, and a means of inculcating and internalising the desired traits of social visibility and dominance that each individual was conscious of. It is this double-faced property of these tales which makes them be of central importance in Gikuyu moral imagination.

We now proceed to the third point about the animal myths. This is the sheer extravagance of action in the myths. The same animals which we have identified as cultural heroes above are capable of actions which stagger the imagination in their brutality and cruelty- actions which are unheard of in the human world where these stories are told. In all the myths in this animal world, the animal characters represent all manner of vice from greed, cruelty, lack of good sense, crude sense of humour, murder, callousness. One may thus ask whether the animals displaying such qualities can be taken as cultural heroes. But further discussion on the Gikuyu understanding of the animal/human binary

opposition identified in the model above will show that these two facts do not represent a contradiction but make perfect sense in Gikuyu moral imagination.

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The animal/human opposition represents a larger uncultured/cultured - unsocialised/socialised opposition in Gikuyu moral imagination. Stated in terms of the characters in the two worlds, that is, Animal world and Human world, Gikuyu morality is seen in terms of an individual moving from the uncultured "jungledom" of the unsocialised Animal characters to the cultured status of well socialised individuals in the Human world. On the one side of the moral continuum are animals, and on the other are spirits in the spirit world. In the human world at the centre of the continuum moral development is marked by the rites of passage, the greatest and the most important being circumcision as already pointed out and the last being death.

We proceed to a detailed discussion of the moral development of the Gikuyu individual which marked a socialisation process which moved progressively from the animal world to the spirit world. We will then be able to locate with exactitude the place of the animal or "jungledom" in Gikuyu moral imagination. When a child is born into Gikuyu society, he

is seen only as a potential member of that society. As Leakey (1977:3)

notes, the birth of a Kikuyu baby was the first of the many rites of

passage that would mark the child's whole life:

> A new individual had become a potential member of the
> community, but it was realised that in its early years the
> child was really little more than a part of its mother and
> wholly dependent on her.

Leakey continues to say that the ceremonies that marked birth were

designed to emphasise the child's connection with its mother and until

the child underwent the next rite of passage, he or she was identified

with the mother in all aspects. If the mother became ceremoniously

unclean, the child was also rendered unclean and if the mother had to

take part in any ceremony, the child took part as well. This emphasises

the point that there was no moral liability on the part of the newborn

child. In fact, Kerschew (1972: 124) notes that a newborn child was

referred to as a Mugeni - visitor or guest. The child would be regarded

as a distinct member of his own family only when he had gone through

the ritual of the second birth - Guciarwo na mburi. Through this ritual

the child was made a member of his own domestic group and as such a

member of the territorial community "though not in his own right, his

family remained liable for his behaviour" (Ibid, p127). Leakey concurs

with this position saying that during childhood the child had no

responsibility to the community beyond the family except that all boys

after the second birth ceremony had certain duties towards the

members of the warrior regiment that was in power. The point we are

pressing is that a child had no moral obligation in Gikuyu moral

imagination. He would not assume any broad responsibilities, duties or

rights in the society since he was considered unsocialised in the culture.

Circumcision is the most important rite of passage in the life of an

individual and marked the passage from childhood to adult status

(Leakey, 1977: 4). As quoted earlier, Routeledge calls circumcision

"that greatest of all ceremonies". Stated in terms of Gikuyu moral

imagination, circumcision introduces a great difference in regard to

socialised and unsocialised individuals. As Cavicchi (1977:16) notes,

there is a great moral chasm between the circumcised and the

uncircumcised:

> The former are considered "humans"- (andu) in the full sense of
> the terms : the latter are not, considered as having attained the
> full "human" dignity and may sometimes be derogatory to as
> "animals"-Nyamu.

He goes on to explain that the uninitiated were not considered as

responsible members of the society. An uncircumcised person is looked

upon as a foreigner in the community and such a man could not marry

on the account of the deep-rooted prejudice that he could not have

children. Cagnolo (1933:83) also explains:

> To be uncircumcised is to be the general laughing stock, a butt
> for derision and contempt, such a person must either be a mere
> child   and treated as such or he is abnormal.

Thus, in terms of our model (See P.134), we would be justified to

represent the CXD axis representing moral imagination in Gikuyu

modes of thought as follows:
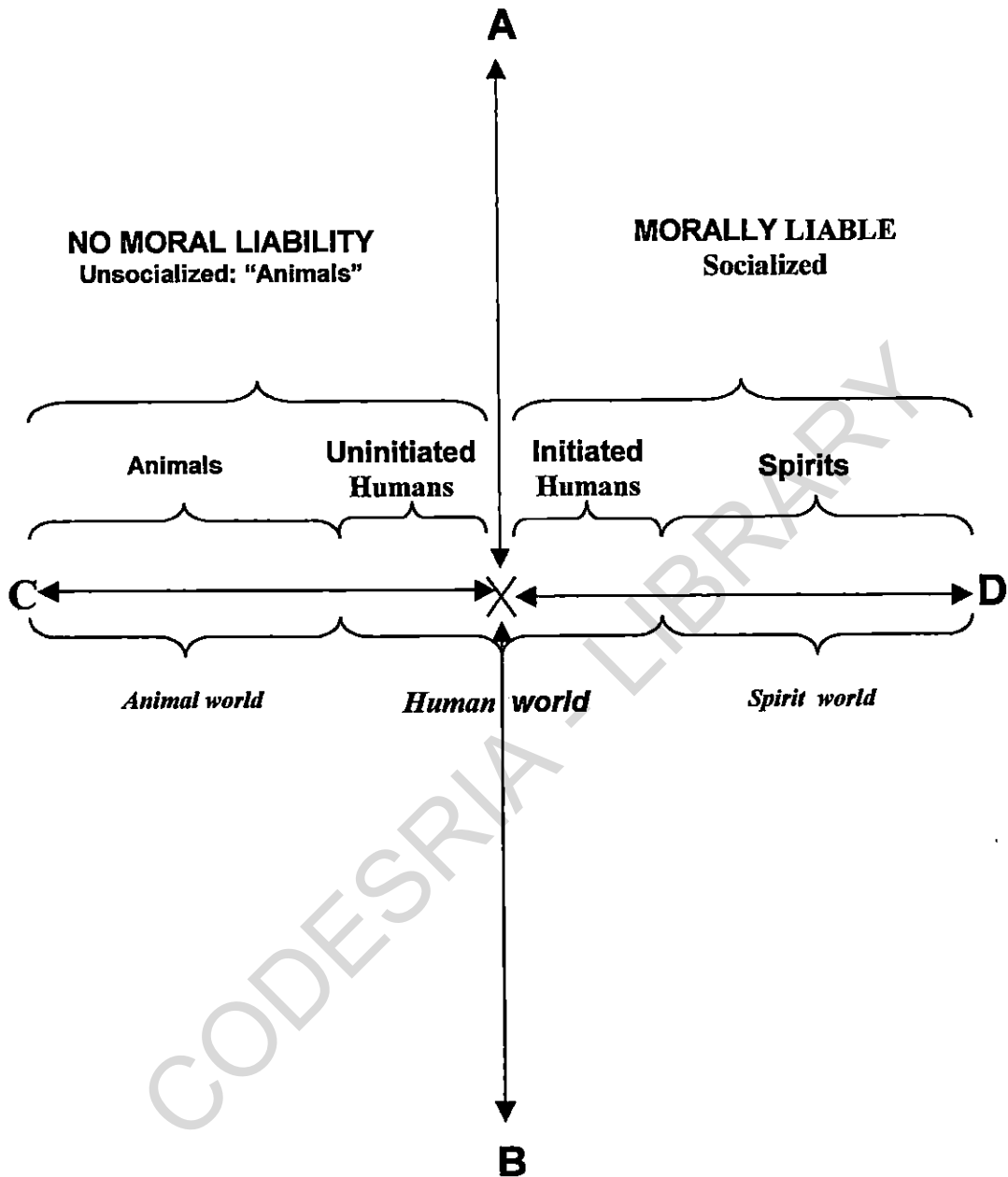
Fig 11: The Socialised/Unsocialized Dichotomy of Moral Liability in Gikuyu Moral Imagination

The uninitiated belong to the unsocialised extension of the Animal world with no moral liability. Thus, the animal characters and the uninitiated characters in the myths are expected to behave the same way and are treated the same way. Going back to our myths, we shall notice that the girls in myth 15 "Wacici" are not punished. They had pushed Wacici into a hole because they were jealous of her beauty. But all indications are that Wacici and her friends were not initiated and therefore the girls had no moral liability. We are told that Wacici grew up with her beauty and when she became "a woman", she was married to the people of the land. Becoming "a woman" is a euphemism for circumcision. Granted that when the misdemeanor took place the girls were not initiated, they were let to go since just like animals, they are not morally liable.

In Gikuyu moral imagination, it is only after initiation that one is bestowed with moral responsibilities, and one stops being an "animal". Thus animals have the licence to do all the heinous actions that we see in animal myths, with the understanding that they are the lowest on the moral scale. This explains the extremes of the actions that animals are capable of. Individuals can also act with licence like animals, provided one is not initiated. After initiation, one is no longer allowed to behave

with licence. This is the purpose of instruction given to boys and girls before and after circumcision.

Cagnolo(1933:82) notes:

> according to [Gikuyu] mentality [circumcision] is a civil and religious rite; it is also the occasion for the routine of ceremonies through which,it is considered, the shame of barrenness may be avoided and good relations established with the world of spirits.

Two points are to be noted in this quotation in regard to our diagram representing moral imagination. The first is that through circumcision "the shame of barrenness may be avoided." This gives us the link between moral imagination and existential imagination. It is only after initiation that the individuals both male and female can marry and fulfil their procreative duties as discussed in the previous chapter. It is also after circumcision that the boys become Aanake - "the piece of God". They can then perform their duties in relation to existential imagination as discussed in the previous chapter.

Thus continuation and sustenance of the community in the existential level had very deep-seated moral implications. After initiation one was not only _allowed to_ participate in the procreative and protective duties of the community, but one was in principle _expected to_. Apart from these

duties associated with existential imagination, one could in a moral sense start his ascension through the civil and judicial ranks of the community to elderhood. This brings us to the second point in the quotation from Cagnolo above: that circumcision was the start of a process in which "good relations (are) established with the world of spirits." In Gikuyu modes of thought, ancestral spirits were still regarded as members of the community and were concerned with the moral affairs of the community. Consequently, any breach of rules of relationship among the living members, which caused injury to any member and disharmony to the community caused ancestral spirits displeasure, which in turn would bring misfortune. But to displease the spirits one had to be morally liable and this liability would be in force only if one was circumcised. It is thus clear that the humans and the spirits were related on a moral level. This relationship is indeed highlighted by the action of the myth that touches on the spirit world. In myth 10, "My father's gourd" the two girls who go to the subterranean world of the spirits are dealt with according to their moral orientation. The girl who showed upright and desirable moral behaviour was rewarded while her counterpart who did the opposite was punished. The first girl's search for the gourd was genuine and she showed good judgement and moral restraint. She was rewarded. The stepsister was

motivated by jealousy and showed lack of moral restraint or good judgement. She was punished. This shows the place of the spirit world in Gikuyu moral imagination. The binary differentiation life/death denoting the relationship between the dead and the living is a moral one and not an existential one. If one had fulfilled all their moral and existential obligations, there was nothing to fear in death since the next logical progression was to enter the spirit world through departing from the human world in death. Death is thus seen as merely a rite of passage in Gikuyu moral imagination. One acquired a higher moral status than the living mortals and the prevailing relationship between one in death and those who are still living is predominantly a moral one. Mugambi (1989:51) eloquently puts this fact in a chapter on African Cosmology:

> The relationship between those who are in the spiritual mode and those in the physical one depends entirely on the moral relationship which was experienced before the former died...Provided that a person has fulfilled all his moral and social obligations, death is not that monster which it is depicted to be in some expressions of western art ... However, a person who knows that he has failed in his moral and social obligations, fears death, both for himself and for those associated with him.

Since this was very well understood in Gikuyu moral imagination, the Gikuyu viewed death with indifference and resignation. Both Cagnolo (1933) and Leakey (1977) say that death among the Gikuyu was

viewed with a considerable degree of fatalism. Though death was not in any circumstance welcomed, "the Kikuyu did not have the haunting fear of death which grips the people of many civilisations" (Leakey, 1977: 937). A Kikuyu who knew his end was near usually faced the fact calmly and with equanimity. Cagnolo's account is even more picturesque. He writes that a Kikuyu displays a stoicism regarding death that borders on indifference. No precautions are taken and no fear is shown. "The dying even though they are close relations are told repeatedly that they are going to die, with the same callousness with which the dying accept the news" (1933: 138).

However, according to Gikuyu moral principles, one had to be at peace with the spirits of the departed so as to be well received in the spirit world and one should have fulfilled his duties to the community at both the moral and existential level. One who had not given birth to children had not only failed himself but had also failed the community. Leakey notes that a sharp distinction was drawn "between the death of the people who were married and those who died before they were married" (1977: 988). But since a young married woman who had not yet had a child was grouped with the unmarried in terms of the burial rite, then "the really important distinction between the two groups was

the question of children" (Ibid.). Thus, a Gikuyu was anxious to have

children to continue his line and community in existential terms and in

moral terms. It meant that his spirit upon death would achieve a status

which it would not have otherwise had. The same applies to the burial

of "elders" and those of ordinary members. Since an "elder" was of a

higher moral standing in the community by having ascended several

grades in the civil and judicial hierarchies after his initiation, he was

accorded a burial which was complementary to his presumed elevated

status in the spirit world. Hobley (1967:22) writes that among the

Gikuyu:

> there is little doubt that the character of the spirit is believed
> to reflect to some extent the character of the person from whom
> it came, and the power of the spirit is intricately connected with
> the position of the person in the community ... the spirit of an
> elder possesses more power than that of an uninitiated common
> person .

Thus one who had fulfilled all these duties was well received in the spirit

world and had status. Thus the life/death opposition in our model was a

rite of passage in the moral sense that accorded one a high moral

relationship with the mortals. As already mentioned the spirits have

visitation rights over individuals in the human world if there is a breach

of the moral order. The spirits of the dead must not be ignored since

the dead continue to be members of the society. Thus in the Human

World apart from observing good moral conduct because of fear of the spirits as moral guardians, the ceremony of communing with ancestral spirits is observed constantly.

Thus in Gikuyu moral imagination, one is expected to ascend the moral plane from the animal consciousness shown by the CX segment on the horizontal axis; -acquire the human consciousness at circumcision and fulfill his existential and moral duties, and then cross over to the spirit world in death, a progression represented by the XD segment of the same axis, (See P.134). The relationships remain moral even after death and the status of one's spirit in the spirit world will depend upon the successful completion of one's duties, one of which is the existential (procreative) one which contributes to ones moral status in the spirit world. Also the relationship with the living remains a moral one, with each side having duties towards the other. On the one side, the living propitiate the spirits and keep them close to the community while the spirits "assist their clients and through a suitable medium ... warn the people of an impending raid" (Hobley, 1972: 22). Thus the XD relationship is two way -from the living to the spirits and from the spirits to the living. Likewise the CD relationship between animals and humans, where one progresses from being an "animal" to being an

initiated, morally liable human being, is also reversible. This means that, in Gikuyu moral imagination, an initiated individual may, on moral grounds, cease to be a morally liable human being as expected for all initiated human beings, and become an "animal" on the basis of moral degeneration. The suggestion that this is so is given in myth 11, - "Nyaga and Wamweru".". The stepmother of the victim, Wamweru, conspires with her daughter, Wamweru's stepsister, to kill Wamweru. They bury her in the ground but her brother Nyaga discovers her. She is rescued, and as a punishment, the woman turns into a hyena and the girl turns into a fox. This is to show that they had degenerated morally to the level of animals which are lower on the moral scale. They could thus not exist as humans on account of showing non-human moral consciousness, but could only exist as animals. In Gikuyu moral imagination an individual who had shown such animal-like moral degeneration could be declared an "animal" and treated as such. This means that one could literally move from the morally higher Human World to the morally degenerate Animal World as in the myth quoted above. In Gikuyu society this was done through a public ceremony of guikia mundu na kiano (to cast a man out with an arrow shaft). This was often in regard to a habitual murderer. By this ceremony the family gave public notice that they could never again take responsibility for a

man condemned in this manner. They indicate that since this man had become an animal, if he killed anybody, they would not pay compensation to the family of the deceased and if he was killed by anyone they would claim no compensation for his death. Leakey gives a detailed account of this ceremony and we will quote his description at length, since it directly pertains to a very crucial reversal of events, that is from a human moral status to

animal moral status in Gikuyu moral imagination as presented in our

schema (See P.134).

> The head of the family to which the *Mutoi* (violent or murderous person) belonged would summon all the council of elders living in the vicinity; as well as representatives from all the neighbouring territories, including members of the warrior classes, and when they had assembled together with all the members of his own family he announced that they proposed to perform the ceremony of *guikia mundu na kiano*. He produced an ox and a ram to be slaughtered for all the company to eat, and while this meat was being divided up and roasted some of the senior elders prepared a special bow of *mugere* wood strung with a string made from *mugere* bark and they also made two wooden arrows of *munyururu* and *mugere* wood. All the family assembled in a circle round the head of the family, with all the council of elders in a circle around them, and all the warriors in yet a third circle. The elder then stood up with the bow and arrow in his hand and announced that the family hereby disowned the man, saying that if anyone ever attempted to claim against anyone who killed him, may they all perish, that in no circumstances would they consider a claim made for someone killed by the person disowned,and finally that as far as the family was concerned, the said man was now a "wild animal of the bush" (*Nyamu ya githaka-ini*). With this he fitted one of the arrows to the bow and shot it over the heads of the circle, out into the bush beyond. He then made all the same statements (sic) a second time and shot away the second arrow. Then the bow was broken in two and the halves were hurled away. From then on, the man was a hunted outcast who would be killed on sight by anyone who recognised him (Leakey, 1977: 1015-1016).

We have followed the progression in Gikuyu moral imagination from the animal world to the human world to the spirit world and back again to the animal world. We have demonstrated that as a metaphorical projector the animal world provides the community with the means of externalising the undesirable feelings in the unconscious generated by a status based morality and at the same time provides them with the means of internalising and imbibing the desired qualities of moral and social progression. We have also demonstrated that at the level of reality, the Animal world represents the lowest level of moral degeneration. Thus we are in a position to make certain observations regarding the place of the Animals both in mythological thought and in Gikuyu culture.

One, since they represent a position of moral degeneration, animals in Gikuyu mythological thought are not portrayed as creators as in other myths from other cultures. Due to for example their position on the moral scale, as indicated, they cannot take such elevated positions. In their mythology, the Gikuyu appreciate the position of animals and they clearly differentiate animal and human consciousness. The one is degenerate non-moral while the other is morally progressive. Thus assertions like the ones held by evolutionists like Smith and Dale (1920)

that the myths "arose in the stage of the culture when the vital differences between men and animals were not yet recognised" and that "it was not unnatural for the makers of these tales to ascribe human characteristics to the lower animals, for they did not recognise any psychic difference between them and us" (Smith and Dale, 1920: 338-9) seem overstated in regard to our analysis. We have shown that the Gikuyu clearly distinguished between wild animals and humans, and that in their modes of thought, each constituted an independent sphere of activity. They ascribed human characteristics to animals on an identifiable metaphorical level and this mythological reality cannot be pushed to the point of saying that the Gikuyu "did not recognise any psychic difference" between wild animals and humans because they did.

Secondly, from our understanding of the Gikuyu modes of thought through the analysis above, we are also in a position to refute claims to totemism in relation to Gikuyu culture. Such practices as snake worship attributed to the Gikuyu by such authors as Routeledge (1910) are not justifiable from our schema and actually did not exist. Our schema and discussion above show that the Gikuyu attributed a low moral consciousness to wild animals and there is no way they could have

worshipped an animal since such a practice was not sustainable in their modes of thought. The Gikuyu moral imagination was incapable of accommodating such a practice.

We have seen that the purpose of socialisation in Gikuyu moral imagination was to raise the level of moral consciousness of human beings from that of wild animals. This progression continues from initiation through adult life and into the spiritual realm. This progression is located in the *sasa* period. One's actions and place in society are judged in relationship to all other individuals in the society and ones' contribution to the communal perpetuation. One's personality cannot be separated from the setting of the *sasa* defined by the society in which one lives. One's moral standing, that is his duties, rights and privileges are based on an agegrade system whose controlling rite is circumcision. One belongs to one group or another in relation to this rite, a group with whom they share duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges. From this group, one receives co-operation, assistance and security and through the group the moral codes of the community are institutionalised and followed. The fulfillment of existential duties of procreation and protection of the community is also morally regulated. One participates in procreative, providential and protective activities not just as a social obligation but also as a moral obligation. Fulfilling these

obligations constituted a moral premium during life and in death. This is a logical system that fulfills the principal in the understanding of the African world view in the summative maxim: "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969: 108-109).

As we can see, the traditional Gikuyu modes of thought were neatly arranged and logical. The tradition presented to the Gikuyu individual the wisest and most exhaustive approach to personal problems and to the problems of the society. It is the product of the experience of generations and had successfully stood the test of time. This experience has come down through the ages via folklore. As we have shown in the discussion in this chapter the relationship between Gikuyu mythology and the Gikuyu culture and modes of thought is not a haphazard one, but a logical and systematic one. This relationship can be well summarised by quoting Bottignole(1984:31) who notes:

> The Kikuyu traditional, social, political and economical systems as well as the tribal religion are inspired by these myths from which they draw their structure and normative values.

This is demonstrated in our discussion above, since we have been able to systematically explore Gikuyu normative values and modes of thought by relating Gikuyu culture to mythological structures.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This study was designed to address the notion that the institution of mythology leads an uncertain existence. We attributed this scenario to methodological and definitional shortcomings in the existing approaches to the study of mythology. We identified the atomicist methodologies and typological definitions as restrictive and contributing to this uncertain existence. In divesting with the typological definition, we alternatively defined "myth" as all the tales of a community. We also adapted a methodology that sought the structural unity of mythology and recognised the symbolic and potential for signification of delineated mythological structures. We thus postulated that myth, like language, should be seen as a self-contained structure whose various constituent units and, in our case, its worlds, exist in a transversal/transformational relationship. The meaning of myth is thus to be found in the relations of its worlds which have to be related to the culture for interpretation.

Thus with the assumption that the Gikuyu mythology constitutes a transformational group, we formulated a hypothesis that: the structural model of the Gikuyu mythology derived from the transformational relationships of its identifiable worlds is related to Gikuyu society and culture and thus provides the basis for analysis of the mythology.

Using a corpus of twenty purposefully sampled myths which included all tale "types" of the mythology, we proceeded to test this hypothesis.

By identifying the temporal, spatial and phenomenal relations of each myth in the sample we have established that the Gikuyu mythology consists of five identifiable worlds: A Past world, a Human world, an Ogre world, an Animal world and a Spirit world. We therefore constructed a structural model, showing the transformational relationships of these worlds. We have established that the human world is at the centre of the structural model of the worlds of Gikuyu mythology and through its transformational relationship with other worlds, four binary differentiations are identifiable viz. Animal/Human, Past/Present, Life/Death and Reality/Fancy. We have established that Gikuyu mythology manifests meaning on two levels represented by a horizontal axis and a vertical axis each of which symmetrically crosses

through the structural model. The vertical axis highlights the oppositions between the past world, the human world and the ogre world and represents the existential imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought. The horizontal axis highlights the oppositions between the Animal world, the Human world and the spirit world and represents moral imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought.

We have then proceeded to interpret this structural model of Gikuyu mythology by relating it to Gikuyu culture and modes of thought, with insights for the latter adduced from extensive and detailed ethnographic material. We have been able to make the following readings:

The vertical axis represents Gikuyu kinship ties, which ensure communal perpetuation. In Gikuyu existential imagination, this hinged on divine providence and its manifestation in the community through land, women and children. The mythic symbolism of the preternatural ogre is to be seen in relation to the Gikuyu understanding of this communal immortality. It is through the God/ogre symbolic opposition that the Gikuyu explore the natural, cultural and psychological challenges of their communal existence. It is through this symbolism that they situate their belief in God and divine providence in a

communal past, and align this past with a present fraught with dangers and calamitous possibilities represented by the ogre, possibilities which occur in nature, psychologically confronting and tormenting the communal consciousness. While these psychological existential pressures are expurged by the cathartic effect of ogre tales, the Gikuyu also evolved very elaborate institutions, both ritual and social, to combat the vagaries of nature and ensure communal survival.

The horizontal axis (representing moral imagination in Gikuyu modes of thought) presents several entities, namely, animals, humans and spirits related to each other on a moral plane. This axis coincides with the age-grade system in Gikuyu society. This system was based on gradations related to the all too important circumcision rite. The moral concept of right and wrong is to be seen in relation to the duties, rights, responsibilities and privileges of individuals and groups of individuals in and across circumcision related gradations of Gikuyu traditional society. The metaphorical animal world is used to facilitate the externalisation of undesirable feelings that are caused by a graded status-based morality which produced senior and junior dichotomies upon which social relations were based. They at the same time facilitated the internalisation of the culturally desirable traits of wit, intelligence and

bravado which provided individuals with the means of ascension through the civil and judicial ranks of the society. Animals at the same time represent the lowest rank of moral consciousness from which the individual, through the prescribed rites of passage, was expected to progress. The individual was expected to move up the existing grades, fulfilling existential obligations, which have moral implications, to eldership and ultimately to a privileged spiritual existence, this being the highest level of moral consciousness. The progression was also reversible with the relationship between spirits and humans being on a moral scale. The one providing moral guardianship with visitation rights and the other fulfilling propitiatory duties. Human beings who degenerated on the moral scale to the level of the raw-consciousness of animals were also liable to be degraded to an "animal" existence.

We can thus venture to report from these interpretations that our hypothesis has been confirmed together with the attendant assumptions. Consequently, the definitional and methodological postulates we have adopted for this study, that is: a wholistic non-typological definition of mythology, its structural unity in analysis, and the symbolic implications of delineated structures, are conclusively sustainable.

We subsequently proceed to assert that the confirmation of our hypothesis and the efficacy of the methodological and definitional propositions above in addressing the uncertain existence of mythology, have several implications, one, for theory and method in mythological study and two, for cultural studies.

Implications for Theory in Mythological Study

It is clear from these findings that the influence of typological definitions in the study of myth has been understated. The notion that mythology is divided into subgroups consisting tales exhibiting similar characteristics and which can be analysed independently of other groups can no longer be taken as axiomatic and will need to be qualified. First, our study shows that all "types" of tales in a particular mythology can and should be seen as interrelated. Thus, the assumed similarities and differences between texts of a culture's mythology, which in the past have been the basis of delimiting myth for analysis may not be legitimate. Thus studies that recognise the typological discriminations and seek to use it as a delimiting principle need to be qualified. Failure to recognise typological assumptions as limitations

would vitiate the findings of studies that recognise these assumptions. Our study shows that it is more efficacious to approach mythology as a structural whole, rather than breaking it down into subgroups in order to analyse it properly.

Secondly, studies which do not recognise structural unity of myth, would give the analyst the arbitrary freedom to use striking incidences and choose those aspects of myth which are important to the message one wants to underscore. This way, myth can be shown to mean anything. But as we have shown, mythology portrays a particular and specific image of reality in the culture in which it is a part. This particularity and specificity can only be identified if the mythology is seen as a structural whole and is related to the culture that produced it.

We thus reiterate the Levi-Straussian caution regarding atomistic methods which assume for instance, that the natural phenomena which feature largely in "myths" constitute an essential part of what myths are trying to explain, or folklorists who try to reduce the meaning of "folktales" to a moralising comment on the situation of mankind making folklore an explanation of love, death, pleasure or suffering. Such approaches would only lead to a limited interpretation. This is because

they inherently court a failure to grasp the distinctive character of myth, which is an emphatic and determinable image of reality resulting from the multiplication of one level by another or several others, each of which as in language, serves to indicate areas of meaning.

The principles of certain strands of structuralism and specifically formalism need to be qualified especially in the study of African folklore. Over and above the provisions of formalism, we have been able to show that delineated structures of myth are capable of signification - that is- providing a schema through which meaning of myth in a particular society and culture can be situated. We have shown that the fundamental structures of Gikuyu myth correspond to the culture. Thus to be of interpretative value, delienated structures of myth must be amenable to the fundamental structures that inform cultural thought and practice. Formalist methods may be able to divide up a myth with mathematical precision, which is arguably their greatest strength, but does not explore the interpretive value of such divisions in relation to culture. Our approach precludes the symbolistic and figurative implication of mythological divisions/structures. It is through such an approach that the undesirable need to turn to other approaches to supplement the search for meaning - for example psycho analysis -

when a mythologist has initially chosen formalistic approaches can be obviated. Future mythological analyses of varied cultures recognising these methodological issues would be fruitful. By using a method that recognises the symbolistic and figurative essence of mythological structures, we have been able to, in the words of (Levis-Strauss, 1976: ix):

> uncover a unity and coherence within things (mythology and culture) which could not be revealed by a simple description of the facts [individual tales or ethnographic material] somehow scattered and disorganised before the eyes of knowledge. [We have done this] more economically, with a very small number of principles, axioms and rules which ... have proved their fecundity.

This stated thus has been the value of structuralism to us. This study is thus significant in the light of this contribution in as far as the theoretical implications therein are far-reaching.

Implications for Cultural Studies

The issues of resilience and change in cultural development would help us to locate the implications of our findings to cultural studies. In regard to this Mugambi (1989:115) tells us:

> there are three aspects of culture in which resilience is most clearly discernible. These are basic worldviews, basic values and social structures. These aspects of culture can withstand great stress, especially worldview and basic values.

He goes on to explain that in the African heritage, the world is viewed as an integrated phenomenon whether physically or intellectually. "God, humanity and nature are ontological categories which *are inextricably related even though they are conceptually distinct."* (P116) (Emphasis mine). We have shown that God and nature, animals, humanity and spirits constitute conceptually distinct worlds but are inextricably related in Gikuyu modes of thought. If then, as Mugambi says, the epistemological foundation of every culture is its basic world-view which even after the damage of all the other layers of culture "is likely to remain intact" (Ibid.), we may want to investigate if and how the Gikuyu worldview discussed above has survived "conquest and internal disruption" (Ibid.). In Wainaina (1998) I have shown that Gikuyu mythology survives in contemporary verbal art. In this work I have shown that contemporary Gikuyu popular songs are rooted in Gikuyu myth, among other aspects of Gikuyu orature. It would thus be possible and very fruitful for cultural studies to find out what aspects of the worldview above have survived or how they have been re-aligned with other new worldviews to which the Gikuyu have been exposed.

This brings us to the issue of cultural change. Mugambi says that in Africa today, three worldviews are concurrently held and an African shifts his reference from one to another according to his situation.

> The traditional world view, which is monistic and non-planetary is limited in its focus and locus, and its relevant geographical data are minimal.

This seems to be borne out by our discussion above. Mugambi continues:

> The Biblical world-view is presupposed by those who prefer the christian faith. This worldview incorporates the concept of spatialheaven and spatial hell and hope for a resurrection of human body
> (p135).

It is therefore possible to compare in very specific terms this worldview to the one discussed above. In terms of cultural change, are these two worldviews very different, and what are the conceptual implications of an individual changing from one to another? On a preliminary level for example, the existential idea of the ogre in Gikuyu mythology and Satan in the Christian world view threatening to devastate and annihilate humankind, and God coming to neutralise this force and redeeming humankind seems to be similar to both. Thus, though using different mythologies, this basic principle seems to be shared by both worldviews. What does this portend for the idea of superior and inferior
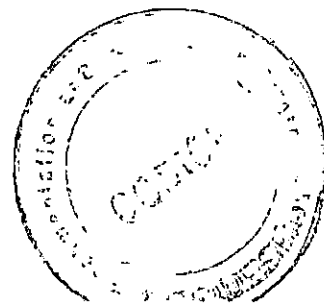
worldviews and cultures? Further still in terms of change, we have the scientific worldview which is "based on the scientific discoveries of modern science and informed by technological extensions of the basic senses of human perception" (Ibid.). This worldview has taken myth making to the more graphic level of cinema and film and utilises scientific principles in entertaining the "modern" man. Again how different is it from the Gikuyu mythology especially in existential and moral terms? It will be very fruitful for future studies to investigate possibilities of comparing traditional mythology to modern film.

Going back to Freedman (1979) quoted in the theoretical framework, it is not how men see their reality that is important. It is how what they see and how they act can be accounted for by deeper layers of reality which they scarcely know. All possibilities of cultural reality are traced to the basic mechanism of human thought. This kind of analysis is, ultimately about the architecture of the mind. By probing further the questions raised above, cultural studies may yet show that despite seemingly different traditional, Christian and scientific worldviews, certain products of the mechanisms of human thought through mythmaking could be strikingly similar!

A PP E N D I CES

MYTHOGRAPHY

1. CHILDREN LEFT AT THE OLD HOMESTEAD

[BY KABEBE]

Long ago, there was a man who had five wives. When he had five wives,

5 the first wife gave birth to two children. The first child, a boy, was called

Muriria and the second, Nyarukwa. When this woman had given birth to

these children, she became barren. She did not give birth anymore. And

as for the other four women, none had a child.

10 This man went to consult a diviner. He was told by the diviner to go with

his matchet and kill the two children, himself, with his own hands. When

the man went home, he sharpened his matchet. He called his children.

He said to them: "Muriria and Nyarukwa, come here. I am calling you."

When he saw them, he was struck with pity and cried. He was struck with

15 pity and said to them: "Go back."

Now, the man was the only one who knew what he had been told to do

because he had not told anybody, nobody, not even his wife.

20 He thought of looking for another diviner, because he thought that this one

was cheating him. He went very far in search of a diviner. When he went,

he was told by the diviner: "Go, and when you arrive at your home, take your matchet, bring the two children to the front gate. Cut them into pieces and your women will stop being barren and will give birth to a lot of

25 children."

Now, this man went. He took out his matchet and sharpened it. When he finished, he called his children. After he called them, and they came and he saw them, he was struck with pity. He said to them: "Go back, I have

30 stopped saying what I wanted to say'"

Now, this man did this very, very often. He would go to the diviners and would be told to kill his children. He would return home and call his children, but when the children reached him, he would be struck with pity

35 and say to them: "Go back, I have stopped saying what I wanted to say to you."

Haya. Now, the man thought very hard and decided that he would not go out again to the diviners. He thought of what to do about his home

40 because the women had not given birth.

Now, he sat quietly and called his wives to his hut. He spoke with them for a long time and made them understand that they should go to the garden. When they went to the garden and harvested everything, maize and sweet

45 potatoes and everything, they were to fill the house of the mother of the two children. He did not, however, tell them the reason. He was the only one who knew what he was going to do.

Now, the women did just what they had been told, because the women of

50 long ago did not argue with their husbands. They brought everything to the house of the woman who had had children. And when they brought the things, the man came and saw that they had done just as he had told them. That night, he slept in the house of the mother of the two children.

55 When he was there, in the dead of the night, when everybody is asleep, he called this woman, the mother of the two children. He told her to go to the front gate. She went to the front gate and stood there. He then called the other women. He said to them: "Drive out the cows and the goats."

60 He told them to go in front together with the mother of the two children. He tied the door of the homestead with ropes. Now, he told the rest to move

on. The woman, the mother of the two children, asked him: "Where are the children?"

65 He said: "Let's go! You think I am so foolish that I can remember to bring the goats and cows and not the children? The children are behind. Go. Let's go."

They went on and the woman kept asking about the children, and was told 70 just to go on. It was dark, so the woman could not see. The woman was anxious.

When dawn came, the woman went back to where the husband was, to see if the children were there, but she could not see them at all. When she 75 could not find the children; She made a decision to go back. She was told by this man: "If you go back, I shall spear you with this spear. And now, we are going. What I have said, I have said." The other women pleaded with her, telling her that it was better to go with them than lose her life. They went to a land that was very far.

80

The two children were left at the old homestead. The neighbours knew that there was a man who had left at night, but they did not know that he had left anything behind.

85   Now, where the children were left, things began to rot. The children began to eat the soil that was near where the cooking stones used to be. chunks of soil. They changed their colour. They became very thin. They became like wild animals, but their features were like those of human beings. They stood the way a man stands upright. Now, the house fell, and creepers

90   grew over it, and the whole place became a bush where people could graze their goats.

Now, two young men went to graze. When they went to graze, the goats went into this bush. When they went, one young man said to the other:

95   "Go and get the goats back." He went to get the goats back. When he got to the bush, he hit the creepers with a stick. As he hit the creepers with the stick, he heard: "Who are you who is hitting our house?" The voice was very, very, very faint. He did not even hear what was said. But he heard something like that. When he hit the creepers again, he heard the

100   same thing. He ran very, very, very fast. He went and told the other young man what he had heard, but this other man had seen him running

away, and he knew that there was something wrong. He knew that there could be trouble, animals, Maasai, probably the other man had seen something strange.

105

He got up. He took his matchet and his spear and said to the other man: "Stop. What is it?" He said to him, "I hit that place with my stick and I was spoken to. I heard as if there were ghosts that spoke." His friend said to him, "Let's go back." He answered, "No, I cannot go gain because it could

110 be an animal or something. I am not going back."

The other one went and hit the bush and was asked: "Who are you who has has hit our house?" He kept hitting the bush and the voice kept coming. He listened very carefully and heard clearly that someone was

115 speaking. Now, he said to himself: "Whether it be ghosts, a man, whatever it might be, I shall clear the place and see what it is that is speaking." He took his matchet and cleared the bush. He cleared it and saw that this was a place where people had built before, because it is easy to recognize this. There could be a pole that was left, or a spot where fire

120 used to be. He saw that it was like a place where there was a house before, but now it looked like a place that was rotten.

After the young man had cleared the place thoroughly, he saw the people

that were speaking. They were like little animals, since they had become

125   very small and had grown hair on their bodies. If you are a cowardly

person, you would not go near them because you would feel afraid. and

they had no clothes, they were naked. He saw that these were people,

when he looked at their fingers and saw that they were five, he knew that

they were people. He was a very courageous man, he did not fear

130   anything. Whatever it was, he had to go to them. Now, he could not see

them clearly, and when they saw him they were running away because

they had not seen a human being for a long time. He saw that truly they

were people and not ghosts.

135   He took them and called his neighbours. The people said that the man

who used to live in the old homestead had two children and that probably

these were the ones that he left behind. Now they were given water so

they could vomit. They were given porridge and they vomited. They were

given a lot of things, and they vomited very, very much. They vomited a lot

140   of dirt, until food they were given started to stay in the stomach. A lot of

things were done. Animals were slaughtered and the entrails of animals

was smeared on them. They were given everything. These people were

all right now. They became very healthy children. The man brought them up until they were adults.

145

Now, when they were grown and had become adults this man who took them said: "The girl is big enough to get married. They young man is big enough to get married. Now, I am not a greedy person and I want to show this to the people of the land. I shall do this. I shall have the boy marry

150 and then I shall let the girl get married. I shall do just that." He told the young man to go and look for a girl to marry. The man had his own property even though he was a young man. He had also a wife. The man who had been taken from the old homestead went to look for a girl. He got one. He decided that he would marry. They started to pay the dowry so

155 that the man could get the young man a wife. Now, the women of this home when they were preparing sugarcane for brewing, they were eating too much of it. The young man, the one who took them from the old homestead, was not around. This other young man said to the women: "Don't eat too much sugarcane because the beer might not be enough."

160

Now, one woman, you know there are women who speak very badly, spoke badly, and said to the young man: "How can you be so proud as if you do not know that you were collected from the old homestead? When

you give us orders, do you think you are the firstborn here, or who do you

165 think you are?" When the young man heard that, he felt very, very, very

bad. He actually cried. He said to her: "I had a father and a mother, and I

hear they are still alive."

Now, the young man went to the man's hut. He took his shield and his

170 spear. Now, when his sister saw this, she too went and took her basket

and followed her brother. When she got far, following him, he did not know

that she was following him, she sang:

175
Hi, Muriria my brother

Is that what you have said and no more?

Children left at the homestead

By the mother when they were moving.

180 When the young man heard this, he knew that that was his sister's voice.

He stopped. They sat down and talked. He said to her: "Now, from today,

I don't want anybody to pay dowry for me. My father is alive. We shall ask

about him until we are shown the place of the man who left at night."

185 When they had been taken from the old homestead, they had asked a few

things from the people, and had been shown the direction their father took.

But it was very far. They went on asking for the place of the man who left

at night for such and such place. They would spend a night here, and then

ask and continue. They went until they reached the place where their

190 father had gone. They were directed to the place very clearly and told:

"That's your father's home. He is the man who left at the dead of night. It

is that place that you see."

They went. You can understand that that home was very big because the

195 man had five wives. Now, they went to that home. When they went and

got in, they sat near their mother's granary. But they did not know it; even

the mother could not recognize them. That woman, their mother, came

outside, the way women do. And when she saw a young man at her

granary, with a shield and a spear, and a girl, she took soil and threw it at

200 them and said to them: "Go, how can you come and sit at my granary and

put your shield and spear there? Don't you know I have my own children

that I left at the old homestead? Go." Now the young man said to the girl:

"Let's go. If they left us at the homestead, what about now?"

205 When the mother heard them say, "If they could leave us at the homestead, what about now?" she knew quite clearly that these were her children whom she had left behind because, you know, blood is thicker than water. She felt that it had to be them, but she wasn't sure. Even they did not know that that woman was their mother.

210

Now, she followed them towards the gate. They had left in tears. She too followed them crying bitterly. Both the young man and girl were in great sorrow and they felt very bad because of all the trouble they had gone into trying to find their parents. At the end of it, they had just shamed them.

215 The mother did not know them at all. Even they did not know her. It was just that what they said corresponded to what she said, and so the mother knew that it was them. This woman had always thought very deeply about her children. We know a child cannot be forgotten, whether the child dies or lives.

220

Now, this woman pleaded very, very much with her children. She went to her house and took a calabash used to store oil. She poured oil on them, the boy and the girl, and then wiped the oil. Then all the neighbours came; it is a home with a lot of people. They came because they heard that there were children left at the old homestead. Because of that, they came.

When they came, they pleaded with the two to stay, explaining to them how they did not know who they were.

The father was not there. When he came and heard what had happened

230 he was very happy, and they spent the whole night making merry. A lot of things were done. Animals were slaughtered, there was a feast and a lot of things were done by the man, the owner of the home.

The man, the owner of the home said: "Every daughter of mine that is

235 married must leave the husband and come back." His wives had given birth to a lot of children, some had got married and he was a man with a lot of property, cattle and goats.

Now, this man went to his hut. at daybreak, he called all the people. The

240 girls who had got married came back home. Not that their marriages were broken. They stayed here until the first girl got married. The rest married; every girl went back to her husband. Even the mother of the children abandoned at the homestead had given birth to a lot of other children, but I cannot remember now how many they were because this *rugano* was told

245 to me.

They lived in that home very happily. And, now, this woman lived in great happiness because she had, up until then, lived in sorrow because of those children left at the old homestead. (From Kabira, 1983: 45-49).

2.   THE ELEPHANT AND THE THRUSH

[By Kabebe]

Sometime ago, some elephants went to eat white chalk. You know, there
5   is white chalk that people, even now, use for cattle. And the elephants, since they are wild animals, also know where to get this white chalk. Now they decided to go and eat this white chalk. Among the elephants that were going to eat the white chalk was one which had left its child at home because the child could not walk.

10

On the way, the elephants came across the children of the thrush. You know the way the birds leave their children behind. Even you must have seen the birds' nests. Now when they arrived where these children were, the first elephant saw the thrush's children and asked them: "Children,
15   children, to whom do you belong?"

(The narrator imitates the elephant's heavy sound)

The little birds said: "We are the thrush's children."

20 The elephant went on its way. The next elephant came. It found the thrush's children on the same spot and asked them: "Children, children, to whom do you belong?" They replied, "we belong to the thrush." That elephant passed on. We shall not repeat everything. All the elephants came, and each of them asked the little birds the same question. This was 25 a way of greeting them. They were not asking anything wrong. They were just greeting them and then passing on.

Now, the last elephant was the one which had left its child at home. When it reached the spot where the thrush's children were it asked them, 30 "Children, children, to whom do you belong?" "We are the thrush's children." The elephant crushed them and killed them. It could see very clearly what it was doing. It crushed them completely.

Now the elephants went to eat the white chalk. In the meantime, the 35 thrush came. Now when the thrush came and found that her children had been killed, she got very angry. She was very, very angry. While she was still very, very angry she saw the elephants' footsteps. It was clear to her

that the elephants had passed by that spot. You know the elephant is a

very, very big animal. Whenever it steps somewhere, it sort of creates a

40   road.

Now the thrush stayed there. She decided to ask God what she should do

because she had to get his permission. What she did was a very big thing.

She sat there and waited for the elephants. The elephants came. When

45   the first elephant came, the thrush was still waiting on the same place.

The thrush asked him [narrator recites rhythmically]:

"Elephant, let me see your tusk."

"Here it is. see."

50   "Let me see the other."

"Here it is. See."

"Let me see your skin."

The thrush was asking to see the elephant's foot. The thrush could see

55   the whole foot [narrator demonstrates] here, the whole foot. at this time,

she is trying to see if she can find any blood or fur, because if this is the

elephant that smashed her children, it would have either blood or fur under

its foot. That's why the thrush asked to see those parts. She wanted to check them thoroughly. She is checking everything.

60

"Elephant , let me see your tusk."

"Here it is. See."

"Let me see the other."

"Here it is. See."

65 "Let me see your skin."

"Here it is. see."

The thrush was shown all the tusks and the feet by the elephants. I shall not repeat everytime. It was the same thing with every elephant. The

70 thrush saw all the feet and tusks. She checked all of them. She checked and checked.

Now, the elephant that had killed the thrush's children was behind all the other elephants. Now it arrived and all the other elephants stood puzzled.

75 They were asking themselves, because they knew that this was the elephant that had destroyed the children of the thrush, "What could the thrush do with such a big animal as an elephant? They stood there arrogantly. They couldn't understand the thrush. So they stood. And the

elephant that had killed the children of the thrush came. The thrush asked

80 him.

"Elephant, let me see your tusk."

"Here it is. See."

"Let me see the other."

85 "Uu - no."

"Let me see your feet."

"Uu - no."

Hi! [the narrator exclaims] Things became bad. The thrush saw blood

90 "Kweli [Swahili for truly] this is the animal that killed my children!" the

thrush cried.

Now because the thrush was ready, she entered the elephant through the

95 anus. She went straight into the stomach. She entered the stomach of the

elephant. You know a bird is very small. She can drill into the elephant.

We could also say that it was given power by God. So she entered into

the elephant. When she entered the stomach of the elephant, she started

to tear it into pieces. She tore all the muscles of the stomach. And the

100 other elephants were asking her: "Little Bird, where are you?" And she

would say she was inside the elephant's stomach. [This is rhythmically

said.]

I am in the intestines, I am harvesting, I am going to tear everything." The

105 thrush was cutting the meat with its teeth and dropping the meat inside.

The other elephants did not know what to do because they could not enter

inside the elephant. They could not tear the elephant into pieces in order

to take out the thrush. They didn't know what to do.

110 Now you know that these who have no strength are given strength by God.

These elephants were asking the thrush: [this is recited rhythmically]

"Little Bird, where are you?"

"I am in the lungs and I shall harvest and harvest. I shall cut and cut."

115 "Little Bird, where are you?"

"I am in the heart. I shall harvest and harvest. I shall cut and cut."

The elephant was not being eaten. The thrush was cutting up the muscles

and dropping the pieces, the way you would clear a bush. She cleared the

120 whole stomach until there were no more muscles left. The elephant died.

She fell down like a log and died. When the elephant fell down, the thrush

flew out of it and disappeared completely. I don't know where it went. The

elephant died completely and thrush disappeared for good.

125   Now the elephants went home. They found the dead elephant's child.

They were sad and they could not understand how a small thing like the

thrush could kill an elephant. You know, even if a bird were to try to bite

an elephant, it wouldn't die. The elephant has a very, very hard skin.

130   Now the child asked the elephants: "Elephants, where did you leave my

mother?"

They said to her: "You keep quiet. We have seen what we have never

seen before and from now on, we shall never touch the children of the bird

135   because we have seen what we have never seen. No animal can defeat

us, but the bird has defeated us. It has killed your mother and she is dead.

The thrush did this because your mother killed the thrush's children. The

thrush entered your mother through the anus. It entered the stomach. We

do not know how it entered. It came out and flew away and we could not

140   help your mother because he who sins cannot be helped. Even you, if you

commit a crime , no one can help you. You would have to face the
consequences."

Now the child decided to abuse the elephants and said [Narrator sings]:

145

You elephants, may you die and be completely finished

You left my mother at the home of the Hyenas.

The child of the hyena just says:

"Ing'ee, ing'ee!" [sound made by children when they cry]

150 "What is ing'ee?" ["Why are you crying?"]

"I want to eat a piece of the elephant."

Now the child said this because in the place where the elephant died,
there were hyenas. You know the whole land is full of hyenas. Everytime
155 a hyena's child cried, it said to its mother: "Go and bring me a piece of the
elephant's heart." The hyena would then take a piece of the elephant and
bring it to the child. Now I think the child of the dead elephant used to go
and see its dead mother, and so could see what the hyenas used to do.
That's why it abused the other elephants and said:

160

You elephants, may you die and be completely finished.

You left my mother at the home of the Hyenas.

The child of the hyenas just says:

165   "Ing'ee, ing'ee!"

"What is ingee?"

"I want to eat a piece of the elephant."

The   story   ends   there.   (From   Kabira   1983:55-58).

3.   THE GIRLS AND THE OGRE

[By Njoroge Kabugi]

Long ago there were some girls. They fell in love with an ogre. They did

not know it was an ogre. Now they used to sing as they walked along with

5   the ogre. They were five girls. One of them realised that it was an ogre.

The ogre jumped again and another girl saw the ogre jump and she turned

back. Another one saw the ogre jump and saw that it had another mouth

at the back and she also turned back. Three girls remained.

10   They went for along time. The third girl saw the ogre jump again. There

were furrows that the ogre used to jump. This girl saw that it was an ogre.

She turned back. She had seen that the ogre had another mouth at the

back. Two girls remained. These two decided they would go until they

knew the man's house. They went and went. The ogre would jump from

15   furrow to furrow. It used to be ahead of the girls to show them its home.

The hair separated again. One girl saw a mouth at the back of the ogre's

head. She went back. One girl was left. The girl that was left said that she

would go until she reached the handsome young man's place. This girl,

even when she saw the mouth at the back decided that she would still

20   reach the young man's home. They went and went and went until they

reached the young man's home. They stayed together until the girl

realised that she was cheated. *She decided to go back where she had come from.* She was told by other people that, that was an ogre's place. She started the journey home. She started to sing: Cinji   cinji

25 gacaraugu?

Cinji cinji you have been spied on

Cinji by three men

Cinji with hair

The brother heard her singing this and sang:

30 Cinji-i-cinji

Cinji gacaraugu

Cinji my sister I used to tell you

Cinji you were going with an ogre

She went and went. She sang as she walked:

35 Cinji-cinji gacaraugu

Cinji you have been spied upon

Cinji by three young men cinji

And the brother sang:

Cinji cinji my sister

40 Cinji I used to tell you,

Cinji you were going with an ogre

Now she was near home. And at this time the ogre was coming very fast because its food had ran away. She sang again. Now she was near home;

45
Cinji-cinji gacaraugu-i

Cinji you have been spied upon

Cinji by three men

Cinji with hair

Cinji cinji my sister

50
Cinji I used to tell you

Cinji you were going with an ogre

The brother met her and he killed the ogre and the girl went home and never went with strangers again. (From Kabira and Mutahi, 1988:81-820.

55

60

4.   THE HARE AND ELEPHANT

[By Wamwere]

One day, there was a competition for high-jump for all the animals. Hare,

Elephant, Hyena, Leopard, Antelope and Squirrel had all hurried up for the

5   competition. All the animals managed to jump except Elephant, because

of his fatness and the tusks. So he asked Hare: "Why is it that I am

unable to jump?" Hare replied: "It is because of that flesh on your back.

Let me cut some of it off for you so that you will be able to jump."

10   So Elephant agreed and some of his flesh was chopped off. He tried to

jump buy he failed. A bigger chunk of flesh was cut off and this time he

managed to jump. Just when the animals were busy jumping, Hare

grabbed the meat he had carved out of Elephant and ran away.

15   After two days, Elephant sent Hyena to go and get his flesh back from

Hare. Hyena arrived and said: "I have been sent to come and get the

meat you cut from the Elephant." Hare told him: "Just wait a minute, I will

give you something I have kept for myself."

20   Hyena sat down very fast with his usual greed. He was given some meat

which had been cooked very nicely. when he finished eating he asked

Hare:

"Hare where did you get such tasty meat? Hare replied:

"Over there! in the distant land. Would you like me to take you there?"

25   Hyena agreed to be taken. So they walked and walked and walked, till

they reached a place where there were deep valleys and huge rocks.

Hare told Hyena: "I want you to close your eyes and when you hear

Kurukurukuru, you move aside - And when you hear Kerekerekere, get

ready to receive the meat."

30

So the Hyena was left with his eyes closed. After sometime he heard

"Kurukurukuru!", and he moved aside, then he heard "Kerekerekere!", and

was hit with such a big stone that he died. Hare dragged him home and

took him to his house. He slaughtered him then cooked him nicely and

35   kept the meat.

The following day when Hyena failed to come back, Elephant sent Ant-

bear. When antbear arrived at Hare's house, he was well received and

given tasty meat just like Hyena had been. He also asked: "Hare, where

40   did you get such good meat?" and Hare replied: "Over there, in the distant

land. Would you like me to take you there?" Antbear agreed and they went. When they got there, he was given the same instructions as Hyena. and he, too, was killed. He was dragged home, cooked nicely and the meat kept in the store.

45

Elephant sent many more animals and none would come back. Eventually he sent Leopard. When Leopard arrived he was given meat as usual and he was asked the same question. Hare told Leopard where he got the meat and asked him whether he would like to be taken there. Leopard

50 agreed but he knew that Hare was cunning. But Leopard was equally sly. When they arrived at the land of valleys and rocks, Hare told him, "when you hear Kurukurukuru, you move aside. And when you hear Kerekerekere, be ready to collect your share of the meat." Then he was left with his eyes closed. But he never closed his eyes. After sometime he

55 heard Kurukurukuru, he moved aside, then he heard Kerekerekere, he moved aside again. Then he saw Hare throwing a very big stone. When Hare saw that Leopard had not been killed by the stone, he got shocked and started running away very fast. Leopard ran after him, but when Hare saw he was about to be caught he ducked into a hole. But Leopard

60 caught him by the tail. Then Hare shouted, laughing, "Oh!, he is just

holding me, but the tiny root only!" So Leopard loosened the grip to try

and hold much better, but Hare ducked deeper into the hole saying,

"Oh! he has let me go!"

65 Leopard stood there waiting for Hare to come out until he got tired. Then

Hare came out and ran away very fast. Elephant never got his flesh back.

and even up to now, Elephant has got no hind flesh but hare is ever hiding

himself. [From Adagala and Kabira eds. 1985:53-55].

5. THE HYENA AND THE CALF

[By Wa-Gachanja]

A long time ago there was a severe famine in the whole land. The famine

5   was so severe that people began to move from their villages in search of

food and water in other countries.

It happened then that one man decided to leave the land of famine for

another land. So the man and his family left their home one day in the

10   afternoon. As the women carried baskets, the man told his younger son to

lead the cattle while he followed. But as the family left they forgot one calf

that was tethered behind one of the huts. Nobody remembered the calf.

That evening, after the family had gone, the hyena came roaming in

15   search of food. How delighted he was when he saw the calf! After the

hyena had scampered all around the homestead and noticed that there

was nobody in any of the huts, he began to think of how he would eat the

calf. "Shall I begin with the calf or the strap?" The hyena thought as he

admired the calf. That time the calf was jumping and kicking. And as the

20   hyena continued to think of the best way to eat the calf, he began to talk to

himself: "God! You say you provide. Are you the one who gave this calf to me?"

And as the hyena continued to talk to himself, he decided that the best way to eat the calf would be to eat the leather strap first and then eat the calf. And so the hyena proceeded; he bit the strap with which the calf was tethered to the tree. And with one bite, the leather strap broke into two. It was then that the calf kicked hard, and with its tail high in the air began to run as fast as he could. The hyena ran and ran after the calf but the calf ran faster. And as the hyena ran and ran after the calf but the calf ran faster. And as the hyena was very hungry, he could not catch the calf. When the hyena realized that he could not catch up with the calf, he stood and began to cry:

Oh God! I realise you provide

I realise you provide.

Please, return the calf to me.

The hyena wept and wept again as he saw the calf disappear. The calf did not return. It disappeared. And that is the end of my story. (From Bukenya, Gachanja and Nandwa 1997:81-82).

6.   KARITHONG'O

[By Mutungi Muthinji]

A long time in the past, there were some young men, who needed hides to
make shields, for in those days shields were made from buffalo hides.

Seven men gathered and went to hunt for buffaloes. Among them was a
young man without one eye. His name was Karithong'o which was a
nickname.

They left home early one morning and walked for most of the day until they
grew hungry. They were armed with spears and swords but they did not
have shields. On the way, they met small animals like hares and rabbits
but left them alone. However, they were getting so hungry, that they
decided to catch one of the larger animals. They caught a deer and
slaughtered it. After roasting it, they ate to their satisfaction and left the
remains on the ground.

Just then they spotted a very big buffalo across the valley on the opposite
ridge and they all agreed it should be their next prey. It was getting late.

Immediately they started towards the opposite ridge in two main groups hoping to corner the animal. But when they got nearer, they found it was not a buffalo but a man sitting down.

25

They moved nearer him. "How are you, old man?" they asked. "All is well." he answered. "How are you?" he continued. "we are looking for buffaloes and we have seen one around here. Could you show us where it went since you were nearby?"

30

"I am sorry, the time I arrived here, I saw a big buffalo, a bull, pass and go. Buffaloes are common here but they are easier to see in the morning. Tell me, young men, where do you come from?"

35   "We come from quite afar. We cannot reach there before nightfall." "Could you not come tomorrow morning?" "No, only if we could stand the fatigue." "Oh do not mind. I am an old but good and welcoming man. Come I will take you to my home. I can offer you accommodation for the night. Tomorrow morning, I will show you the forest of the buffaloes." They

40   agreed.

The old man led the way and after a long walk, the old man suddenly told

them. "Can you see there? Please, follow this path, I follow this other

because I have got some goats and cattle to lead home. I will then order

45 some milk to be prepared for you." So they walked until they arrived at the

old man's home. The old man ran very fast. He was a strange man

because he was capable of turning himself into many things. He could

make himself into an animal. As the young men waited, they heard the

sound of an excited herd being taken home: "Meee, Moooo, iiiii, meeee!"

50 The old man could imitate. He could make any sound made by a goat, a

cow, a calf, or a kid.

So, there they sat and waited as the old man secured his cattle! Presently,

he arrived and entered the house and told them: "This home has no

55 children. My wife went away, and took the children with her. I am all

alone. Let me go milk the cows, then bring you milk, after which I can give

you food. I will also bring you blood. But you have to wait a moment."

The old man left the hut and went into the house. He returned with milk.

60 Then he pierced himself on the leg and some blood spilled out, which he

collected in a calabash. Within a short time, he had a full gitete* of milk.

He gave it to them in a drinking calabash and told them: "My young

friends! Here is milk which you will drink first, after which you will drink the blood. After that you can then rest a little. I will be coming to wake you."

65 Then he went out.

Young Karithong'o was suspicious of the milk and blood. He decided to be the last to drink. The others were, however, arguing on who should drink first and what to drink first. But they decided to follow the host's directives.

70

They drank milk, even Karithong'o the Mono-Eyed drank milk, but he was the last to do so. But as each one drank the blood, he fell. He would lie down without a sound. They thought it was the expected sleep. But they were dying! But they could not know it. After all, they had been told to lie

75 down and sleep.Mono-Eyed became increasingly suspicious. He decided to call out his friends. But he first drank some milk. Then he turned to his sleeping friends. "Hey! You come on, get up!" But none stirred. They were dead. He poured all the blood into the fireplace but in the process, a drop of blood fell on his leg. Then he cautiously edged himself between

80 his dead comrades and pretended to be asleep.

The old man came: "Have you drunk blood?" he called from outside. But there was only silence. He opened the door and entered. All the time he

was calling out, saying what dumb fools the young men were. Then he

85 entered and found them on the floor. He burst out with gleeful laughter,

enjoying the thought of the meal that was awaiting him.

"Ha, ha, ha, haaaaa! I have never in my life eaten such good looking

meat. This I will eat for a year. First I draw some water from the river,

90 then whistle for my friends. Will they love it! Let me count: one, two,

three, four, five, six, seven. Seven!"

He counted again and left to fetch some water, first having armed himself

with a wedge, a gigantic version of the cutlass, and some small gourds.

95 Mono-Eyed then knew this must be an ogre. He went out singing:

> I have been eating
>
> I have been eating
>
> But today,
>
> I will feed on legs
>
100 > For the night!

All the time he was going away, he sang. Mono-Eyed got up, gathered all

the spears and swords he could carry, and left. He started to run as fast

as he could, not knowing where to, nor caring where to, as long as he left
the place behind him as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, Ogre returned and somehow decided to count his food to make sure all was safe and intact: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seve-... One is not here! Let me count again: one, two, three, four, five, six, seve- ... This must be the boy without one eye. I could see him looking at me cleverly. That! That! That! I must eat one day. I will leave these first. He must not escape!" He stepped out and called: "Where are you my blood?" From the fireplace, then again he called and from far, far away, he could hear an answer. He followed it, calling after some time, and again it would run, and on and on, it would run.

Mono-Eyed was getting very tired, despite himself. and as he fled, he heard a voice answering from his leg: "Here I am!" He discovered the source of the voice, and he cut a part of the skin with the blood. Then he tightly tied the fresh wound to prevent much bleeding. He resumed his flight.

Ogre was also tired from the chase, and the water he had gone to fetch had also sapped his strength. But on he ran encouraged by the voice of

125 the blood, greed motivating him forward, fighting the fatigue that was

descending upon him.

Then he called: My blood."

130 "Yea! yea! yea!" it answered.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"Here I am!"

"Where?"

135 And having come so near, he grew frantic, and a blinding greed seized

him.

"Where? Where? Where?

"Here! Here! Here!"

140 At last, he found it and swallowed it! But he was not satisfied. He went

back, however, and gave up the chase, but vowed that one day he would

catch the young man. He whistled for his friends to come to the feast.

And they ate and made merry the whole night.

145 One day, Ogre turned himself into a beautiful girl. And a beautiful girl was

was he! With thiitu* and earrings and beautiful gorgeous clothing.

Weaving a basket she went in search of the young Karithong'o.

"Do you know the home of the young man without one eye?" "Oh, yes

keep going. You will get there." And so she did, until she arrived there.

150 "Is this the home of the young man without one eye?"

"Yes, his mother answered. "What brought you here?"

"I am his friend"

And that being so, as was characteristic of those times, the unmarried girls

155 of the village came around to welcome the visitor and keep her company.

After some time, she claimed she was tired and would want to rest. She

was shown Karithongo's hut where she rested while the rest stayed

outside. Karithong'o was not at home at the time.

160

Now the ogres are not like human beings. When they talk, they are

asleep, when they are not asleep they talk. But she forgot to turn herself

into a normal human being and when she slept, a strange thing happened.

She started swelling. She swelled. The bed started creaking with strain.

165 she filled the whole bed.

Outside, the girls heard the creaking and got suspicious! "Was she not all alone and the bed is creaking!" They entered with a light and checked. She filled the whole bed! The bed was sagging under the weight! "This
170   cannot be a normal human being," they said.

When Karithong'o came he was told of the bad news. They decided to salvage all the worthy belongings out of the hut and burn the house with the ogre locked in. That is what they did. They burnt the house and it
175   burnt, and burnt, until it was nothing more than ashes.

The long rains fell on the ashes, where the hut once stood. There germinated a gourd plant which flowered and brought forth a big gourd. Everybody watched silently as the biggest gourd ever known to the human
180   race grew in size every day. It was so big after ripening that it could hold twenty common gourds of water.

Karithong'o's father decided to prepare it for beer brewing. The first time is always a ceremony, a sort of ritual. He was happy because if anybody
185   wanted to brew much beer, he would lend it to him and in return would get mareko**. For such a gourd, that would be much beer!

But when he went to check his beer, he found the gourd empty and dry!

Even the 'Miratina' were dry. He edged deeper to the bottom. "Nothing!

190   Dry! Does this gourd drink beer?, he asked. "Does this gourd drink beer?"

the gourd mimicked like a human being.

"What! a gourd that talks!" He exclaimed.

"What! a gourd that talks!" Answered the gourd.

195   Karithong'o's father left it alone but never told anybody about it.   He

explained that his beer had spilled. He hung the gourd on the rafters at

the back of the hut. Another man borrowed it, to find out what kind of a

gourd it was. Again it drunk that man's beer.

"Come and see!" The man exclaimed.

200   "Come and see!" the gourd mimicked.

"What a gourd that talks!"

"And one that drinks!" He added

"And one that drinks." The gourd echoed.

205

He took it back to its owner. Karithong'o's father took a club and broke it

down to small pieces. One of the pieces flew into the house. When

Karithong'o's young brother sat down that evening to take his supper, the

piece crawled next to him and said "Give me some or I eat you!" Turning

210   he found nothing. Again, "Give me some or I eat you!" Frightened, he

gave over all his food, to the invisible voice in the darkness. And every

evening, the piece of broken gourd asked for his food. And every evening

he gave.

215   After a long time, the skipping of supper started to take its toll on the boy.

He started growing thinner and thinner with time. One day his mother

asked:

"Son, I always serve food in your calabash, don't you eat?" And because

he was frightened of the voice, he lied. But there came a time when the

220   young boy knew he would die of hunger. Rather than die a slow death, he

told his father about the voice. That evening his father sat on the boys

stool, near the darkness in the half lit room. The boy sat on his fathers

usual stool.

225   He was armed with a sword prepared to challenge the devil himself. After

getting his meal, the piece crawled and demanded food:

"Give me some or I eat you"

The father turned, but there was nothing. Again the demand came. This time, he looked keenly and saw a piece of the broken gourd. He took it

230   that same night near the biggest river. And into the deepest part he threw it. Since then, there was never been any more trouble from the gourd. My story ends, and may I not end like it. (From Adagala and Kabira, 1985:22-27).

7.   THE LEOPARD AND ANTELOPE

[By Praya Gathuka]

Long time ago, antelope and Leopard were great enemies. For this
reason, Leopard used to chase antelope any time he saw him.

One day when Leopard had gone hunting, he fell in mud and could not
take himself out. It chanced that antelope passed by. Leopard saw
antelope walking at a distance and asked him for help. However, antelope
was afraid and did not know what to do. Leopard assured him that he
would not harm him if he helped him out of the mud. Antelope could not
leave Leopard in the mud and so agreed to help him. "Climb on my back
and I will take you out," Antelope told Leopard. He dragged Leopard out
of the mud and deposited him on the dry grass.

"Now that you are out of danger, climb off my back," Antelope said. "I am
not that stupid. How can I get tender meat to eat and throw it away?
Leopard replied. They struggled for a long time until Hare chanced to pass
by. "Why are you two quarrelling?" he asked. He listened to both sides of
the story and decided to act as the judge.

"Leopard go back to your original position in the mud. I want to see how antelope dragged you out because it seems to me impossible for a small thing like Antelope to drag somebody as big as you out of mud. He must

25 be telling a lie." Leopard felt challenged and went back in the mud. Once comfortably settled in the mud, Hare said, "You can take yourself out as you claimed to have done the first time. Antelope you can go and attend to your business. There is no point of helping those who do not appreciate help."

30

Hare and Antelope left Leopard in the mud. After many days of struggle, leopard managed to drag himself out. He swore to make antelope and Hare pay for what they did.

35 The first thing he did was to go to a diviner's place for he wanted to know where he could meet Antelope. Antelope had foreseen this and had hidden himself in an itara*. When Leopard arrived he asked, "Can you tell me where I will find antelope?" The diviner told him. "Antelope will be found in the middle of the most dense forest." Antelope was able to hear

40 this and

*Itara - nest

could, therefore avoid any encounter with Leopard by avoiding the dense

45   forest.

One day as Leopard was hunting for food he met with his enemy Hare.
"so we meet again, ha?" Leopard said. "I am not going to spare you. I will
eat you now." Hare being clever told him. "Don't eat me. I know how to

50   repay my own debts generously. Do you see that herd of monkeys? You
can eat them for I have given them all to you. Go into that cave and I will
send them to you."

From there Hare moved to where the group of monkeys were, and started

55   laughing at them because they were not circumcised. "I wouldn't live with
you, uncircumcised as you are. I will show you where I went to be
circumcised so that you, too, may become like me."

The monkeys agreed to Hare's idea and followed him. Hare took them

60   inside the cave Leopard was hiding in, told them to make a line and enter
one by one for the circumcision ritual. One after another they entered but
none would come out. The last in the line started wondering, "Why aren't

they coming out?" He decided that it was better to remain a Kihii[†] than enter like a fool, into a place from which no one was coming out to tell the

65   truth about the ritual. Only he alone returned home.

Many days went by. One day however the monkey met with Hare and wanted to revenge. Hare, knowing this, said. "I am a generous hare who knows how to repay his debts." He told the monkey, "Can you see those

70   fields of miungu [‡]over there? Those are yours. go call all the other monkeys and celebrate."

It happened that in those fields there were girls gourding the miungu from monkeys so hare had to distract their attention so that his promise to the

75   monkeys could be fulfilled. He thus started singing:

Hare dressed up in clothes that are dazzling.

Others that will defeat mego.[§]"

Daughter I ask.

Daughter I ask.

80

[†] Kihii-Uninitiated person
[‡] Miungu- Gourd plants.
[§] Mego-Seeds from the gourd plant.

All the girls surrounded Hare to listen and see the beauty he was so proud of. Meanwhile the monkeys attacked the fields. They ate until nothing was left. when all the monkeys had disappeared, Hare ran away as fast as his legs would carry him. When the girls returned to their positions,

85   they realised that all the miungu were gone. They set off for home to face the angry parents.

After a few days, Hare met with the girls when they were on their way to fetch water. They asked him, "What will you pay us with?" Boastful as

90   usual, Hare said, "Hare who repays back his debts generously: can you see those Miraa[tt] in that field? Those are yours. Go cut until you are satisfied."

Hare then ran to the field where he knew the owner to be guarding the

95   farm. Panting, he told him, "I was sent by my father to look after your miraa while you go to share meat with him. He is over that hill where you can see a big fire. The man was hungry and he believed Hare without questioning. No sooner had he left than the girls entered the farm carrying as many miraa as they could.

100

[tt] Miraa-Plant for eating

When the old man reached the hilltop there was a big fire but no one near. He swore and started to walk back. By the time he reached his farm Hare and the girls had disappeared and there was not a single miraa remaining in the farm.

8.   MAARA'S DEAD FATHER

This happened to a man called Maara a long time ago. Maara was the only son of a very poor man. His father had only one wife - Maara's mother. He used to earn his living through hunting because he was a hunter.

Maara's mother did not do anything. She was not very strong and one day Maara and his father found her dead. They did not bury her. They threw her body in the bushes behind their hut and in the evening the hyenas came and ate her up. Maara's father was getting very old. One day he told Maara: 'Son, I am getting very old. Strength has deserted me and I cannot go out hunting again.'

From that day Maara went out hunting alone. It was difficult because there were times when there was very little to eat. 'He will die soon', Maara thought. Old age and hunger were closing on him. Maara felt miserable because he always could see people with a lot of cattle passing near their home. He felt poorer every time he saw these people passing; young men looking happy and healthy. 'These young men will inherit something from their fathers. What will Maara inherit? Only the cold dew of the morning, hunting what is at times unavailable.

One day he woke up and found that his father was very sick: 'He is gone now" said Maara feeling sadder than ever. But Maara did not tell anybody

25 of his father's sickness. He looked after him alone - giving him the tenderest meat from the animals he hunted. Maara's father did not get well. He was getting worse and worse until one day he died.

Now Maara did not tell people about his father's death. He did not want

30 anybody's advice on how people are buried or how the body could be disposed of. It was during the night that his father died and Maara sat alone thinking. He did not want to continue sleeping when his father lay there dead. Then very early in the morning before anybody was up and before the sun had come up from the East and before anybody was

35 awake. Maara took the dead body of his father and put it on the path where the cattle followed on their way to the grazing fields. Maara stood at a distance to see what would happen.

It was on top of a hill and the cattle came racing downwards. And they

40 trampled on the dead body of Maara's father. And when Maara saw the cattle trample on his father, he came running claiming that his father has been killed by the rushing cattle: 'Uu, uu! The cattle are killing my father.

Stop them! You are driving the cattle on my father. Uuu! They have killed him.'

45

The young men who were in charge of the cattle ran only to find that Maara's father had been completely crushed. Maara came after them and cried loudly to see his father crushed like that: 'You have killed my father with your cattle. Now I shall have no father. You will pay for his life with

50   these cattle, otherwise I shall go to the medicine- man, who will charge you for me.'

'No! Maara do not go to the medicine-man, we shall pay for the death of your father for which we feel very sad. We did not know your father was

55   coming up the hill. We would have restrained the cattle. We shall take the matter to the old men of the village and these will decide how many head of cattle should be given to you.'

And so the matter was taken to the men of the village and Maara was

60   given a lot of cattle. He married many wives and his homestead became the largest in the village. Maara had become a rich man.

People came to know about Maara's trick after a long time. They came to

know that Maara's father had been dead when the cattle trampled on him,

65 for Maara had put him on the path before anybody was up to see him.

They have not forgotten about this trick until today. The tale ends there.

(From Mwangi 1970:120-122)

9.   MANGA AND HIS FATHER

Once a man did this, he married a woman. After marrying a woman they

left their place in Gikuyuland and went to the land of the ogres. When they

reached that land the man became an ogre. And this wife of his is not an

5   ogre. And that woman remained just a Mugikuyu, she did not become an

ogre.

When they reached that land the woman became pregnant.   After

becoming pregnant she got a baby boy. Now, the woman stayed in that

10   land but she herself did not eat people. No, because she was not an ogre.

This man and his son were the ogres. They would go collecting human

beings all over, come back and eat them. They would be told by this

woman.

Me! because you know I do not eat this meat that you eat; as you eat them

15   slaughter a goat for me.

Me! I will be eating goat meat.

O.K. they did not refuse to slaughter for her. She would be slaughtered for

and she would eat. They would go hunting for human beings in the

bushes. She would stay put just like that, yes the woman, since she was

20   not an ogre.

Now, this woman had left a sister at home in Gikuyu land. Now, her sister

heard stories that her sister and her husband went to become ogres.

'There is your sister who went, they went, went to become ogres'.

25 *She would ask, "people who were not ogres how do they become ogres?"*

She would keep hearing the story, the story. Once she said she would go

looking for her sister. She started off and went, she had a baby and was

expecting another. So she went, went and arrived at her sister's place.

She found her sister. Her sister told her: "Now, my sister where did you

30 pass? And my husband and his son have become ogres and eat human

beings? Now, what will you do? Now, what will you do?" She answered,

nothing! If they eat me let them do it. Now that I have come. What can I

do? O.K., as they stayed her sister got some arrowroots for her and

cooked them. A goat was slaughtered for by her inlaws.

35

Now as arrowroots were cooking the ogres arrived. They started playing

with what? With the baby. O.K. That child will be eaten there by which

ogres? These ones. They would pull out their what? Tongues. If she will

die can mother have anything to do, other than keep quiet?

40

When ogres left, her sister said: Rise and do this. You go before they

return and find you here. Let them find you gone. Didn't the girl begin a

return journey home where she came from? She went, she went , she went but while still on the way it rained. Heavy, heavy rains. She asked

45 herself, now where do I go? She sheltered herself up a very big tree. Here shadow fell on the river.

Now Manga Manga and his father went looking for people in which direction? In this one. Now, when looking for people on that side here is a

50 river where they rest while drinking water. This lad bent down to wash his hands so as to drink water. He looked into the river. You, know a shadow of somebody who was high up was seen in the water. You have seen water in a river. He told his father. Father! Up there is a black spot. There is a black spot.

55

Nothing! if they eat me let them do it.
Now that I have come. what can I do?

O.K., as they stayed her sister got some arrowroots for her and cooked

60 them. A goat was slaughtered for by her inlaws.

Now as arrowroots were cooking the ogres arrived. They started playing with what? With the baby. O.K. That child will be eaten there by which

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65 die can mother have anything to do, other than keep quiet?

When ogres left, her sister said: Rise and do this, you go before they

return and find you here. Let them find you gone. Didn't the girl begin a

return journey home where she came from? She went, she went, she

70 went but while still on the way it rained. Heavy, heavy rain. she asked

herself, now where do I go? She sheltered herself up a very big tree. Her

shadow fell on the river. Now Manga Manga and his father went looking

for people in which direction? In this one. Now, when looking for people

on that side here is a river where they rest while drinking water. this lad

75 bent down to wash his hands so as to drink water. He looked into the

river. You, know a shadow of somebody who was high up was seen in the

water. You have seen water in a river. He told his father.

Father! up there is a black spot. There is a black spot. I am seeing it here

80 in the river. His father told him: Manga Manga! this small shadow you see

is an insects' nest (gathambo). It is an insects' nest that is why it is up

there. Tuthambo are very small insects that build a big nest. Yes a big

nest like that of bees on a tree". The father would tell Manga Manga, that

one is an insects' nest. Manga Manga would answer, "Ah! that one is not

85 a nest." The father says: "What then shall I tell you it is, Manga, Manga?"

Manga Manga says: "I will go up and see"

Manga Manga went up the tree and found the sister to his mother. He told

his father, "This is not a nest. It is a person. So he got hold of the woman

90 and threw her down. She was thrown down roughly and so she died. So

they slaughtered her. Her abdomen was black. Now, they got two babies

from the abdomen.

Now, Manga Manga took the babies. He decided that they should not be

95 thrown away. He tied them with leaves. He will not be destructive. Now,

did they not carry their meat. They found the woman at home and she

was very anxious.

Now this lad is a head with his small things. "Mother take these small

100 things of mine. Will you cook them for me?" She told him: "Bring" She

said in her heart. These children are mine. He asked her, "be cooking

and eating them by yourselves". Manga Manga said, "No mother, these

are small doves. Do cook them for me" She told him; 'bring!' She said in

her heart, "these children are mine". She untied them carefully. She

105 removed the leaves and placed them in another place. She told Manga Manga: "Let me keep them, I will cook them tomorrow for you."

The following morning after father and son had left she took the babies out, washed them carefully and smeared them with oil. She found that
110 they were full developed. O.K. She put them to sleep. She then killed two doves. How many doves? Two. After killing two doves she plucked off the feathers and cut off the legs. Then she did what? She cooked them. She cooked them. She cooked for her ogre.

115 When Manga Manga returned he asked her mother. Mother! where are my small things?" He was told: "They are here". He was given them. He ate them complaining saying, "Ah mother they did not look like this". His mother would ask him; "Manga Manga. This meat you and your father eat, I do not eat them. O.K. "Manga Manga was still doubtful: Then the father
120 asked him this. Manga, Manga, you are asking your mother about this meat have you ever seen her eat it?" Manga Manga ate saying, "hu, hu, hu" still doubting until he finished.

Again in the morning they went, they would go early in the morning and
125 come at night. The woman, is she not left with her children here? She

looked after them, she looked after them. Again this woman told her husband: "Be slaughtering the fat goat for me so that I eat while you eat". The husband, is he going to refuse for nothing? No, because even the goats are very many and nobody else eats them. It is the woman who is

130   left looking after them.

Now the woman removed all the fat from where she stored it, she made children taste it? These children, she made them taste, she made them taste, She made them taste. She makes them eat. When they were full,

135   she put them in a porridge pot.

Those children grew and grew, they became fit to play. Now, these children are taken outside when these ogres go away they play, they play and then they are returned inside. Now this boy called Manga Manga

140   would come and say: Father here, there are many small footsteps. Where do these small footsteps come from? The father tells him: Manga Manga, you talk much, you say there are many footsteps,who else is here with your mother?" The mother tells him: "Manga Manga, when you go with your father, you set off, and you come back, I go to the garden and come

145   back, I go for sweet potato vines and come back, how many footsteps will those be?" Manga Manga says: "I see the homestead really stepped on".

Those children grew very big. Know however that because of God, they never cried. The ogres never heard them. When they grew big, they were

150   put behind the house at the gate. They slept on those skins from the goats the husband slaughtered. Now those children were made to sleep on those skins from the goats. They were brought up there. When the sun sets they are given food, they are given porridge. They sleep. Now when the children finished their meat, the woman would say:

155

"The father of Manga, now because you know, I do not eat this meat of yours why do you not slaughter, that goat for me so that I eat while you eat yours?"

It is slaughtered for her. She gives to the children, she gives, she gives

160   until they are full. When it is finished she says: "The father of Manga, Manga, now because you only eat meat and mine is finished what shall I be eating? Can you not slaughter for me to eat while you eat?" It is slaughtered the fat is removed and put away. Didn't the children grow! When they grew she told them! Do not ever go outside because these

165   people are ogres". They grew, they grew. Now she told these ogres.

"The father of Manga Manga, because you and Manga Manga go out and leave me alone here and you know some spies come, buy me a sword and a spear. If they should attack me, what would I defend myself with? With these goats and cattle of ours" The big ogre did not refuse. He went and bought a sword and a spear. She waited she waited, she waited until the ogre forgot those things, the woman said:

"The father of Manga Manga buy another sword for me so that in this hand I have a spear and sword in the other I have a sword and a spear. If as I fight, I lose these, I fight with these" Did he refuse? No. He brought them there. Hadn't her boys grown into adults? She told them (ogres): "The father of Manga Manga, slaughter this bull for me I shall be eating it slowly". Did he refuse? No. In the morning she told them: "Because you go completely and leave me alone, you are going to do this; fix this dry skin there, yes you fix it on the ground with me inside. If I am unable to lift myself from that dry skin know that our goats will be stolen."

They fixed the pegs, they fixed, they surrounded her with them. She struggled, she struggled and came out. She told them: "You see when you have left here, know you have left somebody. Our goats would not get stolen. Now, both of you. You will go in both of you." She fixed the pegs,

she fixed.   They would ask: "The mother of Manga Manga, why have you fixed the pegs for so long " She would say, "The father of Manga Manga,

190   the speed of men is not that of women. That work which you and Manga Manga do, can I do it as quickly?" Now, have not the pegs gone round? The sons of the woman, have they not emerged? The ogres are beaten "tua, tua, tua" Manga Manga would say, "And father I have been telling you." The father would say: "Yes son, you told me." They were killed.

195   *Then the woman and her children took all the goats and cattle and went back to Gikuyu land.*   (From Kabira and Mutahi, 1988:90-95)

10.   THE FATHER'S GOURD

[By Wairimu wa Kihuuna]

Long ago there was a man who had his own small gourd. He also had two
daughters. The mother of the younger daughter had died. Now this girl
was very good and very beautiful. Now the old man used to put some
beer in his gourd. The beer from miratina[‡‡]. He used to tell the girls: "You
should never go with this gourd to draw water. I don't want it to draw
water." Now they would steal it, draw water and then return it.

Now one day, this younger girl went to the river, drew the water and
brought back the gourd. The next day she took it again and went to fetch
water. When she put it under the water, to fill, the gourd was carried by
the river. When it was carried by the river, she decided that she would not
leave it behind, "I shall go with it, I shall walk along this river. I shall walk
by the river until I see where it will stop."

The girl walked by the river, as she walked along the river, she found goats
that were slaughtering themselves. They said to her: "Young girl come

---

[‡‡]Miratina- plant used in brewing traditional liquor

20 and slaughter us and roast us we shall give you some for your work in slaughtering us.

The girl did not refuse, she slaughtered and roasted. She was given some for having roasted the meat and was told, "This is yours" She said "I do
25 not eat those that eat themselves". She went and she went, she sang: "The gourd of my father ciriciri. You have gone and left me ciriciri".

She went and went. She went and left them with their meat. She went and went and found food that was mashing itself. She was told: Young
30 girl come and mash us we shall give you some for your having mashed us and served us.

She never refused. She mashed and served. She was given some but she refused and said, "I do not eat food that mashes itself and serves
35 itself." She went on singing: "My father's gourd ciriciri. You have gone and left me ciriciriciri."

She went and found cows that slaughtered themselves they said: "Young girl come and slaughter us, when you slaughter us we shall give you some
40 for your having slaughtered us."

She slaughtered. After she slaughtered, she roasted the ones she was going to roast. She left them ready and told them she does not eat those that eat themselves. The gourd was still in the river and she was after it.

45 She sang: "My father's gourd ciri ciri ciri. You have gone and left me ciriciriciri".

She went down hill. She went down hill. She found arrowroots that were cooking themselves. They said to her: "Young girl come and cook us then

50 serve us we shall give you some for your having cooked us and served us."

She did not refuse. She cooked and served. She put it here, she was told "Come so we can give you some for you for having cooked us and serving

55 us". She told them, "I do not eat those that eat themselves." She went downhill singing:

My father's gourd ciriciri ciri

You have gone and left me ciriciri ciri.

60 She went downhill. She went downhill. She saw everything. She found

black beans cooking themselves, everything that is eaten by the mouth of

a human being. She saw them all as she walked and never ate them.

She went on singing, singing. Now then the sun was there in the sky. It

was like three O'clock. Now the rain fell. It rained very, very, very, heavily.

65 Now she had almost arrived at the place where the father's gourd would

rest. She went and went and wondered where she would stand to avoid

this heavy rain. She went and went and found a place where there was a

fig tree. This fig tree was very ripe. The fruits were so ripe that they were

hanging very very low. Now the fruits were hanging low. She stood under

70 it to avoid the rain. As she sat under the shade, the rain fell very heavily.

As a result, the fruits would hit her on the face, on the eyes, on the whole

face. They would pour on her face. When they fell on her face, she would

wipe the face and throw them away. She did this many times and she

didn't say anything. She did this now and again. The rain stopped. When

75 it stopped, the man who was tendering the fig tree was told,"Go and see

whether the fig tree is eating itself." He went, he found the girl. He went

back and told the owner of the tree. "The fig tree is not eating itself."

This is because the girl did not eat the fig tree. She did not eat the fig tree.

80 It would hit on her face and she would clean it off. This man who came to

check the tree was the man who took the gourd. He was told to go back for the girl. The girl was brought to the owner of the tree, when she arrived she was asked: Where do you come from? She said: "I went to fetch water with my father's gourd. When I took it it was carried by the river. I

85 have spent all the time looking for it." The gourd had been hidden. The girl spent the night, when morning came she was called by the man. She saw the gourd. She asked, "Is this the gourd?" "Yes it is". "O.K."

It was put there by this man who called her. They took out a very big

90 container of oil. She was told, "You put your head in this container, this way, then take it out" She put her head inside.

When she put the head inside, she came out with beads on her head and dyed hair and earrings and the necklaces that used to be worn long ago,

95 mikugugu, those necklaces that used to be worn long ago.

She was told to dip in the hand. She dipped it. She came out with bangles, she came out with many ornaments. She came out with many ornaments. She dipped in the other one. She came out with many

100 ornaments. Those that used to be won by people long ago. She dipped in

again and she came out with ornaments, which were made of beads and bangles and beads for the buttocks that used to be worn by girls long ago.

O.K. "Dip in your feet." She dipped it in, she came out with many

105 decorations. She put in the other foot. She came out with many decorations. Now didn't the girl get decorated just like an ostrich. She looks like an ostrich. Honey was put into her father's gourd, she was told: Take this gourd with you. It is the one for your father. When you reach home during the day, you climb to the itara with it. When you reach the

110 itara you stay there. When your mother comes and lights a fire you pour the honey on the fire to put if off. You will be told, "You who is in this itara whether you are an animal or a human being come down so we can light our fire" You shall tell them. "I can only leave that place if older father's bull is slaughtered and its skin spread on the ground so that I fall on it"

115

The girl went home, wasn't the bull slaughtered there and then? The skin was oiled with sheep oil, oiled very very well. The girl came down ba! She sat where? 'Here'. The girl was asked to relate her story. She said she had been following her father's gourd. "It is this one where I went, where I

120 found the gourd is where I was given these decorations; you hear."

The girl stayed in her father's home with her jewelleries. The one who was left would ask her, "my father's daughter give me this one." She would say, "If I give you what will I be left with." She asked the details about her

125 journey and she was told, "I was following my father's gourd that was taken by the river. I went with what? With it, when I went, I would find food that was cooking itself. I would be given and I would say I don't eat those that eat themselves. I found everything, I would find sweet potatoes uprooting themselves, I would uproot them, roast them and not eat them".

130 She said. "Hi I shall also go to let my father's gourd go with the river."

The girl went and let the gourd go, she did it knowingly. She wanted to go and be decorated, she did this. When she went, the gourd was taken by the river. She followed it. She first found goat meat, she roasted, was

135 given and ate. She went and found black beans mashing themselves. Young girl come and mash us and serve us so we can give some to you for having mashed us. She mashed and served, was given and she ate. All the things as I counted for you earlier. She went and if it was food she would mash and eat, if it was meat she would roast and eat, if it was

140 arrow-roots she would eat. O.K.

The rain came, just like the other rain, she went under the tree, while she was there under the fig tree. the sap would pour and she would lick it. Everytime it came she would lick. The same man was told, so and so, "go

145 and see whether the fig tree is eating itself" he saw the girl. Hi! he never spoke and he was asked "so and so is the fig tree eating itself?" Hi! it is eating itself. He was told to go and bring the one who is eating the fig tree. He brought her home. When he was bringing her home, he asked her: "Now what are you here for? "She said" it is my father's gourd that I am

150 looking for. It was carried by the river, I am coming for it".

Water was put in the gourd. When water was put in it, he then filled the container with scabies. She was told to put her head in when she put in her head, she came out with smallpox, she dipped the hands and came

155 out with smallpox. The whole body was filled with smallpox.

She was told " take this gourd of your father, and go with it. When you reach home, go up to the itara when you are told to come out whether you are a human being, or an animal you say that you can do it only if your

160 younger father's bull was slaughtered and ashes put on the skin and spread so you can fall on it."

She poured water as the other one did. Now she was told "Whether you are an animal or a human being come down so that we see you." She told

165 them to slaughter the bull belonging to the younger father. Ashes were put on the skin. When she came out she was all scabies.

These people were shocked because of this scabies. O.K. That is that. The girl stayed. You have heard they are step sisters with the other one, she would ask her sister: "a daughter of my father what happened to you?

170 She said "when I went and saw food that mashed itself and I never ate, I found meat that roasted itself, I roasted and did not eat. I found cows that were slaughtering themselves , I slaughtered, roasted and I did not eat. Now all the things that eat themselves I never ate. The other girl said: "I ate everything". She was asked: "when you went to the fig tree what did

175 you do? She said, "when I went to fig tree and found it hanging, I licked it. The sister told her, "I never licked anything I used to wipe and throw away. I never ate that fig tree."

She stayed there with her smallpox, with her smallpox. The father and the

180 mother wondered how they could stay with her, with her smallpox. We shall leave her in this old homestead and go with the good one. Now they told this good one, "when you go to sleep you sleep on the side that is not next to the wall and let the other sleep next to the wall". When they went

to sleep, the one with smallpox cheated the other one and she slept infront

185 and the other one slept next to the wall.

Now because the parents were leaving at night, they woke up the one who

slept in front because she had been told to sleep in front so that they could

leave the owner of muhare behind. They started their journey with their

190 scabies. When they went, they found out, what do they have? It was that

scabies. The man said "we shall not go with this scabies". He cut her to

pieces. They went where they were going.

This good one woke up and found there was nobody. She asked "Now

195 where shall I go and I do not know where they went". She stayed in her

mother's house. She stayed and stayed and stayed. She thought of what

to do. She said 'I know'. She went and killed a gathuni (frunty of

antelopes). She killed it, slaughtered it. She put the pieces of skins

between her decorations. She stayed in her mother's house. She stayed

200 and stayed and stayed. She thought of what to do. She said 'I know'.

She went and killed a gathuni (frunty of antelopes). She killed it,

slaughtered it. She put the pieces of skins between her decorations. She

stayed looking like a gathuni. When she was dirty she would go to the

river and hide where she could not be seen by anybody. She would say

205 "my skins come out of my body so I can bath". They would shake themselves off, she would wash. When she is dry she would tell the skins "my skins came back to me so we can go home". They would come back. She would go home.

210 Now because it is at the river on the other side there was a man who used to look after livestock. Now the girl would be on the other side of the river. The man spied on her, spied on her until he knew that it was the daughter of so and so. He went slowly, slowly, slowly and hid near her. The girl took a bath. She then came back and sat down and before she said "my

215 skins come back so we can go home" she was grabbed by the man. She was told not to put back the skins. He pleaded with her, pleaded with her. He took her home, slaughtered a goat for her and she became his wife. They lived together. (From Kabira and Mutahi, 1988:95-100)

11. NYAGA AND WAWERU

[By Muthee Mugo]

⁵ A man had two wives. The first wife gave birth to a boy she called Nyaga

and a girl called Wamweru. The other gave birth to a girl called Wacici.

The first wife died. Nyaga used to look after his father's animals. The two

girls used to stay at home. The father decided that he would decorate the

girl who had lost the mother. She was bought laces. The first was given

¹⁰ necklaces and beads. The other woman was angry because the same

was not done to her daughter.

Now the mother discussed with the daughter and decided to bury the other

girl so that the girl could do what with this stool? Sit on it. Now Wacici and

¹⁵ the mother dug a hole in the store, it was Wacici and the mother who did

this. Wamweru was sent and she never imagined that a hole had been

dug. Wacici took the stool. She sat on it. Now the girl came and asked

for her stool and it was refused with. She was asked by the step mother

"why are you asking for the stool" Sit on that oiled skin. It is better than

²⁰ this stool. Now the girl went and did what? She sat on the skin. She

sank. They covered the hole. She was buried with the skin. She was buried.

Haya, the other girl stayed there with the mother. They cooked. They
25 cooked, the young man Nyaga came. He sat down, when he sat down he
asked "Where is Wamweru?" he was told "I sent Wamweru", they ate the
food. They ate the food. Wamweru had not come. The next day the boy
asked her where did Wamweru go? And because he used to stay in the
garden at night to check the animals, he was told "Wamweru did not sleep
30 here. I don't know where she is, may be she got married", ai, she has
stayed. He sat down. He was told the father was not at home. When the
father came and asked where the girl was, he was told that she had been
sent and didn't come back. The woman said that may be the girl got
married. Now the father stayed and knew that the girl was lost completely.
35 He said, "I shall move from this home where my child got lost, I wouldn't
want anything like this to happen". They left the place. When they moved,
a big bush grew up where the home was. Now this boy used to go there to
graze the goats, as they wanted to enter into the bush he told them;

40 "You Gacheru, don't go into that *"Iganjo"* (Bushes that grow on an old
homestead.)" The girl who was underground heard and said; You child

who abuses the goat? We used to drink blood together? We used to drink, I was buried by your mother because of beads, divider of milk. The girl sang from underground, the boy was silent, he was silent. He shouted

45 at the goats again.

Hi Gacheru don't go to that *Iganjo*. The girl sang again   Hi Gacheru don't go to that *Iganjo*. The girl sang again.

50 The boy kept quiet and brought home the livestock. He told the father, "Father our girl who got lost has been singing. Let us go tomorrow and you listen". That is how the father went with the child. He went and they shouted at the goat.

55 You Gacheru don't go into that bush where people got lost. The girl sang: Hi Gacheru don't go to that Iganjo. The girl sang again Hi Gacheru don't go to that Iganjo The girl sang again.

Haya, the man got sticks and made a ladder and went down the hole, he

60 went and the girl came up. "I have nothing, I am naked". He came and brought her clothes now the girl did what? She came out she was taken out and brought to the garden. The boy took the livestock home, the man

prepared her daughter. She vomited, she vomited soil and all the beads that she ate when she was underground. The decorations she had been

65 wearing.

The man called all the animals. Now the man went home, ugali was prepared for him by that woman. He told the woman and the daughter to eat the ugali. The mother became a hyena and the girl a fox. (From

70 Kabira and Mutahi, 1988:100-102).

12.   THE SHE-GOAT

By Muthoni

5   A man had very many goats. Among the goats was one called Njiru. Now

the boy went to look after them. This goat was very greedy and so it

started going to other people's gardens. The boy would say;

You Njiru!

10   It would retort

You Njiru

and again

You Njiru

It would retort

15   You Njiru

Every time the boy came home, he would tell his father; "Father, there is a

goat that talks to me." He would be told "Whom do you think you are.

Where have you ever heard of a goat talking".

20 Now, this goat, and it was pregnant kept talking to the boy. One day the father himself went to look after the goats. That goat became restless and finally moved into somebody's garden and ate maize.

The man saw it and said;

  You Njiru

25 It retorted

  You Njiru I shall not come back

He said, haiya, this is as I was told by my son. They went home. The goat was thoroughly beaten and it ran away into the forest where it gave birth to

30 twins. It delivered inside the hole of an ant eater.

The goat used to leave the kids there and on return she would say;

   children of the goat

   miimi

35   Your mother has come

   miimi

   Ngiririri-ri nanjirima

   Kids do come out

They would come out and feed and then go back to their living place. The

40 mother would go, eat until the breasts would pain with milk then she would

come back to sing again;

Children of the goat

miimi

Come out and breast feed

45 miimi

Your mother has come

miimi

Ngiririri-ri na njirima

Kids do come out

50 Now, the ogre heard and knew that there was meat in that place. It came

and said in a very deep voice;

Children of the goat

miimi

55 come out and breast feed

miimi

your mother has come

miimi

Ngirririri-ri na njirima

60   The children said, your voice is too deep you cannot be our mother,

             Kids do come out

             Miimi

             Come out and breast feed

             Miimi

65   Ngiririri-ri na njirima

             Kids do come out

They came out and said;

Mother shall we breast feed first or shall we tell you first. You better breast

feed first, because kids intestines are fast (in digesting the food). They

70   breast-fed. They told her "Here there was an old man who had a very

heavy voice". You should never move out. You hear? their mother

ordered. The ogre went to a witch doctor and said "I want my voice to be

light because there are children that I want to come out of some place for

me to eat. He was told; Go to a line of safari ants and let them bite your

75   tongue and do not say hui." The ogre went and had the tongue bitten by

the safari ants and said hui, hui, hui. It went to the children of the goat and

said;

             Children of the goat

80   miimi

Come out and breast feed

miimi

Your mother has come

Miimi

85   Ngiririri-ri na njirima

Kids do come out

The children refused to come out. The goat came and they said: Mother

shall we breast feed first or shall we tell you first? The mother said; Breast

feed first because kids intestines are fast. They breast fed and told her;

90 Here was another man who was calling us. The mother said, "Don't ever

come out until I come."

The ogre went again and was asked by the witch doctor "Did you say

hui?" It said, "Yes" It was told to go back and not to say hui It went and

95 again it said hui, hui It went back to the children and sang in a deep voice:

Children of the goat

miimi

come out and breast feed

100   miimi

Ngiririri-ri na njirima

Kids do come out.

They refused to come out.

The goat came and sang and the children came out and said;

105   Mother shall we breast feed first or shall we tell you first.

Breast feed first because kids intestines are fast.

When they finished they told the mother,

Mother there was a very old man here who was calling us,

"Don't ever go out until I come".

110   The ogre went back to the witch doctor and was told that unless he

stopped saying hui, his voice will never change. It went back and had its

tongue bitten without saying, hui. It came and sang just like the mother.

Children of the goat

115   miimi

come out and breast feed

miimi

Ngiririri-ri na njirima

Kids do come out.

120   They came out and they were eaten.

That goat came and sang;

Children of the goat

miimi

125   Come out and breast feed

miimi

Your mother has come

miimi

Ngiririri-ri na Njirima

130   Kids do come out

She found that they had been eaten.

That goat went away and gave birth to two boys. These children spent all their time making spears in hiding. They were hidden all the time when they were growing up. They were always told by the mother that she had children who were eaten by the ogre. Now this goat met an ogre and they agreed to marry. It gave birth to a boy called Konyeki. Now her own children had become adults. One of them used to sing;

140   I shall continue sharpening the knife ici ici

A knife for killing an ogre ici ici

An ogre that ate our children ici ici

The ogre would say;

145 My son what do you sing? It would tell their mother, "These children sing and say they shall kill an ogre" The boys would say;

"Now we sing like this"

150 I shall sharpen the knife ici ici

A knife for killing somebody ici ici

For eating our Giceru ici ici

That is the way we sing:

Now, they would sharpen the spears. When the ogre was near, they

155 would sing:

I shall sharpen the knife ici ici

A knife for killing an ogre ici ici

an ogre that ate our children ici ici

160 The ogre would say;

These children of yours sing and say they shall kill an ogre

The children would say;

Mother we don't sing like that

165 We sing;

> I shall sharpen a knife ici ici

> A knife for killing a man ici ici

> A man who ate our Giceru ici ici

170 Now, there was a goat called Giceru. The boys would lift the spear to see if they had enough strength.

Now, they cut the ogre into pieces. The ogre told them that the children were in the small toe. Now, it was slashed and the children came out and
175 as they came out they would say "don't cut me I am here", Now the ogre died and they lived happily with their children and their goats. (From Kabira and Mutahi, 1988:55-59).

13.   THE SQUIRREL

[By Kabebe]

5   Once there was a man who had his own goats. He went to graze them.

Now where he went to graze them there was a garden which used to be

cultivated by the squirrel.

Now, when he went to graze goats, they went to the garden belonging to

10   the Squirrel. Now, the Squirrel came and chased the goats away from the

garden and asked the man: "Why have you let the goats into my garden?"

The owner of the goats did not argue, he said: "It is true, Squirrel. But

now what shall we do?" The Squirrel said to him: "Now, you will have to

15   pay me." The owner of the goats said, "I agree completely. Now say

whatever you wish and ask whatever you will." All right.

The owner of the goats surveyed his goats. He got one and gave it to the

Squirrel to pay back the damage done by the goats. Now the Squirrel

20   refused the goat that he was given. He said he did not want it. the goat

was let free and it went back to the others. The owner of the goats went and got another.

The Squirrel refused to accept it.

25 Hi! [The narrator exclaims]

"What is it, Squirrel? You have refused every goat that I have given you. What do you want?

30 He went and got another goat. He would go and get a big one, then a small one, he would let that go and then get another one of a different type.

Now, after all this time, he had taken from his herd four goats and brought
35 them to the Squirrel, and each time the Squirrel had rejected them. so he told the Squirrel that he wasn't going to choose any other goat for him.

"Now, do this. Even if you will take the goat that leads all the other goats, go and make your choice. I shall stand here because I have to pay back
40 the damage done by my goats. I shall have to pay you even if it means giving you the goat that leads all the other goats." The goat that leads

other goats is the most beautiful and most healthy of all the goats. It is the pleasure of the owner of the home.

45 Now, the Squirrel did not take the goat that led the rest. Instead, he took the most miserable-looking goat that he could find. This was a goat that could not even walk. Even the owner couldn't see its value. Now the man said to the Squirrel, laughing: "Son Squirrel, we are friends. You are not even being paid back. Whatever I was thinking about you, I have stopped.

50 Now what kind of goat is that which you have chosen? Let it go and give me another chance to give you a better goat. Let it go!"

The Squirrel told him: "No. This is the one I have chosen."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

55

The Squirrel went away. The owner of the goats gathered his goats and went away, saying: "The Squirrel did not charge me. I just do not understand what he is doing. I don't understand."

60 The Squirrel went and locked his goat in a pen. He fed it and fed it. He fed it for a very long time. He fed it very, very well. The owner of the goat

never even once thought about that goat. He had a lot of goats, so what was that one to him?

65 Now, the Squirrel decided to slaughter his goat. He decided he would look for the wild animals so that they would help him slaughter this goat. But not all of them, only those with whom he was friendly. The way you would call somebody who is a friend of yours or who would treat you well.

70 Now, the Squirrel went to look for somebody who would help him slaughter his goat. He wanted to do this because the goat had grown very fat and it looked delicious. The Squirrel went and met a hyena. He said to him: "My son, Hyena, when you are slaughtering a goat, what do you say?" The hyena said: "Uuuuu!"

75 The Squirrel said, "Go, go away completely, go away my son, Hyena, go, go away."

The Squirrel then met the jackal. He said to him: "My son, Jackal, when you are slaughtering a goat, what do you say?" He said, "Hwe! Hwe! 80 Hwe!" The Squirrel said to him: "Go, go away, go, go, I don't want to see you." At this time, the Squirrel had hidden the goat, so nobody would see it. He was just looking for somebody to help him slaughter it.

At last, he met the leopard. He said to him: "My son, Leopard, when you are slaughtering a goat, what do you say?" Now you know the leopard is a very, very clever animal. He is extremely clever. The leopard whistled very beautifully. He made a very beautiful whistle. [Narrator imitates the whistle.] Then the leopard showed the Squirrel its nails. The Squirrel now believed completely that he had found a companion to slaughter the goat. He was delighted with himself. And, you know, they were sort of friends. Long ago, they used to be close friends. Now, you will hear how this friendship died.

Now, they went to slaughter. Now, when a leopard gets a goat, the first thing that he does is to drink the goat's blood. So when the leopard got the goat, it strangled it. It drank the goat's blood: they couldn't get black pudding. Now the Squirrel got angry. He didn't show that he was angry because he was afraid of the leopard. You all know that the leopard is very brave and can do almost anything.

Now when they had finished slaughtering the goat, and as you can imagine the leopard now felt like a chief, the Squirrel was sent to get the fire by the leopard. The Squirrel went to get the fire. The Squirrel is also a very, very cunning person. So when he went, he did not reach the place

where the fire was. He covered himself with soil, came back, found the leopard and said: "I went to get the fire, and they threw soil at me, and chased me away." He was told by the leopard: "Squirrel, what's wrong? Go to another place and bring me fire."

Again, when the Squirrel went to another place, he covered himself with ashes and came and told the leopard: "I did not bring fire. I went to that place, and the owners of the house covered me with ashes." But these were all lies. He was the one who had covered himself with ashes. Now the two struggled a lot, and as you can imagine, the leopard did not want to leave because there was meat. Now, the leopard got angry at last. He said to the Squirrel: "Stay here while I go to get the fire."

The leopard hurried. He went for the fire. He brought the fire. The leopard arrived where the meat had been. It neither found the meat nor the Squirrel. It didn't even find the skin. The Squirrel had taken all the meat and climbed a tree. He had gone to the very top of the tree. So the leopard searched and searched. Hi! [The narrator exclaims.] The leopard couldn't find the meat and couldn't find the Squirrel. The leopard dropped the fire and asked: "Why should Squirrel make me to do all this useless

work? He made me slaughter the goat, and did not even leave me a leg or

125   anything else."

So the leopard complained very very much. He was very very angry

because of all the things that the Squirrel had done. He told himself: "The

time that he asked me to go and get fire, he wanted to do that to me. Now

130   I have brought the fire, but there is no meat. Everything has gone to the

Squirrel."

Now as the leopard stood there, a drop of blood fell on his head. He took

it and tasted it. The leopard looked up in the direction from which the drop

135   of blood had come, and then saw the Squirrel on top of the tree. He was

getting very fed up. Now, you know the Squirrel had climbed the tree

because it was a very small animal, and it is also very light. The leopard

could not go so far up. It felt that if it went up, it could fall, break its bones

and die.

140

So the leopard said, "Squirrel, is that what you have decided?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Yes"

145   "Give me at least the head"

"May it head you."

"At least the foot."

"May it foot you."

"At least the chest."

150   "May it chest you."

"At least the liver."

"May it liver you."

Hi! [Exclaims the narrator.]

"At least the lungs"

155   "May it lung you"

"At least the head."

"May it head you."

"At least the leg."

Hi! Now, the leopard asked him: "My son, Squirrel, is that what you have
160   decided?"

"Really?"

"Yes."

"I shall now give you a warning," said the leopard. "We shall agree that all
165   the wells are mine. If ever you come to a well or a river, I shall kill you and

eat you up. I shall finish you up, body and soul. The Squirrel said to the leopard: "I shall drink my father's urine."

"What about when that is finished?"

"I shall drink my own urine. Go! I shall be drinking my own urine."

170 Haya.

The leopard said it was all right: "And now I am gone."

The leopard went and met all the wild animals. He made them the guards of all his rivers. He told them all to be drinking water, but, "whenever you see Squirrel, get hold of him until I come."

175 "All right." That was decided.

Now, the Squirrel decided to use his brains. You know, no living being can go without water. Even wild animals drink water. So does the Squirrel. He decided: "Now, everytime I am going to drink water, I shall disguise

180 myself.

I know the leopard has kept near drinking places the other animals as guards, and I shall be caught, and if I am caught I shall face problems. I shall be wearing leaves, I shall change my dressing everyday. At other times, I shall wear leaves of different type. Whenever the animals see me,

185 they are looking for the Squirrel, and since I shall not look like the Squirrel, they will never catch me."

All the different types of animals were told to be guards, and each was given a number of hours: "anyone who sees the squirrel must get him", 190 they were told.

Now it would not be so difficult to catch the Squirrel because it was so small. Now, the Squirrel decided to tie leaves around itself. After it had done that, it went and drank some water.

195

The leopard would go to the well and ask: "Whom did you see?" "A person like such and such." It happened like that very often. Everyday, the leopard would come and ask who had been seen, and everyday it was a different type of animal. The Squirrel became much more cunning than 200 all the other wild animals. Now the leopard decided that the Squirrel should not be cleverer than him. He had to catch him. The leopard then went to the river, and when he went to the river, the Squirrel came dressed up with all kinds of leaves. And so the leopard caught him. He caught him with his own hands. He was nicely caught. He asked the Squirrel, "My 205 son, Squirrel, where are you now?"

The Squirrel said to him" "Let me go, my son, Leopard, let me go."

He tried to plead with the leopard, he pleaded and pleaded, but to no avail. He apologised and repented, the kind of repentance that one does before

210 death. The leopard would not be persuaded to let him go. Squirrel decided that his home and the locust's home were one and the same; he had no chance of escaping. There was no alternative, so he kept quiet.

Now the leopard looked for ropes. He tied the Squirrel very, very tightly,

215 very tightly. He tied the ropes around him. He tied the Squirrel in the way you tie something tightly so that you can leave it and go; and it won't be able to do anything. The squirrel's strength was finished.

The Squirrel felt defeated. At last, the leopard took the Squirrel, tied as he

220 was, and brought it to his mother.

The leopard said to his mother: "Mother, this little thing I have tied, make sure you don'tuntie it. Let it boil. When it is boiled, keep it for me.""
"All right"

225 So the leopard went and left the Squirrel there. And he said to his mother, "Mother, [*raised voice*] make sure you don't untie it. Don't even pinch it, don't do anything to it. Just put it into the pot as it is. When the water boils, let it cook completely."

"Alright"

230

Now, the mother of the leopard asked: "Now this little thing that I was told not to untie, yet it was brought to me, why should I not untie it? Now, I shall untie it. I want to see what is inside. How can he bring me this thing and tell me not to untie it?"

235

Now, the mother of the leopard untied the Squirrel. The Squirrel, because they were just the two of them, got hold of the mother of the leopard and tied her up, exactly the same way he himself had been tied up, and then put her on the fire and cooked her exactly the same way he, the Squirrel, would have been cooked. He had heard the directions that the leopard had given.

240

Now when the mother of the leopard was well cooked, the Squirrel took her and put her where he, the Squirrel, should have been. He put her on the itara.[§§] The Squirrel was not afraid. He didn't even feel as if he had done anything. He knew he had his revenge on the leopard. The Squirrel then went to the leopard's mother's bed. He slept the way the leopard's mother had slept. Just then, the leopard came. He asked: "Mother,

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§§ Itara-A structure build inside a house directly above the fire, used for storing firewood.

where is that at this thing, it felt that the thing seemed to be bigger than the

250   original. So, at last, he asked his mother: "Mother, is this the same thing

that I gave you?"The squirrel answered, as if he was the leopard's mother,

and said: "Oh yes, I am here, take your little thing. I kept it up there."

"Why, come and give it to me," he said. "No, I have a headache,Uu,Uu."

255   Now when the leopard took the thing, it ate it up thinking that it was eating

the squirrel, but in fact it was eating its own mother. Every time it looked at

this thing, it felt that the thing seemed to be bigger than the original. So, at

last, he asked his mother: "Mother, is this the same thing that I gave you?

260   Now you know that I don't eat these things you bring. Don't you know that

everything swells up when boiled? It has swollen up."

"Is that so?"

"Yes"

265   The leopard continued to eat. It talked as it ate, because it was still

doubtful: "This little animal is not the one that I brought." The leopard

doubted all the time it was eating. Now, when the leopard finished eating

and was about to go out, the Squirrel jumped out of bed, went up, and

started teasing him, saying: "Oh, leopard who eats his mother, oh, leopard

270 who eats his mother, oh, leopard who eats his mother!" The leopard got

very angry. It tried to catch the Squirrel but all in vain. The Squirrel is a

very small and thin animal. It can climb trees very quickly and can go very

far. Now the leopard got very, very angry and the Squirrel did his best to

annoy and frustrate him: "Leopard who eats his mother. Ii, leopard who

275 eats his mother. Ii, leopard who eats his own mother. Ii, leopard has

eaten his mother thinking he is eating the Squirrel!"

Now, the leopard was extremely angry. He felt very, very bad because the

Squirrel was all out to frustrate him. The leopard could not understand

280 how all this had happened. He could not understand how it came to be

that he ate his own mother.

Now, the squirrel knew what he was doing. The leopard, after seeing all

that had taken place, decided to make a final decision. He said to himself:

285 "If it is me who has eaten my mother, and I had no intention of eating my

mother, and now my mother is no longer there, I shall hang myself." So

the leopard hanged himself.

Now the leopard had a lot of property. He had goats and everything else
290 because, as you know, the leopard can look after its property well. It is not
like the Squirrel.

The leopard hanged himself and died. The squirrel then went and
occupied the home of the leopard and all the leopard's property became
295 his.

Now the Squirrel put the leopard's body outside the homestead, so that
when they hyenas came, they would see it and run away. They would
think that the leopard was alive. Now the squirrel decided to slaughter the
300 fattest goat and roast it. Now, when the hyenas were hit by the smell of
the roasted meat, they wanted to come. But because this was leopard's
home, the hyenas were scared stiff.

One day, the Squirrel said to the hyenas: "Now be careful because if you
305 come near this home, the leopard will catch you, so you better go."

At one time, one of the hyena was cheated by the Squirrel. He was told
"Come this evening and I shall give you some meat." It was given some
meat by the Squirrel. Now, after it was given some meat, it was asked to

310 come at night. It hid among the goats. At night, this hyena was told by the Squirrel, "When you feel somebody touching your buttock don't say anything because the leopard goes around to feel the weight of his goats and to see if they are healthy. It does this by feeling their bottom".

315 Now, the Squirrel made a rope. He tied the hyena to the dead leopard. And this was happening at night and the hyena couldn't say anything because it had been told not to say anything. Now in the dead of night, the hyena heard a voice: "My son, hyena, who told you to come here? Come outside."

320 Every time it looked back, the hyena saw the leopard after him.

Now this hyena ran very fast, and every time it looked back, it saw the leopard after it. Every time it looked back, it saw the leopard behind him. It ran away and when it reached a big hole, the rope was cut and the

325 hyena fell into the hole. Now, this hyena died inside the hole because of fear. It thought all the time that the leopard was alive, but it had been cheated by the Squirrel. The story ends there. (From Kabira, 1983:59-65).

14.   THE TRIBAL ORIGIN

According to the tribal legend, we are told that in the beginning of things, when mankind started to populate the earth, the man Gikuyu, the founder
5   of the tribe, was called by the Mogai (the Divider of the Universe), and was given as his share the land with ravines, the rivers, the forests, the game and all the gifts that the Lord of nature (Mogai) bestowed on mankind. At the same time Mogai made a big mountain which he called Kere-Nyaga (Mount Kenya) as his resting-place when on inspection tour, and as a sign
10   of his wonders. He then took the man Gikuyu to the top of the mountain of mystery, and showed him the beauty of the country that Mogai had given him. While still on the top of the mountain, the Mogai pointed out to the Gikuyu a spot full of fig trees (mikoyo), right in the centre of the country. After the Mogai had shown the Gikuyu the panorama of the wonderful land
15   he had been given, he commanded him to descend and establish his homestead on the selected place which he named Mokorwe wa Gathanga. Before they parted, Mogai told Gikuyu that, whenever he was in need, he should make a sacrifice and raise his hands towards Kere-Nyaga (the mountain of mystery), and the Lord of Nature will come to his assistance.

20

Gikuyu did as was commanded by the Mogai, and when he reached the spot, he found that the Mogai had provided him with a beautiful wife whom Gikuyu named Moombi (creater or moulder). Both lived happily, and had nine daughters and no sons.

25

Gikuyu was very disturbed at not having a male heir. In his despair he called upon the Mogai to advise him on the situation. He responded quickly and told Gikuyu not to be perturbed, but to have patience and everything would be done according to his wish. *He then commanded him,*

30 *saying: "Go and take one lamb and one kid from your flock. Kill them under the big fig tree (mokoyo) near your homestead. Pour the blood and the fat of the two animals on the trunk of the tree. Then you and your family make a big fire under the tree and burn the meat as a sacrifice to me, your benefactor.* When you have done this, take home your wife and

35 daughters. After that go back to the sacred tree, and there you will find nine handsome young men who are willing to marry your daughters under any condition that will please you and your family."

Gikuyu did as he was directed by the Mogai or Ngai, and so it happened

40 that when Gikuyu returned to the sacred tree, there he found the promised nine young men who greeted him warmly. For a few moments he could

not utter a word, for he was overwhelmed with joy. When he had recovered from his emotional excitement, he took the nine youths to his homestead and introduced them to his family.

45

The strangers were entertained and hospitably treated according to the social custom. A ram was killed and millet gruel prepared for their food. While this was being made ready, the youths were taken to a stream nearby to wash their tired limbs. After this, they had had their meal, and

50 conversed merrily with the family and then went to bed.

Early the next morning Gikuyu rose and woke the young men to have their morning meal with him. When they finished eating, the question of marriage was discussed. Gikuyu told the young men that if they wished to

55 marry his daughters he could give his consent only if they agreed to live in his homestead under a matriarchal system.

The young men agreed to this condition, for they could not resist the beauty of the Gikuyu daughters, nor the kindness which the family had

60 showed them. This pleased the parents, for they knew that their lack of sons was now going to be recompensed. The daughters, too, were pleased to have male companions, and after a short time all of them were

married, and soon established their own family sets. These were joined together under the name of Mbari ya Moombi, i.e. Moombi's family group, in honour of their mother Moombi.

65

The nine small families continued to live together, with their parents (Gikuyu and Moombi) acting as the heads of the Mbari ya Moombi. As time went on, each family increased rapidly, and Gikuyu and Moombi had many grand and great-grand children. When Gikuyu and Moombi died, their daughters inherited their movable and immovable property which they shared equally among them.

70

During the time of mourning for the death of their parents they continued to live as one family group as before. But as the number of members of each individual family group multiplied, it was found impossible to live together and to follow the system of classificatory nomenclature without forming more family sets and clans.

75

It was then decided that each of the nine daughters should call together all her descendants and form one clan under her own name. Thus the nine principal Gikuyu *meherega* clans were founded. The names of the main clans are

80

(1) Acheera, (2) Agachiko, (3) Airimo, (4)Amboi, (5) Angare

85 (6) Anjiro (7) Angoi (8) Ethaga,(9) Aitherando.

Besides these there are others which are more or less variations of the original ones.

After the system of kinship was extended from Mbari ya Moombi to several 90 mbaris and meherega, it was then thought necessary to bring all these groups under one strong bond of kinship, in which they could act in solidarity and regard one another as members of one big family.

This large group was then formed and given the ancestral collective name 95 of Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi, namely children or people of Moombi or Moombi' tribe. In this, women continued to be the heads of their family groups and clans for some generations. But somehow the system changed from matriarchal to patriarchal.

100 *It is said that while holding superior position in the community, the women became domineering and ruthless fighters. They also practiced polyandry. And, through sexual jealousy, many men were put to death for committing adultery or other minor offences. Besides the capital punishment, the men were subjected to all kinds of humiliation and injustice.*

105 *Men were indignant at the way in which the women treated them, and in*

their indignation they planned to revolt against the ruthless women's

administration of justice. But as the women were physically stronger than

the men of that time, and also better fighters, it was decided that the best

time for a successful revolt would be during the time when the majority of

110 *women, especially their leaders, were in pregnancy.*

The decision was hailed by the men who were very anxious to overthrow

the rule of the opposite sex. At once the men held a secret meeting in

which they arranged a suitable date to execute their plan. On the day

115 *appointed to carry out the initial stage of the revolt, the men started to act*

enthusiastically. They embarked on a campaign to induce the women

leaders and a majority of their brave followers to have sexual intercourse

with them. The women were unfortunately deceived by the flattery of the

men, and blindly agreed to their inducements without knowing the wicked

120 *plan the men had made to overthrow the women's rule.*

The men, after completing the first act, quietly waited for the result. After

six moons had elapsed the men then saw clearly that their plan had

materialised. At once they organised into groups and finally carried out the

125 *revolt without much resistance. For the brave women were almost*

paralysed by the condition in which they were. The men triumphed, took over the leadership in the community and became the heads of their families instead of the women. Immediately steps were taken to abolish the system of polyandry and to establish the system of polygamy.

130

The men also decided to change the original name of the tribe as well as the names of clans which were given under the matriarchal system, to new ones under the patriarchal system. They succeeded in changing the name of the tribe from Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi to Rorere rwa Gikuyu (i.e.

135 *Gikuyu nation or the Children of Gikuyu). But when it came to the changing of the clan names, the women were very infuriated and strongly decided against the change which they looked upon as a sign of ingratitude on the part of the men. The women frankly told the men that if they dared to eliminate the names which stood as a recognition that women were the*

140 *original founders of the clan system, the women would refuse to bear any more children. And to start with, they would kill all the male children who were born as a result of the treacherous plan of the revolt.*

The men were very much afraid of the women's strong decision, and in

145 order to avoid the conflict, they allowed the original names of the clans to remain unchanged. And the nine main clans in the Gikuyu tribe are still

known under the names of the nine Gikuyu daughters who were the founders of the Gikuyu clan system. (From Kenyatta, 1930:3-8).

15. WACICI

[By Kabebe]

A long time ago there was a very beautiful girl. This girl's name was Wacici. She had an extremely beautiful gap between her front teeth.

5 Now, Wacici used to go visiting the neighbours with other girls of the neighbourhood in the land of the Agikuyu. I don't know when this was, because I am only telling you a story.

Now, Wacici was very beautiful and had a beautiful njarumi[†††]. The other

10 girls became very jealous of Wacici. It was not men that were jealous of her, it was the girls, and this was only because of her beauty.

Now, they did this because those girls were considering what to do with Wacici because any time they went anywhere, every young man admired

15 Wacici. She was the only one among the girls that the young men considered to be very beautiful.

One day when they had gone on a visit, they secretly decided that Wacici should be thrown into an anthole. They saw a tunnel dug by an ant bear.

[†††] Njarumi-A gap between the upper front teeth.

20   They secretely decided to throw her inside this tunnel. They lifted up Wacici

And threw her in. The tunnel was so deep that Wacici could not get out.

Even if she wanted to, she couldn't get out because this tunnel was very,

very deep.Now because the girls did not bury her, she was thrown in,

25   Wacici could not come but she did not die.

Wacici had a little brother at home who loved her very, very much. He loved

her very, very much. If Wacici was late coming home, this boy would not

30   go to sleep even if he was sleepy. He had a song that he used to sing for Wacici.

Now, when this boy missed Wacici at home, he cried very, very much

because he missed her for a number of days. For all the days she was in

35   the ant-bear hole, he missed her very, very much. This boy used to cry

even when he was the one who was looking after the goats. When he was

grazing, he had a song that he would sing for Wacici. He used to sing this

song when he was grazing.

40   He walked about singing, singing. He went near the tunnel, but he did not

know where he was, he just felt tired and so sat down. He sang this song:

Our Wacici, ituhu, ituhu

Beautiful gap between your teeth

45   We declare it beautiful, ituhu, ituhu

Our Wacici, ituhu ituhu, ituhu,

Beautiful gap between your teeth, ituhu, ituhu, ituhu, ituhu,

ituhu.

50   Now, this boy did not know that it was in this ant-bear hole that Wacici had

been thrown. He was just singing the song that he used to sing for his

sister. Everybody in the whole land knew that this boy used to sing for this

girl. Now, this was the tunnel into which Wacici had been thrown. But he

did not know and nobody had told him. This was the secret of the girls

55   because if anybody had known, it would have been a serious matter, what

they had done to Wacici amounted to killing her. They had even thrown

her upside down. They did not even know whether she had died. By

God's luck, she did not die, but those who had thrown her into the tunnel

thought she had died.

60

Wacici heard the song as if it was coming from a very long distance. Since

the opening of the tunnel was not closed, she heard the tune of the song.

She said in her heart: "That's the boy that I love very much." So Wacici

sang the same song. She sang for that boy. The boy heard Wacici. But

65   the way Wacici sang, I don't know because she was inside the tunnel, but

the boy knew what they used to sing to each other.

Haya.

The boy wondered whether that sound had come from above, or from

70   underneath, or where did it come from? He wondered who had sang that

song like Wacici. He didn't think about the ant-bear hole. Wacici

continued singing that song, but the boy could not hear very clearly. He

went near the ant-bear hole and listened. He heard the sound coming out

of the ant-bear hole clearly.

75

Now you know that a boy can go down a tunnel. This boy decided that he

would enter the ant-bear hole. He went right inside until he began to see

some shady thing that was speaking. He went down the tunnel because of

the affection he had for Wacici. He decided that even if there were

80   animals inside the ant-bear hole that would eat him, he would get Wacici.

Now this boy went and when he looked at her, he saw that this was

Wacici. And they talked. So this boy left the ant-bear hole with a lot of joy. He ran very quickly until he reached home.

85 When the boy gave the news of Wacici's whereabouts, some people thought that this boy had gone mad. Probably there was no such thing in the ant-bear hole, but beer is not refused before it is tasted. He went. The people followed the boy. They all reached the ant-bear hole. When they reached the tunnel, the adults went down the ant-bear hole: a lot of

90 neighbours. When they were inside, they found that the girl was there. When they found that she was there, they asked for a leather strap. They tied her with a leather strap and pulled her out.

Wacici had not stayed for very many days in the tunnel. She hadn't stayed

95 too long to be killed by hunger or to have any other problem, but she was very shocked and fear-stricken because the tunnel was not a very good place.

Now Wacici was taken from the ant-bear hole and the elders of the land

100 discussed the action of the girls. But because the girls were also from that land, nothing could be done because, as the old men said, "a child is like any other." Also Wacici was not harmed and she wasn't dead.

Wacici grew up with her beauty. She became a woman and when she had

stayed for some time, she got married to the people of the land. (From

105   <u>Kabira 1983:50-52).</u>

16   WACU

A man had two wives. When he had two wives, he favoured one to the
other. The one who was despised was called Wacu. One day Wacu went
5   to the garden to work there. The man then was secretly holding a banquet
for the favoured wife back at home. He had put a choice morsel to roast
on the fire when a hawk swooped down and carried it away. The hawk got
scalded by the hot morsel and dropped it coincidentally in Wacu's garden.
Thus she got a share of what she was being denied and thus the Gikuyu
10   say "Giakorire Wacu Mugunda" (The food found Wacu in the garden.
(From Miruka ;1984).

17.WAGACIARI[‡‡‡]

Some time ago there was a man who had his own wife. And when he had his own wife, it happened that she got pregnant. And when the pregnancy was at its late stage, you know the way a man sits and thinks about a lot of

5 things when he is at home, he decided to join other men to go and make some tools.

So they went to make some tools, spears and swords. They went where there were iganda (Smithing places). It was very far from their homes.

10 Now, when the man was away, his wife gave birth. Now, the first person to knock at the door of their home, the way people go to a home where a woman has given birth, was an ogre. When the ogre entered, it asked the woman: "Wagaciairi, have you given birth?" "Yes," answered Wagaciairi. "I shall look after you," said the ogre. The woman said to him: "Besides

15 you are here, you can look after me." The ogre took everything. It started to cook some of the things in the house, the way you can do if you go to somebody's home. Long ago, there were many granaries, one for black beans, one for millet, everything. We shall not count everything. Everything was there. And the owner of the house was a man who had

20 land, and everything to give to his people.

[‡‡‡] Wagaciairi-From muciairi-meaning one who has just given birth.

Now, the Irimu did this whenever it prepared some food: it would pretend that it wanted to give it to Wagaciairi, but if she tried to take the food, it would snatch it back and say: "Wagaciairi, take this little food. If you

25 refuse, I shall eat it." It would eat it.

The woman became very, very thin. She lost all her strength. She looked like a sick person. She got very worried and wondered where this thing came from, this thing of having an ogre in her home.

30

Now, this woman used to do this: because this Irimu had to go out sometimes, she would lick the dishes or she would eat any little food that was left. When she ate these remains, the Irimu would come and harass her angrily, and say to her" "Wagaciairi, who ate the food that was here?"

35 It would scald her a lot.

The woman used to be in great danger when she went to sleep, because this Irimu had given her a lot of trouble. It had taken over her home completely. There was nothing she could do. At last she felt that in the

40 end the Irimu would end up by eating her.

Now, this woman's strength and her ability to think came to an end. Sorrow entered and settled in her heart. She had castor beans which were spread to dry outside. A dove came to eat them. She chased it

45 away and said: "Go away you hopeless thing, why do you eat my castor beans? If I sent you to somebody, would you go, you hopeless thing?"

Even as she spoke, she did not expect the dove to speak because doves don't speak. It is as if God had given it this power.

50

The dove talked to her and said: "What do you want?"

She said: "I am in deep trouble."

It asked her: "What trouble?"

55 She said to the dove: "Now, I gave birth and into this house of mine came an Irimu. Now I don't eat. And when my liver hurts, I lick the calabashes or take the little bits of food that remain. And I can only eat this when the ogre is away, and even now we can talk only because it is not here. This ogre has given me a lot of trouble."

60 The dove said to her: "What do you want me to do?"

She replied: "I want you to do this" I shall send you because you have wings, you go all over the flat land and fly over it. I do not know whether

where you go, you will find my husband or other blacksmiths, so wherever you go you sing:

65   Blacksmith who smiths

Smith quickly

Your wife has given birth

Was helped by an Irimu

"Wagaciairi take this bit of food

70   If you don't want it I shall eat it.

The dove went as it had agreed with Wagaciairi. Now it went. It went to every blacksmith's place: you know, where they used to make swords and spears and all kinds of things. Now, it went and found a place where the

75 blacksmiths were working. The woman hadn't told the dove the name of the husband. It just found people working. It landed on a tree the way doves do. The blacksmiths went on working because they were not interested in the dove. Now the dove sang:

80   Blacksmith who smiths

Smith quickly

Your wife has given birth

Was helped by an Irimu

"Wagaciairi take this bit of food

85   If you don't want it I shall eat it."

The blacksmiths asked each other why this little dove had brought this non-sense here. "Let it be chased away with stones," they said. The dove was chased away with stones and it flew away. Big stones were thrown at

90   it. Big iron pieces were thrown at it. They didn't think much about it. The dove went, because if you see a person who is angry, and you are only giving him some news, you can move away, to return later.

The smiths were just interested in making their tools. The dove saw that.

95   They had returned to smith. Haya, they did not understand what the dove was telling them.

The dove returned to the same place and sang.

        Blacksmith who smiths

100   Smith quickly

        Your wife has given birth

        Was helped by an ogre

        "Wagaciairi take this bit of food

        If you don't want it I shall eat it."

105

Now the men heard. The men thought very hard. They thought, "Now this is a dove and it is singing." They talked like that. "And now it has spoken twice, it will not speak any more. Let's ask ourselves why, we are adults. We shall not stone this dove. We shall ask ourselves, we who are

110 here, who of us left his wife pregnant?"

When the man who had left his wife pregnant heard the song, he was very shocked. He had not told anybody. When you have been having a problem on your mind you become alert when somebody refers to it. He

115 told them: "I left my wife pregnant and after all those days, she must by now have a baby." He was told by the other men. "It is you who is being called. Get up and go. We shall not go with you because we do not know what is happening. Get up and go. The man took his matchet and his spear, because long ago people used to carry their weapons. He flew. He

120 went very very very quickly. He was in great sorrow. He left the place in great worry.

He went to his home and found his wife. That man cried when he saw how thin his wife had become. She had only the strength of a hen left.

125   Have you heard that he was in very great sorrow? By chance, that man

did not find the ogre at home. It had gone to collect firewood.

.

He was told everything by his wife. He understood. You heard earlier

what it had done to her. She told her husband all that had happened since

130   he left his home. That man felt very bad in his heart and he thought very

bad things. Now, he said to his wife, "All the food that is left here, take it

and eat it. Eat it all and do not leave anything. Take whatever is in the

pot, then put water in it, pour out the contents. Leave nothing. Eat, and

when the ogre comes, it will find me."

135

Now, because the woman had been with the ogre and knew him well, she

advised her husband on what to do. She said to him: I want you to do

this. Take this matter wisely. I am the one who sent the dove. I spoke

with the dove.. I do not know whether it is a miracle or what. You shall do

140   this. You

Go to itara*and wait there until it comes. When it comes you shall hear

what it will tell me, then you will get the matter straight." The man did not

argue with the wife. He climbed onto the itara and stayed there. The ogre

came just then, carrying a load of firewood. It said: "Wagaciairi who is in

145   this house. May you die with the same thunderous sound." If you let a

load of firewood the size of loads women carry fall, it makes the sound ku!

Wagaciairi said to the ogre, "May you die with the same thunderous

sound." It said to her, "Wagaciairi, why are you behaving as if those who

smith have come?"

150

It looked for porridge. "I am the one who drank it," the woman said. Hi!

They faced each other. They faced each other aggressively. The ogre

became very furious. It asked her, "Wagaciairi, how can you eat the food

I have cooked for myself?"

155

"Yes, I ate it," the woman said.

Haya. Wagaciairi is not telling the ogre that the man has come, but it is

asking her, "Wagaciairi, how come you are behaving as if those who smith

have come?"

160

"They have not come but I have done what I have done," she keeps on

replying.

The man's courage was burning him. You know when men are angry

165 they feel very, very bad. That man felt very bad. He felt that the ogre and

himself had to kill each other. Nobody could separate them. Even you, if

anybody did what the ogre had done in your home, you would be very angry.

170   Haya.

That man speared the ogre. He speared it completely, until the spear went through the body and into the ground. He came down and took his matchet. He cut the ogre into pieces, in great anger. It was cut into pieces, piece by piece.

18. THE STORY OF WANJIRU

Long ago there was famine in Gikuyu land. This famine had made the cows and goats to die. Only human beings were left and even them, it could be seen that they were not going to live much longer. Now the

5   people asked themselves "What shall we do?". It was decided that the most beautiful girl, one called Wanjiru should be sacrificed to God so that the rain could fall.

She was brought to a place where there was a very big river, she sang,

10   Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

My father said I should be lost. I should be lost

My mother said I should be lost. I should be lost

Rain fall and make this ridge green

15   Make this ridge green

She went down up to the knee, she sang:

Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

My father said I should be lost, I should be lost

20   Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

The water reached the waist, she sang:

Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

25   My father said I should be lost, I should be lost

My mother said I should be lost, I should be lost

Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

The water reached the neck, she sang:

30   Rain fall and make this ridge green

Make this ridge green

My father said I should be lost, I should be lost

My mother said I should be lost, I should be lost

Rain fall and make this ridge green

35   Make this ridge green

The head went in. Very heavy rains fell on this land. The grass grew and a lot of food grew and the people began to feel better. Now when Wanjiru went she found her people who had died before her. These people had a

40   lot of cows and goats. Now they asked her what she would like. She said she wanted cows and goats. She was given many goats and cows and then she was told to lie down in a place. When she woke up she found

that she had returned back to her people. She woke up at place where

there was a river and she had her cows and goats. Now when the people

45   saw her they rejoiced greatly

19. THE WOMAN WITH A WOUND ON HER LEG

(Muthoni Murunga)

Long, long ago, there lived a woman who had a big wound on her leg. The wound never healed and one time she told her children to go to the

5 medicine man for prescriptions for the wound.

When they went to the medicine man he told them that their mother's wound could only be healed by a hair from Irimu's* head. When they heard that they got very frightened. On their way home they wondered

10 what to do but they discovered that nobody among them was ready to go to the land of the ogres.

On getting home they lied to their mother that they were told to slaughter a goat, apply its fat on the wound and she would get well. When this was

15 done the wound grew even bigger. They decided to try a different medicine man in the hope that he would have a different prescription. But he too gave the same prescription: that their mother would be healed by a hair from Irimu's head. Everytime, because they feared marimu, would lie to their mother that they were told to slaughter a goat. The youngest

20 daughter used to feel pity on her mother but girls were not allowed to go to the medicine man. One day however, she followed her brothers there and

hid behind the hut. She heard that her mother would only be cured by a hair from the ogre's head. She rushed home and took a kiondo and hit it together with a razor under her armpit and went towards the land of

25   Marimu. She walked and walked until she reached there. Then she met the smallest of the Marimu whose name was Karithong'o. when he saw her, he asked her: "Daughter, who do you visit?" The girl said in a thin voice:"I'm a visitor of Mwengeca Who was the Irimu's hair.that is Mwengeca". Karithong'o moved to let her pass and told her, "Mwengeca is

30   ahead." Mwengeca was the only one who had the hair needed and was also the leader of the Marimu. After some time of walking she came face to face with another Irimu bigger than Karithong'o. This one asked her as the first one had done. The questioning and answering continued with the Marimu becoming bigger and bigger as she went ahead. She was

35   stopped so many times that she was beginning to get desperate, then she saw a huge forest or what seemed to be a moving forest approaching her. She shivered with fright, but she could not run away because she still remembered her mother's pain. So she persevered. On looking closely, she discovered that what she thought to be a moving forest was nothing

40   but the biggest Irimu she had met so far. When Mwengeca saw the girl he happily asked her in a voice that shook and rebounded far and wide.

"Daughter, who do you visit?"

The girl replied in an almost inaudible voice:

45

I'm a visitor of Mwengeca,

Who was the Irimu's hair

That is Mwengeca.

50 On hearing that, he stabbed the spear into the ground and asked her a

second time,

"Daughter, who do you visit?

She answered:

55 I'm a visitor of Mwengeca

Who has the Irimu's hair.

That is Mwengeca.

The ogre announced that he was Mwengeca. He sat down and told the

60 girl "First remove lice from my head then we can go on." When the girl

checked on the head she saw an antelope sleeping and said, "I cannot

see any lice except an antelope. The ogre replied "Bring I eat!" When he

was eating, the girl removed the bag and razor from her armpit cut one

hair from his head and as swiftly as she could, then returned them plus the

65 hairunder her armpit. She then continued searching and everytime she

would see an edible animal she reported it to Mwengeca who answered"

"Bring I eat." After sometime of eating he said to the girl, "Now at least I

can walk."

70 After a long time of walking they arrived at the home of Marimu.

Mwengeca opened a room and locked the frightened girl inside. While

there and alone, she looked upwards and saw very many human bones,

some of which were still dripping with blood. One bone said to the girl, "I

beseech you not to eat that meat. It is human flesh. Don't be happy

75 because they will they collect firewood early in the morning so they can

roast and eat you up. Do this, when they go: smear yourself with ashes,

so much that even your mother will find it hard to recognise you. Go away

as fast as you can if you value your life."

80 Early in the morning, after the ogres had gone in search of firewood, the

girl smeared herself with ashes then left the home of marimu, taking a

different route. She was however very frightened when after walking and

running for a long time and distance, she met the small Karithong'o. He

stopped and enquired, "Who are you that resembles Mwengeca's

85 daughter?" The girl replied in a frightened tone.

"No, this is not Mwengeca's daughter but an empty thing that lives in the

ashes."

90 Karithong'o spat at her and let her pass. The trend followed that she met

with all the Marimu asking the same question and she giving her answer in

varying tones, because the more the Marimu became bigger, the more she

got frightened.

95 Lastly she had to face Mwengeca who scrutinized her and asked, "Who

are you that resembles Mwengeca's daughter?" She was nearly

collapsing with fear while she answered, "No, this is not Mwengeca's

daughter, but an empty thing that lives in the ashes."

100 Mwengeca let her pass but after she had overcome the fear and was

planning on running Mwengeca turned to her again and repeated, "Who

are you that resembles Mwengeca's daughter?" The girl replied with all

her remaining courage, "No this is not Mwengeca's daughter, but an

empty thing that lives in the ashes."

105

The orgre spat on her after satisfying himself that she was not the girl and let her pass.

The girl ran with all her strength and she was still panting when she got

110   home. She found her mother had grown even thinner and could hardly move. The wound was big and there was a bad smell all over the house. There was no fire as the sons had deserted her because of bad smell. She removed the hair from the bag and placed it on the mother's wound. There and then the wound healed and the mother regained her good

115   health.

When Marimu got to their home they lit a huge fire. Mwengeca went to the room where the girl was supposed to be. After a fruitless search, he decided that if he told the others she was not in they would eat him in her

120   place. He dug a hole and buried himself inside. He left some fingers outside as he couldn't bury them.

Outside others started wondering what Mwengeca was doing. The smallest, Karithong'o, told him to bring out the human being so they could

125   feast. He replied that he was still in the process of untying her.

Karithong'o then said, "Well, let me come and help you untie her." He

went in the house, searched for Mwengeca and the girl and didn't find

them. Just when he was about to give up, he tripped and nearly fell. He

noticed the fingers and told Mwengeca to come out. When he came out

130   Karithong'o told him, "Give me one finger or else I shall tell on you." He

was given. "give me another or I tell on you." He was given. He

continued asking to be given parts of Mwengeca until only the stomach

and head were left. Now when Karithong'o said "give me the stomach or I

tell on you." Mwengeca replied, "If you want to call them, do so!" They

135   were called and they mauled him and that was his end.

After that they did not know what to do with the fire outside. Karithong'o

came up with the idea that they should all jump across it and whoever fell

in would be eaten. They jumped and each time one of them fell he was

140   eaten. While the others jumped through the middle Karithong'o jumped

along the sides. This went on until only Karithong'o was left. Not being

able to live alone, he started eating himself and saying "Let's eat

ourselves." He ate himself until only what looked like a log remained.

145   After a long period, a woman came looking for firewood and came across

what used to be Karithong'o and said "I have gotten myself a dry log." She

took it home and put it in the fire on one side of the fireplace. Now a child

in that family used to sit on that side of the fireplace. It so happened that

the child was never eating any food served to him for the 'log' used to say,

150 "Give me the food or I eat you up." The child ended up growing very thin.

The family took time to notice that while the log was not burning and was

growing larger, the child was becoming skinny. They burnt the house and

moved away to a distant land.

155 After many days, there grew a gourd-plant where the house once stood.

From this creeping plant, a huge gourd grew. One day a man was passing

by and could not help noticing the beautiful gourd. Since it was not in

anybody's compound, he took it home and brewed beer in it. As the beer

was fermenting he would send in children to check on it. None of the

160 children returned. When he sent his last son, the son noticed that the

gourd was shifting as if moving towards the door. The boy shouted to his

father, "Father, the gourd is moving!" The gourd replied, "Father the gourd

is moving," and swallowed the boy.

165 The father sharpened his matchet for he felt something was very wrong.

He tool also his spear and rushed to the house. Were it not for his

swiftness, he would also have been swallowed but he slashed the gourd

hurriedly. As he did so, he was careful for he could hear the cries of his children "Father. I'm here, do not slash me." All the children came out and

170   the gourd was slashed into nothingness. (Adagala and Kabira 1985)

20.WOMEN AND THEIR ANIMALS

In Gikuyu legends and stories we are told how, in the beginning of things,

the animals were divided into two sections for domestication purposes.

5   The divider, Mogai, gave one section of the animals to men and the other

to women. At this time people did not possess any iron tools, they used

wooden knives and spears. The women took to slaughtering their animals

for food and other purposes; they did this with wooden knives, and it took a

long time to kill and skin one animal. The legends go on to tell us that

10   owing to the pain inflicted on the animals through this slow process of

killing and skinning with blunt wooden knives, the animals could not stand

it much longer. One night, when the women were sleeping, the animals

gathered together and decided to run away from these cruel human

beings. *All the animals possessed by the women ran away and scattered*

15   *in the forests and plains; at the same time they selected their own chiefs*

and leaders and defended themselves from being captured by the human

beings. The lion and leopard were chosen as the defenders of jungles; the

elephant, buffalo and rhinoceros as the defenders of the forests; the

hippopotamus as the defender of rivers and lakes, and so on. From this

20   time the animals which were possessed by the women became wild

animals, and the men's animals which at that time were not used for killing, remained domesticated.

Women tried hard to get their animals back from the forests and jungles,
25 but they did not succeed; they pleaded with the Mogai to help them get their animals back, but Mogai would not listen to their petition, for he said that the women had treated their animals cruelly and therefore he had given them freedom to roam freely in the forests, plains and jungles. When the men saw the crisis which had befallen the women they held a
30 conference and decided to send a delegation to the Mogai and ask him what they should do with their animals, which were increasing by leaps and bounds. The delegates took with them a fine lamb which was fawn-coloured all over its body. They told Mogai that they wanted to sacrifice the lamb to him, but they did not like to kill and skin it with the blunt
35 wooden knives for fear of losing their herds as had happened to the women. To their request the Mogai replied: "You are wise men, for you have remembered to seek my advice. I can see that you know that I have given you these animals and I have power to take them away from you. For your faith in me I will give you good advice about how to get better
40 tools, not only for sacrifices, but also for your general use. I will make you

the masters of your animals with new tools, but I command you to share these with your unfortunate womenfolk."

45 At this juncture Mogai directed the men to a site in a riverbed and said to them: "Take sand from this site. Dry it in the sun; then make a fire and put the sand therein, and through this process you will get iron. I will give you wisdom to make better tools and you will not have to use blunt wooden tools any more." From this time the Gikuyu, following the advice of Mogai, entered into the phase of metal or iron culture.(Kenyatta: 1932)
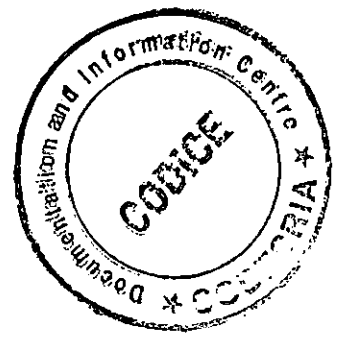
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