

**Jesus Christ  
Our *Mũthamaki*  
(Ideal Elder)**

An African Christological Study Based on  
the *Agikũyũ* Understanding of Elder

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**P. N. Wachege**

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Each church epoch understands, presents and concretely interprets the same Jesus Christ according to its needs and aspirations - a process theology calls inculturation. It is with this awareness that the author endeavours to develop an *Agikūyū Mūthamaki* Christology, basing it on his researches to establish the *Agikūyū* understanding of the concept of Elderhood, on Biblical sources and on the Church's magisterial documents. The book draws intricate analogies between the *Agikūyū Ūthamaki* and the elderhood of Christ and draws the conclusion that Jesus Christ is the *Mūthamaki par excellence*.

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## General Introduction

This book, *Jesus Christ our Mūhamaki (Ideal Elder)*, is a Christological study based upon the Agikūyū understanding of *elder*. It is both anthropological and theological: anthropological in that it investigates from oral, written and experiential material the traditional Agikūyū understanding of elder; theological in that it examines the meaning and relevance of the Christ event from a new Agikūyū perspective.

Various reasons have motivated the subject matter. Vatican II and other post-Vatican II magisterial directives and documents are quite emphatic about making theological inculturation a reality. In *Ad Gentes*, article 22, we are informed that no culture is totally satanic. Every culture is imbued with valuable elements (Flannery 1975:839ff). Hence, the document teaches us that all cultures, including the Agikūyū culture, have their potential contribution to Christianity. This document does not merely ask us to utilize our cultures for the purpose of the Church. It also maintains that the task of inculturation is an obligation and that theological investigation must necessarily be stirred up in each major socio-cultural area (Flannery 1975:256). Likewise, in his address to the bishops of Zaire and, indeed, to the whole of Africa, Pope John Paul II accentuated this:

One of the aspects of this evangelization is the *inculturation* of the Gospel, the Africanisation of the Church. . . . That is part of the indispensable efforts to incarnate the message of Christ. The gospel, certainly is not identified with cultures, and transcends them all. But the Kingdom that the gospel proclaims is lived by man deeply tied to a culture (Hickey 1982:258).

He furthermore stressed that in theologizing:

It is important to carry out a thorough investigation of the cultural traditions of the various populations and of the philosophical ideas that underlie them in order to detect

The book's kernel is Chapter 6 where an effort is made to create an Agiküyü *Mūhamaki* Christology. I endeavour to reflect systematically on Christ's mystery from the perspective of the Agiküyü sense of elderhood. After comparing the Agiküyü elderhood and that of Christ to find analogies between the two types of elderhood, the section ends with further interpretations of the similarities and differences and considers Christ's elderhood in the light of other Christian mysteries. Given the interconnection of Christian mysteries, our Agiküyü *Mūhamaki* Christology has implications for our understanding of the Trinity, incarnation, redemption and ecclesiology. This chapter strives to show the goal or finality of our Christology. The method followed is based on the teachings of Vatican I (DS 3016) and Vatican II (*Optatam Totius*, art. 16 and *Ad Gentes*, art. 22) as the chapter explicates.

Chapter 7 focuses on the pastoral—spiritual, catechetical and liturgical—relevance of our Agiküyü *Mūhamaki* Christology. The chapter endeavours to show that, since our theological reflections have revealed Christ as the *Mūhamaki par excellence*, these facts have important implications for catechetical and theological purposes. The chapter ends with general conclusions.