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BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

KIKUYU CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS.

THAHU AND ITS CONNECTION WITH CIRCUMCISION RITES.

BY C. W. HOBLEY, C.M.G.

[WITH PLATES XXVIII—XXX.]

Thahu, sometimes called *ngahu*, is the word used for a condition into which a person is believed to fall if he or she accidentally becomes the victim of certain circumstances or intentionally performs certain acts which carry with them a kind of ill luck or curse. A person who is *thahu* becomes emaciated and ill or breaks out into eruptions or boils, and if the *thahu* is not removed will probably die. In many cases this undoubtedly happens by the process of auto-suggestion, as it never occurs to the Kikuyu mind to be sceptical on a matter of this kind.

It is said that the *thahu* condition is caused by the *ngoma* or spirits of departed ancestors, but the process does not seem to have been analysed any further.

We are now in a position to realize the attitude of the Kikuyu mind towards *thahu*, and it is considered that the term curse, in its medieval sense, expresses it. Everyone will remember in the *Ingoldsby Legends* the pitiable condition of the Jackdaw of Rheims after he had been cursed by the Cardinal for stealing his ring; now this would appeal to a Kikuyu, and he would at once say the jackdaw was *thahu*. In one of the cases of *thahu*, quoted hereafter, it is possible for a person maliciously to lay a curse on a whole village by breaking a cooking pot, and in another instance, a father can lay a curse on his son for disobedience, and we thus have parallel instances from both higher and lower civilization, the Cardinal curses the jackdaw with the help of the supernatural powers with which he is invested by virtue of his sacred position, but in the lower culture it is apparently held that any person can inflict a curse by invoking the supernatural powers of the *ngoma* or spirits of the dead ancestors.

Truly the position has changed but little, but it would appear probable that as the priests had gained power they arrogated to themselves the monopoly of laying a curse upon their flock; the freedom with which people use the conventional formula of curses to this day is evidence, however, that the power to inflict a curse was formerly at the disposal of all. It is important to realize, however, that when curses were believed to be effective, and if malicious, were punishable by native law, people were more careful about the custom than they are to-day when all belief in the power of a curse has died away.

Some people use the term ceremonial uncleanness to express the meaning of *thahu* but, as far as my enquiries go, the phrase inadequately explains the Kikuyu ideas on this question. Acts which cause a person to become *thahu* are often found to be enumerated under the heading of "prohibitions" and "*tabus*."

The similarity between *thahu* and *tabu* is somewhat striking and worth considering. *Tabu* appears usually to be applied to some act or object by a man who often acts in the dual capacity of ruler and magician. There is as far as can be discovered no record of a Kikuyu *thahu* having been imposed by any known personage, but these beliefs must have originated somewhere, and it may be that they were originally imposed one by one by great medicine men in former times and have thus become incorporated in what may be termed the tribal religion.

The removal of the curse is effected by a process of lustration which, in the more serious cases, has to be done by the *mundu mugo* or medicine man, and in others by the members of the native council or *kiama*; the latter is an interesting case of the overlapping of judicial functions and those of a sacerdotal character.

The lustration ceremony is almost always accompanied by the slaughter of a sheep and anointment with the contents of the stomach, and in some cases the white diatomaceous earth called *ira* is used; the purification is called *tahika*.

In a few cases smoke is used as a purifying agent and seems to be considered effective in some more trivial cases.

The reality of this aspect of Kikuyu life and thought may easily be underestimated, but it is important that all who wish to gain a deep insight into native affairs should understand it and give the phenomenon its true value. To give the question a practical application it may safely be said that no Kikuyu native who becomes *thahu*, during the course of his employment by a white master, will rest until he has been freed of his curse or ill luck, and will probably desert with wages due to him in order to get rid of it; he cannot afford to wait, the risk is too great.

There is another curious side of the question; a Kikuyu when he is circumcised undergoes this rite either according to the old Kikuyu custom or according to Masai custom; the physical operation and result is the same, but the ceremonial varies, and for some unfathomed reason a man who is circumcised Masai fashion can do certain things or encounter certain circumstances with impunity which would, if he had been circumcised Kikuyu fashion, render him *thahu*. This is a very curious fact, and the Kikuyu themselves do not seem

to be able to give any reason for it; the matter should, however, be made the subject of further research, as my information is derived from the southern branch of the tribe, and many customs which are dropping into disuse in that area, and thus losing their inner meaning, are found to be very much better known in Kenya Province or Mwaitumi as they term it.

List of Thahu.

I will now proceed to give a list of *thahu* which I have collected with the assistance of Kinanjui and his *kiama* or council of *athuri* or elders; the question of the two classes of circumcision will be discussed later.

(1) If a small child dies and the mother carries the body away into the bush, the woman is *thahu*, and if the husband cohabits with her before she is purified, he becomes *thahu* and the woman is cleansed. The man carries the *thahu* away with him, and what is worse, may transmit it to his other wives. If the man becomes *thahu* in this way it is much more serious for him than the woman, and a *mundu mugo* or medicine man has to be called in: the woman has to be purified by three elders, *athuri ya Kiama*, and an elder woman *mwirui*. For instance, if a man has two wives and the younger had become *thahu* in this way, the senior wife would shave the head of the woman who was to be purified, and a sheep is killed, and she is smeared with *tatha* or the contents of the stomach.

This *thahu* only falls on those who have been circumcised according to Kikuyu fashion: if the man has been circumcised according to Masai custom he does not become *thahu*.

(2) If a woman who has assisted at a birth cohabits with a man before the end of the umbilical cord of the newly born child has shrivelled up and come away, and before she has ceremonially bathed herself, the infant, although not her own, will become *thahu*. To remove the curse from the child the principal elder of the village kills a sheep and smears the woman with *tatha*, the contents of the animal's stomach, and thus cleanses her.

This applies to those circumcised either according to Kikuyu or Masai fashion.

(3) If a man touches or carries a corpse he becomes *thahu* until he is cleansed, the lustration is performed by members of the local council of elders, *athuri ya Kiama*, and the final purification by a *mundu mugo* or medicine man: if he cohabits with a woman before he is cleansed she also becomes *thahu*.

(4) Stepping over a corpse—this inflicts a *thahu* of a very serious nature, the person contracts a sickness called *mangu* (possibly leprosy is meant). He is said to break out into an eruption, the fingers come off and the nose rots away. To remove this *thahu* both the elders, *athuri ya Kiama*, and the *mundu mugo* are called in, the latter procures a bone of an elephant and the bone is placed on the ground and the *athuri* form a circle round it, the patient then steps over the bone; the *mundu mugo* afterwards purifies the man in the usual way.¹

¹ The act of stepping over a corpse is probably considered a serious insult to the *ngoma*. This applies to those circumcised *à la* Kikuyu and *à la* Masai.

This *thahu* applies to both sections of the tribe, viz., those circumcised Kikuyu fashion and those circumcised Masai fashion.

(5) During a marriage ceremony five goats have to be presented to the *athuri ya Kiama* and they are killed for a feast. After they are slaughtered the eyes of the carcasses have to be taken out, if during this process an eye becomes cut or broken, the bride becomes *thahu*, and if nothing is done will not bear children; the father of the girl has to present a sheep to the *athuri*, and the girl is purified by them—this is not a matter which necessitates a medicine man. This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(6) On the occasion of a birth, the young men of the village kill a sheep for a feast called *mambura*; if the man who slaughters it cuts his finger and his blood drips on to the meat, he is *thahu* until he is purified by the *athuri ya Kiama*.

This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(7) If a man, the head of the village, attends the circumcision of a child at the hut of one of his wives, he is *thahu* until the children who were circumcised in the hut are cured; a *mundu mugo* then comes and purifies him and the woman in whose hut the children were circumcised.

This only applies to those circumcised Kikuyu fashion, for it is the custom of that section for the village head to sleep in the hut where the circumcision has taken place, and he becomes *thahu*, whereas it is the custom for a village head who was circumcised Masai fashion to sleep in another hut until the ceremonies are quite over and he thus escapes the *thahu*.

(8) If one man kills another, and comes to sleep at a village and eats with the family in a certain hut, the people with whom he has eaten become *thahu*, and the skin on which he has slept is *thahu* and may infect anyone sleeping on it. This is a case for a *mundu mugo* who is called in to purify the hut and its occupants.

If, however, the owner of the hut and his family have been circumcised Masai fashion they do not become *thahu*.

(9) If an important elder dies he is buried by his sons and they are *thahu* until purified by the *athuri ya Kiama*, they are smeared with oil and their heads are shaved during the ceremony; this is not considered a very serious *thahu*. If they have been circumcised Masai fashion they can be purified forthwith, but if they belong to the other section it is necessary for them to isolate themselves until the new moon appears.

(10) When a child is born the father kills a sheep, of which a large part is given to the woman who has assisted at the confinement, and if before he has pegged out the skin and divided the meat he is summoned away from the village on urgent business (my informant gave an example, and said: "Suppose he was arrested and taken away as a prisoner"), the infant is *thahu* and the principal elder of the village has to kill a sheep, take a strip of skin from the fore foot of this animal, and fasten it as a bracelet on the wrist of the infant to remove the ill luck.

This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(11) If children are being circumcised at a village, and the owner of the hut where the ceremony has taken place goes away to sleep at another village before he is cleansed, and, say, on the way, he meets a crowd of people, the children who were circumcised will all be *thahu*. This is a case for a *mundu mugo*.

This only applies to those circumcised Masai fashion as, by Kikuyu fashion, the man does not sleep at another village.

(12) If two men who were circumcised at the same ceremony fight and blood is spilt, they are both *thahu* until a *mundu mugo* comes and removes it. He kills the usual sheep and the *athuri* or elders put a strip of the skin of the sheep on the wrist of each of the two men. Persons who are circumcised at the same feast are called *wakini*. This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(13) If one man circumcises his children according to Masai fashion and another according to Kikuyu fashion, and the former should eat meat killed by the latter, the former will be *thahu* and *vice versa*.

(14) If a person belonging to the Mwithaga clan sleeps in the hut of a person belonging to another *rika* or clan, the people of that hut become *thahu*; this is a case for both medicine men and elders, and it applies to both sections of the tribe.

(15) If a man throws some earth at his wife, both become *thahu*; this is a case for a medicine man, and both have to be purified. This only applies to those circumcised Kikuyu fashion.

(16) If food is eaten from a cracked pot the persons eating it become *thahu* and a *mundu mugo* has to be called in. This affects both sections of the tribe.

(18) The wives of smiths are usually decorated with armlets made of twisted strips of iron called *mithiori*. If a man enters the hut of a smith, and cohabits with a woman so decorated, he becomes *thahu*. A sheep has to be killed and a supply of honey beer provided, a strip of skin from the sheep is placed on the wrist of the man, the woman, and any children she may have; this bracelet is placed on the left wrist of females, and the right wrist of a male. The purification ceremony is performed by another smith.

This *thahu* affects both sections of the tribe.

(19) Persons eating food in a smithy become *thahu*; the smith himself can purify one from this curse.

It affects both sections.

(20) If a bead worn on a warrior's neck or waist falls into food, the persons who partake of the food become *thahu*; if such a bead falls into the grain store and becomes inadvertently cooked with the food the result is the same; this only affects persons circumcised Kikuyu fashion.

(21) If a Mu-Kikuyu has had his crops protected by magical processes performed by a medicine man (to protect in this way is called *ku-roga*), and some one takes food from a garden so protected, he becomes *thahu*, and this form of *thahu* can only be removed by the medicine man who has *roga*-ed the plantation.

This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(22) If a man has connection with a woman from behind, they are both *thahu*. This is a very serious *thahu* and both the *athuri ya kiama* and a *mundu mugo* are necessary to remove it, neither the man nor the woman can eat any of the sacrificial sheep.

This applies to both sections.

(23) If a man beats his wife and draws blood the woman is *thahu*, and the man cannot sleep in her hut until she is freed from it; the elders are called in and kill a sheep. The two persons concerned are not allowed to eat any of the meat, and the skin is reserved as a fee for a *mundu mugo* who is called in to perform the formal lustration.

This affects both sections of the tribe.

(24) If a woman is carrying a baby on her back, and it slips out of the leather garment and falls to the ground it is *thahu*; the child must not be lifted from the place where it fell until a sheep has been killed on that spot, this is a case for both the elders of *kiama* and a medicine man. Both sections of the tribe are affected by this.

(25) If an elder or a woman when coming out of the hut slips and falls down on the ground he or she is *thahu*, and lies there until a few elders of *kiama* come and slaughter a sheep near by, and some blood and *tatha* (contents of the stomach of the sheep) are rubbed on the spot where the person fell. The elders then say "So and so is dead, let us bury him," and they plant a sprig of the bushes called *mukuria* and *muthakwa* on the site of the mishap. This applies to both sections.

(26) If a man marries a woman and she steals anything from a member of her father's clan, she is *thahu*, and milk will flow from her breasts without any natural cause, and any child she bears before the *thahu* is removed will be *thahu*. This is a matter for the *athuri* or elders of *kiama*; a sheep is placed on the woman's shoulders, and its throat is pinched until it micturates on the woman's body, the sheep is then killed, and the contents of the gall bladder, mixed with urine from its bladder, are poured over the leather garment of the woman, and her navel is touched with a little of the mixture. The milk that was unnaturally flowing from her breasts will then dry up, and by this sign they will know that the *thahu* is removed.

This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(27) If a man's son commits adultery with one of his father's wives, and the father is still alive, the father becomes *thahu* and not the culprit, the reason given being that the father takes the *thahu* because he begot the son. The erring woman does not return to her husband, she is not *thahu*, and can still bring food to her husband, but he does not cohabit with her, and her hut is broken down. The son who has transgressed in this way has to make peace with his father by a formal present of a big male goat, *nthengi*. This *thahu* can be removed by the *athuri ya kiama*; it is a very serious matter, and if the *thahu* is not quickly removed from the father, he will die.

It applies equally to both sections of the tribe.

(28) If a person touches menstrual blood, he or she is *thahu*; or if a man

cohabits with a woman in this condition he is *thahu*. The person who is contaminated will first take some cow dung and then red ochreous earth (*thiriga*) and plaster it on the part of the body touched by the blood; ochre is said to be used because it is the same colour as the blood; the woman from whom the contamination came is also *thahu*. The *mundu mugo* has to be called in to purify the persons.

This applies to both sections.

(29) If one woman is circumcised Masai fashion and another Kikuyu fashion, and the child of the latter is suckled by the other woman, the child becomes *thahu*: this is a case for a *mundu mugo*.

This applies to those circumcised Kikuyu fashion.

(30) If a hyæna comes into a hut at night, kills a goat and the owner kills the hyæna in the hut, the hut will be abandoned, and the whole village has to be purified by the *kiama*.

This applies to both sections of the tribe.

(31) If a hyæna defæcates inside a village, the village and its inhabitants are *thahu*, this is a case for the *kiama* to arrange; the usual sheep is killed and it must be eaten by the people of the village. If a person belonging to another village eats any of the meat, a hyæna will come and defile the village where he lives.

This applies to both sections.

(32) If a woman is carrying a gourd on her back and it falls and breaks, she is *thahu*; this is a matter for the elders of *kiama* to arrange.

(33) If a goat should come up to where people are sitting, and try to suckle a woman's breast, the woman is *thahu*, the goat has to be taken away and slaughtered at the village of the woman's father, and the elders of *kiama* are called in to purify the woman.

This applies to both sections.

(34) If a woman is milking a cow and the calf climbs up on her shoulders while she is so occupied, the calf is not allowed to suckle the cow again and is forthwith slaughtered; this is a case for the elders. The people of the village must not eat any of the meat, half is taken by the woman to her father and the other half is eaten by the elders.

This applies to both sections.

(35) When a woman has recently been confined and the discharges are still unfinished, it has sometimes happened that a cow has come along and licked the stool upon which she has been sitting. In such a case she must immediately tell her husband, if not, he will become *thahu* and die, and all the other people in the village will become *thahu* in a lesser degree and get ill. The cow has to be killed without delay by the elders and is eaten by them; no person of the village must eat of the meat unless he has been circumcised Masai fashion. Three elders in Kikuyu are said to have died from this *thahu* within recent years.

This only applies to those who have been circumcised Kikuyu fashion.

(36) If a cow is out grazing and its tail becomes twisted round a tree it is

thahu, and must be slaughtered there and then ; it is killed by the owner, and the elders receive the saddle and the young warriors the neck.

This only applies to cattle owned by persons circumcised Kikuyu fashion.

(37) There is a white bird called *nyangi* (the bird *nyangi* is in Swahili called *furakombe*) ; if one is seen to settle on a cow, and the cow is not killed, the owner of the cow will be *thahu* and die. The cow must be killed there and then and the meat divided up, the elders receive the saddle, and the neighbouring warriors the neck, no person belonging to the village must eat of the meat. The herd of cattle also need to be purified, and the owner of the village, assisted by the elders, must take a female sheep which has not borne a lamb, and a male goat ; these are slaughtered, and the intestines and bones of the animals (termed *ichua*) are placed on a fire, which is lit to the windward of the cattle kraal, and the smoke passing through the kraal and among the cattle will purify the herd. If the bird was killed among the cattle all the herd would die.

This applies to both sections.

(38) If a cow's horn comes off in a person's hand the animal is *thahu* and is slaughtered, the meat is eaten by all. This applies to both sections.

(39) If a bull or bullock leaves the herd when out grazing and comes home alone, and stands outside the village digging at the refuse heap (*kiaraini*) with its horns, it is known to be *thahu*, and is forthwith killed by the owner. This applies to both sections.

(40) If a goat is giving birth to a kid, and the head appears first and the body is not born quickly, it is said to be *thahu*, and is slaughtered by the owner. No woman must touch the meat of such an animal or she would become *thahu*, only men can eat the meat. Moreover, if a goat which is in kid should die, no woman must touch it or eat the meat, the idea probably being that her fertility might become contaminated. This applies to both sections.

(41) If a woman bears twins the first time she has children, the twins are *thahu*, and an old woman of the village, generally the midwife, stuffs grass in their mouths until they are suffocated and throws them out into the bush. If, however, a woman first bears a single child and then has twins they are not thrown out.

If a cow or a goat bears twins the first time, the same practice is observed, and a necklace of cowries is placed round the neck of the mother. This practice is observed by both sections.

(42) If the side pole of a bedstead breaks, the person lying on it is *thahu*, and a sheep must be sacrificed ; this is a matter for the *kiama* to arrange, and a bracelet called *rukwaru*, cut from the skin of the sheep, must be placed on the wrist of the person, or he or she is liable to die. This applies to both sections.

(43) A malicious person will, sometimes, out of spite or in a fit of rage, take up a cooking pot, dash it down to the ground and break it, saying the words *urokwo uwe*, "Die like this." This is a very serious matter and renders all the people of the village *thahu* ; it is necessary for the people of the village to pay as much as seven sheep to remove the *thahu*. This is naturally considered a crime according to

native law, and the offender is punished by the elders of *kiama*, who inflict a fine of seven goats. This applies to both sections.

(44) If a son seriously disobeys his father, he can be rendered *thahu* by his father rubbing ashes on his buttocks, and cursing him saying, "May you be eaten by my anus"; the son will have to take a sheep and then a male goat and a jar of honey and crave his father's forgiveness; the father slaughters the animal, and rubs his navel and his buttocks with the meat and the curse is removed. This applies to both sections.

(45) If the head of a village has a quarrel with another man, wounds him with a *simé* or sword, and blood is spilt in the village, the village becomes *thahu*, unless the offender takes his adversary and leads him round the outskirts of the village letting the blood drip on the ground as they go; the elders will then have to be called in, a sheep is killed, and they purify the village. This applies to both sections.

(46) If an idiot or maliciously-minded person picks up a skull, walks round a village with it and leaves it on the "*thomi*" or "place of conference," the village is *thahu*, and is in very serious danger. The elders are first called in and they take a sheep and drag it round the confines of the village by the same route as that taken by the person with the skull, the animal is killed and pieces of the intestines are dragged round the village; the meat of the sheep is only eaten by very old men. Six other sheep then have to be killed by the elders, and finally the medicine man has to come and purify each person in the village.

(47) If a wild animal is killed among a flock or herd of animals out grazing the beasts are *thahu*; they can be purified by the owner and the *kiama*; a sheep is killed and the bones and intestines are placed on a fire lit to windward of the infected flock or herd and the smoke cleanses them and removes the curse. *Vide* Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii, pp. 430-434, "Fire serves for purification in cases too trifling to require sacrifice." This applies to both sections.

(48) If domestic animals are attacked and stung by bees they are *thahu*; a sheep is killed and the bones and intestines are placed on a fire lit to windward of the herd and the smoke removes the curse. This applies to both sections.

(49) If a son curses his father seriously he becomes *thahu*; he has to bring a sheep, which is eaten by his father and mother, the fat is melted and all three are smeared with it; the son then has to peg out the skin of the sheep in front of his mother's hut. This applies to both sections.

(50) If a person strikes anyone who is herding cattle, etc., and draws blood the flock or herd is *thahu*; the offender must pay a sheep, which is killed by the elders, and a strip of skin (*rukwaru*) is placed on the wrist of the offender; no young person is allowed near during the ceremony. This applies to both sections.

(51) If the droppings of a kite or crow fall on a person he is *thahu*; he must shave his head and bathe at a river, and the elders kill a sheep and fasten a strip of the skin on his wrist. The skin of the sheep must not be pegged out to dry in the village where the person lives. This applies to both sections.

(52) If a woman sleeps with her leather garment inside out it is unlucky, but she is not *thahu*, the procedure is for her to spit on the garment and turn it right way. This applies to both sections, but it is much more unlucky for a woman circumcised Masai fashion.

(53) When a man dies the eldest son gives one bull or a big male goat (according to his means) to the *athuri ya kiama* for a feast, the elders then teach him his duties (*kirira*). The next step is to give the elders a male sheep (*ku-hukuria*), which must not be eaten by the children; this is to cleanse the village of the deceased. Now if a son has not made these gifts and gone through the necessary ceremonies marking his succession, he cannot participate in the sacrificial feast which has to take place at the sacred fig tree after the death of an elder (called *ku-hoya Ngai*); the principal wife of the deceased can attend the sacrifice but the other wives and their children cannot, and if they do they will become *thahu* and it is a case for a medicine man to arrange. The women and children from the neighbouring villages can go.

If a sacrifice is made at a sacred fig tree to invoke rain only, *athuri ya kiama* can attend and eat it. No woman must go near. These rules apply to both sections.

(54) If children are being circumcised at a village according to Kikuyu fashion and the head of the village leaves the village on a journey before eight days have elapsed or, according to Masai fashion, before four days have passed, he and those of his children who have been operated on become *thahu*; this is a case for the medicine man to arrange.

(55) If a child has been circumcised and, on the first occasion after the ceremony on which he leaves his village, the goats and sheep come back from grazing and enter the village before he returns, he is *thahu*. He cannot return to his village until it is removed and must sleep at a neighbouring village where some of the other boys reside who went through the ceremony with him. To remove the *thahu* his father has to kill a sheep and place a strip of skin (*rukwaru*) from the animal on his wrist.

(56) If a father picks up one of his children and places it on his back or shoulders, the father becomes *thahu* and the child will die, the result is the same whichever the sex of the child; if he carries the child in front of him there is no evil result. This is a case for a medicine man to arrange, and it applies to both sections of the tribe.

(57) If a person should be bitten by a hyæna or a dog he or she is *thahu* and a medicine man has to be called in; he kills a sheep and places a bracelet or *rukwaru* of the skin on the wrist of the patient. This applies to both sections.

(58) If a dog dies in a village it is a very serious matter, the head of the village and his people are *thahu*, and the elders are called in. The village head provides a sheep which is slaughtered, and the stomach contents (*tatha*) are sprinkled round the village, which is then ceremonially swept by the elders; the medicine man is then called in to purify all the people of what is called the *mugiro* of the dog. (*Note.* The *mugiro* means the pollution produced by the blood of the

dog having fallen on the ground of the village or the death of the dog in the village.) This only applies to the Kikuyu section of the tribe.

(59) The children and grandchildren of brothers and sisters cannot intermarry. If they do it is a very grave sin, and all children born of such marriages surely die ; the *thahu* on them cannot be purged by any ceremonial. The parents are not affected. It sometimes happens, however, that a young man unwittingly marries a cousin ; for instance, if a part of the family moves away to another locality a man might become acquainted with a girl and marry her before he discovered the relationship. In such a case the *thahu* is removable, the elders take a sheep and place it on the woman's shoulders, and it is then killed, the intestines are taken out and the elders solemnly sever them with a sharp splinter of wood from the *mukeo* bush, and they announce that they are cutting the clan "*kutinyarurira*," by which they mean that they are severing the bond of blood relationship which exists between the pair. A medicine man then comes and purifies the couple. This only applies to the Kikuyu section of the tribe.

(60) If a parent goes on a journey and while absent one of his or her sons cohabits with his wife the parents are *thahu*, and upon re-entering will be seized with illness. This is a case for the medicine man, who has to be called in to perform a lustration ceremony to purify them ; the offending son is not affected. Sprigs of the *mahoroa*, *muchatha* and *mitei* bushes are bound up together and dipped in water, and the water is sprinkled over the couple, a little is also sprinkled at the gate of the village. This only applies to those circumcised Kikuyu fashion. It is curious to note that practically the same custom is observed by the A-Kamba.

(61) If a Kikuyu native kills a man belonging to another tribe he is not *thahu* ; if he kills a man of his own tribe but of a different *rika* or clan to his own, he is not *thahu* ; if however he kills a man belonging to his own *rika* or clan he is *thahu*, and it is a very serious matter. The matter can be arranged by the elders in the following manner :—

Two trunks of the plantain or banana tree (called *miramba* in Kikuyu) are placed on the ground parallel to each other and an elder sits on each ; one of them is then lifted up by another elder, and the offender has to seat himself on the tree trunk exactly in the same place ; the other elder is then removed and the elder brother of the deceased or brother next in age to him is put in his place.

The mothers of the offender and deceased then bring to the place food made of every kind of field produce grown by the tribe, also some meat ; the usual sheep is then killed by the elders and a little of the *tatha*, or stomach contents, is then sprinkled over the food which was provided by the mothers of the two parties.

The two elders who first sat on the plantain trunks then solemnly eat a little of this food, and also administer a little to the offender and the brother of the deceased. Two gourds containing gruel made of meal are then taken, and the elders put a little of the *tatha* in each, and one gourd is sent to the village of the offender and one to that of the deceased. The remaining food is then divided among the assembly.

The following day the elders proceed to the local sacred fig tree (*mugumo*), and kill a sheep there. They deposit some of the fat, the chest bone, the intestines and the more important bones at the foot of the tree, the rest of the carcass is eaten by the elders. They say that the *ngoma*, or spirit of the deceased, will visit the tree that night in the shape of a wild cat and eat the meat, and that this offering will prevent the *ngoma* of the deceased from coming back to his village and troubling the occupants.

A medicine man then has to come and purify the murderer and the brother of the deceased.

The above ceremony is not considered legal, and cannot be performed, till the blood money has been paid.

The above case is a good example of the two stages of the removal of a more serious *thahu*, in the first place the spirits of the deceased ancestors including that of the murdered man have to be appeased, and then the personal defilement due to the spilling of blood, which falls on both the murderer and the family of the murdered man, has to be removed by a separate ceremony performed by the medicine man, and it is interesting to note that only the medicine man can remove this latter.

The above *thahu* applies to both sections of the tribe. In describing the above details, my informants explained that according to Kikuyu native law the blood money for a man was 100 sheep and goats and nine sheep and goats in addition for the elders. If, however, a man could not raise 100 goats it was the custom for him to give three daughters in payment plus the nine goats for the elders.

The Kikuyu were formerly only allowed to eat the following wild animals and birds before being circumcised :—partridges (*ngware*), pigeon (*ndutwa*), and hyrax (*mi-kami*). Many will not eat wild game throughout their lives, people follow the custom they have been brought up to observe ; those that eat wild game probably had Asi or Dorobo ancestors. A person who eats wild game does not become *thahu*. This same view is held by both sections. The repugnance to eating wild game probably had its origin in totemism, but all traces of this belief seem to be lost in S. Kikuyu.

(62) The last of the *thahu* which will be quoted is one of some importance, as it may be in primitive culture the germ of one of the beliefs which affect the life of civilized peoples. This is the ill luck which is attached to the seventh day.

A herdsman will not herd his flocks for more than six days, and on the seventh must be relieved by another man.

If a man has been on a journey and absent for six days he must not return home on the seventh day, and must observe continence on the seventh day ; sooner than return to his village on that day he will go and sleep at the house of a neighbour a short distance away. If this law is broken, serious illness is certain to supervene and a medicine man (*mundu mugo*) has to be called in to remove the curse. Both sections of the tribe are subject to it, and both male and female are affected and moreover the live stock of the offender will become sick.

This belief makes it easy for the missionaries to explain to the A-Kikuyu the force of the Christian observance of the Sabbath.

It will be well to review the results of this inquiry, and it should be noted that in a number of cases, about one-third of those enumerated, the *thahu* is brought upon the offender or brought upon a third party, by the intentional act of the offender; in other cases the person and sometimes live stock are the victims of circumstances over which there is no control.

The investigations throw a vivid light upon the complicated nature of the life-history of a Mu-Kikuyu, and it is pretty evident that a native of this tribe cannot go through life without becoming *thahu* sometime or other.

The *thahu* is, however, in nearly all cases removable by the elders and medicine men for payment, and it may therefore be urged that the belief has not much value as a moral restraint. This view cannot, however, be seriously maintained for the following reasons:—Take the case of a person who commits an act which he knows will bring *thahu*; it must be clearly understood that he never questions the liability of the principle, he goes about with the burden of the misdeed on his conscience, this worries him so much that he gradually gets thin and ill, and all this he puts down to the *thahu*. It therefore ends by his confessing to the elders and begging them to free him from the curse. It is in essence nothing more or less than the confession and absolution of the Christian Church. Then again we have to consider the publicity of *kraal* life, very little goes on which is not known to the neighbours; polygamy too increases this, a man confides in one wife, she tells another wife and so it goes through the village; if one person commits an act which inflicts *thahu* on himself or a neighbour, it will gradually leak out by some means or other, and public opinion will insist on measures being taken to remove it. No living person would ever dream that he could hope to evade the wrath of the *ngoma* or ancestral spirits. Of course occasions may arise when the commission of a prohibited act may involve a third party, and the person who committed it may preserve silence on the point, but the elders will in most cases be in possession of complete information as to the movements of every person in the neighbourhood, and moreover, the demeanour of the conscience-stricken culprit will invite suspicion, so in practice it is but rarely that the offender would not be detected.¹

It is curious to note how deeply this division of the Kikuyu tribe into the two guilds *Kikuyu* and *Masai* permeates their customs. There is for instance a ceremony called *Ku-chiaruo ringi*, the literal translation of which is “to be born

¹ *Vide* cases Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 49, 50, 54, 59, 61. The *thahu* beliefs also occur among the Kamba tribe and there go by the name of *makwa* and also *thabu*; they have not however yet been fully worked out; the Hon. C. Dundas informs me that he saw a youth who had incurred the curse through sitting on his brother-in-law's bed and that it may also be contracted through sitting on a stool belonging to certain relatives. Several cases are mentioned on p. 102 of author's work on A-Kamba and other E. A. tribes. The term *thabu* is extraordinarily similar to *tabu* and in many ways there is very little difference between *tabus* and *thabus* or *thahus*.

again," and which must be undergone by young people before they are eligible for circumcision. The occurrence of these two ceremonies, connected as they are, cannot help but strike one as being in a lower civilization the genesis of the idea of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and in fact some of the missionaries it is said do not scruple to explain the two Christian doctrines mentioned by reference to the two pagan ones, and state that with the help of this key the natives at once grasp the idea of their doctrines.

But to return to the ceremony itself—the form varies with the guild of the parents. According to the Masai fashion, about eight days after the birth of the child, be it male or female, the father of the infant kills a male sheep and takes the meat to the house of the mother, who eats it assisted by her neighbours as long as they belong to the Masai guild. At the conclusion of the feast the mother is adorned with the skin from the left fore leg and shoulder of the sheep, the piece of skin being fastened from her left wrist to left shoulder; she wears this for four days, and it is then taken off and thrown on to her bed and stays there till it disappears. The mother and child have their heads shaved on the day this ceremony takes place; it has no connection with the naming of the child which is done on the day of its birth. The ceremony of *Ku-chiaruo ringi*, according to Kikuyu fashion, is as follows in S. Kikuyu. The day after the birth a male sheep is killed and some of the fat of the sheep is cooked in a pot and given to the mother and infant to drink. It was not specifically stated that this had a direct connection with the rite referred to, but the description commenced with a mention of this. When the child reaches the age of from three to six years the father kills a male sheep, and three days later the novice is adorned with part of the skin and the skin of the big stomach.

These skins are fastened on the right shoulder of a boy or on the left shoulder of a girl. The skin used for a boy has, however, the left shoulder and leg cut out of it, and that for a girl has the right shoulder and leg cut away.

The child wears these for three days, and on the fourth day the father cohabits with the mother of the child.

There is, however, one important point, and that is that before the child is decorated with the sheep skin it has to go and lie alongside its mother on her bed and cry out like a newly born infant. Only after this ceremony has been performed is the child eligible for circumcision.

A few days after circumcision the child returns to sleep on a bed in its mother's hut, but the father has to kill a sheep before he can return, and the child has to drink some of the blood, the father also has to cohabit with the mother upon the occasion.

Owing to similarity of name it is possible that the ceremony of *Ku-chiaruo ringi* might be confused with *Ku-chiaruo kungi*, which is of widely different significance. This latter is an adoption ceremony, and is said to be similar to a Swahili rite called *ndugu Kuchanjiana*. If a person has no brothers or parents he will probably try to obtain the protection of some wealthy man and his family. If

such a man agrees to adopt him he will take a male sheep and slaughter it, and the suppliant takes another one. The elders are assembled and slaughter these sheep, and strips of the skin (*rukwaru*) from the right foot and from the chest of each sheep are tied round each person's hand, each is decorated with strips of skin from the sheep of the other party. The poor man is then considered as the son of the wealthy one, and when the occasion arises the latter pays out live stock to buy a wife for his adopted son.

Circumcision Ceremonial.

As previously mentioned, the A-Kikuyu are circumcised according to two systems, some according to one and some according to the other.

(1) *Ku-ruithia ukabi*, i.e., Masai fashion.

(2) *Ku-ruithia u Kikuyu* or *Gikuyu*, i.e., Kikuyu fashion.

The actual surgical operation is the same, but according to the Masai system the boys stay in the hut, where they sleep after the operation takes place, for four days, and then go out, shoot birds, and wear the skins of the birds on the head and neck. When the new moon appears their heads are shaved, and each one then goes to his home. The head of the village cannot sleep in the hut where the circumcised youths stay until they are well.

According to the Kikuyu system the youths stay in the hut for eight days; on the day of the operation a sheep is killed, and on the ninth day the father of the children takes them away to their homes. The head of the village sleeps in the hut where the youths stay after the operation has taken place.

Those circumcised according to Kikuyu fashion hold the feast called *Mambura* the day before the operation; the writer recently witnessed one of these gatherings, and so is able to describe it with some accuracy. It was held at a village between the Mathari and Thigiri streams, and was on the 12th day of the moon, so there does not appear to be any particular significance as to date. Several thousand people of both sexes had collected to dance and take part in the festivities; the warriors were dressed in their war paint and had their bodies smeared with red or grey paint, and in some cases were picked out with star-like patterns. The women were all in their best, and freely smeared with red ochre and oil, a large collection of elders were there, and the chief was present, as he explained, in order to keep order and prevent the young warriors from quarrelling. Over the gate of the village two long pieces of sugar-cane were fastened, and all who entered the village were supposed to pass underneath, the entrance of the village was also guarded by a bag of medicines belonging to a *mundu mugo*; these were supposed to prevent anyone coming into the village to bewitch the candidates. In the morning a big male goat, *nthengi*, was slaughtered by the elders of Kiama by strangulation, and each male candidate for circumcision had a strip of the skin fastened round his right wrist, and the same strip was also carried over the back of his hand and his second finger was passed through a slit in it. The male candidates were nude with the exception of a string of beads or so, and a necklace

made of a creeper called *ngurwa*; the girls were nude as far as clothes went, but were enveloped in strings of beads from their necks to below their waists. Much dancing took place till a little after 2 p.m., when a ceremonial meal took place. The candidates came into the village in Indian file, the girls leading the way. They were received in front of the hut, where they were to reside temporarily after the operation, by a few elders who had for some time been preparing a number of strips of a vegetable creeper, and smearing them with a black oily mixture. Each girl first came up and had a piece of the creeper fastened round her left ankle; the creeper is called *ruruera*, and each piece was smeared with medicine made from the *unu* and *wangnondu* plants mixed with castor oil. One of the elders then took a handful of porridge made of *wimbi* and *mtama* meal (eleusine grain and sorghum), and placed some on a bundle of twigs of the *mararia* bush and offered it to each candidate, the candidate bit a little piece and then spat it out on the ground, the balance was then placed in her hand and she ate it. The porridge was placed on a flat stone used for grinding corn. The boys then came along one by one and the ceremony was repeated in the same manner, but the strip of creeper was fastened on the right ankle of each boy. It was stated that the object of this portion of the ceremony was to lessen the pain suffered by the candidates during the actual operation.

In another part of the village a man was completing five stools of white wood, these were roughly hewn out of the solid, and were special seats for the elders and old women who had to perform the ceremony.

Immediately after the ceremonial meal was finished a great rush occurred, and the candidates, followed by the crowd, galloped off to a *mugumo*, fig tree, about 300 yards away; as they approached the boys threw clubs and sticks up into the tree, and then commenced to climb into the branches hacking savagely the whole time at the leaves and twigs; each youth had a light club with the head sharpened to a blunt cutting edge, and by dint of vigorous hacking gradually broke off small branches which fell down among the crowd below, and were immediately seized by the people, some of whom at once began to strip off the bark.

It was said that the bark was to bind round the heads of the candidates. The people then danced round the tree, and this ended the proceedings. The leaves of the fig tree are collected and strewn in the hut where the candidates sleep after the operation, and are said to be for the purpose of catching the blood, and possibly to prevent the hut being defiled by the blood soaking into the earthen floor. They would never throw sticks into, or gather leaves from, a sacred *mugumo* tree.

The actual operation was not seen, as it took place at dawn the following morning; it takes place in the open near the village. The bulk of the prepuce is not cut off at all, but forms an excrescence below the glans, a small piece of skin only is cut off; it is not buried but thrown away.

Mambura festivities preceding circumcision according to Masai fashion.

The festival which precedes circumcision according to the Masai fashion was also witnessed; it was originally to have been held at full moon, but bad weather caused its postponement till the 25th day of the moon, which seemed to be equally propitious.

In the morning a sheep was killed and eaten by the elders, and about noon the candidates had assembled. The people of the village and the candidates passed their time in dancing until the preparations were completed. The male candidates were smeared from head to foot with ashes, and were nude with the exception of a belt of iron chain (*munyoro*), a bead necklet (*kinyata*), an iron dancing bell (*kigamba*) on the right leg near the knee; some wore a ring of the *ngurwa* vine round their necks.

The girls were decorated from neck to waist with a load of beads as in the ceremony according to Kikuyu fashion.

The first proceeding was the decoration of each of the male candidates with a bracelet made of climbing euphorbiaceous plant called *mavimba iguru*.

The elders of Kiama and the wives of the owner of the village, who was one of the elders, sat round in a circle in the middle of the village with a quantity of tendrils of the plant on a wicker tray, *kitaruru*, in the centre; a small gourd of white diatomaceous earth, *ira*, was produced, and each person licked a little and then smeared a small portion of the white earth on his throat and navel; this was to purify himself for the ceremony; a horn cup of honey beer was then produced and each one took a sip, and then all simultaneously blew it out of their mouths in spray on to the plant; the object of this was said to be to purify or dedicate the plant to the use to which it was to be applied. The male candidates then came up one by one and a bracelet of the creeper was fastened on the right wrist of each.

After a little more dancing the male candidates were seated in a row on ox-hides spread out on the ground, a woman, the sister of the owner of the village, came along and poured first a little milk and then a little honey beer on the head of the one on the left of the line, she then smeared it over the scalp and shaved a place on the right side of his head and then passed on to the next; the shaving was merely ceremonial, as the candidates had all been shaved on the head before coming to the ceremony—the native razor, *ruenji*, was used. The milk was in a gourd and the beer in a cow horn. The male candidates then got up, and the same performance was gone through with the girls.

Shortly after this two great branches from the *matamaiyu* tree were brought to the gate of the village and held upright, one on each side of the entrance; the elders said that in the ceremonies according to Masai fashion the *matamaiyu* had the same significance as the *magumo* tree had in the Kikuyu ceremonial. The candidates came through the village dancing and singing all the time up to near the *matamaiyu* branches, and stopped a few yards away from them, still dancing

and singing. The song did not appear to have any great significance, being to the effect that from time immemorial they always had the *matamaiyu* at these festivals, and now it had come they could proceed to circumcise the candidates according to old custom.

They then all returned to the village, and the candidates were arranged in the order in which they could be circumcised on the morrow. The owner of the village divested himself of his blanket and donned an oily kaross made of goatskin from which all the hair had been scraped; his hands were carefully wiped and some *ira* (the white earth previously mentioned) was poured into the palm of his hand from a small gourd. He then commenced at the left of the line and anointed each candidate on different parts of the body with smears of the white earth; he was assisted by his principal wife and two sisters and another elder.

The boys were first touched on the tongue, and a line was then drawn down the forehead to the point of the nose, a spot was placed on the throat, the navel, the palm of each hand, and finally between the big toe and first toe.

The procedure with the girls was slightly different, first the tongue was smeared, then a horizontal line was drawn across the forehead, then the palms of the hands, the navel, and finally a band was drawn round each ankle.

After the candidates had thus been anointed, the elders took mouthfuls of honey beer out of a horn and blew it in spray over each candidate's head and shoulders. This part of the proceedings was a ceremony intended to purify the candidates from any *thahu* which might be on them, and to protect them from any *thahu*, which was possessed by an onlooker, being transferred to a candidate. The spectators "*ululued*" loudly during this operation.

It was then about 2 p.m., and nothing further of importance took place, the crowd, which had been gradually growing, however, danced on till sundown.

At nightfall I was told that each candidate received a dose of the crushed seeds of a plant called *ngaita* which acted as an aperient, and in the morning before the operation each one had to bathe in water in which an axe head had been placed to make it cold; it was however stated that if there were a large number some would not bother about this, but would bathe in the nearest stream.

The operation took place at dawn on the following morning, and was not witnessed. No firewood but that from the *matamaiyu* tree is allowed to be used in the hut where the candidates stay after the operation.

This custom of circumcision according to the two different systems applies to both sexes. Both classes dance with the oval wooden shields called *ndomi* before circumcision, and travel through the district painted with white clay in zig-zag stripes.

A man circumcised according to Masai fashion can marry a girl circumcised according to Kikuyu fashion and *vice versa*; but a medicine man and the elders have to perform a ceremony to change the girl from Kikuyu to Masai before the marriage can take place. The ceremony is said to be as follows:—a male sheep is killed and the small intestines are extracted. The medicine man and the girl

take hold of them, and the elders then cut the intestines with three pieces of wood sharpened to a knife edge and made of *mathakwa*, *mukeo*, and *mukenya* bushes. A piece of intestine is cut with each knife. The girl is then anointed with the fat of the sheep by another woman and smeared over with *tatha* (the stomach contents) mixed with water.

In the case of a marriage between a couple belonging to different guilds the man never changes; it is always the woman who relinquishes the system in which she was brought up. A man can, however, at his own wish and for reasons of his own change his guild, that is to say, a man brought up Masai fashion can change over to the Kikuyu side. It is a much simpler matter for him than for a woman; a male sheep is killed by the elders, and a medicine man then comes and puts him through the ordinary purification ceremony.

A man usually belongs to the guild of his father, that is to say, he is circumcised according to the system of his father and grandfather before him. The mark of a person circumcised Masai fashion is as follows:—a copper ring is placed in the lower lobe of each ear, and a piece of stick with an ostrich feather on it is bound on each side of the head; a band of sansevieria fibre, *ndivai*, is bound round the forehead, and on this band bird skins are fastened.

They wear these ornaments for eight days only; they also carry bows and arrows and wear sandals. After eight days they put off the ornaments and give up the bows and arrows, leaving them in the village where they were circumcised. They then have their heads shaved at the village and return home.

Those circumcised Kikuyu fashion go through none of this, but wear for two days a strip of banana fibre, *maigoia*, in the lobe of each ear. They also wear in their ears for five days after recovery a round plug of *mununga* wood whitened on the top with *ira* and a necklace of the leaves of the *mutathi* plant. This is probably a protective magic to preserve them from evil influence during their convalescence.

The marks just enumerated only apply to the male sex. With regard to girls further inquiry has elicited the following facts:—A girl whose father belongs to the Masai guild wears rings of copper on each ankle; these are called *ndogonyi*. A girl whose father belongs to the Kikuyu guild wears an anklet of iron with little rattles attached to it; this is called *nyara runga*.

If a girl who is Masai marries a man who is Kikuyu the *ndogonyi* are taken off at marriage. If a girl who is Kikuyu marries a man who is Masai she does not, however, discard the *nyara runga*.

The elaborate ceremonial of old days in connection with circumcision is now rapidly dying out in Southern Kikuyu.

Inquiries were made as to whether the bull-roarer, which is well known in Kikuyu as *kiburuti*, was used in these ceremonies, but curiously enough it appears to only survive as a child's toy, whereas in many of the neighbouring tribes that and its first cousin, the friction drum, are regularly used in initiation ceremonial.

Extinction of fire in a hut.—Though unconnected with the *thahu* beliefs as far as can be discovered, the ill luck which is associated with the extinction of fire in a hut is rather interesting to note.

If a man has several huts and the fire goes out in all of them in a single night it is extremely unlucky. He must at once summon the elders, and they kill a male sheep and sprinkle some of the stomach contents or *tatha* on each fireplace. If his nearest neighbours live some little way off he relights the fire by means of a fire stick, *mwaki ku-thegetha*, but if they live near by he begs some fire from them. When the sheep is killed they also fry the fat in a cooking pot and sprinkle some of it in the village and pray to *Ngai* (God)—“We give thee fat to drink, and beg thee not to extinguish the fire again.”

If fire goes out in the hut of a medicine man it is not necessary for him to kill a sheep like ordinary people, but he feels the ill luck all the same, for he will not travel next day, and if anyone comes to him for medicine or to be purified he will not perform the ceremony until a whole day has elapsed.

The elders who were interrogated about this were quite clear that it was God who put out the fire and not the *Ngoma* or spirits.

Miscellanea.—A curious custom was recently noticed during a journey among the Kikuyu. The dessicated carcass of a cow or ox was noticed in the branches of a tree by the roadside a little distance from a village, and it appears that if cattle are lodged at the village of a friend and one should die, the owner is informed, and he is asked to come over and see it and remove the meat. If he does not come for some reason or other the carcass is hoisted into a tree so that all may see. The object of this is that people may know that the beast was not surreptitiously killed and eaten by the people of the village, and no claim can then be lodged against them by the owner.

Occasionally in a Kikuyu village the vertebra of an ox may be seen trans-fixed on the stick which surmounts a grain hut. This is a charm to keep butterflies away from the village, as it is believed that these insects carry sickness to the goats and sheep.

PURIFICATION BY MEDICINE MAN.

KU-TAHIKIA IN KIKUYU.

Reference has been repeatedly made in this paper to purification by the medicine man, which generally concludes the ceremonies connected with the removal of *thahu*. This ceremony is the same in all cases in which it is considered necessary; it may vary a little according to the practice of a particular medicine man, but that is all.

The writer was recently present at one of these ceremonies, and the procedure was as follows :—The medicine man first received a sheep ; he then made a small incision between the hoofs of the right fore leg and rubbed a little medicine into the wound. This medicine was a powder made from the *mararia* bush and *mahunyuru*, which is the epidermis and hair of a sheep. Probably the idea underlying this was a consecration of the animal for the purpose of the ceremony. The medicine man then brought a number of sprigs of the various plants—

Mahoroa,
Murumbai,
Uruti-Emilia ?
Mukandu,
Muchatha-Emilia, *sp.*,
Matei or *Mitei*,
Ithurura, a creeping, vine-like plant.

He separated these into two bundles, and bound each at the base with the creeper *ihurura*, and they resembled two hand brushes of green leaves.

The mother of the patient or person who was to be purified then fetched about a pint of water from the stream, carrying it in a couple of banana leaves laid over each other. A small depression was scooped in the ground, and the water still in the banana leaves was deposited therein. The medicine man and the patient squatted opposite to each other. The former then put a variety of powders in the water. These were enumerated as follows :—

- (1) Powder made from the stomach contents of the tree *hyrax*.
- (2) *Ruthuku* made from the *muhokora* root.
- (3) *Umu*, a reddish powder made from the root of a thorny plant.
- (4) A powder made from the *irura* (papyrus) and the *mahoroa* plant.

He then produced the dried right black fore foot of a sheep, dipped it in the water, stirred up the contents, and placed the wetted foot in the mouth of the patient, who licked it vigorously and then expectorated the liquid on to the ground. This was repeated some twenty or thirty times, and the medicine man all the while recounted all kinds of dangers and evils in a chanting voice with a general refrain, "May you be delivered from all these." He then took one of the bundles of plants and dipped the lower end in the water. The patient licked it and expectorated as before described, the medicine man chanting the whole time.

The same procedure was then adopted with the second bundle of leaves.

The patient then stood up, the medicine man took one of the brushes, dipped it in the water, and sprinkled the patient's head and wiped the front of his body with the wetted bundle of leaves. The patient then turned round and the back of his body was similarly treated.

The patient then knelt down and washed his face with the water and then washed each foot and leg. This done, he wiped his face, feet, and legs, first with one bundle and then with the other. The patient then put his finger into the

water and pierced the banana leaf basin, and the water soaked away into the earth. The medicine man then gathered up the banana leaves and his bundle of leaves and deposited them on the village manure heap, *kiaraini*.

There was still a final stage of the proceeding, viz., the anointing with white clay, *ira*. The patient still stood in front of the medicine man, who took from a small gourd some of the white earth, and smeared it down the line of the nose, on the upper lip, under the chin, on the right and left big toe, and on the palms of both hands. He then took a little of the medicines called *irura* and *muhokora* and placed a little in the palm of each hand of the patient, who crossed his hands and, holding them in this position, alternately licked each palm. The medicine man then licked a little of the above medicine, and the ceremony was finished.

The purification ceremony cannot be performed without payment, or it is of no avail.

APPENDIX.

GENERATIONS OF THE A-KIKUYU.

In the December number of *Man*, 1908, the Hon. K. Dundas gives a list of the *Rika* or circumcision ages of the A-Kikuyu which probably goes back about 100 years or so, but this enumeration did not go sufficiently into detail, and certain important points were missed, so it has now been revised.

Four well-known elders, named Katonyo wa Munene, Karanja wa Hiti, Ithonga wa Kaithuma, and Mukuria wa Mucheru, were consulted, and the following lists are probably as reliable as any such lists, dependent as they must be on the memory of old men, can be. The first list was given me by the first two, the second list by the second two. There are slight variations, but these are almost unavoidable under the circumstances.

Morika, singular—*Rika*, plural, is the circumcision age or generation, and corresponds more or less to the *poror* among the Masai. The *Rika* called *Manjiri*, *Mamba*, *Manduti*, and *Chuma* were not recognized by either of the elders, who both commenced their count with *Chiira*, which is obviously the same as *Shiera* of Dundas' paper, possibly the further north one goes among the Kikuyu tribe the farther back will go their legends.

The following is the list beginning at the most remote point:—

VERSION I.

1. *Chiira*.
2. *Mathathi*.

3. *Endemi*.
4. *Iregi*
5. *Kiarie*
6. *Kamao* } These three, it is said, are often grouped as *Iregi*.
7. *Kinuthia*
8. *Karanja*
9. *Njuguna*
10. *Kinyanjui* } The fathers of the oldest men alive in the country belonged to these ages, and they are called *Maina*.
11. *Kathuru*
12. *Nḡnanga*
13. *Njerogi*, means the orphans, Chief Katonyo is of this *morika*.
14. *Wainaina*, means those who shivered during the circumcision ceremony.
15. *Mungai*, means swelled faces.
16. *Kitao*, refers to their eating colocasia roots after they were circumcised.
17. *Ngua ya nina*, those who wore their mothers' clothes.
18. *Mbugwa* or } Because the circumcision wounds did not heal.
- Kuchu*
19. *Mwiruri*, name of a song they sang at the ceremony that year.
20. *Mwitungu*, means smallpox.
21. *Kiambuthi*, called *Mwangi*, those of the dancing place.
22. *Kirira* or } Because fire was seen on Kenya at the time of the circumcision ceremony.
- Ngugi*
23. *Mangorio*, named after a sweet smelling tree used to decorate the youths after circumcision.
24. *Rohangha*, named after a girl who had decorated her ears before marriage.
25. *Wanyoiki*, because they came one by one to the place of circumcision.
26. *Boro*, the big stomach of a sheep.
27. *Imburu*, the poor people (there was a famine at the time).
28. *Ngoraya*.
29. *Kiniti*, from a song.
30. *Ingigi*, season of the locusts (Katonyo's son, Thuku, belongs to this generation).
31. *Mutongu* } Called *Mwangi*. { Time of the smallpox, probably about 1895.
32. *Kenjeko* } { When circumcised they went to dig potatoes in the fields.
33. *Kamande* }
34. *Wanyaregi* }
35. *Kanyuto* } Called *Mwiringhu*. This is a name given by the youths themselves to this age. They will probably be renamed }
36. *Thegengi* }
- { Time of the caterpillar plague. The wanderers. The man-eating leopards; there were several about in that year. The year of the cutting of the iron wire.

37. <i>Kariangara</i> or <i>Matiba</i>	} later by the elders when the generation is complete.	} They ate gruel made of immature maize (Thuku's son belongs to this year). The porcupines. Named after a liquid magic medicine which was sold in Kikuyu during the year. Those circumcised in 1910 belong to this <i>morika</i> , it will finish early in 1911.
38. <i>Njege</i>		
39. <i>Makio</i>		

VERSION II.

1. <i>Chiira.</i>	24. <i>Marire.</i>	
2. <i>Mathathi.</i>	25. <i>Wangigi.</i>	
3. <i>Endemi.</i>	26. <i>Ngua ya nina.</i>	
4. <i>Iregi.</i>	27. <i>Wakirutu.</i>	
5. <i>Mukuria.</i>	28. <i>Mougwa</i> or <i>Kitindiko.</i>	
6. <i>Kicharu.</i>	29. <i>Mwitongu.</i>	
7. <i>Kamao.</i>	30. <i>Mwiruri.</i>	
8. <i>Kiarie.</i>	31. <i>Uchu.</i>	
9. <i>Kimemia.</i>	32. <i>Kiambuthi.</i>	
10. <i>Kimani.</i>	33. <i>Ngugi</i> or <i>Kirira.</i>	
11. <i>Karanja.</i>	34. <i>Mangorio.</i>	
12. <i>Kinuthia.</i>	35. <i>Rohangha.</i>	
13. <i>Njuguna.</i>	36. <i>Wanyoike.</i>	
14. <i>Kinyanjui</i> or <i>Kathuru.</i>	37. <i>Kinyiti.</i>	
15. <i>Ngnanga.</i>	38. <i>Imboru.</i>	
16. <i>Njerogi.</i>	39. <i>Ingigi.</i>	
17. <i>Ubu.</i>	40. <i>Mutungu.</i>	
18. <i>Wainaina</i>	} These are often grouped as <i>Wai-</i> <i>naina.</i>	41. <i>Kenjeko.</i>
19. <i>Kangnethi</i>		42. <i>Kamande.</i>
20. <i>Kitao.</i>		
21. <i>Mungai</i>	} Often grouped as <i>Mungai.</i>	
22. <i>Injehia</i>		
23. <i>Mairanga</i>		

This brings us up to the last few years, and the elders said they had no interest in them.

The name given to the *morika* generally has some topical allusion to an event which occurred during the year and about the time of the circumcision ceremonies; these allusions of course become forgotten in course of time, and the derivations in many cases now appear senseless.

One *morika* extends over two years or four Kikuyu seasons, called *Kimera*.

The terms *Maina* and *Mwangi* as names for the *rika* of the last fifty years seem to be fixed as far as one can gather, *e.g.* :—

The Chief Katonyo's father was *Maina*.

Katonyo himself is *Mwangi*.

Katonyo's children are *Maina*.

Katonyo's grandchildren when circumcised become *Mwangi*.

His great grandchildren when circumcised become *Maina*.

So apparently every person when circumcised takes the name of the *morika* of his grandfather.

The word *morika* is used indifferently as applying to the larger group as well as to the group of a particular year. Any young men, however, who have been circumcised of recent years, and are still under the class *Mwiringhu*, would not be called *Mwangi* until the group of years was complete.

The time of the completion of a group of years is decided by the elders, but what determined the commencement of a new group was not ascertained.

These *rika* names only apply to males.

[Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, and 12 are from photographs kindly lent by Mr. A. C. Hollis.]

FIG. 1.—SUGAR CANES OVER GATE OF VILLAGE.

FIG. 2.—FOOD FOR CEREMONIAL FEAST AND MEDICINE PLANTS TO BE TIED ROUND LEGS OF CANDIDATES.

FIG. 3.—EATING CEREMONIAL FOOD.

SCENES AT "MAMBURA,"

KIKUYU CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS.

FIG. 4.—EATING CEREMONIAL FOOD

ACCORDING TO KIKUYU FASHION.

FIG. 1.—MALE CANDIDATES.

FIG. 2.—THE TWO OPERATORS.

FIG. 3.—FEMALE CANDIDATES.

FIG. 4.—WARRIORS PRESENT AT THE FEAST.

SCENES AT "MAMBURA," KIKUYU CIRCUMCISION FEAST, ACCORDING TO KIKUYU FASHION.
KIKUYU CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS.

FIG. 1.—WARRIORS AT THE FEAST, SHOWING ORNAMENTATION.

FIG. 2.—MEN CLIMBING INTO THE “MUGUMO” FIG TREE TO GATHER LEAVES.

FIG. 3.—FIG TREE FULL OF PEOPLE.

FIG. 4.—CHIEF KINARYIRI AND HIS HEADMEN AT THE FEAST.

SCENES AT “MAMBURA,” KIKUYU CIRCUMCISION FEAST, ACCORDING TO KIKUYU FASHION.

KIKUYU CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS.