

FIRST LESSONS IN KIKUYU

by

L. S. B. LEAKEY, F.B.A., M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc.



EAST AFRICAN LITERATURE BUREAU

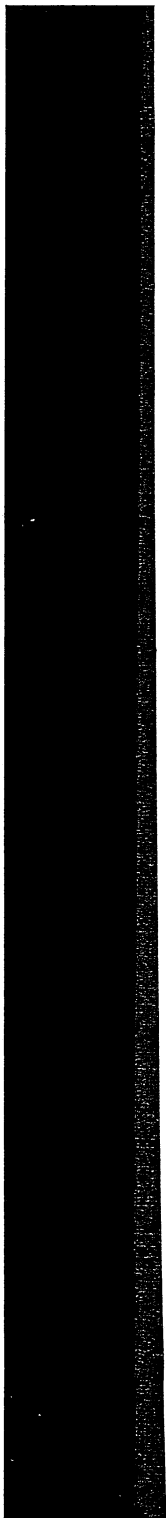


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INTRODUCTION

Kikuyu is probably one of the most archaic of the Bantu group of languages and in consequence has a grammatical structure with fewer exceptions than in most of the others. Essentially Kikuyu is written with seven vowels which are:

- a pronounced rather as the vowel sound in "hut".
- e pronounced rather as the open *e* in "hen".
- ĩ half vowel which is written as *ĩ* and pronounced as the *i* sound in "it".
- i which is pronounced like the *e* in "he".
- o pronounced like the *au* sound in "author".
- ũ pronounced like the *oo* in "good".
- u pronounced like the vowel sound in "who".

So far as the consonants are concerned they are, in the main, the same as in English, but *c* is pronounced "ch" as in Italian, or shall we say as the "ch" in "church". There is no *l* except in words imported into the Kikuyu from other languages. There is no *x* and no *z*. The symbol which is written as an *r* is, in fact, a sound midway between *r* and *l*, while the symbol written as *b* is not the English *b* but has a touch of *f*, *v* and *p* in it. Neither *f* nor *p* occur, except in imported words.

There are certain rules which govern euphonic changes: these are set out in detail in Barlow's *Kikuyu Grammar* and need not be re-iterated in detail here. For instance, certain consonants when they are preceded by another consonant followed by a vowel change their value—for example, a *k* followed by a vowel followed by another *k* becomes a *g*. In particular, the letter *n*, when it occurs before various other consonants and vowels results in clearly defined euphonic changes which Barlow has analysed in full. These may be summarised as follows:

The "N" changes and other important euphonic changes

N is an important prefix in Kikuyu both in Class III of the nouns; as an adjectival prefix in this and some other classes and as one of the forms of the personal pronoun I or me. The "N"

changes are therefore very important. N before **h, m, n, th** becomes silent and is dropped. Sometimes it is indicated in writing by an apostrophe.

n followed by **c** becomes **nj**.

n followed by **t** becomes **nd**.

n followed by **k** or **g** becomes **ng** or **ng'**.

n followed by **b** becomes **mb**.

n followed by **r+m** or **n** becomes **n**.

n followed by **r+any other letter** becomes **nd**.

n followed by a vowel becomes **nj**.

“K” changes

When a **k** is present in a syllable and the syllable is followed (even in the next word) by **c, t, th, or k**, then the first **k** becomes **g**.

Vowel combinations

a+e becomes **e**.

a+i becomes **e**.

a+o becomes **o**.

a+ũ becomes **o** (in many but not all cases).

a+u becomes **oi**.

ũ+u becomes **u**.

ĩ+i becomes **ii**.

There are a few exceptions to these vowel changes, for example **maũndũ** is NOT pronounced “mondo”, and **aũ** in **Njaũ** is not “njo”.

NG and NG'

Ng is pronounced with the **n** and the **g** both clearly enunciated.

Ng is pronounced like **ng** in “Sing”.

LESSON I

NOUNS

As in all Bantu languages, nouns are divided into a number of different classes, each class being marked by a distinctive singular and plural prefix which goes in front of the noun stem. Words which define or amplify the meaning of the noun, that is to say, words which, in a European language, we should call adjectives or pronouns, must agree with the nouns which they qualify or define and there are set rules, which will be duly outlined, as to how such words are made to agree by means of a prefix to the stem, which in turn agrees with the noun prefix, of the noun which is qualified. The only exceptions are certain humans who go into Class V but whose pronouns and adjectives behave as though they were in Class I (see page 14).

Although, in general terms, one can divide the words which qualify nouns in a Bantu language roughly into what European grammar calls adjectives and pronouns, it is essential at the outset, to realise that the words which fall roughly into these two groups are not necessarily quite the same as those which would fall respectively into adjectives and pronouns in a European language. Certain words, which, in English, we should certainly consider to be pronouns, are grouped with what we call adjectives and *vice versa*, since those European grammatical terms do not really correspond with Bantu structure.

In the Kikuyu language, as a general rule, all the nouns which occur in any one noun class are linked together by certain very definite and clearly defined rules of association, although these are not always apparent at first sight. This general statement does not, of course, apply to words imported into the language, in more recent years, which are placed haphazardly in various noun classes. As a qualification to this general rule, it must be noted that for good and sufficient reasons, such as will be indicated presently, a noun which would normally, by rule and association, fall into one class may be removed into another class.

I do not follow the class sequence set out by Barlow, but one of my own.

Class I Nouns

The first three classes of nouns in Kikuyu represent things which are considered to have a spirit and not to be purely material. The nouns which fall into these classes are divided according to the importance of the category of spirit which they are deemed to possess. Class I is the class into which nouns denoting human beings are placed, and there is no word in this class which does not denote a human being. On the other hand there are certain human beings who are, deliberately, taken out of Class I and reduced to the status of some other class. This may be for derogatory and derisive purposes, even though it be admitted that, in point of fact, the persons denoted by these words in other classes DO possess a human spirit. It is only in terms of language that they are demoted, in order to show scorn or hatred. Another reason for removing humans out of their correct class is when they have some special connection with religion, or magic, or ceremonial (see Class V) for example **ithe** father; **ma-ithe** fathers.

The noun prefixes for words in Class I are, in the singular, **mū-** and in the plural **a-**:

For example, the stem **-ndū** means "a thing" or "an object", hence **mū-ndū** and **a-ndū** are human objects or human things, that is to say, persons. But if you should put the prefix of Class IV, which denotes inanimate objects, in front of the same stem **-ndū**, you would change the meaning from a person to an inanimate object.

The following are words in common usage denoting humans which belong to Class I and which should be learned for purposes of the first Exercise:

mūndū,	pl. andū	person
mūrūme,	p. arūme	male
mūtumia,	pl. atumia	married woman
mūka,	pl. aka	female person
mūhiki,	pl. ahiki	bride
mūthuri,	pl. athuri	married man (elders)
mūirītu,	pl. airītu	initiated girl
mūanake,	pl. anake	young initiated man (not married)

mūthamaki, pl. **athamaki** ruler
mūrugi, pl. **arugi** cook

In contrast to these words denoting humans in Class I we may, at this stage, note that **kī-rimū**, *a fool*, although a human, is demoted to the class of inanimate objects. Similarly, **kūgū**, *a congenital cripple*: **gītonga**, *a miser*: **kīrīgū**, *a big girl who has reached puberty but for some reason has not been initiated*: **kihū**, *a big, uninitiated youth*, (lout).

Other humans who get taken out of Class I are put into Class III, which is occupied by lesser living things such as birds, beasts, insects and the lesser plants. The reason why some humans are, for language purposes, demoted to this class is that they are objects of pity, for example, **ngombo** *a slave*. Examples will be given when we come to Class III.

SOME ADJECTIVES

Words which would normally be called adjectives in European languages take the same prefix, in this class, as the nouns which they qualify or agree with, that is to say, **mū-** as the singular prefix before the adjective stem, and **a-** as the plural. **Mū-** changes to **mw-** if the stem starts with a vowel.

The following adjective stems should be learnt at this stage in readiness for the first Exercise.

-ega	good
-ūru	bad
-nene	big
-nyini (or nini)	small
-raya	tall, long
-kuhī	short
-erū	white, light-coloured
-irū	black, dark-cloured
-rūrū	bitter

Adjectives normally follow the nouns which they qualify, and, therefore, in view of the rule of agreement given above, a good man is **mūdū mūega** (written **mwega**) and a tall woman is **mūtumia mūraya**, while bad cooks would be **arugi aūru**. But **aūru**, in view of the standard rules of euphonic change given earlier, is pronounced and written **oru**.

It should be noted here that in the list of adjectives above, word stems were given for white or light-coloured, and black or dark-coloured, and there is only one other adjective denoting ordinary colour. This is *-tune*, which covers the reds, red-browns and oranges. This extreme paucity of stems denoting ordinary colours is compensated for by a wealth of adjectives describing variation of colour in cattle, goats and sheep, comparable to our special colours for horses, such as dun, chestnut, roan, etc. There are, strangely, no stems denoting green or blue, and to describe these colours one has to paraphrase and say "the colour of the grass" or "the colour of the sky".

NUMERALS

In European languages we treat numerals as though they were adjectives and one might, therefore, expect that in Kikuyu numerals would take an adjectival prefix when qualifying a noun but, as I said earlier, the English grammatical words, adjective and pronoun, do not really fit Bantu language structure at all.

In Kikuyu and all other Bantu languages, the numerals are treated as pronouns in so far as their prefixes are concerned. Pronouns in the strictly European grammatical sense, as well as numerals when qualifying or referring to nouns in Class I, take the prefix *ũ-* in the singular and *a-* in the plural, Note. *ũ-* becomes *w-* before a vowel.

SOME PRONOUN STEMS

At this stage the following possessive pronoun stems should be mastered:

<i>-akwa</i>	my
<i>-aku</i>	yours, thine
<i>-ake</i>	his, hers
<i>-itũ</i>	our
<i>-anyu</i>	your (plural)
<i>-ao</i>	their

Pronouns and numerals follow the nouns they qualify and thus *my married woman*, (i.e. *my wife*) would be *mũtumia ũakwa (wakwa)*: *their rulers* would be *athamaki aao*. Numerals will be dealt with in a separate lesson, but four examples of numeral stems will be given here for purposes of the first Exercise.

-mwe	1
-tatũ (-thatũ)	3
-na (or nya)	4
-tano (or thano)	5

Therefore, by our rules of agreement, *airĩtu aitũ atatũ* means *our three girls*.

EXERCISE ON LESSON I

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. your good wife | 7. his light-skinned bride |
| 2. my small cook | 8. one bad married woman |
| 3. one bad ruler | 9. a bad cook |
| 4. three short girls | 10. your (<i>singular</i>) five dark young men |
| 5. our four tall men | |
| 6. four big persons | |

2. *Translate into English*

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. athuri aitũ (aega) ega | 6. airĩtu ake anyinyi |
| 2. mũhiki wake mũirũ | 7. mũanake ũmwe wao |
| 3. athamaki ana oru (aũru) | 8. mũrugi witũ mwega |
| 4. arugi aao araya | 9. atumia anyu oru (aũru) |
| 5. mũanake ũmwe mũnene | 10. mũka wakwa mwega |
3. What classes of nouns other than Class I can human beings be put into, and for what reason?

Give examples of human beings who do not go into Class I.

LESSON II

NOUNS—CLASSES II AND III

Class II Nouns

Class II nouns are principally those which are regarded as having second class spirits, (i.e. a spirit of a lower category than that of humans, but nevertheless of considerable importance). A certain number of other words, while not actually denoting objects that have such spirits go into this class and are regarded as *closely linked with such spirits*. There are also, in this class, some words denoting things which would normally go into other classes but which have, *for some special reason*, been promoted, as for example the words for lion and three-horned chameleon (see below).

In general, it may be said that most large trees and plants belong to this class, together with certain epidemic diseases which are essentially regarded as spirit-borne. In addition to these, a certain number of animals and reptiles which would normally rank as having only third class spirits, but which are promoted for one reason or another go into Class II. It is usually found that where such promotion has taken place there is a folk tale to explain the reason for it. It must, however, be noted that a considerable number of trees and plants are removed from this class into Class V, the class for objects of religious, magical and ceremonial significance, because they are more properly associated with that class, as a result of their various properties and other associations with magic and ceremonial. It may, indeed, be said that where a tree or plant is found to belong to a class other than Class II or Class III, it is almost certain that it is a plant which has some real, or imaginary, magical or religious significance.

Nouns in Class II take a singular prefix which is the same for that of Class I, *so far as spelling is concerned*, i.e. **mũ-**. This **mũ-** is tonally slightly different, however. The plural prefix of Class II is **mĩ-** instead of **a-**.

It may be noted that tonal differences are of considerable importance in the study of advanced Kikuyu, but it is strongly recommended that the beginner should not attempt to differentiate

between the tones, since they are not of major importance in the early stages of learning, except perhaps in the next class to be dealt with, Class III, where, however, most beginners are content to do without tone and manage fairly successfully.

The adjectival prefixes for adjectives agreeing with Class II nouns are the same as noun prefixes, namely **mū-** and **mī-**.

The following nouns in this class should be learnt for the purpose of the Exercise:

mūti	tree	
mūrimū	spirit-borne disease	
mūtūngū	smallpox	
mūthandūkū	chicken pox	
mūgumo	fig tree	
mūkūyū	another kind of fig tree	
mūtamayū	wild olive	
mūere (mwere)	rat-tail millet	
mūrūthi	*lion	} promoted from Class III
mūriū	*three-horned Jackson's chameleon	
mūaka (mwaka)	year	
mūgūnda	garden (not in the sense of the soil of the garden, but the plants growing in it)	
mūatū	beehive	
mūeri (mweri)	moon or month	

*It will be noted that in the above list the lion has been promoted to this class. This is due to the fact that it is believed that a lion, if he hears himself spoken of by the true Class III word denoting a lion, 'ndū is liable to take offence and thereafter attack the person who has hinted that he only has an inferior spirit. Similarly it will be noted that the three-horned Jackson's Chameleon is promoted out of his correct class into Class II. This is due to the fact that it is believed that the three-horned chameleon played a major part in an endeavour to give man eternal life, while the ordinary chameleon, **kūmbu**—which is hated and feared by the Kikuyu—is demoted from Class III into Class IV, that of inanimate or despised objects, and is traditionally regarded with hatred and fear as the creature which caused man to be mortal.

Similarly, certain epidemic diseases, and in particular **kimiiri influenza**, and **gīthūkū measles**, are regarded by the Kikuyu as not

being indigenous and spirit-borne, but rather as having been imported, deliberately, by the white man. They are therefore ranked, as soulless, man-made, objects without spirit: diseases which, for that reason, cannot be placated and do not respond to the normal Kikuyu methods of combating epidemic diseases.

It should be noted, however, that in certain parts of Kikuyu country, measles has in recent years been promoted to the class of spirit-borne diseases and is now called **mũthũkũ** instead of **gĩthũkũ**.

Class III Nouns

Class III is the one into which are placed nearly all birds, reptiles, insects and mammals, and many lesser plants, weeds and grasses—in fact, all living creatures which are not covered by Class I and Class II. The only exceptions are those which, for some specific reason, have either been promoted, as we have seen, or which have been deliberately removed from their correct class because they are objects of scorn, derision, hatred or fear; or, in a few very rare cases, because their mode of life brings them automatically into some other class. For example, **rũhuhu**, a *bat*, goes into Class VI. Occasionally words denoting humans, which should properly go into Class I, are found to be in this class. They are humans who, for language purposes, are demoted from their own class but not right down to Class IV, as is done with humans who are despised. Humans demoted to Class III are merely pitied, examples are:

njangiri	an outcast
ngĩa	pauper
ngombo	serf or slave
njamba	boaster

It should be noticed that some dictionaries show **njamba** as warrior or brave man, but the word derives directly from the verb stem **-camb-** *to boast*, and it is only by subsequent extension that **njamba** has come to mean *warrior*. Lesser illnesses and ailments, as distinct from most epidemic diseases (which are in Class II) usually go into Class III.

It must be noted, here, that a few objects that are closely connected with creatures in Class III, are put into that same class, *because of direct association*. As example of this is word **nyũmba**

which means a nest or a lair where the young are born or reared, and which is, therefore, intimately connected with creatures in the Class III. In the Kikuyu language, this word has, later, been extended to cover the huts in which women sleep and produce and look after their children until they reach the age of puberty. Such huts clearly conform to the condition of a lair or nest as set out above. All other Kikuyu huts are treated quite differently, and are *not* correctly called **nyũmba** at all.

In Class III the singular and plural prefixes are the same so far as the nouns are concerned, and consist simply of **n-** before the stem. The tone is different as between the singular and the plural, but this can be ignored at the moment since the context usually indicates whether a noun in this class is singular or plural. Attention must here be drawn to the note in the introduction in which the euphonic changes which result from the juxtaposition of certain letters of the alphabet play an important part. For example, we have already seen, in dealing with Class I, that the stem **rũme** denotes a male, so that when a **mũ-** prefix of Class I was put in front of this stem we had **mũrũme**, a man. Now, if an **n-** prefix, that is to say a prefix of Class III, is put in front of this same stem, it clearly indicates a male within the third class of nouns, but the result of an **n** standing before a stem beginning with **r** results always, as seen in the introduction, in a change from **n** into **nd**, so that the word for a male animal is **ndũrũme**. This is limited today to a *ram*, unless it is followed by some qualifying clause.

We do somewhat the same thing in the English language where the word *bull* originally signified almost any male animal and is now confined to the male of the cattle family, unless it is qualified by a second word, such as bull-eland etc.

Adjectives agreeing with Class III nouns have exactly the same prefix as the nouns, i.e., **n-** in both singular and plural, but subject of course to the rules of the **n-** euphonic changes. For example, we have seen that the stem for *good* was **-ega**. Whenever the prefix **n-** stands before a stem starting with a vowel, the **n** changes to **nj**, so that *good* when referring to animals in Class III is **njega**, both in the singular and the plural.

The pronoun prefix for nouns in Class III is **ĩ-** in the singular and **ci-** or **i-** in the plural.

The following typical words in Class III should be learnt at this stage:

ng'ombe	a cow
ndürüme	a ram
ndegwa	an ox (or bull)
nyoni	a bird
nduira	a cobra
nyaga	an ostrich
ndahi	a grasshopper
nügü	a baboon

It must also be noted that most lesser herbs, weeds, grasses, and domestic plants etc., as distinct from shrubs and trees, go into Class III and not Class II, as well as humans who are pitiful, and some ailments.

Thus:

nyeki	grass
nyaragita	oat grass, etc.
nyeni	wild spinach
nyũmba	a nest, woman's hut
ndwari	an illness
nyongo	gall-bladder sickness, biliousness
njika	earache
njangiri	outcast
ngia	pauper
ngombo	serf or slave
njamba	boaster
ndungata	servant

EXERCISE ON LESSON II

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. my tall wild olive tree
2. their bad gardens
3. four good three-horned chameleons
4. one tall fig tree
5. your bad chicken-pox

6. one good lion
7. our tall millet
8. my big garden
9. your small-pox
10. five tall olive trees.

2. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. your short serf
2. one bad outcast
3. her big hut

4. five short cows
5. two black rams
6. my one little baboon

7. four light coloured grass-hoppers
8. our tall bad ostrich

3. *Translate into English*

1. nyũmba yake (iake) nene
2. mũtĩ ùmwe mũkukĩ
3. mĩgũnda yao (iao) mĩega itano
4. mũrimũ waka mũũru
5. mũkũyũ mũkukĩ

4. *Translate into English*

1. nyeki yakwa ndaya
2. nyũmba ìmwe nene
3. ngombo yake
4. ndwari njega
5. ndũrũme ìmwe njerũ

9. my big red ox
10. your tall oatgrass.

6. mũgumo wake mũraya
7. mũrũthi itano yao (iao)
8. mũgũnda ùmwe wakwa mwega
9. mũrimũ mũũrũ
10. mũriiũ itano mũkuhĩ

6. nyoni yakwa njũru
7. nyeni iitũ njega
8. ndwari yao (iao)
9. njika yanyu (ianyũ)
10. nyeni yao (iao) ndũrũ.

5. What sort of things are grouped together in Class II?
How can you explain the presence, in this Class, of things like epidemic diseases on the one hand and a few animals on the other?
6. How is the singular distinguished from the plural in Class III?

LESSON III

NOUN CLASSES IV, V and VI

Class IV Nouns

The fourth class of nouns is the class of nouns which are principally inanimate objects: a proportion are man-made, others are natural. But in addition, other objects (including some humans as we have already seen), get put into this class if they are held in contempt or scorn or hatred. The noun prefixes in this class are **kī-** or **gī-** in the singular, and **ci-** or **i-** in the plural.

There is a definite rule which decides whether the plural prefix should be **ci-** or **i-**, namely that if the stem of the word starts with a vowel then the prefix is **ci-**, but if with a consonant then the **c** is dropped and the prefix becomes **i-**.

We have already seen that the stem **-ndū**, if it has a human or Class I prefix in front of it, becomes a human object, i.e. a person, and it follows that a **kī-** in front of **ndū** is a man-made or other inanimate object, *a thing*. The plural is **i-ndū** (this is euphonically changed into **indo**).

Examples:

gīkombe	drinking vessel
gītī	stool
kīano	quiver
kīrīgū	big uninitiated girl (derisive)
kīhū	big uninitiated boy (derisive)
kīratū	sandal
kīnoro	hone
kīhembe	drum
kīriko	a ford
gītonga	a miser (derisive)
kīmiri	influenza
kīeha	grief (regarded as man-made)
gīkeno	joy (regarded as man-made)
kīng'angi	crocodile (demoted because hated)
kīgunyū	maggot (demoted because hated)

A certain number of words connected with land, especially land connected with agricultural development, are placed in this class.

githaka	an estate
kianda	valley flats
kirima	a hillside (by extension it comes to mean a mountain)
kihaaro	a grassy field

Adjectives agreeing with nouns in this class have the same prefix as nouns in the singular, **kī-**, but **n-** in the plural, while the pronominal prefix is **kī-** in the singular and **ci-** (or **i-**) in the plural.

Class V Nouns

These are objects of ceremonial, religious and magical significance. It must be noted that each of the words in this class might, for other reasons, be classified in other noun classes, but every single word in this class is an object which is used, or has been used until recently, in connection with religion, magic or ritual or some other form of ceremonial. Class V includes a large number of objects which appear, to the European mind, to have no link whatever with magic or religion or ritual, but from the Bantu point of view they are closely linked with one or other of these things.

The noun prefix is **rī-** or **i-** in the singular, and the plural is **ma-**. **Rī** is used when the stem starts with a vowel; **i** if the stem starts with a consonant.

The following are examples of nouns in this class.

ithiga, mahiga strictly speaking the three hearth stones but by extension (in modern times) any stone. The hearth-stones are the dwelling place, in normal times, of the ancestral spirits (much as in Roman mythology), and it is at the hearth-stones that libations are poured out to departed spirits, hence their inclusion in this class.

itimū, matimū warrior's spear

The warrior's spear is included in this class—while hunting spears and old men's spears are not—because the warrior's spear is potentially contaminated with the blood of a human enemy and is, therefore, the subject of many taboos and much ceremony.

rītho, maitho eye

This word, which is otherwise a part of the human body, comes into this class because of its magic potential for the power of the "evil eye".

rīumba clay for making pots (no plural)

This object comes into this class because of the complex ceremonial rules and taboos associated with pot-making and with the digging of clay for this purpose.

ithanūa, mathanūa an old style, tanged, axe-head

This object comes into this class because ointments for ritual purification had to be mixed on an axe-blade if they were to be of any valid ritual use.

igego, magego tooth

Although a part of the body, this word comes into this class because of the ritual extracting of incisor teeth just prior to puberty and initiation.

A few words which denote human beings also occur in this class instead of Class I because they represent humans who play a very special religious part in family life. Thus we have:

ithe, ma-ithe	father
nyina (strictly inyina) manyina	mother
guka (strictly iguka) maguka	grandfather
cūcū (strictly icūcū) macūcū	grandmother

N.B.— The adjectives and pronouns agreeing with these words behave as though they were still in Class I, for example **ithe ūitū**.

All other adjectives agreeing with Class V nouns take the same prefix as the nouns, thus the adjectival prefix is **rī-** (or rarely **i-**) in the singular, and **ma-** in the plural.

The normal pronoun prefix for Class V nouns is **rī-** in the singular and **ma-** in the plural.

The following additional noun stems in this class should be learnt for the purpose of the Exercises:

irigū, marigū	banana tree
itoka, matoka	crinum lily
rīūa , (no plural)	sun
rīiko, marīiko	cooking hearth

Class VI Nouns

The connecting link which unites all words in this class is a somewhat strange one, and that is the concept of undulation. Many words come into this class which, at first sight, seem to have no connection at all with other words in the same class, and yet investigation will always reveal this concept, even if only in a limited part of the use of the word.

The singular prefix is **rū-** and the plural is **n-**.

The following words should be learnt:

rūūi, njūi	river
rūūa, njūa	rawhide, dried skin
rūhuho, 'huhu	wind
rūrīmi, nīmī	tongue
rūkūngū, nkūngū	whirlwind (dust, by extension)
rūthanju, 'thanju	wooden wand
rūhuhu, 'huhu	bat (because of the way it flies)
rūhiu, 'hiu	fighting sword (which traditionally has a wavy edge)

Adjectives agreeing with nouns in this class have **rū-** as the singular prefix and **n-** as the plural one. The pronoun prefixes are also **rū-** in the singular, but **ci-** or **i-** in the plural.

EXERCISE ON LESSON III

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. my big drinking vessel | 6. one big crocodile |
| 2. their little stools | 7. my nice estate |
| 3. four dark-skinned big un-initiated girls | 8. your grassy field |
| 4. his three drums | 9. my hillside |
| 5. one bad maggot | 10. our grief |

2. *Translate into English*

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. gīkeno giakwa kīnene | 5. kīnoro kīmwe kīnini |
| 2. ihīi ciao njirū | 6. gīti kīanyu gīkuhi |
| 3. kīano kīao gītune | 7. kīng'ang'i kīirū. |
| 4. kīratū kīmwe giaku | |

3. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. your eyes
2. his big hearth-stones
3. my white clay
4. his tall father
5. my good grandmother,

6. his big axe
7. your four bad teeth
8. his tall four short crinum lilies
9. your long spear.

4. *Translate into English*

1. mahiga maa manene
2. itimū riakwa
3. nyina wao mūkuhi
4. irigū rimwe inene
5. maitho makwa mega (maega)

6. ithe witū mwega
7. magego manyu
8. riūa riēga
9. riiko rinene riirū
10. riūmba riakwa rierū.

5. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. my little bat
2. his black tongue
3. your big river

4. one small dried skin
5. his swords
6. one long white wand.

6. *Translate into English*

1. njū ciao
2. rūhuho rūūru
3. rūthanju rūao rūkuhi

4. rūrīmi rūakwa
5. igego rimwe inene.

7. What is peculiar and contrary to all basic Bantu language rules about the four words *ithe father; nyina mother; cūcū grandmother; guka grandfather*?

Can you explain why this peculiarity has come into being?

8. What are the concepts which link together, respectively, the words in Class V and VI?

LESSON IV

NOUN CLASSES VII, VIII and IX

Class VII Nouns

This is the class of abstract nouns. The noun prefix for this class is **ũ-** (which becomes **w-** before a stem starting with a vowel) in the singular and **ma-** in the plural. It must be noted that a number of words come into this class which, at first sight, do not *appear* to represent abstract nouns at all, because the English translation of the relevant Kikuyu word has a slightly different shade of meaning and makes it appear as though the word concerned was concrete rather than abstract. For example, the English word *face* is translated in Kikuyu **ũthiũ**. The reason why *face* is treated as an abstract noun is, in fact, simple and logical: to the Kikuyu, the face is composed of different parts, such as nose, mouth, lips, etc., all of which are concrete and do not come into the abstract noun class, but the Kikuyu word which we translate as *face* should, perhaps, be more correctly translated as *facial expression*, and the Kikuyu argue that you may touch a person on his ears, or nose, etc., but you cannot touch a person on his face because a face is not tangible *except in its separate parts*. Similarly, in most dictionaries the Kikuyu word **ũhiũ** is translated as *cattle* or *stock*. This again does not quite seem to fit in with the concept of an abstract noun, but the Kikuyu maintain that it is abstract. You can see and touch the various animals that make up a herd, but the herd itself is not tangible. You can slaughter the animals that make up the herd, but you cannot slaughter the herd as such.

A few words which are strictly abstract are transferred, as we have already seen, to Class IV, because they are regarded as essentially man-made, for example **kĩha**, *grief*, **gĩkeno**, *joy*, **kiĩro**, *wailing*.

The vast majority of words in this class are, however, abstract in the English sense as well as the African, and the following list should be mastered at this stage:

ũhiũ	stock
ũhoro	news, information
ũtheri	light

wendo	love
ūrūme	bravery
ūtukū	night
ūrimū	foolishness
watho	law
ūthiū	face
ūiru	jealousy
ūthamaki	kingdom
ūgeni	a visit
ūgo	magic
ūrogi	witchcraft

It may here be noted that in Kikuyu any adjectival stem can be turned into an abstract noun. This is done simply by placing the *ū-* prefix in front of the adjective stem to turn it into a noun having the attribute implied by the adjectival. For example, we have seen that *-nene* is the adjectival stem for *large*; *ūnene* is *largeness* or *bigness*. We have seen that *-erū* is the adjective for *white*—(*ūerū*) *werū* is *whiteness*: and so on. Similarly, abstract nouns can be made from verb stems at will, for example, the verb stem for *cook* is *rug-* and an abstract noun made from it is *ūrugi*, which means the *art of cooking*.

The prefixes for adjectives agreeing with nouns in this class are *mū-* in the singular and *ma-* in the plural.

Class VIII Nouns

There are only a very few ordinary nouns in Class VIII and only three of them are in common usage. In other Bantu languages this class is sometimes quite large, and it is not at all clear why the class has become abandoned in the Kikuyu language.

The ordinary nouns in this class are linked together by only one thing—that they represent parts of the body. The noun prefix in the singular is *kū-* or *gū-* and in the plural *ma-*.

The only three ordinary nouns in this class in common usage are:

<i>gūtū, matū</i>	ear
<i>gūoko, moko (maoko)</i>	arm
<i>kūgūrū, magūrū</i>	foot

In addition, *the infinitives of all verbs* can be, and regularly are, used as though they were nouns in this class.

Adjectives agreeing with these three nouns take **kū-** or **gū-**, and **ma-** in the plural, and pronouns also take **kū-** or **gū-** and **ma-**.

Class IX Nouns

There is only one single noun in Class IX in the Kikuyu language. The class is locative in concept, the singular prefix is **ha-** and the plural **kū-**. The *only* noun is:

handū, kūdū place, places

This stem **-ndū**, as we have seen, means a thing, so a thing in the locative class is a place. Adjectives agreeing with the noun take the prefix **ha-** in the singular and **kū-** in the plural, and the pronominal prefixes are also **ha-** and **kū-**.

Class X Nouns

As in most Bantu languages, there is a Kikuyu noun prefix in both singular and plural which denotes diminutiveness. In other words, almost any noun can be turned from an ordinary object of its own class into a diminutive by placing it into Class X.

The singular noun prefix for diminutives is **ka-**, and the plural **tū-**. In some cases the diminutive prefix *takes the place* of the original prefix, but in other cases, where doing so might lead to ambiguity, it precedes the normal noun prefix of the class. This is explained in the next paragraph.

We have seen that the stem **-ndū** means a *thing*, so that put into the human class, Class I, as **mūdū**, the stem was turned into a *human thing* or *person*. Put into Class V with a **kī-** prefix, **kīndū**, it becomes a *man-made object* or *inanimate thing*; while in the third class, creatures with a third class spirit, with an **n-** prefix, it becomes *an animal*. Moreover, as we have seen, if you put it into the locative class, Class IX, it becomes a *locative thing* or *a place*. If, therefore, we want to turn any of these things into a diminutive by transferring them to the diminutive class, we would have to put the diminutive prefix in front of the relative class prefix, since if we did not do so we could not distinguish between a *little person*, a *little man-made object*, and a *little place*, etc. But where a noun stem is only used in one class, and has no possible alternative

meaning, then the diminutive prefix takes the place of the normal one. For example:

mūgūnda

growing crops in a garden

kagūnda

a small area of growing crop in a garden

ihiga

stone

kahiga

a little stone

Adjectives agreeing with nouns in the diminutive class take **ka-** and **tū-** prefixes, and pronouns agreeing with nouns in this class also take the singular prefix **ka-** and the plural **tū-**.

EXERCISE ON LESSON IV

1. What is the main concept linking the words in Class VII, and why do some words which are clearly abstract get put into Class IV instead of this Class? Give examples and explanations.
2. *Translate into Kikuyu*
 1. my love
 2. his jealousy
 3. one black night
 4. their bad laws
 5. my good news
 6. one visit
 7. your bad jealousy
 8. our big kingdom
 9. your good magic
 10. his bad witchcraft
3. *Translate into English*
 1. ūrimū waa
 2. ūthiū wakwa mwerū
 3. ūrogi witū
 4. watho mūnene
 5. wendo wanyu mwega
 6. ūtheri mwega
 7. ūgeni waku
 8. ūhoro ūmwe wakwa
 9. ūhiū wao
 10. ūthamaki mwega
4. *Translate into Kikuyu*
 1. his ears
 2. your one good arm
 3. our long legs
 4. their black ears
 5. my white foot
 6. our place
 7. your places
5. *Translate into English*
 1. handū hanyu hega (haega)
 2. kūdū kwao kūnene
 3. moko (maoko) makwa manene
 4. gūtū gwake kūrū
 5. guoko gwake gūkūhi
 6. kūdū kūmwe

6. *Translate into Kikuyu (using diminutive prefix)*

1. my little garden
2. his little tree
3. my good little initiated girl
4. my little black river
5. our little cooking stones
6. your little black eyes
7. his little axe
8. five little gardens
9. my eight little people
10. his little bad disease

LESSON V

NUMERALS

As we have seen, in Kikuyu certain of the numerals are treated, so far as their agreements are concerned, not as though they were adjectives in the ordinary European sense, but as though they were pronouns.

Some numerals do not, however, fall into either of these categories but are, in a sense, independent verbal clauses *which are in apposition to the nouns* they qualify and are, often, so much contracted as to have lost any relationship to their original form unless it is traced very carefully.

The only numerals which *do* agree with the nouns which they qualify and which take, as seen above, a pronominal prefix relevant to the noun class concerned, are the following:—

1	-mwe
2	-gĩrĩ or -ĩrĩ
3	-tatũ or thatũ
4	-na or -nya
5	-tano or -thano
6	-tandatũ or -thathatũ
8	-nana or -nyanya

Each of the numerals 7, 9, and 10 are contractions of verbal clauses which *never* agree with the nouns they qualify, but remain unchanged and simply in apposition to the noun they qualify. This is true of certain numerals in nearly all Bantu languages. So far as Kikuyu is concerned, the contracted verbal clauses for these three numerals are linked with human pregnancy and birth, possibly because the most important use of counting lay, formerly, in the need to count the months of pregnancy so as to be aware of the events likely to occur in connection with birth. There are even indications that, in the past, all the numerals from 1 to 10 may have been verbal clauses of this type, and that the instances where numerals are now stems which have to agree with the nouns they qualify, maybe the result of a relatively recent change.

The word for 7 is **mūgwanja**, and as we have seen it never varies or alters. It is a contraction of the following verbal clause:

mweri mūgūa nja the month of falling down in the courtyard

The Kikuyu believe, and not without good reason, that the seventh month of human pregnancy is the most critical one. It is during the seventh month that a miscarriage can be most dangerous to the mother; a premature baby born during the seventh month is very rarely able to survive, under Kikuyu conditions. It is this fear of the seventh month of pregnancy that gives rise to the verbal clause.

This same explanation gives us the reason why the numeral 7 is regarded by the Kikuyu as an unlucky number: the number which is used either in connection with the uttering of curses, or in the taking of oaths and in black magic. Seven is the number which has to be avoided in every possible way, even to the extent, in the olden days, of no-one ever being allowed to work on the same project for more than six consecutive days because, if he worked on the seventh, he would be certain to come to some harm. That, incidentally, is why the seventh day of the week is known as **Kiumia**, *the day on which you come out*, from the verb stem **-um-**, *to come out*, while, by extension, **kiumia** also means *a week*.

Turning next to number 9, the word used today is **kenda**, a contraction of the verbal clause (**kaana**) **karī o nda**, (*the child*) *is still in the womb*.

This refers to the ninth month of pregnancy, while the third example, **ikumi**, for *ten*, refers to the child's exit from the womb, and is linked with the word **kū-uma**, *to come out*. An alternative word for 10 is **mūrongo**, which signifies *a complete unit*, but this is seldom used in the singular, while its plural, **mirongo**, is almost always used for each of the units of 10 between 20 and 90 inclusive. **Mirongo** is, of course, a noun.

When the plural noun **mirongo**, meaning *units*, is used for 20 or 30 or 40 as the case may be, it is qualified by the necessary numeral which must agree with it, except in the case of 7 and 9; thus 20 is **mirongo ūrī** and 30 is **mirongo itatū**, etc.

The numerals for 100 and 1,000 are also nouns, which are in apposition to any word they may qualify, and are respectively

igana, which literally means *a sufficiency*, and **ngiri**, the original meaning of which is not clear.

So far as numerals used adverbially are concerned, i.e. once, twice, thrice, four times, etc., those forms change in respect of those numerals which are capable of agreement with the nouns they qualify by prefixing **ri-** in front of the stem for *one*, (because it is singular), but **ga-** or **ka-** in front of other stems. Thus the adverb for *once* is **ri-mwe**, but for *twice thrice, four times* etc. it is **kairi** (which contracts to **keri**) **gatatū, kana**, etc.

Because 7, 9 and 10, and also units of 10, are verbal clauses and do not, as we have seen, agree with the nouns they qualify, the adverbial form in these cases is more complicated and consists of putting **maita** in front of the numeral, in its verbal clause form, so that we have **maita kenda**, *nine times*; **maita mūgwanja**, *seven times*, **maita mirongo itatū**, *thirty times*, **maita igana** *a hundred times*.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The demonstrative pronouns, *this, that* (near), *that* (yonder), *these, those* (near), *those* (yonder), are formed in Kikuyu, in accordance with a set of definite rules, from the pronominal prefixes of the respective classes. The rules are as follows:

1. To form *this* and *these*:—

(a) If the pronominal prefix is **ū-** or **a-**, then double the vowel and put a **-y-** between.

Thus we get **ūyū** and **aya**.

(b) If the pronominal prefix is **i**, then add **-no**. Thus we get **-ino**.

(c) If the pronominal prefix is a syllable starting with a consonant (other than an **m**) then double the syllable, thus we get:

riri
ruru
giki
(c)ici
tutu
gaka
haha
guku

- (d) If the pronoun prefix is a syllable starting with an **m** then add **-ya**. Thus we have **maya**.
2. To form *that* (nearby) and *those* (nearby)
- (a) If the pronoun prefix is **ũ** or **a** or **ci** or **ma**, add **-cio**, thus we have **ũcio**, **acio**, **(c)icio**, **macio**.
- (b) If the pronoun prefix is a syllable starting with a consonant, other than **ci** and **ma** above, add **u**. Thus we have **rũu**, **rũu**, **mau**, **hau**, **tũu**, **kũu**, **kau**, **kũu**.
- (c) If the pronoun prefix is **i**, add **o**. Thus we have **io**.
3. To form *that* (far away), and *those* (far away)
Whatever the pronoun prefix may be, add **ia**. Thus we have **haria**, **aria**, **ũria**, **kũria**, **iria**, etc.

For convenience, these demonstratives may be tabulated as follows:

	this	these	that (near)	those (near)	that (far away)	those (far away)
I	ũyũ	aya	ũcio	acio	ũria	aria
II	ũyũ	ino	ũcio	io	ũria	iria
III	ino	(c)ici	io	(c)icio	iria	(c)iria
IV	giki	(c)ici	kũu	(c)icio	kũria	iria
V	riri	maya	rũu	mau	rũria	maria
VI	rũrũ	(c)ici	rũu	(c)icio	rũria	(c)iria
VII	ũyũ	maya	ũcio	macio (or mau)	ũria	maria
VIII	gũkũ	maya	kũu	macio (or mau)	kũria	maria
IX	haha	gũkũ	hau	kũu	haria	kũria
X	gaka	tũtũ	kau	tũu	karia	tũria

Locative

The English *in* is made by putting **-inĩ** after the noun. Thus *in the trees* is **mitĩ-inĩ**; *in the garden*, **mũgũnda-inĩ**.

We saw that Class IX has only one word in it, **handũ**, plural **kundũ**, meaning place.

Since there is only one word in this class the demonstratives are commonly used WITHOUT the noun, since clearly they can only refer to the one noun in the class.

Thus **haha** is used instead of **handũ haha**, this place, and becomes simply *here*. Similarly **gũkũ** is used instead of **kũndũ gũkũ**, for *hereabouts*, or *at these places*.

The difference between the significance of **haha** and **gūkū**, **hau** and **kūu**, **haria** and **kūria** is very important. When the singular is used it means a single particular spot, clearly indicated. When the plural is used the meaning is vaguer, *hereabouts* and *thereabouts*. Europeans often say **rehe haha** when they mean **rehe gūkū**, and *vice versa*, through not understanding the important difference.

If I am in a room and I say to a Kikuyu **rehe haha** referring to some object, I mean that he is to bring it right to me. If I say **rehe gūkū**, I mean bring it somewhere into the room but not to the actual spot where I am.

Iga hau means *put it there* (at some indicated spot), **iga kūu** means *put it somewhere over there*.

EXERCISE ON LESSON V

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*
 1. seven bad men
 2. nine black oxen
 3. their ten bad rulers
 4. twenty-three people
 5. one hundred black married women
 6. a thousand bad young men
 7. fifty-three rivers
 8. nine white stools (or seats)
 9. sixty-three black faces.
2. *Translate into English*
 1. njangĩrĩ ikumi
 2. mahiga makwa matandatũ manene
 3. mĩrũthĩ igana
 4. andũ anene mũgwanja
 5. aka ake mĩrongo ũĩrĩ na atano
 6. nyoni ikũmi na mũgwanja
 7. nyũmba ciakwa nene igana na ithano
 8. 'huhu kenda njũrũ
 9. ithaka inyanya nene
 10. maithe anana.
3. *Translate into Kikuyu*
 1. this black ox
 2. that tall man (nearby)
 3. these tall trees
 4. those hills (far away)
 5. those black cows (nearby)
 6. this long river
 7. those ten tall men (nearby)
 8. these fourteen trees
 9. those (far away) little gardens
 10. those (nearby) six big axes.
4. Explain the main rules governing the formation of demonstrative pronouns, giving examples.
5. *Translate into English*
 1. andũ acio oru (aũru) atano
 2. mũndũ ũria
 3. rũĩ rũu rũtune
 4. mahiga maya makwa
 5. itonga irĩa ikũmĩ
 6. mĩtĩ ino yao (ĩao)
 7. kũndũ gũkũ
 8. handũ hau hega (haega)
 9. kahĩ gaka gakukĩ,
 10. kũndũ kũmwe.

LESSON VI

THE VERB

In studying the Kikuyu (or any other Bantu) verb it is emphatically not necessary to go into all the apparently complicated tense formations which are suggested by some of the earlier grammar books dealing with the language. These books were written in an attempt to interpret the Kikuyu verb structure in terms of the known grammatical structure of the Indo-European languages. The verb structure in most, if not all, of the Bantu group of languages, is based upon an entirely different conception, different both in respect of time factors and in respect of the way in which one tense can be modified in its meaning to become what would appear (under European grammatical structure) to be a different tense, where, in fact, it is merely an extension of the same tense.

In the Indo-European languages, verb structure is based on the idea of a *present*, with *past* and *future* respectively on either side. The Bantu concept of time is slightly different. The difference does not appear significant when first stated, but the significance soon becomes apparent when we study its implications. In Bantu languages, time is divided into **present unit of time** and **succeeding unit of time** and **preceding unit of time** on either side, beyond which, in both directions, is **indefinite time**, both past and future.

The difference between **present** and **present unit of time** is to be found in the fact that the tenses which are grouped together as those of **the present unit of time** can be used for periods quite far ahead, or quite remote in the past, *provided that the unit of time has been either clearly specified or implied*. In the normal course of events, unless the unit of time is otherwise specified or implied, it is taken to be a day, or 24 hours, from dawn to the following dawn. The unit of time may, however, be specified by stating it to be a week, or a month, or a year, or a school term, or even a lifetime, and *once the unit of time has been specified, any event within that unit must be referred to by means of a tense within the present unit of time, which therefore may have a quite different*

meaning from our Indo-European type of tense. For example, should I say, at the beginning of the year, *This year I am going to work in Nairobi*, thereby specifying that *This year* is the unit of time to which I am referring, then, if I speak about something which I hope to do on Christmas Day this year *I must use a tense within the present unit of time*. Were I to use a tense in the next unit of time group (which is emphatically NOT the same as our future) it would refer not to Christmas of this year, but to Christmas of next year.

It is essential that this Bantu concept of time divisions of the verb be clearly understood, as the use of a wrong tense may cause considerable confusion to the listener, and serious misunderstandings may occur, which would be the fault of the speaker for using the wrong tense.

Within the present unit of time, whether it be the standard 24 hours from dawn to dawn, or any other specified unit of time, there are a number of tenses which refer, respectively, to **something immediately happening and being done**, to the **future within the present unit of time**, (in our English sense of the word future) and the **past within the unit of time**. Thus, in ordinary conversation, if during the day I wish to refer to something that happened in the early hours of the morning, I will use the tense which is, in fact, **past within the present unit of time**, while if I wish to speak of something I hope to do in the evening or during the night, I should use the **future within the present unit of time** group of tenses. We shall return to these tenses presently.

In Kikuyu, and in all other Bantu languages, the basic stem of nearly every verb is a monosyllable. The only exceptions are words of non-Bantu origin imported into the Bantu language from Nilotic or Hamitic, or other foreign languages. Where a verb stem appears, at first sight, to consist of more than one syllable, it can usually be safely assumed that one or other of the syllables is basic, while the other is only there to modify the original meaning.

In addition to the straightforward tense structures which we shall examine in the next lesson, it must be remembered that every Kikuyu verb and every Kikuyu tense within a given verb can, theoretically at least, be modified by one or more of the considerable number of infixes. These infixes are placed between the verb stem and the verb tense ending. By so inserting them the meaning of the verb is

modified, or the tense of the verb is slightly altered, in many subtle but very useful ways.

At this stage one example will suffice. Take a stem such as **-twar-** to *take*. The active verb-ending, in the indicative mood, would be **-a**, and by simply inserting **-ag-** between the stem and the ending we give a habitual sense to any of the tenses used. Thus, in the infinitive, **gũ-twar-a** is *to take*, whereas **gũ-twar-ag-a** makes it *to make a habit of taking* or *to take it regularly*. In many cases a number of different infixes can be used to modify one and the same tense of the verb at the same time, and once this principle has been mastered, the apparent difficulties of the Kikuyu verb are seen to be much exaggerated.

Before we discuss these formative infixes in detail in a later lesson, we must briefly consider the principle tenses in the indicative mood.

Present unit of time tenses

In the present unit of time which, as we have seen, is normally from a dawn of one day to the dawn of the next, there are five main tenses.

1. Pronoun prefix + **ra** + stem + formative infix or infixes (if required to modify the meaning) + ending.

This tense is the tense denoting the actual present, and refers to something that is actually in the process of being done while the speaker is in the act of speaking. For example, the pronoun for *he* is **a** and the stem for *cook* is **-rug-**. Therefore **a-ra-rug-a** means *he is cooking at this very moment*.

2. The tense for something that has already happened within the unit of time is made up as follows:

Pronoun prefix + stem + formative infix (if required) + **ir** + ending. Therefore, we could have **a-twar-ir-e** which is *he took*. This is the past, *he took*, or *he did take*, but *within the present unit of time* and *not* within some previous unit of time.

3. A '*had*' tense within the present unit of time is made up as follows:

Pronoun + **-** + stem + infix (when required) + **it** + ending. Thus **a-twar-it-e** is *he had taken* (within the unit of time) *before something else happened*.

4. The immediate future, within the unit of time, is made up of:

Pronoun + **kū** (or **gū**) + stem + formative infix (if required) + ending. Hence **a-gū-twar-a** is *he will take* (before the present unit of time is over).

5. If we want to say that something had already been **done** within the present unit of time, at a time when something else took place, then the rule is:

Pronoun + **kū** (or **gū**) + stem + formative infix (if required) + **ir** + ending. Thus **tū-gū-twar-it-e** means *We had already taken* (when something or other happened).

Next unit of time

6. The future immediately following, i.e. in the next unit of time to the one which is being used is made up by:

Pronoun + **ka** (or **ga**) + stem + formative infix (if required) + ending.

Some people speak of this tense as the "tomorrow" tense or the "immediate future tense". It is not the "tomorrow" tense except when the unit of time is the standard time of dawn to dawn. It would be the correct unit of time to use for next year, if we were speaking of a year as a unit of time.

Thus: **tū-ga-twar-a**—*we shall take* (during the next unit of time)—normally tomorrow, if the standard unit is being used.

Future other than next unit of time

7. An indefinite future, i.e. any unspecified point in the future beyond the next unit of time is made up by:

Pronoun + **rī** + stem + formative infix (if required) + ending.

Thus: **tūrītwara** — *we shall take* (some time).

This same future tense may be used *with a qualifying adverb or phrase* in order to make it definite in respect of a stated future time, other than in the next unit of time. Thus **tūrītwara mūthia wa mweri**—*we shall take at the end of the month.*

Preceding unit of time

8. Turning to the period prior to the present unit of time, the immediate preceding unit of time tense, sometimes called the "yesterday tense" is made up as follows:
Pronoun + **ra** + stem + **ir** + ending.
Thus: **a-ra-twa-ir-e**—*he took* (normally yesterday).
9. Another tense in the preceding unit of time is the "had" tense and is made by substituting **it-** for **ir-**, thus:
a-ra-twar-it-e means *he had taken* during the preceding units of time, as distinct from *he took*.

Past other than the preceding unit of time

10. An indefinite past, i.e. any part of the past prior to the preceding unit of time, is made up of:
Pronoun + **a** + stem + **ir** + ending,—*he did take* (at some indefinite point in the past.)
11. As in the case of the past of the preceding unit of time, the indefinite past can be given a "had" sense by changing the **-ir-** to **-it-**, thus:
a-a-twar-it-e—*he had taken* (at some point in the indefinite past).

As in the case of the indefinite future, beyond the next unit of time, both the past tenses can be made to refer to a **specific** point in time by using a qualified verb or adverbial phrase, thus:

a-a-twar-ir-e riria aari Nairobi—*he took it while he was in Nairobi*, but at a point in time prior to the preceding unit of time.

Verb Endings

It must be noted that each of these eleven tenses, as well as all other tenses in the Kikuyu language, may potentially, have any one of four verb endings, but sometimes cannot, in practice, do so.

There are two active-mood verb endings, one of which we have already referred to, and this is **-a** (or **-e**), and the other is **-ia**. Contrary to what some of the existing books on Kikuyu say, these do not really correspond to transitive and intransitive.

The **-a** ending is the simple one and usually (but by no means always) has what in English grammar we should regard as a

transitive significance while the ending *-ia* is usually a causative, although in English translation it may also seem to be a simple transitive, but sometimes an intransitive.

Thus the stem *-thamb-*, means *to splash*, and *gū-thamb-a* is *to splash*, but *gū-thamb-ia* is *to cause to splash*. But this, by extension, means *to wash in liquid*, because you cause the object washed to splash about in the water: *Gūthambia*, therefore, is correctly translated into English as *to wash* (with a liquid), and we should call *to wash* a transitive verb.

There are also two passive verb endings which are *-ūo* which is passive transitive, and *-io* which is passive comparable to the active *-ia* which is a passive causative, which may be either transitive or intransitive in translation.

With the aid of these four endings, *each of which can vary any of the eleven tenses given above*, we have now mastered what may be called 44 out of the 56 tenses in the indicative mood.

SUBJECTIVE PRONOUNS

At this stage it is necessary to list the subjective pronouns as used in tense structure.

The personal pronoun for "I" is very variable, strictly speaking it is the same as in English, *i*. Alternative forms for "I" are *n* and *nd* or *ng*. *You* in the singular is always *ū*. *He* or *She* is *a* or *e*. *We* is *tū*. *You* in the plural is *mū*. *They* is *ma* or *me*.

Where the pronoun does not refer to a human, but to some object in one of the other noun classes, then the subjective pronoun used with the verb is the pronominal prefix, singular or plural, of the noun class concerned.

For example, we have seen the plural pronominal prefix for the 2nd Class nouns, trees etc., is *i*, and this would, therefore, be the pronoun form used in the sentence *the trees have fallen—miti igūite*. *Rū*, as we have seen, is the singular pronoun prefix of Class VI, therefore *it*, referred to a noun in this class, would be *rū*.

THE INFINITIVE

The infinitive of any verb is made by prefixing *kū* or *gū* in front of the stem and adding one of the four verb endings. Thus:

Kū-rug-a
Kū-rug-ūo
etc.

to cook
to be cooked

The following list of verb stems should be learnt at this stage:

-kom-	lie down
-ror-	look at, look after
-rug-	cook,
-twar-	take
-hūr-	beat
-hing-	shut
-īr-	tell
-thamb-	splash
-rī-	eat
-hat-	sweep
-ak-	build
-rūng-	straighten
-hand-	plant
-end-	like or love
-ūk-	come
-ug-	say
-tem	cut

Additional Vocabulary for Lesson VI

ūmūthi today; ira yesterday; rūciū tomorrow; tene long ago; kaingī often; riu now; ringī again.

EXERCISE ON LESSON VI

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*
 1. those ten men are eating bananas
 2. I am cooking this meat
 3. he will sweep the hut (*future of present unit of time*)
 4. we planted those tall matoka lilies (*past of present unit of time*)
 5. he will like meat (*future of next unit of time*)
 6. that bad man beat this black cow (*past of preceding unit of time*)
 7. the trees will be planted (*next unit of time*)
 8. the five black birds have built nests in the trees (*indefinite past*).

2. *Translate into English*

1. tūratwara ng'ombe kīhaaro
 2. mītī io ihandītūlo mūgūnda wakwa
 3. tūgūtware mbūri rūūī
 4. atumia aya akwa atatū makaruga nyama
 5. tūgūthambia iratū ici ciitū
 6. maraire mūtumia waku
 7. athamaki aya mekwenda ng'ombe ciaku
 8. Njoroge witū arahaata nyūmba īno
 9. maatwarite ndūrūme yao njirū kīfanda.
3. Explain the Kikuyu (Bantu) system of tense structure with examples.
4. Discuss the Kikuyu (Bantu) concept of time, compared with the European idea of past, present and future.

LESSON VII

CONDITIONALS

Although there are a few other tenses in the indicative mood, which we shall have to examine in Lesson IX (as for example the narrative and optative tenses) we must leave these for the moment and consider the basic conditional and subjunctive tenses.

In English, we use in effect the little conjunction *if* to make a condition of one kind or another, although we do not necessarily speak of a tense which follows *if* as a conditional tense, but confine this definition to "should" and "would" tenses. For example, we say on the one hand *if he loves me I will marry him*, or on the other hand *I would marry him if he loved me*, and only the second of these has a conditional tense.

In Kikuyu, as in all other Bantu languages, it is the first part of the first and the latter part of the second of the above sentences, i.e. that followed by the word *if*, which would have to be put into a conditional tense.

In some Kikuyu grammars, several conditional tenses are set out to be learnt by heart. This is quite unnecessary. The only thing that must be learnt is that the conditional meaning is made by putting the infix **-ngi-** between the pronoun and the verb stem, or, if some other additional tense infix is also being used (as it may be) then the **-ngi** conditional infix must be used to change any of the indicative tenses (which we have studied in Lesson IV) into a conditional tense. For example, **a-ngi-rug-a** is *if he cooks*, but we have seen that **a-ra-rug-a** means *he is at this very minute cooking*, so if we say **a-ngi-ra-rug-a**, we change it to a conditional, and so say *if at this very minute he is in the act of cooking*. Or again we have seen that **a-ra-twar-it-e** means *he had taken* (during the preceding unit of time), and if we add an **-ngi-** between the pronoun and the **-ra-**, we make it a conditional within the preceding unit of time, namely *if he had already taken it during the preceding unit of time*.

SUBJUNCTIVES

The simple subjunctive in Kikuyu is made by the simple process of pronoun+stem+ending. For example, **a+twar+e** that he may take.

In European languages, we talk about present subjunctive, past subjunctive and so on, in Bantu, including Kikuyu, there is just one main subjunctive tense, but the tense which dominates the subjunctive may of course be present or past or future, thus *he wants you to take* (future within the present unit of time) is **ekũenda ũware**. *He wanted you to take*, would be **a-ra-end-ir-e**, but followed by the same subjunctive **ũware**, while *he will want you to take* at some indefinite point in the future would be **a-ri-end-a**, again followed by the same subjunctive **ũware**.

NEGATIVES

Indicative Mood

To make the negative of any tense within the indicative mood, the rule is that you place **nd** in front of the pronoun, *if the pronoun is a vowel*, but add **ti** after the pronoun *if the pronoun starts with a consonant*. Let me give examples, if we want to say *he has not cooked* we should write **nd-** before the pronoun **a**, since **a** is a vowel, and then follows the rest of the tense: in this case **rugĩte**, so we have **ndarugĩte**. If we had to say *they have not cooked*, we should have the pronoun first—**ma**, followed by **-ti** since in this case the pronoun starts with a consonant, we should thus have **matirugĩte**.

Other negatives

While the above rule applies to all the tenses of the indicative mood, no matter whether the pronoun refers to a person or to some non-human in another class it also applies to conditionals where they are not subordinate. In all other conditional tenses, and in all subordinate clauses, other than in the subjunctives, the negative is made by a different rule. This rule is that you put the syllable **ta** after the pronoun, no matter whether the pronoun is a vowel, or starts with a consonant.

Note. With a **-ta-** negative the personal pronoun *I* is always **-i-**.

Examples of **ta** negative are as follows:

i-ngĩ-twara	if I should take
i-ta-ngĩ-twara	if I should not take

mangiarugire
matingiarugire

they would have cooked
they would not have cooked

Imperatives

There is a special set of rules for negative imperatives which, at first sight, appears to be paradoxical, although, in fact, critical examination shows that they are quite logical. The simple ordinary imperative is made by simply using the verb stem plus one of its four normal endings. For example, if you order someone *to cook*, you say **rug-a**, or *to take* **twar-a!** These are the singular positive imperatives. If the order is given to more than one person, then an *i* is added after the verb stem and ending, so that if you were ordering *several different people to cook* you would say **rug-a-i!**

But if we want to give a negative imperative order we cannot use any of the ordinary negative forms described above, for reasons which we shall indicate presently. Instead, in Kikuyu, it is necessary to use the cumbersome method of employing an imperative of one verb, followed by the infinitive of the operative verb. The verb which one puts into the negative tense is **-tig-**, *to abstain from* or *fail to*: so that *do not cook* is **tiga kūruga** or literally *stop to cook*.

The reason for this unusually cumbersome circumlocution lies in the fact that if a straight-forward negative is used as an imperative, the effect, in Kikuyu, is not to make a negative imperative, but rather to make a doubly strong affirmative one. For example, if I say **ndūruga**, I am not saying *do not cook*, although the **nd** is a clear negative form, but I am, in Kikuyu idiom, saying *You have got to cook* and I am using, in fact, an extra strong imperative.

The underlying idea is quite logical—a simple negative is used as a threat: *Don't cook and see what happens to you!* Therefore some other form of negative has to be found for a real negative imperative, hence the circumlocution described above of using **tiga** followed by an infinitive.

The use of the **ta** negative in front of a simple imperative turns it into a polite, but firm, imperative, almost a *please*. Thus **tatwara** is “*be so good as to take it*”, **ta ruga** “*be so good as to cook*”, etc.

EXERCISE ON LESSON VII

1. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. if I come I will cook the meat
2. I do not like this garden
3. If I were told that news I would not take my wife to the river again
4. don't beat this black ox
5. you must cook these bananas
6. If he had come he would have cooked the meat

2. *Translate into English*

1. athuri acio anana matingihanda marigũ mũgũnda wakwa
 2. mũtũ ũcio ndũgatemwo nĩ aka acio aitũ
 3. ĩra athuri arĩa atano matware ũhiũ wao rũũ
 4. tũtingĩruga nyama ithe witũ (ataũkite) atokĩte
3. Explain the Kikuyu way of making a very strong imperative positive and also a very strong imperative negative. Give examples.

7. I will take the sandals if you come
8. if he had built a hut his wife would have loved him
9. do not plant rat-tailed millet
10. I would not like jealousy

5. matingikoma matahandite nyeki
6. tiga gũtwara atumia Nairobi
7. ndikũruga ũmũthĩ ngaruga rũciũ
8. ndũrore mũndũ ũcio mũũru riu
9. ũtangĩruga ndũngikoma
10. twarai tũhũ rũũ.

LESSON VIII

THE FORMATIVE INFIXES AND THEIR USES

In all Bantu languages (not only Kikuyu) the meaning of a verb and of almost any tense in a verb may be altered or modified by the use of one or more formative infixes. These do not really alter the tense at all, although some authors invest some of these infixes with *tense value*. I prefer not to regard any of these infixes as having tense value (unless we count *ir* and *it*, which occur in past tenses, as also being formative infixes). I prefer to treat all formative infixes as a special Bantu feature. We have in English *slightly comparable* syllables which alter meanings, as for example the use of **un-** as a prefix to a verb stem, such as

<i>lock</i>	<i>unlock</i>
<i>do</i>	<i>undo</i>

and our syllable *able* after certain words such as *cook*

<i>cook</i>	<i>cookable</i>
<i>love</i>	<i>loveable</i>
<i>like</i>	<i>likeable</i>

The important thing in Kikuyu, and indeed in all Bantu languages, is that these infixes play a major part in the language build-up, and make it possible to make so many twists to a single basic verb stem: thus, in fact, one verb stem in Kikuyu may—with the help of various formative infixes—give you the equivalent of a large number of English verb stems.

The following are the most important of the Kikuyu formative infixes; a brief explanatory discussion of each one is given later.

- | | | |
|-----|-------|---|
| (a) | -or- | } |
| | -ür- | |
| | -ük- | |
| | -ok- | |
| (b) | -am- | } |
| | -im- | |
| (c) | -an- | |
| (d) | -ith- | |
| (e) | -ag- | |
| (f) | -ang- | |

- | | | |
|-----|------|---|
| (g) | -ir- | } |
| | -er- | |
| (h) | -ik- | } |
| | -ek- | |
| (i) | -ar- | } |
| | -at- | |

Potentially, any or all of these may be used together, at one and the same time, to modify, in their respective ways, the meaning of the basic verb stem in almost any tense, *provided the result makes sense*.

In practice, one very seldom gets more than five formative infixes used together, and normally only one or two are used together.

N.B. Formative infixes are placed between the verb stem and the verb ending.

- | | | |
|-----|------|-----------|
| (a) | -ūr- | (or -or) |
| | -ūk- | (or -ok-) |

These are reversive in their meaning, and in theory they can be used with *any* verb stem, but, in practice, they are only used with certain stems.

The -ūr- (-or-) form is used essentially in transitive meaning only, while the -ūk- (-ok-) form is always used with an intransitive meaning. For example, the stem for *shut* is **-hing-**

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|
| so | kū-hing-a | is to <i>shut</i> |
| | kū-hing-ūr-a | is to <i>unshut</i> , i.e. to <i>open</i> |
| | kū-hing-ūk-a | is to <i>become open</i> . |

It often happens that a reversive infix, when used with an ordinary stem, has acquired a specialised meaning. For example **-rug-** is the stem *cook* as we have seen, so that **kū-rug-a** is to *cook*. Now clearly, one cannot, literally, *uncook* something that has been cooked, and yet we find that the reversive of **rug-a**, i.e. **rugūra-** exists in Kikuyu, but it has a special meaning, i.e. *disentangle, separate out the different elements, explain, translate*.

Underlying that is the idea that, in cooking, you mix all sorts of ingredients together until you make them a single whole, but they cannot be uncooked. However, if I have mixed up my words and made a parable or a story with a hidden meaning, I can ask you to **rugūra** them, i.e. *sort them to find out the real meaning*.

(b) **-am-** (or **-im-** but this is very rare)

This infix has the effect of giving the meaning of *in a state of*. It is used to alter the meaning of verb stems, as the following example shows. **-Rūng-**, as we have seen, is the stem of *to straighten*, if we add the **-am-** infix we change **rūng-a** to **rūng-am-a**, which in turn in Kikuyu becomes modified to **rūgama** (without the **n**), and is translated into English as *stand up*. Basically, it does not mean "stand up", but *get into a state of being straightened*. A person has been sitting or lying down and is not straight, he "**rū(n)gama**"s and gets in a state of being straight, i.e. *stands up*. Similarly, **ar-** is the stem for *to spread out*. **Ar-am-a** is *in a state of being spread out*, i.e. *to be wide apart*.

(c) **-an-**

This infix has a reciprocal effect. For example, **-end-a** means *like*, **-end-an-a** means *like each other* or *love*. **Hur-a** means *beat* or *strike*, **hurana** means *beat or strike each other*, i.e. *fight*. **Twar-a** means *take*, **twar-an-a** means *take each other* or *accompany*. **ira-** means *tell*, **ir-an-a** means *tell each other*, or *make a verbal agreement* or *agree*.

(d) **-ith-**

This is a very interesting formative infix. It is *only* used with the causative verb endings, **-ia** active and **-io** passive, never with **-a** or **-ūo**. Its meaning is *strongly causative* and it often changes the logic meaning of the verb stem to such an extent that Europeans cannot, at first, see the connection between the basic stem and meaning and its altered meaning with its causative **-ith-** formative infix and giving (apparently) a wholly different meaning.

In ordinary words, **-ith-** is a simple causative, thus we have **-rug-** the stem of *cook*, **-rugithia** is *cause to cook* or *have cooked by some other person*, but, in many special cases, this infix gives a special meaning. Thus the stem **-rī-** is *eat*, but **rī-ithia** which literally is *cause to eat* has the special meaning of *herding a flock of goats or sheep or cattle*; because the shepherd takes them out in order to *cause them to eat*.

-Gi- is the stem of *to possess*, **gūithia** is literally *to cause to possess*, but in the dictionary you will find it given as *to greet*. **Kū-gūithia** is strictly only *to greet with a present*, while an ordinary hand-shake without a present, is **gū-tang'-an-a**, *to shake each other's hand* (note the **-an** reciprocal infix).

-Tũithia- is another interesting example of how the **-ith-** infix, by special extension, gives a special meaning to a verb stem. **-tĩ** is *to honour*, yet **tũithia**, your dictionary will tell you, is *to help*. How does *cause to honour* come to mean *to help*? Very simply: if you find some person working on a job and you assist them in it, by doing so you *cause them to be honoured*, because you have shown, by this act, that you are willing to put yourself out to help the person concerned. More particularly is this true if you take over a job while they enjoy a rest.

(e) **-ag-**

There are two formative infixes **-ag-** which are tonally different, and at first caused a great deal of confusion to Europeans. For the beginner it is only possible to judge which of the two is meant *by the context*, and of course this is also true so far as written Kikuyu is concerned. **-ag-** (1) gives the meaning of *habitually*, while **-ag-** (2) gives the meaning of *continue to*. When spoken by a Kikuyu the tone is quite different and is clearly understood, while the context, *in most cases*, helps.

-ag- (1) with the ordinary indicative and subjunctive mood tense means *do habitually*. Thus **rugaga Kiumia** means *make a habit of cooking on Sunday*, **nake Njoroje arugage** (subjunctive with **-ag-** (1)) **mĩthenya io ingĩ**. *whilst Njoroje habitually does the cooking, on the other days*.

-ag- (2) **Rugaga** when the **-ag-** has the second tone means *go on cooking for the time being* or *continue to cook*, and not "cook habitually". For example, **rugaga** (imperative with **-ag-** (2)) **na niĩ hatage** (subjunctive with **-ag-** (2)) means *go on cooking while I continue to sweep*, and not "you make a habit of doing the cooking each day while I make a habit of doing the sweeping".

For the beginner, while keeping in mind the difference between the two **-ag-** formative infixes, it is easier simply to learn it as:

-ag- means either *habitually* or *continue to*.

(f) **-ang-**

This is a formative infix giving the meaning of *a little bit more*, for example:

twara means *take*; **twaranga**, *take it a little bit further*
hũra means *beat*; **hũranga**, *beat a little bit more*
ruga means *cook*; **ruganga**, *cook a bit more*

(g) **-ir-** or **-er-**

These have the triple prepositional meaning of "to" or "for" or "at". For example:

twara is *take*; **twarira**, *take to* or *take for*
ruqa is *cook*; **rugir-**, *cook for* or *cook at*

If you use the **ir-** infix with any past tense which has the **-ir-** tense infix then the **r** of **-ir-** drops out for euphony, thus **a-twar-ir-ir-e**, *he took to*, becomes **a-twar-i(r)-ir-e**.

(h) **-ik-** or **-ek-**

This infix gives the English meaning *-able* to a word, for example the infinitive **kū-rug-a** is *to cook*, **kū-rug-ik-a** is *to be cookable*. Sometimes this infix appears to alter the meaning (so far as the English translation is concerned). For example, **taha** is *to draw* (a liquid), so **taha mai** is *draw water*, but **tah-ik-a** is *to vomit*, because the act of vomiting makes the liquid in the stomach *drawable*.

(i) **-ar-** or **-at-**

These two formative infixes tend to give a meaning of *become*. Thus **-thing-** is *to be pure*, **thingata** is *to become pure*. **-tunga-** is *to bend*, **tungata** is *to become bent down*, i.e. *to serve as a slave to a wealthy man* (from which we get the noun **ndungata**, *a servant* see Page 10).

-rūa- is *fight*, **rūara** is literally *to become in the state of fighting*, which by extension is confined to *fighting a disease*, and thus today means only *to be ill*.

REFLEXIVES

When one wants to express the idea which in English we make clear by using *self* with a pronoun, in Kikuyu the rule is to put **-i-** before the verb stem. This is really simply a process of using a reflexive pronoun, and the **-i-** is the reflexive pronoun used no matter what class of noun is referred to.

For example, **-tem-** is the stem of *cut*, so **i-tem-** is *cut oneself*, therefore *he cut himself* (in preceding unit of time) is **a-ra-i-tem-ire:** *I will cook for myself* is **ngūrugira**, and *the dog bit itself* would be **ngū irairūma**.

We have already seen that, basically, every Kikuyu verb stem is a monosyllable. Some verb stems that seem to be di- or trisyllabic are due to the fact that a reflexive has been prefixed to the

stem (as well as a formative infix occasionally) to give it what appears to European eyes to be a wholly different meaning, and one that has to be translated by a different verb altogether. For example, **-tig-** is the basic stem meaning *leave*. **-i-tig-ir** is given in many Kikuyu vocabularies and dictionaries as *to fear*, but it is basically the single syllable stem **-tig-** or *leave*; the **-ir-** is a formative infix denoting for, and the **-i-** is a reflexive, and the word really means *leave alone for oneself*, i.e. *to abandon, give way or give up*. It is by extension from this that it comes to mean *to be afraid* or *to fear*.

Similarly, **-e-her**, which seems to be a two-syllable basic stem meaning *to get out of the way*, is really the reflexive **-i-** (changes euphonicly to **-e-**), followed by the basic stem **-her-**, *to repent* or *to regret*. You *repent* or *regret for yourself that you have got into a position*, and by extension this means you *get out of this position*.

There are many such examples; **-iruta** is *to learn*, and **-ithamba** *to wash*, **-ereka** *to go towards*, etc.

EXERCISE ON LESSON VIII

1. Translate into Kikuyu

1. they love each other
2. take this stool a little bit further
3. they opened the huts for each other
4. these bananas would not be cookable
5. the young men would not like to fight each other for that bad girl

2. Translate into English

1. matingiamahingũriire
2. tũkũhandanga
3. ndingiamatwarĩre nyama
4. matiĩtiĩthanangagia
5. maratwarana Nairobi
6. tũkũaranangia ũhoro ũcio

6. get this meat cooked tomorrow
7. I will go on planting the garden you go on sweeping the house
8. do not make a habit of beating the cow
9. go on eating a little bit longer
10. cook the meat for the elders.

7. rugaganga
8. marathambĩra rĩũũ
9. nyoni ciakagĩra nyũmba ciao mĩĩni
10. tũtangĩagũĩthanĩrie tũtingĩaarĩrie ũhoro ũcio.

3. Explain how the Kikuyu language makes use of formative infixes and how sometimes a wholly different English meaning seems to be given to a basic verb stem by a formative, until the position has been analysed out clearly. Give examples.

LESSON IX

NARRATIVE AND OPTATIVE TENSES

The Narrative Tenses of the Indicative Mood

In all Bantu languages, including Kikuyu, there is a special tense for use in a consecutive narrative. In Kikuyu this is made up as follows:

Pronoun + **kī (gī)** + stem + ending, for example **agítwara nyama, akíruga, akíría** and *he took the meat and cooked and ate it.*

The **kī-**narrative tense infix may be doubled, for extra emphasis, for example **agítwara** is not "and he took", but *and so he took.* Of course the narrative tense may be used with the active and passive endings and, when necessary, with any formative infix.

The Optative Tense, in the Indicative Mood (sometimes known as the blessing and cursing tense).

In Kikuyu, as in some other Bantu languages, there is a special tense for use in connection with the "expression of a wish". This is made up of pronoun + **ro** + stem + ending; thus *may he die* is **a-ro-ku-a**; while *may he be blessed* is **a-ro-rath-im-ũo**.

CONJUNCTIONS

And is **na**. When it is used with pronouns in apposition to a noun (for purposes of emphasis), the **na** meaning *and is sometimes* as a matter of habit, joined to the pronoun. For example, **nake**, *and he, but it would be more correct* to write it as **na ke**, but by common usage this is never done.

PRONOUNS IN APPPOSITION

Both in the nature of object and of subject, pronouns are sometimes used in apposition to a noun, or a personal name, or even by themselves in front of a personal pronoun used as the subjunctive form of a verb tense in order to give emphasis.

Personal Pronouns when so used are:

nii

I or me

wee

thou or thee

ke or we
ithui
inyui
o

her or she, him or her
we or us
you
they or them

For example:

as for myself, I was beaten, but he was released, niĩ ngihũrũo, we akirekio.

as for him, they beat him, nake makimũhũra.

And, He, Jesus, took the cup, Nake, Jesu, akioya gikombe.

We (emphatically) do not wish to cook, ithui tũtikwenda kũruga.

OBJECTIVE PRONOUNS

Objective pronouns when not used in apposition, but as ordinary objectives, are made up by using the pronoun prefix that refers to the noun in question. Personal objective pronouns however are *me -n*; *you (singular) kũ*; *him or her, mũ* (this is tonally different from the *mũ*, *you (plural)*; *us, tũ*; *you (plural) mũ*; *them, ma*.

Objective pronoun prefixes are placed immediately before the verb stem, after the tense infix. Thus: *tu-kũ-mũ-hũra* is *we are going to beat him*.

VERBAL NOUNS

We have seen that any infinitive can be used as a noun belonging to Class VIII. Infinitives are so used both as subjects and objects. *I want to cook* is *ngwenda kũruga*. *They would not know (how) to cook, matĩngimenya kũruga*.

Sometimes the Kikuyu infinitive, when used as a verbal noun, is more correctly translated into English by a present participle.

For example, the English *cooking meat is difficult* would be written in Kikuyu *kũ-ruga nyama kũri hinya*.

THE ENCLITIC NĪ

I have never been able to find a satisfactory rule to explain when, in Kikuyu, the enclitic conjunction *nĩ* should be used and when it should be omitted. It is often used at the start of a sentence, if the sentence starts off with a verb, for example *I want to go to Nairobi* would be *Nĩ ngwenda gũthĩ Nairobi*, rather than *Ngwenda gũthĩ Nairobi*.

WORDS USED FOR PUNCTUATION

Since the Kikuyu language had never been written before the coming of the European, punctuation marks like commas, quotation marks, full stops etc. did not exist. A narrative, or a sentence, was broken up by means of the introduction of such words as **atiri**, **atiriri**, **riri**, **ati**, **ri**. **Atiriri** and **atiri** commonly seem to open new paragraphs and new sentences. **Ati** most commonly is the opening of a phrase in inverted commas, i.e. quoted speech, or sometimes just as a comma or pause in the sentence. **ri** is much like a comma and **riri** a colon or semi-colon.

THE VERBS "TO BE" AND "TO HAVE"

Both these verbs in Kikuyu are *defective*, having a very limited number of tenses, and used *without* the correct endings, **-a**, **io**, **ũo**, **io**.

The stem of *to be* is **-ri-**, so the present is:

ndi (n ri)	I am
ũri	you are
ari	he or she is
tũri	we are
mũri	you are
mari	they are

Referring to non-humans, the pronoun stem simply goes in front of **-ri-**. The past of the verb *to be* is pronoun + **a** + **ri**.

nda-a-ri	I was
ũ-a-ri (wari)	you were
a-a-rũ	he was
tũ-a-ri (twari)	we were
mũ-a-ri (mwari)	you were
ma-a-ri	they were

The verb *to have* is simply *to be* followed by **na**. For example:

I am is "**ndi**", but *I have* is "**ndi na**"; *they are* is "**mari**", but *they have* is "**mari na**".

INTERROGATIVES

In Kikuyu, a question is expressed by a change of tone, not by any alteration of words. In English we say as a statement of fact *you are a cook*, but as a question *are you a cook?* In Kikuyu we say in both cases **we ũri mũrugi**, but the tone is changed for a ques-

tion. This interrogative tone is best learnt by the help of a Kikuyu person, in conversation. In the written word a question mark shows where the voice has to be changed in tone in order to make a question. Questions can also be established by the use of interrogative words, such as **niki** *why*, **nũũ** *who*, or by **rĩ** *when*, which comes after the verb; while **niki** or **nũũ** can be used either before or after the verb.

ADVERBS

Adverbs occur in Kikuyu, for example **riria** *when*; **kaingi** *often*; **rimwe** *once*.

FURTHER VERB TENSES

The -na- and -a-na- Tenses

These two very useful Kikuyu tenses are not at all easy to define in terms of European grammatical structure, having no real equivalent at all.

The -na- tense Infix

The first of the two, in which **-na-** is inserted as a tense infix before the verb stem, is not normally used except in the negative.

This tense infix can be used in the indicative mood with the negatives appropriate to the indicative mood (i.e. **-nd-** before a vowel pronoun and **-ti** after a pronoun starting with a consonant). When so used, it has the meaning of a very emphatic negative past, but only within the present unit of time. For example, **ndi-na-twara**, *I did not take* (or *I did not so much as take*). **tũ-ti-na-ruga**, *we definitely have not cooked*.

This **-na-** infix for negative emphasis can also be combined with the narrative **-ki-** tense; thus while **ma-ti-na-ruga** would mean *they definitely did not cook*, **ma-ti-na-ki-ruga** would mean *and so they did not so much as cook*.

The **-na-** tense infix can also be used in subordinate clauses (with the appropriate negatives which go with conditional subjectives and subordinate clauses (i.e. **-ta-** after the subject pronoun).

The **-na-** tense used in a subordinate clause has the meaning of *before*: thus **Ruga tũtanaria** means *Cook before we eat*.

The -a-na- tenses infix

This dual syllable tense infix **-a-na-** may be used both in the indicative mood, as well as in conjunction with the conditional

tense prefix, **-ngi-**, and in subordinate clauses, and also with the **-ka-** subjunctive future, with of course the appropriate negative form when required.

In the affirmative, within the indicative mood, **-a-na-** in front of the stem gives the meaning of *often* and *frequently*. Thus **tū-a-na-hūr-ūo** would mean *We have often been beaten*, and **a-a-na-ruga** is *he has often cooked*. In the negative within the indicative mood the **-an-a-** tense infix makes the opposite of *often*, which is *never*. For example:

ma-ti-a-na-gūra is *they have never bought*.

ndi-a-na-ruga mūgate is *I have never cooked bread before*.

Combined with the conditional tense infix **-ngi-** in the affirmative the **a-na-** tense infix gives the meaning of *often*, but with a conditional connotation. Thus **i-ngi-ana-ruga nyama ūgūo, i-ngi-ūi nī ūendaga ūgwo**, is *I would often have cooked meat in this way had I known you habitually liked it so*. With a negative and the **-ka-** subjunctive in a subordinate clause, the **a-na-** can also be used to make an ultra-strong imperative with a *never* sense, thus **ndū-ka-a-na-ūrag-ane**. *Thou shalt never kill* or *Thou shalt not kill under any circumstances*.

EXERCISE ON LESSON IX

1. Translate into Kikuyu

- and he took the cows, and he herded them on the grassy field and they became ill
- he said "May I die"
- and so Njoroge and Wanjiru cooked the bananas and ate them
- as for us we will build a house
- and so they took you (singular) to the hill

- he wants to cook meat
- I do not wish to eat today
- as for me I am taking my wife to Nairobi
- and so they gave us trees to plant in the garden and we planted them
- and so they opened this house for us.

2. Translate into English

- agikimera (agikimaira) atiri tūgūtware ūhiū witū mūgūnda
- we, Bwana, akiuga ndikwenda kūrīa
- marotiga kūhanda
- matingikiamatwarīre nyama
- agīūka, akīruga, akīrīa

- gitonga kīu gikinjira, nīi, ati nduge ngikiruga
- athamaki marorathimūo
- ithui nake tūgigitema mīti io
- makimūtware mūgūnda makīmūhūra
- inyui na Njoroge rūgamai

3. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. I am a male person
2. he was a big loutish boy
3. we are elders
4. I was a cook
5. you were a chief
6. are you a young uninitiated girl?
7. who wants meat?

4. *Translate into English*

1. nĩ ndĩ mũrogi
2. inyui mũtirĩ ega (aega)
3. ũarĩ gũkũ ira?
4. tũri na nyoni nyingĩ
5. mũrũthi ndũri na nyama

5. *Translate into Kikuyu*

1. we have not so much as eaten meat today
2. we have often built huts

6. *Translate into English*

1. ndinahanda marigũ mũgũnda
2. itangĩanaruga
3. mũtikandarũe

8. why have they taken the cows to the river?
9. the tree was tall
10. the women are here
11. are you a good witch doctor?
12. often I make a habit of eating meat by day and bananas at night.

6. nũũ ũkũhũra Njoroge?
7. ingĩkĩmahũra?
8. ũhĩngũrĩrũo niki?
9. rũũĩ rũarĩ rũnene
10. njangĩrĩ itirĩ gũkũ.

3. you are not ever to take the oxen to the river
4. I have often fought him

4. itanaaka nyũmba nĩngũira Njoroge
5. ndinamũrugĩra.

LESSON X

HOW TO GO ON LEARNING

While you are learning the first nine lessons it is most important that you should learn to pronounce Kikuyu properly. The best way is to get an intelligent educated Kikuyu to help you. Read words aloud and make him correct your pronunciation and start to try and talk with him. Start making your own vocabulary, listing nouns in their correct classes, using the singular prefix to guide you. When a noun, by its prefix, seems to be in a class which does not fit in with what you have learnt, try to discover the reason. Sometimes you may not be able to do so. Usually you will succeed. For example, you will find that the Kikuyu word for a *large branching bush* is **kī-hinga**. Why should a bush of this type have *shut* as its basic stem, and why should it be in the man-made or soulless objects class rather than in Class II of trees, or Class III of lesser plants? The answer lies in the fact that using branching bushes was the normal means of shutting the entrance to a homestead at night, in the olden days. It is only by subsequent extension of meaning that the word has come to be used for *any* large growing bush.

To take another example, you will find that *a gap in the front teeth* is called **kīng'ethū**; again it is another word in Class IV. In English I suppose a gap is abstract, but in Kikuyu such a gap is a man-made object, having been caused by human intervention in extracting one or more teeth. Or again you will find that a *bee-hive* is **mūatū**, and a *homestead* **mūcīi**, both of them are in Class II which is predominantly the class which contains things with second-class spirits. If you study Kikuyu bee-keeping as carried out in the olden days, you will discover that a hive was believed to have a spirit, which at times needed placating in some way; thus bee-hives have spirits. Similarly all ceremonies connected with homesteads equally show the concept of a "spirit of the homestead" which is quite distinct from the spirit of the ancestors.

In making your own vocabulary, try to link the stem of a noun with that of some basic verb; if you can. It is not always possible.

We have seen above that the stem of the verb *to shut* is the basic stem of its noun *bush*, and we have seen why. The word for *bee-hive* is *mũ-atũ* as we have just seen, this links with the verb stem *-hat-*, to *stick close together*. The *h* has become silent (a very common Kikuyu feature). But why is a bee-hive a thing (with a second class spirit) which has been stuck together? The answer is simple. All old true Kikuyu bee-hives were made up by taking a length of tree stem and splitting it open—*(h)atũra* (or *unsticking it*); hollowing out the centre and then sticking it together again. The act of sticking the two hollowed halves together created the bee-hive.

In listing verbs in your own vocabulary, if a verb stem has more than one syllable, try and break it down into a basic syllable and formative syllable, which alters or modifies the meaning. Sometimes it is easy, like *-hingũra* *open* from *-hing-* *shut*, with the reversion *-ũr*. Sometimes it is less obvious, like *-ti-* *honour*, and *ti-ith-* *help*.

Get an African to dictate to you slowly while you write down what he says, so as to get accustomed to breaking up the sounds into the correct words.

Take a book in Kikuyu, of which you can get an English translation, such as the New Testament, and then take a passage and analyse the words in each sentence to see how the Kikuyu means the same as the English. The essence of good translation is not to translate each word in one language literally by a corresponding word of the other language, but to write a sentence which *in its entirety* means the same thing as the sentence which is translated. Analyse each sentence, to start with, on paper, and pay special attention to tenses and to formative infixes in long words.

KEY TO EXERCISES

KEY TO LESSON I

1.

1. mūka waku mwegā
2. mūrugi wakwa mūnyinyi
3. mūthamaki ūmwe mūūru
4. airītu atatū akuhī
5. arūme aitū ana araya

6. andū ana anene
7. mūhiki wake mwerū
8. mūtumia ūmwe mūūru
9. mūrugi mūūru
10. aanake aku atano airū.

2.

1. our good elders
2. his black bride
3. four bad rulers
4. their tall cooks
5. one big young man

6. his small girls
7. one of their young men
8. our good cook
9. your bad married women
10. my good wife.

3. Words denoting human beings can be put into other classes, such as Class IV, inanimate objects, or Class III, which is strictly the class of lesser plants, insects, animals and reptiles.

In the first instance, this is done to denote scorn, or hatred or dislike. Thus a fool, a cripple, a miser and a lout of a boy are treated in this manner. In the second case humans who are pitiable may be demoted to Class III, such as *ngombo*, a *slave*, *njangiri outcast*. In rare cases, humans who are closely connected with religious matters are also taken out of Class I, into class V for example *ithe father*.

KEY TO LESSON II

1.

1. mūtamayū wakwa mūrāya
2. migūnda yao (i-ao) mīuru
3. mīriū ina mīega
4. mūgumo ūmwe mūrāya
5. mūthandūkū waku mūūru

6. mūrūthi ūmwe mwegā
7. mwere witū mūrāya
8. mūgūnda wakwa mūnene
9. mūtūng'ū waku
10. mītamayū itano mīrāya.

2.

1. ng'ombo yaku (īaku) nguhi
2. njangiri imwe njūru
3. nyūmba yake nene
4. ng'ombe ithano nguhi
5. ndūrūme igiri njirū

6. nūgū yakwa imwe nyinyi
7. ndahi inya njerū
8. nyaga imwe ndaya njūru
9. ndegwa yakwa nene ndune
10. nyaragita yaku ndaya.

3.
 1. his big hut
 2. one short tree
 3. their five good gardens
 4. my bad disease
 5. a short fig tree
 6. big tall fig tree
4.
 1. my tall grass
 2. one big hut
 3. his slave
 4. good illnesses
 5. one white ram
5. The nouns which go into Class II are in the main those which are considered to have a spirit inferior to a human one, but rather higher than that which inhabits, reptiles, most animals and lesser plants. These Class II nouns include trees, epidemic diseases, the moon, and one or two animals which are removed from Class III. Where creatures that would otherwise be in Class III are promoted to Class II, it is in order to show honour and appreciation of them.
6. In Class III, the singular and plural prefix is the same, and in writing it is not possible to distinguish between singular and plural, except where there is a demonstrative pronoun associated, but in speaking the singulars and plurals are tonally different. In most cases, context will decide whether singular or plural is involved, because of the pronoun part of the verb that goes with it.

7. their five lions
8. my one good garden
9. bad diseases
10. five short three-horned chameleons.
6. my bad bird
7. our good spinach
8. their illnesses
7. your earache
10. their bitter spinach.

KEY TO LESSON III

1.
 1. gikombe giakwa kinene
 2. iti ciao nyinyi
 3. irigũ inya njirũ
 4. ihembe ciake ithatũ
 5. kigunyũ kimwe kifũru
2.
 1. my great joy
 2. their black louts (uninitiated big boys)
 3. their red quiver
3.
 1. maitho maku
 2. mahiga make manene
 3. riũmba riakwa rierũ
 4. ithe wake mũraya
 5. cĩcũ wakwa mwega
6. kin'gangĩ kimwe kinene
7. ithaka ciakwa njega
8. kiharo giaku
9. kirima giakwa
10. kieha giitũ.
4. your one shoe
5. one small bone
6. your short stool
7. a black crocodile.
6. ithanũa riake rinene
7. magego maku mana moru (maũru)
8. matoka make mana makuhi
9. itimũ riaku rĩraya

4.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. their big stones (hearth-stones) | 6. our good father |
| 2. my spear | 7. your teeth |
| 3. their short mother | 8. the good sun |
| 4. one big banana tree | 9. the big black hearth |
| 5. my good eyes | 10. my white clay. |

5.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. rūhuhu rūakwa rūnyinyi | 4. rūūa rūmwe rūnyinyi |
| 2. rūrīmī rūake rūirū | 5. 'hiū ciake |
| 3. rūūi rūaku rūene | 6. rūthanju rūmwe rūraya rūerū |

6.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. their rivers | 4. your tongue |
| 2. the bad wind | 5. one big tooth |
| 3. your short wand | |

7. These four words for human beings that go into Class V because of their close connection with religious ceremonial, and therefore leave Class I, nevertheless retain their Class I status for purposes of adjective and pronoun agreements. They are the only words in which adjectives or pronouns in agreement do NOT take the same class prefix. Thus *ithe*, *father*, or (*inyina*, *mother*, belong to Class V, and should take the adjectival prefix of this class, but they do not. A *good father* is *ithe mwega*, NOT *ithe riega*, and *their mother* is (*inyina wao*, NOT (*inyina yao*.

8. Words in Class V are all closely connected with magic, religious and ceremonial of one kind or another, and include words as diverse as spears (inanimate man-made objects), crinum lilies (plants), fathers (humans), teeth (parts of the body) etc. which should, by right, go into other classes. Words in Class VI are linked by the concept of undulation and so the class includes *rūrīmī*, tongue, which is just of the body, *rūhuhu*, bat, which is an animal etc.

KEY TO LESSON IV

1. The vast majority of words in Class VII are abstract nouns, and indeed this is the class of abstract nouns. A few words in the class do not at first sight appear to the European mind to be abstract, such as *ūthiū face*, and *ūhiu, live-stock*, but both are actually abstract, one being really "the facial expression", and the other stock in the collective sense.

On the other hand, some words which are clearly abstract DO NOT go into this class, but into other classes, particularly Class IV, for various reasons.

Words which go into Class IV are such things as *kīcha grief*, *gīkeno joy* *kīrumi curse*, and similar words which are basically "man-made".

2.
 1. wendo (ũendo) wakwa
 2. ũiru wake
 3. ũtukũ ũmwe mũirũ
 4. mawatho mao moru (maũrũ)
 5. ũhoro wakwa mwega

3.
 1. their foolishness
 2. my white face
 3. our black magic
 4. a big law
 5. your good love

4.
 1. matũ make
 2. gũoko (gwoko) gwaku kũmwe
kũega (kwega)
 3. magũrũ maitũ maraya

5.
 1. your good place
 2. their big places
 3. my big arms

6.
 1. kagũnda gakwa
 2. kamũtĩ gake
 3. kairĩtu gakwa kega (kaega)
 4. karũũĩ gakwa kairũ
 5. tũhiga tũitũ tũnini

6. ũgeni ũmwe
7. ũiru waku mũũru
8. ũthamaki witũ mũnene
9. ũgũ waku mwega
10. ũrogi wake mũũru.

6. good light
7. your visit
8. one news of mine
9. their live-stock
10. a good kingdom.

4. matũ mao mairũ
5. kũgũrũ gwakwa kũerũ
6. handũ haitũ
7. kũndũ kwanyũ.

4. his black ear
5. his short arm
6. some places.

6. tũitho tũaku tũirũ
7. gathanwa gake
8. tũgũnda tũtano tũnini
9. tũmũndũ twakwa tũnana
10. kamũrimũ gake koru (kaũru)

KEY TO LESSON V

1.
 1. andũ mũgwanja oru (aũru)
 2. ndegwa kenda njirũ
 3. athamaki ao ikumi oru (aũru)
 4. andũ mũrongo ũĩĩ na atatũ
 5. atumia igana airũ

2.
 1. ten highway robbers
 2. my six big stones
 3. one hundred lions
 4. seven big people
 5. his twenty-five wives
 6. seventeen birds

6. anake ngiri oru (aũru)
7. njũĩ mũrongo ĩtano na ĩtatũ
8. ĩtĩ ĩnya njerũ
9. maũthĩũ mũrongo ĩtandatũ na matatũ mairũ.

7. my one hundred and five big huts
8. nine bad bats
9. eight big estates
10. eight fathers.

3.

1. ndegwa ino njirũ
2. mũndũ ũcio mũraya
3. mĩtĩ ino mĩraya
4. irĩma irĩa
5. ng'ombe icio njirũ
6. rũũĩ rũrũ rũraya

7. arũme acio ikũmi araya
8. mĩtĩ ino ikũmi na ĩna
9. mĩgũnda irĩa mĩnyinyi
10. mathanũa mau manene mata-ndatũ.

4. Demonstrative pronouns are based upon fixed rules. There are three in the singular and three in the plural for each noun class. These are *this*, *that (near by)*, and *that (far away)*. *These, those (near by)* and *those (far away)*.

Where a pronoun prefix starts with a consonant other than *m*, then *this* and *these* are made by doubling the pronoun prefix. Thus *rũ* is the pronoun prefix singular for Class VI, and *rũrũ* is *this* for that class, while *tũ* is the pronoun prefix plural for Class X, and *tũtũ* is *these* for that class.

If the pronoun prefix is a vowel other than *ĩ*, *this* and *these* are made by doubling the vowel and adding a *y* between, thus we have *ũyũ* and *aya*.

If the pronoun prefix is *ĩ*, then *this* and *these* are made by adding *-no*.

If the pronoun prefix is *ma-* then *-ya-* is added. To make *that* or *those* (nearby), if the pronoun prefix is a vowel other than *ĩ*, or if it is *ma* or *cĩ* then add *cio*, but if it starts with a consonant other than *m* or *c*, add *u*. If the pronoun prefix is *ĩ*, then add *o*.

To make *that* or *those (far away)*, no matter what the prefix is add *-ria*.

5.

1. those five bad people
2. that person
3. that red river
4. these stones of mine
5. those ten misers (rich men)

6. these trees of theirs
7. these places
8. this good place
9. my little short boy
10. some places.

KEY TO LESSON VI

1.

1. arume acio ikũmi mararĩa marigũ
2. ndĩrarĩa nyama ino
3. ekũhata nyũmba
4. tũhandire matoka mau maraya
5. akaenda nyama

6. mũndũ ũcio mũũru arahũrire ngombe ino njirũ
7. mĩtĩ ino ikahandũo
8. nyoni njirũ ithano ciaakite nyũmba mĩtĩ-inĩ.

- 2
- 2.
1. we are taking the cows to the grassy field
 2. those trees have been planted in my garden
 3. we are taking the goats to the river
 - 3 4. three wives of mine will cook the meat (next unit of time)
 5. we will (present unit of time)
3. The Kikuyu system of tense structure is one in which tense is indicated by a prefix before the verb stem, and sometimes with an infix before the verb ending as well, in past tenses. Any tense may potentially have one of four endings, two of which are active and two passive. The active ones are -a and -ia, and the passive are -ũo and -io.
4. The Kikuyu concept of time is not quite the same as our past, present and future. It is instead "present unit of time" with "preceding unit of time" and "succeeding unit of time" and beyond these in either direction indefinite future and indefinite past. The unit of time is normally from dawn to dawn, but if *specified* may be a week, a month, a year etc., Once specified, all tenses must be in keeping with that unit of time. If in January we have specified that we are talking in terms of "this year", then anything that happens up to December 31st is within the unit of time specified, and will be correctly described in the present unit of time tenses.
- 4
- 5
- 6

KEY TO LESSON VII

- 1
1. ingĩũka nĩngũruga nyama
 2. ndiraenda mũgũnda ũyũ
 3. ingĩrũo ũhoro ũcio ndingĩtwara mĩtumia wakwa rũũ rĩngĩ
 - 1 4. tĩga kũhũra ndegwa ĩno njirũ
 5. ndũruga marigũ maya
- 2.
1. those ten men would not plant bananas in my garden
 2. that tree is not to be cut down by those wives of ours
 - 2 3. tell those ten elders to take their live-stock to the river
 4. we would not cook the meat until our father has come
 5. they will not sleep (lie down to rest) unless they have planted the grass
6. angĩũkĩre angĩrugire nyama
 7. ũngĩũka ndatwara iratũ
 8. angĩaakire nyumba mũka angĩamwendire
 9. tĩga kũhanda mwere
 10. ndingĩenda ũiru.
6. don't take the married women to Nairobi.
 7. I won't cook today I'll cook tomorrow
 8. look at this bad man now.
 9. unless you cook you may not sleep
 10. take the little boys to the river.

3. In Kikuyu a very strong negative imperative is made by using the word **tiga** followed by an infinitive, i.e. **tiga kūuga** is *don't cook*.

A very strong affirmative imperative is made by a form of negative which implies a threat. Thus **ndūruge**, which is literally *don't cook*, means *just don't cook and see what happens to you*, and so has an affirmative meaning *you must cook*.

KEY TO LESSON VIII

- 1.
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. nī marendana | 6. rugithia nyama ino rūciū |
| 2. twaranga gītī gīkī | 7. nī ngūhandaga mūgūnda we
hataga nyūmba |
| 3. mahingūraniire nyūmba | 8. tiga kūhūruga ngombe |
| 4. marigū mau matingīrugīka | 9. rīanga |
| 5. anake matingīenda kūhūranīra
mūirītu ūcio mūūru | 10. rugīra athurī nyama. |
- 2.
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. they would not have opened for them | 6. we will talk a little more with each other about that matter |
| 2. we will go on planting a little bit longer | 7. go on cooking a little bit more |
| 3. I would not have taken meat to them | 8. they are swimming in the river |
| 4. they do not continue to help one another a little more | 9. birds build their nests in the trees |
| 5. they are taking each other (accompanying one another) to Nairobi | 10. if we had not greeted each other (with gifts) we would have not discussed that matter. |
3. Kikuyu, like other Bantu languages, has many formative infixes which are put between a verb stem and a verb ending in order to modify or extend the meaning. By use of these infixes, a basic verb stem can be made to alter and have a meaning requiring a quite different verb in English. For instance, **-hing-** is *shut* but by adding a formative infix, **-ūr-** which is reversional transitive, we make *shut* into *open*, (i.e. *unshut*). Similarly, **-rī-** is the stem of *eat*, **rī-ith-īa** is *cause to eat*, which is in English *to herd* or *to take stock out to pasture and cause them to eat*. **-hūr-** is *beat*, **-hūr-an-a** is *beat each other*, or *fight*. Many of the formative infixes can be used with others to build up a long word, each syllable of which alters or varies the basic meaning of the stem. For example, **hing-ūr-an-ang-ir-a** has four formative infixes, one reversional **-ūr-**, one reciprocal **-an-**, one **-ang-** which means a little more, and one **-ir-** prepositional for *to* or *for*.

KEY TO LESSON IX

1.

1. agítwara ng'ombe, agiciríithia
kíhaaro, ikírúara
2. akíuga ndírokua
3. Njoroge na Wanjirú magíkíruga
marigú makimaria
4. ithuí tūgúaka nyumba
5. magígútwara kírími-iní

6. ekwenda kúruga nyama
7. ndikwenda kúrúa úmúthi
8. níi ndatwara mütumia wakwa
Nairobi
9. magígítúhe mítí túkahande
múgúnda túkímihanda
10. makítúhingúrira nyumba íno.

2.

1. and so he said to them we will
take out stock to the garden
2. and he, the Bwana, said I do not
want to eat
3. may they give up planting
4. and so they would not have
taken them meat
5. he came, he cooked and he ate
6. and so that miser said to me

- that I was to cook and I
cooked
7. may the elders be blessed
 8. and so together we and he cut
down the trees
 9. and so they took him to the
garden and beat him
 10. you and Njoroge stand up.

3.

1. Níi ndí mündú mürúme
2. we aarí kíhí
3. ithuí túrí athuri
4. ndarí mürugi
5. wee warí múthamaki
6. úrí karigú?
7. nūú úkwenda nyama?

8. matwaríte ngombe rúúí níki?
9. mútí warí mūraya
10. atumia marí haha
11. úrí mündú múgo mwega?
12. kaingí ndíaga nyama múthenya
namo marigú útukú.

4.

1. I am a dealer in black magic
2. you are not good
3. were you here yesterday?
4. we have many birds
5. the lion has no meat
6. who will beat Njoroge?

7. and if I should beat them?
8. why has it been opened for you?
9. the river was big
10. the highway robbers are not
here.

5.

1. tūtinaría nyama úmúthi
2. tūanaaka nyumba

3. ndúkaanatware ngombe rúúí
4. twanahúrana nake

6.

1. I did not so much as plant
bananas in the garden
2. if I had not often cooked
3. you are not ever to fight

4. before I build a hut I will tell
Njoroge
5. I did not so much as cook for
him.