



**Further Researches Into Kikuyu and Kamba Religious Beliefs and Customs.**

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FURTHER RESEARCHES INTO KIKUYU AND KAMBA RELIGIOUS  
BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS.

[WITH PLATE XLIV.]

By C. W. HOBLEY, C.M.G., East Africa Protectorate.

IN a recent number of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (vol. xl, p. 428) the author published a paper on the beliefs known as *thahu* among the Kikuyu, and its connection with the circumcision rite, and it was found to give such an insight into the influence which the belief in the ancestral spirits has upon the life of the natives, that the line of enquiry has been further continued in Kikuyu and extended to Ukamba. With regard to the latter area the author is greatly indebted to the assistance of Hon. C. Dundas, who, while serving in Kitui district, has made careful enquiries on many points.

One interesting feature now elucidated is the dying curse—the *kirume* of Kikuyu and *kiume* of Ukamba; the general idea of this being that a dying person can put a curse upon property belonging to him, or can lay a curse upon another person, but only upon a person belonging to his own family; thus, for example, the head of a village, when dying, can lay a curse on a certain plot of land owned by him and will that it shall not pass out of the family, and if a descendant sells it, it is believed that the speedy death of the offender is the result. A case recently came to the author's knowledge where an elder was offered a very tempting sum for a particular piece of land, and equivalent land elsewhere, but it was refused by the owner because it had come down to him with a *kirume* on it. This is a very interesting revelation, because when one comes to consider it, it is undoubtedly the genesis of a last will or testament. Furthermore, it is the rude beginning of our principle of "entail." It moreover shows that these people have reached the stage of individual tenure in land.

In some of the additional examples of *thahu* which are cited later, cases will be noted in which the hut is affected, and if the curse is not removed, it has to be forthwith demolished; this feature appears to be worthy of note, and it may in some measure account for the low type of domestic architecture among these tribes, for it becomes obvious that there is but little incentive to build large permanent structures if there is a chance that, owing to the incidence of a *thahu*, the owner may have to demolish it at any moment. The author's attention was first called to this point by a learned French missionary who has studied the Kikuyu for many years. A further point upon which enquiries have been made is the attitude of the native mind towards the question of punishment for murder, and the effect of the

substitution by Government of the *lex talionis* in murder cases for the native law of compensation.

Much doubtless remains to be learnt upon all these matters, and it is difficult to decide the point when such comparative finality is reached in any line of research as to warrant publication. It is, however, submitted that as soon as one is convinced of the principles governing a certain group of customs that it is best to render them accessible to other workers, as this should stimulate further enquiry, and the wider the discussion the better.

The effect of the belief in the ancestral spirits, the *Aïimu* of Ukamba and *Ngoma* of Kikuyu, upon the actions of members of these tribes has, it is believed, never received much attention from those concerned in their administration, and consequently its influence has not received due consideration; it is, however, maintained that the question is not merely an academic one, but of the greatest practical value to the administrator, the missionary, and the student. This influence of the spirits, or the belief in this influence, which is in effect the same thing, is the real key to a close understanding of the native mind; the natives' life is so permeated with these beliefs, and they have consequently such a profound effect on their actions, that until we thoroughly understand this question we are bound to be perpetually brought face to face with what appear to be absolute enigmas. Progressive Europeans in East Africa are apt to pooh-pooh these beliefs, and to feel very impatient with them, as they undoubtedly, in general effect, tend to conservatism, and to check development according to our standards. This is probably the case, but the fact must, however, not be lost sight of that on the whole they act as moral restraints, and perform the functions which a religion fulfils among people of a higher culture, and even if Government formally abolished them by legislation it would not affect the belief one iota, and before these beliefs are officially discountenanced we must be quite certain that we have something better and something equally adapted to the native mind to put in their place, or blank materialism will result, and the effect of this negation of faith and the freedom from all moral restraint upon a savage is appalling to contemplate. There is practical evidence of this in the criminal tendencies evinced by numbers of natives who have drifted into the up-country towns in British East Africa and cut themselves adrift from their tribal life. As far as can be seen we have nothing to hand at present which is quite suited to people at this stage of culture, and it would therefore appear that the best policy will be carefully to study their present beliefs and encourage them, at the same time with the help of that knowledge, and influence based on that knowledge, to induce the people gradually to give up any repugnant features of their ritual and retain the better elements. It is of great interest to note how the more intelligent elders respond to enquiry into their beliefs once they are convinced that such enquiry is undertaken in the proper spirit, and nothing convinces them so much of the *bona fides* of our intentions as a sympathetic study of their own customs and a demonstration of one's knowledge of them.

## FURTHER EXAMPLES OF THAHU AND SPIRIT BELIEFS.

*Kikuyu.*

*Kikuyu*.—1. If a tree falls on a hut it is considered extremely unlucky, the hut will not be abandoned, but it is necessary for the head of the village to kill a ram; it is led round the village before being killed. If this was not done, the owner of the village, or at any rate the woman who lived in the hut, would become the victim of a *thahu* or curse. The owner of the village, however, may not enter the hut until the sacrifice has been made to appease the *ngoma* or ancestral spirits who inflict the *thahu*. This applies to both sections of the tribe, viz., those circumcised Kikuyu fashion and those Masai fashion.

2. If a jackal (*mbwei*) comes into a village and calls at night when the inhabitants are asleep, the people say it is a spirit calling for meat, and it is considered very unlucky, and the owner of the village will next morning take a male goat (*nthenge*), lead it round the village, and kill it at about the spot where the jackal called out. Pieces are cut from the loin, lungs, heart, and each of the limbs, and piled up into two little heaps as offerings to the *ngoma*, who are believed to have called out through the jackal as medium. The sex of the *ngoma* is not known, so to make sure two little heaps are laid out, one for any male spirits and one for any female spirits. No bone must be broken in any meat offered to the spirits.

The next morning the elders go to the place where the two offerings of meat were deposited and pour out a libation of beer on each. They then address the *ngoma* as follows: "O ye spirits, take this meat and beer and give us goats and cattle and children, and do not bring *thahu* to this village." The people of both circumcision guilds follow this procedure.

3. If a certain snake, called *nyamuyathi* by the Kikuyu, enters a hut, it is necessary to pour some milk or fat on the floor for the reptile to drink; it may drink and leave, or it may not. If it does, well and good; if not, the owner of the village has to kill a sheep, cook some of its fat, and pour it out in the hut, saying at the same time: "We offer you some fat to drink, we beg of you to leave us." It is believed that an *ngoma* or spirit has come in the guise of a snake, and on no account must such a snake be killed. After the sacrifice of the sheep has been made the snake will always go, but it mysteriously disappears, no one sees it leave. If the snake stayed on in the hut, the wife who owned the hut and her children, would be *thahu*.

4. If a stranger comes to a village and dies in a hut there, the hut is completely abandoned if the owner belongs to the Kikuyu guild; a big hole is broken away in the side of the hut by taking out several of the wall slabs or planks (*Mihirigo*); the corpse is left inside and the hyænas come and carry it off. The hut is then left to fall into ruin, and nothing is removed from it, such as cooking pots, beer, jars, etc. The men who break the hole in the wall are even

considered unclean, the same as if they had handled the corpse, and after performing the duty go straight off into the bush and stay there until they have bathed and been anointed with *tatha* (the stomach contents of a sheep); finally a very old woman comes and shaves their heads, they are then ceremonially clean and can return to their families. A medicine man (*mundu mugo*) has, however, to come and purify the whole village in the usual way.

If the owner of the village belongs to the Masai guild the consequences are not so serious. The family leave the hut temporarily until the corpse has been carried off by the hyænas; they then kill a goat or sheep near the door of the hut, take a little of the fat which occurs round the stomach of the animal, and place a small portion on the cooking fire of each hut. This removes the *thahu* due to the death of the stranger and all is well.

5. If a new hut is built in the village and the wife enters it and finds herself menstruating on the day she lights the first fire in it, the hut has to be broken down and demolished the very next day. The woman must on no account sleep a second night in it; a *thahu* is on both the woman and the hut. A medicine man has to be called in ceremonially to purify the woman and her children, a new hut is built and the medicine man ceremonially sweeps it out with a broom made of the twigs of the *Mukenya*, *Mahoroa*, and *Michatha* bushes; he then collects the sweepings and throws them outside the village. This custom applies to both sections of the tribe.

This custom also has another phase which is as follows:—If the day a hut is built the wife, who is the owner of the hut, is away from the village and finds herself menstruating, she cannot even return to the village, but has to seek shelter with neighbours for three days. On the fourth day she returns bringing with her a gourd of water. When she reaches the *thomi*, or meeting place outside the village, she pours some of the water into a half gourd and washes herself. She can then enter both village and hut without further ceremony. This applies to both sections of the tribe.

6. When a new hut is built the first fire to be lit in it must be brought from a fire out in a *shamba* or field, not from another hut. If fire cannot be obtained from a *shamba* it is first obtained from another village; with this a fire is lit in a *shamba* and burning sticks are taken from that fire. The Kikuyu state that they are afraid to get fire direct from another village in case they bring some unknown *thahu* along with it or with the firewood; they say it is such a great risk, particularly for the children, who might get thin and ill in consequence.

Two or three days after the first fire has been lit a male sheep has to be slaughtered by the owner of the village. The meat is cooked in the hut, and the blood is poured out on the village *thomi*, then beer is brewed and a libation of it is poured out inside the hut near the door and on the *thomi* or village green. The above applies to those circumcised Kikuyu fashion. Those circumcised Masai fashion make the first fire in a new hut by friction with a firestick, and the wood for the first fire must come from two of the trees sacred to this branch, viz., *Mutamaiyu* and *Mutarakwa* (Juniper).

There is one important point in connection with *thahu* in Kikuyu which previously escaped notice, and that is, that an owner of a village cannot enter or sleep in a hut which has been ceremonially purified until two days have elapsed if he belongs to the Kikuyu circumcision guild, or for two months if he belongs to the Masai guild. This prohibition has a very practical effect, for in cases where the whole village has to be purified to rid it of some serious *thahu* the owner of the village would naturally be homeless for either two days or two months, as the case may be. To obviate this difficulty the purification ceremony is carried out in two instalments: one-half of the village is done first, and a little later the medicine man returns and performs the lustration ceremony on the other half; the people are not thus greatly inconvenienced.

A variant of the word *thahu* in Kikuyu which is often used by the old men is *Nzahu*.

It appears upon enquiry that it is not every elder in Kikuyu who has the power of removing *thahu*, but only those who have lost a wife who is a mother.

If a wife dies and leaves children the husband calls in two *athuri ya ukuu* (these are the very senior elders), a *muthuri ya kiama* (elder of council), and an old woman past the age of child bearing.

They kill a lamb, *mwati*, or a ram, the elders then take the *tatha* (stomach contents), pour them into a half gourd, *njeli*, dip a bundle of leaves in the *tatha* and sprinkle the hut. This ceremony is believed to remove the *thahu* left by the death from the father and his children, the half gourd is then placed at the bed head of the father. A medicine man finally comes and purifies the whole family. If his generation or age is junior to that of the elders who come to perform the above ceremony he cannot participate, but has to sit apart.

After this the father is considered to be eligible to take part in ceremonial connected with the removal of *thahu*, but only if he is a qualified *muthuri ya Kiama ya imburi nne* or *mburi ithano*, that is to say, if he has reached the grade to which the entrance fee is 4 goats or 5 goats.

*Ukamba*.—In *Ukamba thahu* is called *thabu* or *makwa*, and the popular attitude towards it is very similar to that existing in Kikuyu, but it does not appear to be such an important factor in the lives of the people, and for some reason or other does not seem to have reached such a high development. It is looked upon with awe, but people generally dislike to talk about it, and in consequence the bulk of the elders can only give one or two examples of it, and say the only people who can give much information are the *Atumia ya makwa* (elders of *makwa*) and *Atumia ya ukuu* (elders of *ukuu*), and those important people undoubtedly endeavour to envelop the beliefs in mystery.

The incidence of *makwa* or *thabu* does not appear to be nearly so frequent in *Ukamba* as it is in Kikuyu. In fact, the A-Kamba sneer at the A-Kikuyu, and say they are full of *makwa*. Moreover, owing to the reticence of the A-Kamba on the subject, it is not easy to collect examples. Mr. C. Dundas, who has assisted in this enquiry, had to pay a fee of a bullock for himself and a goat for his

interpreter before he could get any information on the subject. These fees admitted him to the grade of *Mutumia ya ukwu*. All enquiries, however, had to be conducted in a low tone, and no one was allowed to listen. The following are all that have been discovered up to date, but there is little doubt that others exist :—

(1) On the death of a man the village is unclean and must be purified by the elders, and during the period of purification strict continence must be observed by all those resident in the village. If a man fails to observe this rule he will become afflicted with *makwa*; also the woman, providing she belongs to the village where the death has taken place. Moreover, if a daughter of the deceased who is living away from the village visits the village within eleven days of the death of her father she will become afflicted.

The curse is removed in the same way in either of the above cases. A brother of the deceased must first cohabit with his wife. He then brings a goat and the afflicted person brings some beer. One of the elders then collects twigs of the *movu*, *mutale*, and *muteme* bushes; these are pounded up with water, and the mixture is called *ng̃ñondu*. Some of the *ng̃ñondu* is poured down the goat's throat, the idea probably being ceremonially to purify the animal. The patient then walks three times round the goat, and the animal is then lifted up by the elders. Its throat is cut and the blood spurts out over the patient's head and body. A piece of stick is then placed under his left arm and another between the toes of his right foot; two elders take hold of each of these sticks and pull them away saying, "We purify you." Possibly the belief is that by some magical process the defilement is passed into the sticks. Subsequently the brother of the deceased again cohabits with the same wife, and the patient is then cured.

(2) A man may not lie on his mother's bed, or even take any article from it, or he becomes *makwa*. Upon the death of his father he inherits, and is then entitled to use, his father's bed, which was, of course, also occupied by his mother, and it is therefore necessary that he should be protected from any evil on this account. So the elders then make the mixture called *ng̃ñondu*, and smear the soles of his feet with it; they also sprinkle the framework of the bed. They say that if this was not done the son would become *makwa* if he so much as put his foot on the bed. If a son becomes *makwa* through transgressing this law before his father's death he has to be purified as in the previous case. It is suspected that this prohibition was devised as a safeguard against incest, but if the theory is correct the natives seem to have forgotten the reason.

Reference is invited to the author's work on the *Ethnology of the A-Kamba* (Camb. Press), p. 65, the danger to a girl if a stranger touches her menstrual blood; this is a clear case of *makwa*, which falls on the girl in consequence.

Some of the prohibitions mentioned on p. 102 are also cases of *makwa*, and on p. 97 there is an account of a man who was suffering from *thabu* or *makwa*. It is regretted that at the time the importance of the phenomena had not been fully recognised.

(3) If a man dies and leaves young wives the sons usually take them over;

of course, a son could not marry his mother. A son cannot, however, succeed to one of his father's wives until the elders have performed certain ceremonies. If he cohabits with her before these are carried out he will become *makwa*.

To remove the curse in this case the ceremonial is as follows:—A paternal uncle of the offender collects the elders and provides beer for them; the woman concerned brings a goat. The elders make some of the *ng̃ñondu* mixture, and this is handed to the patient, who pretends to pay it to the elders. The elders then bring a branch of a tree called *muuti* and tell him to pay it to his uncle. He does so by throwing it at his uncle, saying, "I pay you before the elders." This looks as if the spirit of the deceased father is offended, and ceremonial payment has to be made to the brother of the deceased, who represents him for the time being.

A piece of wood about 15 inches long, cut from a *makeingezia* tree, is then brought. This is first inserted into the vaginal passage of the woman, and then the man's penis is touched with it twice or thrice. One of the elders then carries the stick away and throws it across a river saying, "I throw this evil away." In the evening the uncle cohabits with the woman. The *makwa* is thus believed to be removed, but the man can never have anything to do with that woman again. He can, however, marry another of his father's wives after the elders have performed the necessary rites.

(4) After the death of a father none of the sons may take honey from the father's hives until the paternal uncle has first done so. Any who break this law will become *makwa*. It can, however, be removed by the uncle, who brings a sheep, and the uncle, the elders, and the mother of the patient lead the sheep three times round the patient; at the conclusion of the third turn the sheep is lifted up and its throat is cut, and the blood is allowed to spurt over the patient. The animal's throat is cut by one of the elders, whose forearm is held by the uncle and the mother. After this ceremony the patient is believed to be cured, and he can take honey. It may be that this was devised to prevent a son rushing off into the woods after his father's death and annexing any honey he found, irrespective of whether such and such a hive would fall to his share when the elders decided as to the division of the estate.

(5) If a woman loses a young child by death it is necessary for her to have her breasts ceremonially purified by a qualified elder, or it is believed that any future children she may bear will die of *makwa*.

(6) If a man cohabits with a married woman in the woods while the cattle are out grazing, it brings *makwa* upon the cattle and they will die. The woman, however, is generally afraid of evil falling on the precious cattle, and confesses. The cattle are then taken out of their kraal, medicine is placed on the ground at the gate, and they are then driven back over the medicine, and this lifts the curse. The woman also has to be ceremonially purified by an elder.

(7) If a woman who has borne children is forced by a man it is believed that a curse will fall on the children and they will die. The evil can, however, be



averted if she is purified by an elder; the man has to pay a goat and the expenses of the purification ceremony.

(8) If a hyena defæcates in a village during the night there is a *makwa* on the village, and the elders have to kill a goat and purify (*tapisha*) the village.

(9) Some medicine men have the power to place a *makwa* upon one of their wives who is a particular favourite. This is done by medicine, but the details are kept secret. If a man seduces the woman in question it is said that death will ensue unless he can by payment induce the medicine man to lift the curse.

(10) If a person goes to the village from which his mother came and eats food there, and if by any chance a death has occurred in that village and the funeral ceremonies are not completed, he will be stricken with *makwa*. Even if a wife goes to pay a visit to her father's village under the above circumstances the result is the same. This form of *makwa* can only be removed by a medicine man.

The little known Thaka or Theraka people in the Tana Valley south-east of Kenia also believe in *makwa*, and use the same word for it. A few examples have been collected by Mr. C. Dundas, and are given below:—

(1) If a village is ceremonially unclean for some reason or other, and a man cohabits with a person of the opposite sex before it is purified, they are both stricken with *makwa*.

(2) If a man belonging to a village has been absent on the occasion of a death and at the necessary subsequent purification of the village, he may not enter until a sheep has been killed and the contents smeared on the threshold of his mother's hut. If this lustration ceremony is omitted he is stricken with *makwa*.

(3) After the death of the head of a family the sons may take the younger widows to wife, but not until the brother of the deceased has ceremonially cohabited with the principal wife of the deceased. If this rite is not observed before a son marries one of his father's widows he will become *makwa*.

Little is yet known of the procedure which has to be adopted to remove the *makwa*, but it is said that only medicine men can remove it. An elder was recently met with who was covered with small sores, and some of his toes had come off. It was stated that he was suffering from *makwa*, due to infringement of the rule mentioned in example (1) above.

In connection with this enquiry it is of some interest to analyse the functions of the grades of elders among the A-Kamba, *i.e.*, *Atumia ya makwa* (elders of *makwa*) and *Atumia ya ukuu* (elders of *ukuu*), and this has been done.

It must first be made clear that these titles have no connection with the ranks of *Atumia ya nzama* (elders of council) in whose hands the judicial functions are vested. The members of the highest grade of this rank are termed the *Atumia ya ithembo* (elders of the shrine), both of these ranks are part of the natural career of the head of a family of any standing in the tribe. The elders of *makwa* and *ukuu* are, however, more comparable to positions which are attained by successful medical specialists. A man may become one or the other, or he may be both. Of the two branches the elders of *ukuu* are considered the more important;

on the other hand, it is said to be more difficult to become a successful elder of *makwa*.

These branches of practice must not be confused with the profession of medicine man, which is quite distinct. A man can only become a medicine man if he is in direct communication with the *aiimu*, or ancestral spirits.

The function of a *Mtumia ma makwa* (elder of *makwa*) is to avert the evil consequences of the incidence of a *thahu* or *makwa*, the functions of a *mtumia ma ukvu* is to ward off death itself.

The former uses ceremonial and lustrates by means of various herbs, from which he concocts the *ng̃ñondu* or purifying reagents.

The latter (*ukvu*) uses spells only which have a magical value, and gives directions.

The qualification which enables a man to become a *Mutumia ya makwa* (elder of *makwa*) is that one of his wives shall have died under circumstances which may leave a curse or *thahu*. He must then at once consult an elder of *makwa*, who performs certain purification ceremonies. If these are not performed the children of the deceased will become afflicted with *thahu* or *makwa*. If the ceremonies are successful the husband is after this considered to be initiated as an elder of *makwa*; if, however, he wishes to practise the art, he must set to work to obtain experience, as the ceremonial necessary to cure the many forms of *makwa* is very varied, and a wide knowledge of the various herbs employed is necessary.

In the case of a *Mtumia ma ukvu* (elder of *ukvu*) the necessary qualification is a series of deaths in the family within a short period. He can then go to another elder of *ukvu*, pay fees and be initiated in the secrets of the art—the fee is usually one or two bullocks; his duties are to remove the curse due to murders, accidental deaths, and remove the curse of death from a family which has been afflicted by an unusual number of deaths. He does not perform purification ceremonial, but lays down certain procedure which has to be followed by the applicant. He may be compared to the consulting physician who gives certain advice, such as a particular diet, and leaves the patient to follow it or not as he likes. The prescription sometimes, for instance, takes the form of a direction to have conjugal intercourse at a particular season.

To refer a moment to what may be termed the natural grades through which a native can expect to pass during his life, these really compose a system of graduated initiation which commences when a child is circumcised, when the stages of the circumcision rites are finished he becomes a fully fledged warrior, *mwanake*; a little later he becomes an *nthele*, or young married man; and when he has circumcised children he enters upon the various grades of the council: first the *kisuka*, and later on the *nzama*. The judicial powers of the community are vested in the *nzama*.

The final degree which he reaches in old age is called *Mutumia ma ithembo* (elder of the shrine), and his duty then is to offer the sacrifices at the sacred grove or *ithembo*. Among the A-Kamba the members of this grade take but little part in

the affairs of the tribe, but in Kikuyu the *Athuri ya ukuu* form a tribal court of appeal (the word *ukuu* in Kikuyu has a different significance from *ukuu* in Ukamba and merely means "great or senior").

If an elder of *ithembo* becomes so old as to fall into his dotage, and has a son who is qualified to take his place, the son is often elected in his stead.

If, however, a *Mutumia ma nzama* (elder of council) is married to a wife who is a magician, and who can instruct him in certain matters connected with the ritual of the shrine, he can approach much nearer to the sacred grove than the ordinary elder of *nzama*, but cannot actually go up to the place of sacrifice—only the elders of *ithembo* can do that.

Elders of *ithembo* are very few in number, there are rarely more than two for each grove. The above practice is what prevails among the Ulu A-Kamba. It is possible that the Kitui customs may vary somewhat.

I am greatly indebted to the Hon. K. Dundas for assistance in making these matters clear.

#### *The Oath of the Sacred Bead (Chuma cha mchugu) in Kikuyu.*

This oath or ordeal belongs to the same class as those described in the writer's work on the *A-Kamba and other Tribes* (Camb. Press), pp. 139-143, viz., the *Kithathi* and *ku-ringa thengi* ceremonies.

If one man is in debt to another and then repudiates his debt the creditor goes to the elders and demands that they may both be given the ordeal of the *chuma cha mchugu* (*chuma* is the Kikuyu word for bead).

Now the bead used for this purpose must be one of a particular kind, which has been handed down from past ages and is evidently believed to be of magical value. Several of the clans in Kikuyu are alleged to possess specimens of this bead, and each one is in charge of a particular elder, they are said to be reddish in colour and rather long in shape. Endeavours have been made to get a specimen brought in for examination, but it has not been possible to locate one, the elders state that they have not seen one used for some years. A *chuma cha mchugu* must not be kept in a house, but is hidden away in the bush—in this particular it is like the *Kithathi*.

To return however to the ceremonial connected with its use:—On the appointed day the creditor and debtor meet the elders, the latter sit in a circle and the former sit on the ground in the middle and facing each other. Each takes a piece of fine grass and places it inside the aperture in the bead and swears, as the case may be, that he lent a cow, or that he borrowed a cow, and that if he testifies falsely may, be eaten by the bead (*i.e.*, destroyed). Sometimes the bead is held in the hand, and sometimes it is placed on the ground between the two parties.

Perjury is believed to result in the death of the perjurer, and furthermore serious harm, even death, to his near relatives.

If a man who has perjured himself by this oath dies, his brothers by the same

parents will promptly pay the debt, and then call in the elders to remove the curse or *thahu* which the perjury has inflicted. To effect this lustration, the sacred bead has to be brought to the village, a sheep is killed and some of the stomach contents are smeared on the bead. Another sheep is next marched round the afflicted village, is killed, and the people eat the meat. The bones of the sheep are afterwards collected and calcined in the fire on which the meat was cooked, and next morning a libation of beer is poured over the ashes of the bones by the elders of the village. A medicine man is then summoned and he purifies (*tahikia*) the villages, and these are then finally safe from all danger from this *thahu*.

There is another piece of ritual in which beads play a part. If an elder or old woman dies in one village and later on a similar death occurs in a neighbouring village, the head of each village goes to assist at the *hukura* ceremonies or death ceremonies (described later) at the village where the death has occurred. At the conclusion of these ceremonies each will have two blue trade ring beads of the pattern known as *mtinorok* fastened on his wrist, and the senior wife of the principal elder of the village where the death occurred will have two beads tied to her wrist; they wear these for eight days, and then bathe and cast the beads into a river, finally they wash their clothes there and return home.

The custom is practised only by the people belonging to the Kikuyu circumcision guild. The blue beads used on this occasion are called *chuma cha mchugu*, but they are not the sacred beads referred to in the earlier portion of this chapter, but ordinary trade beads. Probably, as the real *chuma cha mchugu* are very rare, they pretend that these are the real articles, or think they delude the spirits into believing that the beads are the genuine thing.

#### *Curse for Disobedience to a Judgment by the Court of Elders.*

In connection with the history of the operation of the *thahu* in Kikuyu there is one point worthy of notice. That is that if a person has been one of the parties in a suit before the *kiama* or council of elders, and refuses to pay up the compensation he has been ordered, the elders can lay a curse or *thahu* on him. The procedure is as follows: they assemble at one of their recognised meeting places and then mass together, beating their long staves on the ground in unison, calling out, "We curse you on the *mithegi*; the person who disobeys the order of the *kiama* shall be cursed." *Mithegi* being the name of the staves carried by old men, and deriving the name from the wood they are made of. No elder goes to a council without his staff. The offender need not be present, but it is believed that the curse forthwith begins to take effect.

To remove the curse the offender then goes to the elders and begs to be allowed to pay the amount of the judgment. This is done, and he brings in addition a sheep; the elders then say, "Go back home, bring some beer, and the day after to-morrow we will come and spit on you." They assemble at his village on the appointed day and the offender gives another sheep, which is killed outside the gate

of the village; this is for the purpose of purifying the village, *Ku-thirura muchi*, and the meat is carried round the confines of the huts. The elders then each take a little of the sheep's fat and rub it on their staves saying, "We are glad that the man who defied our orders has now obeyed it; we cursed him through our *mithegi*, but we now smear our *mithegi* with fat, as a sign that we and our *mithegi* are glad, and there is now nothing to be feared, for we have come to cleanse you and your village from evil." The elders then assemble in a circle with the man and his family in the middle, and one of the elders anoints the tongue of each individual of the family with a spot of *ira* or white earth, and the elders then ceremonially spit on the offender and each of his family and depart.

The same belief occurs in Ukamba, and the *nzama*, or council of elders, can inflict a curse upon a man for disregard of its orders, and if he is still recalcitrant it is said to be so potent as to kill him and all the people of his village in a short time. The elders impose this curse by all clapping their hands together, and it is called *kutuu*. The effect of the curse can be averted if the man obeys and the elders forgive him; as in Kikuyu, however, he has to pay a fee of a goat, and the elders assemble and ceremonially spit on the culprit to neutralize the curse. The removal of this curse is called *ka-athimwa* or *ka-musia* by the Akamba.

#### *The Kikuyu Ceremonies on the Occasion of a Death.*

Among most people, irrespective of their stage of culture, definite ceremonials have to be observed upon the occasion of a death, and before the heirs can succeed to the property; and in Kikuyu land these are somewhat complex, and like many other observances in that country, their form greatly depends on the circumcision guild to which the person belongs. This is the excuse for introducing this subject, as it is submitted that this factor has apparently escaped the notice of previous investigators, and to understand fully the life-history of a Kikuyu native one must clearly realise how, from early years to his death, he is bound down by the ritual of the guild to which he belongs. The nearest analogy one can readily find to illustrate this is the case of one child who is baptised a Protestant and another a Roman Catholic; the main principles of these religions are the same, and among the Kikuyu the guild to which a man belongs does not affect his beliefs as to the *ngoma* or spirits and their influence upon mortals, but the ritual of his religion varies throughout his life according to the guild to which he belongs.

The ceremonial observed upon a death is called *ku-hukura*—the Swahili synonym, *sadaka*, has practically the same meaning.

The death and funeral ceremonies of an elder circumcised Kikuyu fashion, will be first described. On the day of the death the children or heirs take two rams and present them to the elders to pay for the digging of the grave; every elder who has circumcised children is buried, married women who have borne five or six children are also buried. The grass is dug with a *mubiru* or *mukuruuwi* stick, and the sons of the deceased do the actual digging, but the elders decide the site

and supervise the work ; if a son refuses to assist in digging his father's grave it disqualifies him from receiving a share of the estate. The grave-diggers will receive a big male goat (*nthenge*), or if the family is rich, a bullock, the bullock will be slaughtered and the corpse buried in the hide. The corpse of a male is buried on its right side with its knees doubled up and with the right hand under the head ; the site of the grave is near the gate of the village, and the face of the corpse is placed looking towards its hut. A woman is always buried lying on her left side.

On the third day after the interment the elders assemble at the village to kill a ram to cleanse the village from the stain of death, and the sons eat the breast of this animal and next day shave their heads. The same day the elders bring with them one of their number who is very poor, and of the same clan as the deceased, and he has to sleep in the hut of the senior widow of the deceased and have connection with her ; he generally lives on in the village and is looked upon as a step-father to the children.

Then there is a pause of six days and on the seventh day the elders return, a supply of beer is made ready for them and a big male goat is killed, which is eaten by all present. This is called *nthenge ya noro* ; this means the "goat of the whetstone," referring to the whetstone which is used in sharpening the razors with which the heads are ceremonially shaved at the conclusion of the ceremonies. During the first four days after the death the married men in the village must have connection with their wives, after that, for another four days, they must observe strict continence.

After the *nthenge ya noro* has been killed the property is divided.

If the deceased belongs to the Masai circumcision guild the ceremonies are as follows :—

When a death occurs the elders decide whether the person is to be buried or not. Only elders above what is known as the "three goat" grade are buried ; these are what are called *athuri ya mburi tatu*, which means that they have reached the grade, the entrance fee to which is three goats, the next grade is *athuri ya mburi nne* or the "four goat" grade. No elder is a fully qualified member of council till he reaches that rank. Generally speaking it works out that only those elders who have grown-up children are buried. In the case of a person not entitled to burial, it is the duty of the elders to decide the place in the bush where the corpse shall be deposited.

Assuming that the deceased is entitled to burial the local *athuri ya ukuu* (highest grade of elders) are summoned, and the corpse is taken out of the hut by the sons and laid on the hide on which the person slept during life. A ram (*ndarume*) is then slaughtered, the fat is cooked in an earthenware pot and some is poured on the corpse, and the children of the deceased are also smeared with the fat. The ornaments of the deceased are then removed under the supervision of the elders and divided up among the immediate family, the eldest son has the first choice, then the senior wife, and each child gets something. An ox of a uniform

colour is then slaughtered, one that is all white or all black is preferred, and the hide is set aside. The elder sons dig the grave, the site having first been chosen by the elders; it is usually situated inside the village near the goat hut or bachelor quarters, *thingira*. The corpse is then interred lying on the sleeping hide used during life; if a male, it is laid on its right side, knees doubled up and right hand under the head; if a female, it is laid on its left side in the same position. The corpse is then covered with the raw ox hide with the hair side upwards and the grave is then filled in. Nothing is buried with the body, but after the grave is filled in, the elders pour some honey and some of the cooked fat on the grave, and say, "We give you this to drink."

A little later in the day a male goat, *nthenge*, is slaughtered, the meat is roasted on a fire near the gate of the village, and a little of the fat is placed on every fire in the village; the smell of this is believed to be very pleasing to the *ngoma*, or spirits, and any *thahu* or curse that may be impending is drawn away, and this act is also said to lustrate the sons who have performed the burial.

A month, or perhaps more, is allowed to elapse, and the division of the estate takes place. The children or heirs then take four rams, and the women of the village take off all their ornaments and all sleep together in the same hut, and the four sheep are also placed in the hut in question. In the morning the elders arrive and the sheep are killed, the fat is cooked and then put away to cool, while the meat is eaten by the assembled people, providing they belong to the Masai guild. The head must be cooked and eaten away from the village, the skin is taken by someone else, and the viscera by yet another person.

On the following day the heads of all the inhabitants of the village are shaved and they are anointed with the fat of the sheep. During the ceremony the people present wear their skin garments inside out, and these are anointed with the cooked latex of the *mugumo* fig tree; after their bodies have been anointed with the fat they can turn their skin robes right side outwards once more, and the women resume their ornaments.

The property of the deceased is then divided up by the elders; the principle followed is that each son takes the property which had its dwelling-place in his mother's hut, the goats and sheep, for instance, lodge so many in the hut of each wife. With regard to cattle, each son gets those which have been milked by his mother. Strict continency must be observed by all in the village until these proceedings are finished, and at their close the inhabitants and all the property of the deceased are ceremonially purified by a medicine man.

#### *The Itwika Ceremony.*

As was explained in the last portion of the previous paper on *thahu*, etc., the Kikuyu have *rika* or circumcision ages, and a long list was given; these *rika* fall into groups and so many form a greater *rika*, named either *Mwangi* or *Maina*, and these follow one another alternately. It was not clear at the time as to what

determined a group of *rika* being lumped together as *maina* or *mwangi*; it, however, now appears that this is connected with periodic ceremonies called the *itwika*, which takes place about every fifteen years or so. These correspond to a great extent to the *eunoto* of the Masai and are of tremendous importance to the Kikuyu, in fact the elders state that they originated in Kikuyu, and were copied by the Masai during the period when the Kapotei and Dogilani Masai were great friends with the S. Kikuyu and the Purko Masai friends with the N. Kikuyu; in the present state of our knowledge it is, however, impossible to say whether there is any foundation for this.<sup>1</sup> Probably the best test would be to enquire if the Bari people who live in or near the country from which the Masai are believed to be derived, possess this kind of social organization. The *itwika* has been described by Mr. Routledge as a secret society connected with snake worship, but as far as can be discovered in S. Kikuyu there is no foundation for this idea, but elders do not care to discuss its ceremonial unless one is very well known to them, and they are not supposed to discuss it with any person of younger grade than themselves, in fact the ceremonies may be considered as a final initiation at which only fully qualified elders are allowed to attend.

The last great *itwika* ceremony was at the end of the big famine of 1898–9, and was held about the time that the Government founded Fort Hall.<sup>2</sup> The gatherings were formerly held on the area between the Thika and Chania rivers, just above the junction of these two rivers, and the name Thika is derived from its connection with the *itwika*. The last *itwika* was held near Kalaki's, in the district known as Tingnanga in Mimi wa Ruchu's country; it is said that on account of the decimation of the people by famine and small-pox it was decided not to hold it at the old place. The next *itwika* will take place when the grandchildren of people of the same *rika* as the chief Kinanjui have all been circumcised, the decision of the date rests with the *athuri ya ukuu* of the Maina generation as this is the senior generation to-day. This apparently corresponds to the *ngaje* of the Masai, *vide* Hollis's *Masai*.

An account of the last ceremony was obtained from one who was present, and it is said that the first step is to build a huge long hut to accommodate those who participate in the festival. This is divided into two main divisions, one for elders of the *maina* generation and one for those of the *mwangi* generation, and in addition, a small room for the *athuri ya ukuu* who can be considered as the officiating priests of the festival. These *athuri ya ukuu* are always eight in number, and at the last *itwika* their names were, Muthaka, Ngombwa Tutua, Kimwaki, Kathungu, Kithenji wa Njuki, Rimui wa Kanjuku, Ngegenya and Mburu wa Katuku, and the whole programme rested in their hands.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* article on Masai and their traditions, by A. C. Hollis—*London Quarterly Review* July, 1907, p. 104—"Now the Masai themselves say they learnt this peculiar ceremony (*viz.* : their method of circumcision) from the Kikuyu.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Routledge mentions a later one which took place near Karuri's about 1904, but according to the S. Kikuyu natives it was only a local ceremony.



The principal elder of each village is supposed to attend, and often the next in importance as well, so it means that the gathering contains several thousand souls, and the proceedings continue for three months or more. Each elder brings sheep and goats, bullocks, gourds of honey beer, and gourds of sugar cane beer, and relays of food are brought to the camp during the ceremonies by women, but no women are allowed within the confines of the camp. A number of men are also told off to collect firewood but do not come inside the camp. The only persons allowed inside the camp, except the elders, are eight spearmen, who are told off to attend on the eight *athuri ya ukuu*.

It does not appear to be possible to obtain a detailed account of the proceedings, but it is said that every day the eight *athuri ya ukuu* instruct their juniors in the customs of the tribe and so forth, the elders also hold "*ngomas*" or dances.

One man is chosen as an official trumpeter to the proceedings, and he collects the elders for the various rites by blowing a horn of the rare bongo antelope (*ndongoro*). This horn is called *choro*, and no one else is allowed to blow it; this is considered a very honourable office, and he is paid nine rams and nine female kids for his services.

In former days the elders in charge of an *itwika* used, towards the end of the festival, to send two envoys to a certain place on a stream called Kikira, in Kenya province, which is said was the habitat of a mysterious reptile called the *ndamathia*. It was described as not being a snake but more like a crocodile. It is explained that they gave this beast beer to drink, and when it was drunk plucked some hairs from its tail. A hairy tail is not characteristic of reptiles, but all are agreed that the hairs were obtained. The envoys then returned, and the hair was plaited together with some strands of the fibre of the wild date palm (*Phoenix reclinata*), and then placed on the top of the *itwika* hut. At the conclusion of the festival the people went in procession to a sacred fig tree (*mugumo*) in the vicinity, and stuffed the hair into a crevice in the tree and left it there. They then took the milk of a cow which had only borne one calf, the milk of a ewe which had only borne one lamb, and the milk of a goat which had only borne one kid, and poured them as a libation at the foot of the fig tree, a dance round the fig tree then ensued. This was the concluding ceremony of the *itwika*, for after that each person attending was adorned on the wrist with a *mkwaru* or strip of skin from a male goat, and they broke up the *itwika* house and returned home.

At the last *itwika* held in south Kikuyu the elders did not send for the hair of the *ndamathia*, but the concluding ceremony was carried out with a big black ox, which was tied by its fore and hind legs and laid between two poles; all the people then came along one after the other and stamped on the ox, which eventually died, the ox was not eaten but left lying there, they then poured libations of milk and fat at the foot of the sacred *mugumo* tree and danced round it, praying to God (*Engai*). After this they shaved their heads, were adorned with the *mkwaru* from a male goat and returned home. Upon reaching their villages each elder killed a

ram and placed a *mkwaru* cut from its skin on every person in his village; these were worn for only one day, the villagers then ceremonially bathed, and threw them away.

It is said that these ceremonies are very pleasing to God (*Engai*). No one is ever allowed to cultivate on the area which has been used for an *itwika* ceremony, and no one must ever cut the *mugumo* (fig tree) with an axe or knife.

There is a curious custom among the Kamba of Ulu in the event of a member of the family being away when a death occurs in a village. An elder measures the corpse, cuts a stick of the same length and places it alongside the house of the deceased; this procedure is believed to protect the absent one from evil. Upon his return a goat is killed and he is smeared with the contents of the stomach *muyo* in Ki-Kamba, the *tatha* of Kikuyu, and some is deposited at the door of the hut, and he must tread in it before he enters the hut; this ceremonially purifies him. The stick is then taken up by a *mutumia ya makwa*, one of the elders who understands the ritual connected with the removal of *thabu* or *makwa*, and it is thrown out into the bush where the corpse of the deceased was deposited.

There is another curious custom in Ukamba which throws some light on their spiritual beliefs:—If a young unmarried man is killed away from his village, his *mwimu* or spirit will return there and speak to the people through the medium of an old woman in a dance (see p. 86, author's work on the A-Kamba), and say, "I am so and so speaking, and I want a wife." The youth's father will then make arrangements to buy a girl from another village and bring her to his, and she will be mentioned as the wife of the deceased, speaking of him by name. She will presently be married to a brother of the deceased, but she must continue to live in the village where the deceased had his home.

If at any time the corporeal husband beats or ill-treats her, and she in consequence runs away to her father, the *mwimu* of the deceased will come and pester the people of the village and they will have bad luck; it will probably ask, through the usual medium, why his wife has been ill-treated and driven away. The head of the family will then take steps to induce the girl to return for fear of the wrath of the spirit of his deceased son.

#### *Laws of Compensation for Murder in Kikuyu and Ukamba.*

It is a matter of great importance, from an administrative point of view, that these should be properly understood, as otherwise a murder is likely to create a hereditary feud between the two families, which will eventually lead to fresh crimes.

*Kikuyu*.—In Kikuyu, for instance, until the ceremonial has all been properly carried out, no member of the family of the murdered man can eat food out of the same dish or drink beer with any member of the family of the murderer, and in Ukamba it is believed that unless the matter is properly adjusted according to the law

(their law) the members of the family of the murderer will continually be involved in quarrels which are likely to end by one of them killing his neighbour, and conversely the members of the family of the murdered man would become involved in quarrels and be liable to be killed as their relation had been. If one tries to look at the matter from their point of view it appears to be this :—there is a bad spirit or *muimu* about, belonging to an ancestor, it enters into a man and the result of this is that the next time he quarrels with a neighbour he kills him. This spirit may continue to possess that person, or it may go on to another member of that family and then the same result occurs. In the same way the *muimu* of the deceased, the murdered man, influences the *Aimu* in the bodies of all the members of his family and makes them afraid. They know that this death-dealing spirit is abroad, and the members of the family are more liable to be killed if they become entangled in a broil. Thus both families are anxious that this state of affairs shall cease and that the troublesome spirit should be appeased and laid to rest.

The explanation just given may or may not be the final interpretation, but the fact remains that it is considered a vital necessity that the ceremonies necessary to close the trouble caused in a tribe by a murder should be carried out according to the law of the tribe, and only by the observance of the proper ritual can the avenging spirit be appeased.

In south Kikuyu there are only two persons qualified to perform these ceremonies and they are Gachii wa Kihara and Joguna wa Kihara, both sons of a great elder and chief named Kihara, of the Anjiru clan, upon whom those duties devolved, and the office is apparently hereditary.

The ceremonies are called *Kugira uhio wa kuria mundu*, which means "To carry the man who was killed," and the word *mugiro* derived from *ku-gira*, is also used in this connection. Of course, the payment of compensation has now been abrogated by Government, and the death penalty imposed in its place according to our law, so the functions of the elders mentioned have of late years been confined to the supervision of the ceremonies which have magical or religious significance. The description of the affair, which was obtained from Gachii himself, however, takes no cognizance of the amendment caused by the substitution of the "lex talionis" for the old principle of "wergild" or compensation. The procedure runs as follows :—Soon after the murder has occurred the father of the murderer summoned Gachii or Joguna to his village, and whichever of these elders attended took with him eight *athuri ya ukuu* (they are the elders of appeal), and the first object of their mission was to stop any fighting between the young men of the two parties.

They remained at the village, and the father of the murderer then collected seventy goats and sent them to the father of the murdered man, and a bullock and a male sheep to the mother of the deceased; this bullock is important, it is called *ndegwa muhiriga* or *njiga migwe*, that is the "ox for the clan" or the "ox of the arrows," this represents a peace offering to the clan, and is to prevent the clan of the deceased taking out their arrows to avenge their brother. Two days

later thirty goats were collected and sent to the father of the deceased. The compensation of a hundred sheep or goats can be paid either in goats or sheep or cattle, but whatever is paid the count is always kept in sheep or goats. For instance, a *thenge*, or big male goat may count as two or three goats, according to size, in the same way an ox has its stated rate of exchange and will be counted as so many goats; in pre-European days the ox counted as three goats, and a heifer or cow counted as ten in paying compensation or in marriage fees for a wife.

The next payment is nine male sheep to the *athuri ya ukuu*, and nine more sheep are given to the father of the deceased, and nine ewes, *nyarume*, to the maternal uncle of the deceased or *mamaawe* as he is called. The father of the murderer and the father of the deceased then each bring a male sheep, and the trunk of a banana plant is procured, placed on the ground, and the murderer and his relations seat themselves on one side of it, and the relatives of the other party on the opposite side; four of the *athuri ya ukuu* also sit on each side. The two sheep are then killed, and the two parties exchange pieces of cooked meat and eat them, they then exchange pieces of sugar cane and sweet potatoes smeared with *tatha* (the contents of the stomach of the sheep), these are given to the women and children of the two families. Some gruel is also exchanged, this is for the children of the two families, and is eaten inside the villages of the two parties.

The presiding elder Gachii or Juguna does not sit with either party, but a little way off, his function being to see that the proper ritual is observed.

The elders then take the spear or sword with which the murder was committed, and beat it until it is quite blunt, the spear head or sword is then taken away and thrown into a deep pool in the nearest river, they say that if they omitted to do this the weapon would continue to be the cause of murder.

The final act is what is called *ku-kukurwiwa ithe na nyina* (to purify father and mother). The elders adorn themselves with necklets of a grass called *ngoka*, and they wear these for eight days, but if at the expiration of this period no moon is visible they cannot take them off till the moon reappears. When the day comes for dispensing with them they cross a river and bury them on the far side, and return home without looking back. In north Kikuyu, Mwaitume, it is said that they throw the rings away in an old *shamba*, garden, dig up a sweet potato, eat it, and then return home.

These ceremonies are the same for both grades of the Kikuyu, viz.: those circumcised Kikuyu fashion, and those circumcised Masai fashion. If they are properly carried out they wipe out all questions of blood feud, and the members of both families can eat together.

If the *mugiro* ceremonies are not properly carried out the spirit of the murdered man will go back to his village, cry out in the night like a child, and will enter into one of the villagers who will become as one possessed. The people will call out to him, "Who are you?" and he will reply, "I am so and so" (mentioning the deceased). "I have come because I have been abandoned." A near blood relative of the deceased must then take a male goat or sheep, if the deceased was

a man, or a young ewe, *mwati*, if the victim was a woman, this animal is taken away into the bush, and it is killed by strangling, and immediately it is dead its throat is pierced and the blood allowed to run out on the ground. They then carve a piece of meat from each limb and part of the animal, and place them in a heap, the bones are also placed in another heap, and they are left there. Any meat that remains is eaten by the elders, the person who was possessed of the *ngoma* or spirit of the deceased then recovers.

There are some variations in the customs for different cases, the compensation for the murder of a woman is only thirty sheep or goats and three rams.

If a man murders his cousin on his mother's side of the family, the father of the murderer collects fifty sheep or goats, and pays them to the head of the family of the deceased, and the recipients usually kill an ox which is eaten by both parties; the elaborate ritual described above is not observed because of the blood relationship which exists.

If a man kills his brother or sister by the same mother there is no compensation—the case very rarely arises, the father would, however, kill a sheep and make his children eat it together.

If a pregnant woman is struck and injured by a man, and miscarries in consequence, the elders are called in to settle the matter, the culprit has to bring two male sheep, first one is killed and eaten by the villagers and the elders, but not by the woman, the second is eaten by the woman and visitors, but not by the elders.

Some of the fat and meat of this second animal is cooked in a pot with some bitter herbs, and the woman drinks the decoction, this is evidently of the nature of a purification, it is called *theria nda*, to purify the belly. The people present who are nearly related, either to the offender or the woman, are then invested with *rukwaru* or wristlets, made of the skin of the sheep first mentioned.

This is not a matter for the *athuri ya ukuu*, but the ordinary councillors *athuri ya Kiama*.

*Ukamba*.—In Ukamba there is a general similarity of ideas, but a considerable difference in ceremonial.

The general compensation for the murder of a man is thirteen cows, two bulls, and fifty goats; and for a woman six cows, two bulls, and one goat.

In each case the actual blood money is twelve cows and five cows respectively, the balance being for the ceremonies necessary to wipe out the blood stains, and which bear the name of *Etumo*.

The cow, the two bulls, and the goat are taken to the village of the murdered man; the elders, *athuri ya ukuu*, assemble there, and the goat is first killed about 5 p.m., the murderer must not be present, if he or any member of his clan appeared at the *Etumo* ceremonies they would probably be killed. Fourteen pieces of meat are cut from its throat, an elder impales seven pieces on a wooden skewer, and puts them into the mouth of the wife of the deceased, who eats them, and the other seven are similarly given to the brother of the deceased. When darkness

comes on the elders retire to a short distance from the village, and the widow and her brother-in-law retire to a hut and have connection, they then return and call the elders.

Upon their return the bull is killed and they receive half of its meat and half of that of the goat, the remainder being consumed by the family of the deceased. The meat must all be eaten up during the night, and none of the bones must be broken, and before morning breaks the latter must be carried out and deposited in the bush by the elders. The hides of the two animals must not be allowed to remain in the village, but are carried off by any elders who do not belong to the same *mbai* or clan as the deceased. The cow remains in the village, and becomes the personal property of the widow, and she is not allowed to sell it.

The collection of the number of cattle payable as blood money generally takes some time, and the members of a man's clan often assist him to pay. When they are all collected there is an assembly of people with the elders at the village of the deceased, members of the family and clan as well as strangers, and a bull is slaughtered from the compensation cattle; there is a general feast, and each person takes a strip of the hide away with him for use in tying up loads. The cattle are then divided, the senior member of the deceased's family receives one cow and pays back one bull, the maternal grandfather of the deceased receives a cow and pays back a bullock, and if there is a half-brother of the deceased he receives a cow and pays back a bull, provided that he does not live in the village of the deceased. If there is a village of the same clan near by, the head of it receives a cow and pays back a bull. None of these cows may be sold or given in exchange for a wife; if this rule is broken the recipient has to pay back a cow to the family. The bulls given in exchange provide feasts for the elders, members of the family of the deceased, and members of the clan. The remainder of the cattle are the property of the eldest brother of the deceased, he divides these between the mother and wife or wives of deceased, and they have the use of the milk, he cannot dispose of one of the beasts without the permission of these women.

The payment of the cow, bull, and goat first mentioned is of ritual importance, and is called *Etumo*; they are necessary to protect both the family of the murderer and the murdered one from the powers of the unappeased death-dealing spirit which is abroad. Even if the killing was accidental (*Mbanga*) the *Etumo* payments and ritual must be observed, because it shows that there is some bad influence about or the accident would never have occurred.

In former times, if a man of one clan killed another in some intertribal fight, the custom was for a brother to waylay and kill a man of the clan who had killed his brother, these two deaths cancelled each other, and there was no more question of compensation, but it was considered essential that the *Etumo* fees should be paid and the proper ceremonial observed.

There is one other point, and that is with regard to the weapon which was the instrument used in the murder, in Kikuyu the spear is thrown away, but in Ukamba the weapon is nearly always an arrow, and this is carried away some

distance and placed on a path, the idea 'apparently is that it contains a harmful essence which it is impossible to remove, and it is believed that the evil will be passed on to whoever picks it up. If this is not done it is said that the evil will remain with the family of the deceased.

*The Kirume or Dying Curse.*

The doctrine of the *kirume* occurs in both Kikuyu and Ukamba, in the latter district it is termed *kiume*.

The belief is also said to be found among the Ja-Luo Kavirondo where it is called *ukuongo*.

It is really a *thahu*, *thabu* or *makwa*, which can be suspended over his descendants by a dying man. The same idea exists among the Swahili, who call it *rathi*, or the dying blessing. If a man does not receive his father's blessing he is believed to go through life attended by much misfortune.

If the head of the family feels that he is nearing his end he will assemble his sons, and to the eldest he will probably say, "The goats belonging to such a hut shall be yours"; he will then call another son and say, "The goats of such and such a hut shall be yours, and if any of you break these wishes he shall surely die." He will then mention a certain *shamba* (cultivated field) and say, "Such and such a *shamba* shall not be sold, and if this wish is broken the one who sells it shall die." This operates as an entail on the property, and, upon enquiry, examples may be found all over the country, and it will be passed on from generation to generation; such is the strength of the belief.

Another case quoted was that of a man who had a ne'er-do-well son who was in the habit of pilfering the neighbouring villages, the custom is for those who have suffered to collect and seize the equivalent of their losses from his father. If this continues the father will in the end become so annoyed with his son's misdeeds that he will put a *kirume* on him when on his death bed—there is quite a mediæval flavour about this action.

Sometimes, too, a man when he is very old will entrust a son with charge of his live stock, and the son may abuse the trust and let the flocks and herds melt away. Cases have been known where the old patriarch when dying has put a *kirume* on his son to the effect that he shall neither grow rich nor have wives, but to the end of his life shall be condemned to perpetual poverty.

Again a daughter may be a trouble to her father, she is, say, married to a husband who has paid over the required dowry to her father, she runs away, repeatedly misbehaves herself, and so forth, and the father will then be subject to continual worry, owing to the husband's demands for the return of the dowry. The father may eventually become so weary of all this worry that he will put a *kirume* on her and condemn her to perpetual barrenness.

Another case quoted was that of two brothers, one rich and one poor, the poor man may be envious of his brother and hate him in consequence, one day they go to drink beer, and excited by the liquor the poorer one brutally attacks his brother

and grievously injures him, when the injured man recovers consciousness he will call his brother and say, "You have always been jealous of my wealth, and now I shall probably die from treatment received at your hands, but when I am dead if you attempt to seize any of my property you shall only be able to look at it, for if you touch a single head of stock you will die, and if your son comes to take any of my beasts he will also die."

If a dying man calls out to a man of his own clan *mukirika*, and makes a request such as, "Give me water," and the person refuses, the dying man can impose a *kirume* upon the one who refuses.

A man is, generally speaking, only able to lay a *kirume* upon a person belonging to his own *mukirika* or clan, which really means that a *kirume* will only affect one with a common blood tie.

There are, however, two exceptions to this:—

If a man of one clan marries a woman of another clan (as is the rule) he can, if necessity arises, place a *kirume* upon the family of his wife if they live in the village of his father-in-law, because they have, as the expression runs, "Eaten of his property," referring to the live stock he has paid over to his father-in-law for his wife.

The converse can also happen, for if a man has married a woman and has not paid up to his father-in-law the full amount agreed upon, the father-in-law when he dies can impose a *kirume* upon his son-in-law, and such *kirume* may also extend to his daughter, the idea probably being that the daughter has not sufficiently worried her husband to pay the balance due.

The power to impose a *kirume* is apparently not altogether confined to elders, for it is said that if an incorrigible child is driven away from home, becomes starved and dies in consequence, it can before it dies curse its parents and say, "You have treated me like this, and therefore you shall not have any more children."

It is said that if a person hears that someone of his own clan is threatening to impose a *kirume* on him, he can take steps to prevent its infliction, the procedure was described as follows: If a person hears that, say, a brother intended to place a *kirume* on him, he would at once take a male goat or sheep to his village and kill it there, he would offer some of the fat, some milk and some beer to the dying man, who could not refuse to forgive the suppliant, and would ceremonially spit into his hands and rub a little saliva on his forehead, navel, and feet. The threatened person would then depart in peace free from any danger of a *kirume* from that person. This applies to both guilds.

One curious case of *kirume* was described which is worth notice, it is probably very rare, but it possibly carries evidence of the ancient origin of the belief and dates back to matriarchal times.

Suppose a dying *mwanake*, or member of the warrior age, lays a *kirume* upon his maternal grandfather, what course would he pursue to rid himself of the dangerous infliction? If he was unable to get the one who imposed it to spit on him as above described, he would have to seek a grandson by another daughter, take or send to him a male goat, some beer, the milk of a cow and seed of the



various kinds of grain grown in the country, and beg him to come to his village. The grandson would then come accompanied by the elders, he would taste the meat, beer, milk, etc., and ceremonially spit them out on the grandfather, and this would relieve the old man from all danger from the *kirume* imposed by his other grandson. There is a word *kigao*, which is intimately connected with *kirume*, and is often confused with it, but enquiry seems to show that *kigao* means the neglect of a dying father's wish with regard to the disposal of property, and the result of *kigao* is, therefore, *kirume*, but cause and effect are often very closely allied in the mind of a native.

The fear of *kirume* seems to be much greater in that section of the tribe circumcised Kikuyu fashion, for a prominent elder of the Masai guild stated that when those circumcised Masai fashion succeed to their father's property they are invested with the brass bracelet worn by elders on their right wrist, and upon their mother's death they wear the iron bracelet worn by her, these are called *kigao*, and once an elder has been invested with these he is quite safe from the effect of any *kirume* from his parents. The younger sons receive pieces of the ear ornaments, *ichwi*, which are made into finger rings and fulfil the same purposes as the bracelets. This probably accounts for the greater popularity of the Masai guild among the Kikuyu people. At the same time the elder admitted that it would be bad to squander the flocks and herds left by his father, and that if they became depleted he would probably sell a portion of the landed property to make the flocks and herds up to their original strength.

If a man hears that a near relative is very ill he makes a point of going to see him, and takes the precaution of getting him to ceremonially spit on his hand and rub his visitor on the navel.

If a man goes to see his sick father or mother he takes a piece of mutton fat, and the sick parent ceremonially spits on it and the visitor rubs the saliva covered piece of fat on his navel.

A married woman can impose a *kirume*, but not on an unmarried woman, the following is an example of a case in which a married woman may invoke this curse :—

If a married woman has for a long time been systematically ill-treated by a brutal husband she can when dying put a *kirume* on her father for having forced her to marry such a bad man, and also upon her husband for his brutality.

The *kirume* is looked upon as the severest form of *thahu* or *nzahu* known, in most cases of *thahu* the subject rarely dies, because it is slow in its action and the patient has an opportunity of making reparation and seeking relief from the prescribed medicine man or elders, but in the case of a *kirume* the curse is very swift in its action, the patient will rapidly sicken, break out into ulcers and die often before he can make arrangements to take measures to arrest its onslaught, his live stock will also mysteriously die.

It is believed that the effective power of the *kirume* is derived from the spirit (*ngoma*) of the deceased person by whom it is imposed, assisted by the *ngoma* of the ancestors of the family.

It is said that there is no poison without its antidote, and the same applies to the *kirume*, but the antidote must be applied in good time and the only persons who can effect a cure are certain persons called *athuri ya ukuu*. The *athuri ya ukuu* compose a grade of elders above that of *athuri ya mburi nne* (elders of four goats—referring to the fee they pay for initiation to the grade). They are always old men and rich, and have to pay to their fellow elders of the grade a bullock and a male sheep or goat as initiation fees.

While the *athuri ya mburi nne* form the ordinary *kiama* or council of elders, the *athuri ya ukuu* constitute a native court of appeal, but they do not admit appeals except in very important cases, when it is within their competence to revise a judgment and if they consider fit reduce the amount of compensation. It is also the duty of the *athuri ya ukuu* to instruct the heir in the customs of the tribe when he succeeds to the property after his father's death.

The *athuri ya ukuu* do not treat ordinary cases of *thahu* but have to be called in in cases of *kirume*.

The ceremonial connected with the removal of a *kirume* is as follows, it is called *ku-takikia kirume* in Kikuyu, which means "to purify from the *kirume*."

The *athuri ya ukuu* are summoned to the patient's village, and the day before the ceremony the elders catch a mole-like rodent called *huku* (*Tachyoryctes* sp.), put it alive in a cooking pot with some sweet potatoes and cork up the mouth of the pot. The *huku* must be caught near by the patient's village. Next morning the *athuri ya ukuu* arrive with a medicine man belonging to another clan and a male sheep will be killed, the elders then take the *huku* out of the pot and make passes all over the patient's body with the live animal and they then take the *huku* and samples of various kinds of native food, beads, etc., and proceed to the place where the corpse of the person who imposed the *kirume* has been buried or thrown out. Another sheep is taken with this party and also a small cooking pot, upon reaching the spot referred to the second sheep is killed and some of its fat is cooked in the pot. They then dig a hole and pour the fat in it, also milk, honey, beer, etc., they smear the *huku* with the *tatha* or stomach contents of the sheep, and the medicine man ties a tiny piece of meat to the right and left foreleg of the animal with a string made of *mugeri* (hibiscus) fibre, and then fastens it up in a rough net made of the roots of the *ruriera* plant, and they cut the face off the sacrificial sheep with the eyes intact and place them all in the hole saying, "Go back to your burrow and take with you the spirit of the person who left this curse." They then fill in the hole. The medicine man eats the remainder of the meat. The medicine man afterwards returns to the village and purifies it.

They state the *huku* personifies the person who imposed the *kirume*, and the eyes of the sheep are to watch to *huku* and see that it does not return to the village. The *huku* is chosen because it lives below ground, and the *ngoma* of deceased persons are believed to live below ground.

After this ceremony it is said that the affected one will recover, some say, however, that it will only alleviate the effect of a *kirume* but not remove it

completely. The elders, however, stated that this would not affect a *kirume* placed on a piece of land forbidding its sale, and what may be called the *kirume* of entail could not be lifted.

The lustration from a *kirume* by the *huku* ceremony only applies to the Kikuyu guild.

Altogether this is a very pretty example of what Prof. Frazer terms "homœopathic magic."

If a young woman has been abused or vilified by the young men (*anake*) of her particular *rika* or generation, it is a serious matter for her, but nothing is done about the matter until the girl is about to be married. The father, however, then takes a ram and makes a feast for the *anake* of the same *rika* or circumcision generation as his daughter, and they assemble and ceremonially spit on the girl. She can then be safely married and bear children. In fact, as a precaution, this is generally done even if there is no record of a quarrel between the girl and the young men of her *rika*. A medicine man is then called in, a ewe is slaughtered, and he ceremonially purifies the girl before her marriage.

*Ukamba*.—As was mentioned before, the doctrine of *kirume* or the dying curse is found among the Kamba people and is there called *Kiume*.

Elders, *atumia*, and young married men, *anthele*, can impose a *Kiume* among the A-Kamba but not the warrior class, *anake*.

A man is able to place a *kiume* upon the people of a village to the effect that they shall not refuse food or good treatment to a particular person, the friend of the dying man, and this friend may even belong to another tribe.

A person cannot impose a *kiume* on anyone outside his immediate family. A married woman can place a *kiume* on her father's village if she has reason to do so.

An eldest son can place a *kiume* on a particular thing in the village from which his mother came, a common case of this is when a man places a *kiume* on the people of his maternal grandfather's village, contingent on the disposal of a beast which was paid by his father to his mother's people as part of her marriage price. The reason of this is that an eldest son has a claim to a heifer, the progeny of the marriage price paid by his father to his maternal grandfather for his mother, and he can, when dying, will this beast to any particular person, and if anyone prevents this bequest being carried out he will die; the *kiume* generally falls on the head of the village. The formula used is:—"If you do not carry out this wish you will not be able to eat meat, to drink water, to drink milk, to eat maize, to eat millet, and so on—and you will surely die."

As in Kikuyu, a dying elder in *Ukamba* can place a *kiume* on a cultivated field, forbidding its sale out of the family.

If a Mu-Kamba breaks a dying wish and incurs a *kiume* he can generally be freed from the consequences if he goes to an elder of his father's village or to a near relative of his father and takes a bullock, the beast is killed and the elders spit water and milk on to his face—this saves him from the worse effects of the *kiume*, viz., death, the ceremony is called *kuathimwa*.

There is little doubt that much more remains to be learnt about the ritual of *kiume* in Ukamba, but these things are more difficult to work out in that district and the details have to be dragged out bit by bit.

As a general summary of the belief in the *ngoma* or ancestral spirits in Kikuyu it may be mentioned that there appears to be very little difference between Central Africa and Europe in this matter, for they seem to be merely the souls of the departed which received such marked attention in Europe even up to present times, as for example the Feast of All Souls and St. John's Eve. The Kikuyu will tell you that there is only one *ngoma* or spirit for each person, and that women as well as men possess *ngoma*.

Cattle are said to have no *ngoma* or soul, but sometimes become possessed with the *ngoma* of human beings. An evil disposed *ngoma*, it is said, will sometimes enter cattle to kill them, and the people know when a beast is so possessed by the animal shaking its head and by tears streaming from its eyes. The *ngoma* can however, be driven out by lighting the dry fruit of the Kigelia Musa tree, and making the beast sniff the smoke. They also believe that the Almighty (*Engai*) can control the actions of the *ngoma*, and they occasionally go to a sacred fig tree, *mugumo*, and beseech *Engai* to prevent evil disposed spirits from bringing evil on the people.

It is said that the *ngoma* of a murdered man flies straight back to his father's village and, as a rule, remains there, but if a murderer runs off and hides, the *ngoma* of the murdered man will often pursue him and haunt him, or influence events which will result in him being discovered and handed over to justice.

It is of the utmost importance for students of the sociology of these people to try and realize the reality and closeness of the influence of the ancestral spirits upon the daily life of the native, and unless an ethnologist has been in daily contact with the people, and striven to understand their point of view, it is difficult for the weight of this to be felt to a full extent. It is not proposed to assert that there is any scientific foundation for their beliefs in the activity of ancestral spirits, but some of the leaders in the psychical research field allege that it is scientifically proved that human personality does survive and does communicate under favourable circumstances, and if this is so, it might turn out that the races of the lower planes of culture are more sensitive to such influences, and that after all there is some truth in these beliefs.

It is therefore submitted that the safest attitude to adopt is that the evidence is at present insufficient, but that it is important to continue to study carefully the question.

It will be observed that the Kikuyu believe that their ancestral spirits live underground, but the Kamba believe that they inhabit certain sacred fig trees, and it is worthy of note how widespread the latter belief is.

It is prevalent all over India, and examples are to be found all along the east coast of Africa; there is one common feature to the whole area and that is the belief that sacrilegious trespassers in a sacred grove are assailed by showers

of missiles, cases of this are often alleged to occur in India, and the writer has heard of two examples in East Africa, where colonists who had no knowledge of these beliefs, and had built their houses in the vicinity of sacred fig trees, asserted that they were periodically disturbed at night by stones thrown on their roofs. In Phil Robinson's well-known book, *In my Indian Garden*, page 208, it is stated that in Burmah to this day Government pays to the headman of certain forest tracts a fee called *muring* for appeasing the *manes* of their ancestors lodged in old *sal* trees.

### EVIL EYE.

The belief so widespread in Europe, Morocco and many other parts of the world has never received much attention from observers in this part of Africa, and it was only recently realized that it received much recognition in Kikuyu. It is called *kita* or *kithamengo*.

The word *kita* means saliva as well as evil eye. The Swahili synonym is *kijicho*.

A few people here and there throughout the country are believed to possess this gift, women as well as men possess it, and it is irrespective of the guild to which a Kikuyu belongs; the possessor is born with it.

It will gradually dawn upon the people that so and so possesses the power, owing to the fact that if that person audibly admires a beast belonging to a neighbour the animal shortly after that becomes sick. If this occurs several times the various owners compare notes and it becomes generally known that so and so is *kithamengo*.

It would therefore seem that the idea is not based on an evil glance but upon an envious thought.

After that, if a cattle owner hears that a man who has this power (or one ought, perhaps, to term it "this infliction") has been admiring one of his cows, he will send for him and insist on him removing the evil; this is done by the man wetting his finger with saliva, and touching the beast on the mouth, and on various parts of the body with his wetted finger; this is believed to neutralize the enchantment.

Members of the Chera and Anjiru clans are notably possessed of this power with considerable frequency, the Ambui and Aithiageni again very rarely possess it. Even a medicine man cannot remove a curse imposed by a person possessing the evil eye; only the individual who imposed it can remove it, and he can do it only in the morning before he touches food.

Human beings and also inanimate objects are equally affected by the power, for it is said that if a person who possesses the evil eye admires a woman who is enceinte she will abort, and if she is not her breasts will become highly inflamed,

and he has to come and ceremonially rub a little saliva on them to remove the danger.

If an individual object is admired, say a spear, it will soon afterwards be broken, or if say the leather covered sheath of a sword is admired it will probably be gnawed by rats and spoilt.

No one who is not born with the power can acquire it, and it appears to be looked upon as an unavoidable misfortune, for they say it is the gift of God (Engai), and if a death or loss occurs the person to whom it is attributable cannot be sued for compensation before the "Kiama" or council of elders.

In time the people get to know who possesses the power, and if such a person enters a village he is asked in a friendly way to spit ceremonially on all the children to prevent anything untoward occurring to them owing to his visit. If a father possesses this power he can render his children proof against its action either from himself or any other person by shutting his eyes and then ceremonially spitting into each of their mouths.

The power is said to be hereditary, but all the children are not born with the gift. This belief exists among the Masai, and it is called '*Ng-onyek oo'-l-tunganak*', and will probably be found to account for the ceremonial spitting which was so common among them when they wished to show their friendliness. Refer to Hollis's *Masai*, page 315, the spitting on children is undoubtedly done to show the parents that the stranger is anxious to do the right thing and not afflict the child by the power of the evil eye. Also vide Hollis's *Nandi*, page 90, spitting is again believed to remove the spell of the evil eye (*sakutik*).

In Ukamba Mr. Dundas states that it is called *kyeni*, there is said to be a whole clan in Kitui called Mwanziu which possess the power, and it often happens that when a person has received a slight injury he will go to a member of this clan and ask him to spit on the injured spot, and forthwith becomes whole, possibly he attributes his hurt to someone with the power of the "evil eye." It is also said that possessors of this gift have such power that if they admire a stone it will split into fragments.

#### *The Magic of the Eithaga.*

It has occasionally been incorrectly alleged that the power of the "evil eye" in Kikuyu is the monopoly of one clan called the Eithaga or Aithaga, but such does not appear to be the case. The members of the Eithaga clan are credited with supernatural powers, but they are of quite a different character, as will be seen below. The name of the clan is *Eithaga* or *Kiuru*, a single member is called Mweithaga. The name Kiuru is an opprobrious nickname, which means "those who bewitch people."

The stronghold of the Eithaga is Karuri's country on the east slopes of the Nandarua Mountain, but it is said that they originally came from Karira's to the north of the Saba Saba River. The present head of the clan is one Kiriri near

Karuri's, and in South Kikuyu the most prominent Mweithaga is Mkone wa Ndawa, it is said that the chief Kiriri has hair growing on the point of his tongue. The clan is nearly entirely endogamous, that is to say, a Mweithaga generally marries a Mweithaga, no man of another clan will marry a Mweithaga woman but a Mweithaga man may occasionally find a mate from another clan. The members of the Eithaga clan practically all belong to the Kikuyu circumcision guild. They are, however, divided into two divisions, *A-Mbura* and *A-Kiuru*, the first meaning the "rain-makers" and the second the "wizards."

The former profess to be able to make rain, but their powers in this connection are not considered very extensive, and the majority will only admit that if rain is about a *Mu-Mbura* may cause it to fall but not if it is not the proper season for rain. If rain comes on in a camp where one has any Eithaga porters they will turn out, wave branches and blow vigorously in the direction from which the rain is coming, and what is more, firmly believe that they are having some effect on the elements.

In connection with these rain-making powers, it is curious to note that no Mweithaga may drink or cook with rain-water that has been collected in a cooking pot, if he does he will surely die. Further, no Mweithaga may carry embers of fire in a fragment of crock from a cooking pot, he must either carry the fire in some green leaves in his hand or get a fire-brand.

We now come to the wizard branch of the clan. Only the males have magical powers. It is said that a Mweithaga will take an ox or Kudu horn and blow it and by doing this will bewitch an enemy saying, "I blow this horn and your heart will become like the wind I blow through this horn," meaning, it will disappear and be lost. The person will then be bewitched, will cough up phlegm, and eventually die unless he takes offerings to the Mweithaga and beseeches him to remove the spell, the proper thing is to take a ram and some sugar cane, if this is done the wizard is unable to refuse and will keep the sheep, cook some of the fat and put it in his mouth with some of the juice from the sugar cane. He will then squirt some into the mouth of the bewitched person, and will also put some into a gourd for the patient to take back to his village and give to his children. After this ceremony the patient recovers, and what is better, it is said that no Mweithaga can again bewitch him in this way.

A Mweithaga, if he wishes to bewitch a village, will go into the bush and find some francolin eggs, and will put these, together with the leaves of the *mkurwe* (*Albizzia*) bush, on a fire and will say, "As these eggs burst and as these leaves shrivel up so shall this village be destroyed," and it is believed that evil will forthwith fall on the people of that village, but only upon the people, for the Eithaga do not harm livestock. Some will put the francolin eggs with water in a cooking pot on a fire and then break the pot and the eggs with one of the hearth stones. The Eithaga never use herbs or material substances in their magic, all spells are done by invocation. No medicine man can remove a spell imposed by a Mweithaga, it can only be removed by the one who imposed it or by another Mweithaga. If, however, a mysterious sickness falls on a village a *mundu mugo*

or medicine man is called in, and he can diagnose it and tell whether it is due to the magic of the Eithaga. A Mweithaga cannot bewitch another Mweithaga, nor can he bewitch a person belonging to another tribe such as Masai or Kamba.

Sometimes, however, they are of use, for they are believed to have the power of bewitching unknown thieves, and so it occasionally happens that a person who has had, say, some goats or some sugar cane stolen, will call in a Mweithaga and ask him to throw a spell on the thief. He will come to the village and take a piece of mud containing the spoor of one of the stolen animals or one of the stems from which the sugar cane has been cut as the case may be, and he will say "*A rokwa uguo*," "I bewitch the thief," the thief who is probably not far away will hear people talking of this, and being convinced of the effects of the magic will hasten to return the stolen property to its owner.

The Mweithaga is then called again, and the owner of the goats takes one and kills it, the Mweithaga cuts out the stomach with part of the œsophagus, he wets his finger with saliva and touches the end of the œsophagus with his wetted finger, and he then inflates the stomach by blowing and makes passes with it over the body of the thief and thus removes the spell, finally he fastens a *rukwaru* or strip of the goat skin on the thief's wrist; the thief has to pay a sheep to the Mweithaga as a fee. If the theft is that of such a thing as sugar cane the thief has to find the sacrificial goat and then be purified as above described.

No Mweithaga may eat any wild game, in no case can he even wear the skin of a wild beast, the only exceptions to this law are that they can eat locusts and they can make honey bags out of the skin of the *ngunu*, a small reddish antelope, probably a duiker.

For all their magical powers the Eithaga are subject to the incidence of *thaku* just the same as other people, and are also subject to the power of the evil eye like other folk.

There is a kind of constitutional antipathy between the Eithaga and the smiths of the tribe, and it is said that there are no Eithaga smiths. A Mweithaga may not sleep in a smith's house or *vice-versa*, if this did occur it is believed that illness or even death would supervene. The evil spell can, however, be removed by the owner of the house, that is to say, if a smith sleep in the house of a Mweithaga, the Mweithaga could remove the evil, and *vice-versa*.

Smiths are believed to possess magical powers similar to those of the Eithaga, and to obtain these from the tools of their trade—from the fire, the iron, the bellows and the anvil.

If, for instance, a smith is forging a weapon and when it is white hot he plunges it into water saying "May such and such a village cool as this iron is cooling," evil effects will fall on the village. Only that smith or another can remove the spell, a medicine man has no power over a smith's magic.

The Kikuyu are very afraid of the Eithaga, and in former days after someone had been killed by their black art the elders would induce one of them to come and remove the spell from all the people of the village where the man had died, they



would then collect as many of the members of the clan as they could find and insist on them taking the oath known as *ku-ringa thenge* by which they would swear not to bewitch any more of their neighbours. Sometimes, however, they would turn out *en masse* and slaughter all the Eithaga they could lay their hands on. It is said that a Kikuyu would never enter the village of a Mweithaga uninvited.

If a Mweithaga goes to a village and becomes embroiled in a quarrel with a member of another tribe, goats must be exchanged to make the peace, and the Mweithaga must spit on the other party to obviate any evil effects, the Mweithaga will then invite the other man to his village to drink beer with him, and will take a sip from a horn of beer and then eject it back into the horn, the man then drinks the beer, and after that he is immune from the effects of any Eithaga magic.

The Eithaga are believed to have the power of protecting forest, and their powers are sometimes invoked for this purpose. If a man wishes to protect a patch of forest on his property he sends for a Mweithaga to put a spell on it, the magician proceeds to the spot with the local elders and takes with him a cooking pot taken from the deserted hut of a deceased person. He fills this with water taken from each spring and stream in the piece of forest, and boils it on a fire made on a path in the said forest, the pot is supported on three stones, after this a little of the water is poured back into each of the springs or streams, and the pot is then shattered by dropping one of the hearth stones on it. The magician then blows his horn and announces that if anyone cuts the trees in the forest his heart will burst forth like the blasts of the horn.

#### *A Kikuyu oracle.*

There lives in South Kikuyu-land an elder named Kichura or Thiga wa Wairumbi wa Kaumo of the Kachiko clan and the Njenga generation or *rika*, who is credited with the extraordinary power of being the recipient of messages from the Supreme Being and in consequence the gift of prophecy. He was interviewed and cross-examined by the writer, and stated that at intervals, about twice a year, during the night he falls into a deeper sleep than usual, a trance in fact, and that while in this condition he is taken out of his bed and statements are made to him by a voice, but he cannot see who gives him the message. The trance always occurs at night, and he is generally taken outside his house while in this cataleptic condition, but says that he never remembers being able to distinguish the huts or any familiar objects in the village. The interior of the hut appears to him to be lighted up, and the message comes with a booming sound which he understands.

He stated that one day he went to visit an elder named Kibutu, and he was seized during the night and taken bodily through the thatch of the roof, and was found on the top of the hut next morning. On another occasion a young man of the warrior class, *mwanaake*, belonging to his village was sleeping alongside him in his hut when he was temporarily carried off, and the young man's hair all came off as if it had been shaved, and in the morning it was found lying in a heap on the floor by the bed, and the owner had no idea how it had occurred.

He does not sleep in an ordinary hut with his wife but in a *thingira* or bachelor hut with another elder, and when he is seized with one of his trances the other elder will wake up and find he has gone, but does not see him go or return.

The day following one of his seizures he collects the elders and delivers to them his message. He states that after one of these seizures he is very exhausted, and for three days cannot rise from his bed. His father and paternal grandfather had this gift or power, and he says that his father told him that his paternal grandmother had three breasts, two on her bosom and one on her back, but whether he considered that this had any connection with the other phenomena he did not disclose.

He stated that he believed the gift came from God and not from the *ngoma* or ancestral spirits, and that if he did not deliver to the people the messages he receives he would be stricken with sickness. He says that he was invested with this power when he was a stripling, soon after he had been circumcised. One morning he woke up with his two hands tightly clasped, and he passed blood instead of urine for nine days, and a big medicine man named *Wangnendu* was then called in, a goat was killed, and the medicine man tied *rukwaru* bracelets of the skin on to the patient's wrists. The hæmaturia then stopped, and his hands relaxed, and he was able to open them, and it was found that he had fifteen *mbugu* in each hand. These were white stones such as are used in a medicine man's divination gourd. The medicine man then brought a small medicine gourd and placed the *mbugu* therein.

Kichuru still has the gourd with the thirty *mbugu*, and relates how on one occasion his hut was burnt down and his gourd was destroyed in the fire, but that the *mbugu* were found quite uninjured in the ashes. He was asked whether he considered that his powers were intimately connected with these stones, and he stated that he did not believe he could lose them, but if by some mischance they should be lost that God would give him some more, and that even if they were lost that he would receive oracles as before.

He gave examples as the kind of messages he receives, and said that on one occasion some time before the advent of Europeans he was told that the Masai would be severely stricken with small-pox, and that subsequently many would settle among the Kikuyu, and shortly afterwards it happened accordingly. On another occasion he was told that a white race would enter the country and that they and the Kikuyu would live side by side in this country, and now it has come to pass.

He was seized before the great famine of 1900 and foretold its arrival. Later on he was told to inform the Kikuyu to sacrifice at the *mugumo* sacred fig trees a white sheep, a red sheep and a black male goat, and that the chief Kinanjui was to sacrifice a *mori*, white heifer, at the head waters of the Mbagathi River. These orders were obeyed, and the famine and small-pox were lifted from the land.

Early in the present season he was told that the maize and other grains would be lost by drought, and that the food being planted now (April, 1911)

would come to a good harvest. He was also told that during the present year the young people would suffer greatly from dysentery, and that they were to sacrifice sheep at the sacred fig trees, and that the women and children were to put bracelets from the skins of the sacrificed sheep on their wrists. Many have done so, and those who have obeyed will escape the visitation. After this he says that small-pox will come from the west of the country, and attack people from Karuri's (east slopes of Nandarua Mountain) to Limoru. The disease will gradually work its course eastward and decrease in intensity. When he delivers one of his oracular utterances the *athuri ya Kiama*, elders of the council, bring him a sheep and a gourd of beer. He kills the former and eats it, and the beer is returned to the elders to drink.

He says that sometimes when rain does not come he is accused of stopping it, but that such accusations are due to ignorance, that he is merely the unconscious and involuntary agent for utterances from a Supreme Power, and that all he can do in such cases is to take a sheep to a sacred fig tree, sacrifice it there, and pray for rain, just like any other elder who is qualified to do so.

#### *Names among the Kikuyu.*

Every Kikuyu child receives two proper names. The first name, if a male, is that of his paternal grandfather *thiga*, and if a female that of her maternal grandmother *chuchu*. The second name is that of his father if a male.

In addition he generally receives another name at the time of circumcision, this is considered as a nickname, these generally refer to some peculiarity of character, habits or physique.

For instance, a boy will be called *kichuru* because he was said to drink a large amount of gravel as a child. If the lobe of a man's ear is broken he is called *kachuru*, if he happens to break a finger he is called *kara*.

The names are derived from animals such as *nugu*—a baboon, *njovu*—an elephant, *hiti*—hyena, *ngui*—a dog.

From names of natural objects, such as *kamiti*—trees, *kegio*—a wild hibiscus used by the Kikuyu for making fibre, *higa*—stone, *meriwa*—a thorn, *wa-rui*—a stream, *kirima*—a hill.

From names of weapons such as *kitimu*—a spear (used of a tall thin man), *kahiu*—a sword, *njuguma*—a club.

#### *The Kikuyu Kichandi or Gourd of Song.*

The *kichandi* or gourd of song is a great institution among the Kikuyu, and gives untold amusement to the younger people. They are usually narrow in shape and 10 inches to 1 foot long, and are inscribed with designs from the neck to the rounded end, and strings of cowrie shells are fastened round the circumference

at intervals, the cowries are attached to fine leather strings and secured to the gourd by acacia thorns driven in like nails. The interior of the gourd contain seed of various trees, which, when the gourd is shaken, make a rattling sound. Some gourds have a cap of raw hide shrunk on the neck, others have a plug made of a piece of gourd.

Those with the most elaborate designs are said to come from Mwaitume, the Kikuyu country north of the Thika, and they have designs different from those made in South Kikuyu.

It is considered a considerable accomplishment for a young man to be an adept at guessing the significance of the designs on a *kichandi* and be able to sing the appropriate song for each. Most youths possess the knowledge to some extent, but only a comparatively few really excel, and if one meets another singing to his *kichandi* he will probably ask him to go through the songs, and if the singer makes three mistakes the gourd becomes forfeit to the person who points them out, and the owner will have to redeem it if he wishes to regain possession of it. The price of redemption is supposed to be a goat skin.

They are usually sold at about a rupee each.

The singer commences to sing about the designs at the rounded end of the gourd and works his way towards the mouth.

It can hardly be said that the artists who make these instruments and inscribe thereon the conventional designs consider they have any magical value, but it is probable that in early times it was so, because they are still half in joke designated by the name of *mundu mugo*, which means a medicine man. They were formerly bought for four goat skins and some beads, and the purchaser upon returning to his village had first to sing its song before his father and received from him a goat, which was said to be done to avert any ill luck, which certainly gives one the idea that there was some magic connected with the business; he then had to sing before his uncle and received a present from him; he then sang before his grandmother, *tata*, and received from her a piece of iron. He then performed before the girls of the village.

Each verse refers to a particular design, and some of the songs are on the principle of "The house that Jack built." The singing is conducted with great vigour and is very rhythmical, and has the usual minor intonation. A number of verses have been translated and are given below; it is regretted, however, that the rhythm has been lost in the process, but the general idea is preserved as closely as possible.

TRANSLATION OF THE SONG OF A KIKUYU WHEN PLAYING A KICHANDI.

(1) *Itina lya ngondi*, the hartebeest's rump :—

I set forth and met a hartebeest by the way.  
His hind quarters were quivering with fatness.  
I made my salaams to this beast,

And my salutation was at once returned.<sup>1</sup>  
 These courtesies were those of the plains,  
 So I plucked two blades of grass  
 And strewed them by the side of the road (for luck).

NOTE.—It is a custom all over Central Africa to drop a little grass at cross roads, and this may have some reference to that custom.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the custom of the hartebeest to nod its head when alarmed by the proximity of human being.

(2) *Mburya cha Wairetu*—the cicatrization of young women :—

I looked around and saw the scars on the breasts of the maidens.  
 I went back to the huts and there I saw a smith  
 Busily engaged in forging a razor (for the purpose of cicatrizing the girls—this is understood).

(3) *Mbura*—rain :—

When the rain pours steadily down,  
 Then is the time for planting pumpkins,  
 Then they grow and a piece of stick is planted for the vine to bear upon.  
 The pumpkin ripens and it is plucked  
 When my mother is sowing *mawe*,<sup>2</sup>  
 But I am busy the whole day long playing my *kichandi*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mawe* is a small millet-like grain.

(4) *Migwe*—arrows :—

I set forth and found an arrow maker ;  
 I paid him the usual salutations  
 And asked him to sell me a bow and arrows ;  
 I also begged for a quiver to carry the arrows,  
 And I asked for some feathers to mend the arrows.

(5) *Njira*—road :—

When a man takes a walk on the road with his *kichandi*  
 And meets with another player by the way,  
 The proper thing is to salute each other ;  
 And one asks the other, what do I hear ?  
 Who is this who is singing, shaking his *kichandi* ?  
 Are you speaking the truth or only deceiving the people ?

(The insinuation being that the speaker does not understand the burden of the other's song.)

(6) *Njata kairumbi*—the morning star :—

When the morning star comes out and shines,  
 I too came out of my house.

I wandered about and then came back to my village  
 Without finding food or profit.  
 I entered into a house and found the elders gathered together ;  
 So I sat beside them and began to abuse them,  
 Saying, O ye elders, why have you brought me into the world and here am I a poor  
 man.

(7) *Njata Kirimira*—the Pleiades :—

When the pleiades meet with the moon  
 The people assemble and take the oath of the blue beads.  
 If a man who plays a kichandi comes to a place  
 And finds another singing or playing,  
 He must stay and hear the song,  
 For if he passes by the oath is sure to catch him.

NOTE.—If a person passes a place where the people are singing and playing a *kichandi*, they call out to him to join in, saying, “If you pass by you will be seized by the oath of the *chuma cha Mchugu*,” the blue beads, it is said to be only a joke.

The Kikuyu say that the Pleiades is the mark in the heavens to show the people when to plant their crops ; they plant when this constellation is in a certain position early in the night.

(8) *Iroli ya thongo*—the holes in the kichandi.—There are numerous small holes pierced in the gourd, and acacia thorns are stuck into these from the outside, and they increase the sound of the instrument because the beans and seeds inside the gourd rattle against the thorns. *Iroli ya thongo* literally means the hole in the skull of a one-eyed man, *i.e.*, the hole where the missing eye should be.

I paid my salaams to a hole.  
 The hole was then filled up (by a thorn)  
 When the gourd was full of salaams.  
 I then went back to my village.  
 I passed by a house and saw a wooden mortar.  
 The mortar was for crushing sugar cane for beer.  
 The beer will cause the elders to salaam each other.  
 The salaams (in the gourd) spoke to the elders and said :  
 I am hanging here on a wooden nail,  
 A drinking horn<sup>1</sup> of the elders is also hung here too ;  
 And behold I look down and see a stream of black ants climbing up and making their  
 home therein.

NOTE.—The *kichandi* gourd is supposed to become full of compliments as the round of songs prompted by the figures on the gourd is completed.

<sup>1</sup> In Kikuyu native beer is only supposed to be drunk out of a cow's horn.

(9) *Lina*—name :—

We were met together for choosing our names (at the circumcision feast).  
 A rainbow came and seized our names and scattered them.  
 When planting potatoes the porcupine came and dug them up.

The porcupine ran away and met an ant bear on the way.  
 The ant bear began to dig a hole but he met a hunter.  
 The hunter was armed with a bow and arrows.  
 The hunter drank water at the Tana River.  
 He cooked his food, took his knife and ate.  
 He then arose and entered a wood, peering ahead with his eyes.  
 He suddenly saw a spider's web before him.  
 The web covered his face and he could not see.  
 He then plucked some leaves<sup>1</sup> and cleaned his face.

<sup>1</sup> Certain leaves are used by the Kikuyu to cleanse their bodies when water is not available or possibly by way of lustration, the leaves used are those of the *Machii*, *Meteri*, *Machura* and *Malinda* bushes.

(10) *Migwa ya Mugwa*—Swahili, *Miiba ya Mgunga*—acacia thorns :—

And the thorns of an acacia bush pierced his eyes.

(This refers to the hunter in No. 9.) The thorns are those referred to in note at head of No. 8.

(11) *Mukuha wa kutunerera*—a needle for sewing with :—

I took a needle for sewing a bag,  
 I twisted the fibre for making my thread.  
 When the thread was finished I measured it  
 To see if it was enough for the bag.  
 I then called out to my wife<sup>2</sup> and said,  
 Bring here to me the bag  
 That I may put my *kichandi* therein.

<sup>2</sup> He called to his wife because the woman would actually make the bag. The Kikuyu string bag is called *chondo*.

(12) *Mukwa na Kichocho* or *Mulathi*—the leather strap and the wooden nail :—

The wooden nail referred to is stuck into the wall of the hut to hang articles on, the *mukwa* is a long thong used for carrying a load on the back, the thong passes over the forehead.

When the bag (*chondo*) is finished  
 A leather strap is sewn on for a handle.  
 With these straps we carry our sugar cane,  
 And tie together our firewood and put it in the bag.  
 When work is done we hang up the bag and our *kichandi*,  
 And in the morning go out and make holes for playing *bau*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Bau* is a game which has spread all over Central Africa, thirty-two holes are made in the ground or on a board, and the players move pebbles or seeds from hole to hole according to rules.

(13) *Muwezya Ukicharikya*—when the beans are ripe and burst :—

When the beans<sup>1</sup> are ripe and burst,  
 Are burst and scattered o'er the ground,  
 We haste to pick them up to put in the *kichandi*.

<sup>1</sup> The beans referred to are those of a leguminous tree widely known as the *msekese* and they are collected to put in the dancing gourds to form the rattle.

(14) *Makoni*—bark :—

When the banana flower comes out,  
 A ring mark on the stalk is seen,  
 The covering leaves then unfold and fall,  
 The young fruit is then first seen.

(15) *Njoka*—a snake :—

I had one day a call of nature in the bush,  
 And I met a savage snake.  
 I called for help and a man came and struck the snake.  
 The snake slid away and entered a wood.  
 Then it split a piece of firewood,  
 And placed it upright in the way (to deceive me).  
 And in the meantime slipped into its hole.  
 I followed it and pulled it out and threw it into the bush again.  
 I then went on and met an upper grinding stone,<sup>2</sup>  
 And the stone was grinding maize.  
 And I said to it let us cook.  
 But it lay still and never answered a word.

<sup>2</sup> The upper stone is held in the hand and rubbed on a big stone slab, the Swahilis call it *Mwana jive*, the child of the stone.

(16) *Tama*—cloth :—

A tailor sits down and sews clothes.  
 And I sing and send out salaams.  
 I met a blacksmith forging knives.  
 I returned home and grumbled to my brothers,  
 And I said When a child grows up  
 He must stay at home like a he goat.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The implied idea being that there is no profit in wandering about from village to village playing the *kichandi*.

(17) *Njuki*—bees :—

In due season we hang a beehive on a tree.  
 Then father goes up and takes the honey.  
 He climbs up with a bag and puts the honey in it.  
 He calls his wife who mixes the honey with water.



The husband asks his wife,  
Is the honey (beer) ready to drink ?  
They spend the whole day drinking the beer.  
The whole company becomes overcome with liquor.  
They slaughter a goat and eat it.  
The skin they use for a cloth to wear.  
They then call out for an elder.  
The old man goes and settles the case.  
They then call out for a medicine man.  
He comes and gives medicine to make them sick.  
And the medicine man says to them all,  
I see not anything evil only peace.

NOTE.—They drink beer, quarrel, an elder comes and settles the dispute, the medicine man comes and purifies them and tells them that the whole affair is a storm in a tea-cup.

(18) *Nderi*—marabou stork :—

A marabou stork was killed by a hunter,  
And I took the feathers and wore them,  
And so adorned, a girl set her heart on me,  
I took her away and she conceived.  
The elders came to sit in judgment on me.  
So I bought a sheep and killed it for them and said,  
I am paying this for the mischief I have done.  
The elders accepted my repentance and said to me,  
A wrong like this must not be done again ;  
If a man has goats it is better for him  
To pay out his wealth and properly marry a girl.

(19) *Ndumunya*—bracelet :—

Bracelets are made for adorning young girls  
At the time of circumcision feast.  
They are then free from taunts of the children,  
But still being children cannot eat bananas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This means that they are not ready for marriage—intercourse with the opposite sex—a double entendre.

(20) *Thongoli*—trumpet made of oryx horn :—

I hear the sound of a horn,  
Which is blown when the new moon is seen.  
I raised my eyes and looked into the clouds,  
And there in the sky I saw the moon.

(21) *Ndundu*—a council :—

In our land (Kikuyu) only the elders come to the council.  
 For only they know how to give out the law.  
 If a man kills another the slayer is caught.  
 When he is caught and brought before the elders  
 The elders say "Let him swear to his guilt by an oath."  
 But maybe the oath (ordeal) does not touch him.  
 The elders then go and consult with each other,  
 And they come back and say he must pay up a fine.  
 And the man then declares I will kill this sheep,  
 And swear that I did not commit this deed.  
 But the laws are all made by the elders,  
 And the elders shall teach the people to follow the law.

(22) *Ndani*—inside (the hut) :—

He was a sweeper of the goat hut.  
 He gives salt to the goats to lick.  
 He drives them all out of the village.  
 The goats then rest for a while.  
 When they awake he drives them to pasture.  
 There they eat grass till his father calls,  
 And he brings them all home safe to the kraal.

(23) *Nguru*—a tortoise :—

A tortoise slept by the road-side.  
 First he screamed and then was silent.  
 Then he spoke to the young men  
 And said, When those bracelets are finished  
 It will be selfish to wear them yourselves,  
 You must give to the maidens in the village.

(24) *Ngotho ya Wathuri*—the ivory armband of an elder :—

When I made my *kichandi*  
 I decorated it with many devices,  
 But when I counted them over  
 I found one pattern was missing,  
 And that was the armband of an elder.  
 So I went forth and sought for one  
 And carved its likeness on my *kichandi*.

(25) *Nyali or nyama* (Kikuyu)—*muhanga* (Swahili)—ant bear :—

One day I went out for a walk,  
 I made for the place where the elders were assembled  
 As I wished to show the people my *kichandi*.

By the way I met an ant bear,<sup>1</sup>  
It was a very lucky beast to encounter,  
So I returned to my house and carved it on my *kichandi*.

<sup>1</sup> If one meets an ant bear by day it is an omen of long life, being a nocturnal beast it is very rarely seen by day.

(26) *Thatu*—mist :—

When I was making my *kichandi*  
I found a place for one more device.  
So I sallied forth to search for a design  
Which would be suitable to add to its fellows.  
But when I looked outside rain was falling,  
And the mist had covered the earth,  
So I came back and made a sign for the mist.

(27) *Nyongo Nyongo*—snail :—

I went forth in the morning and gazed around.  
Crawling along the road I espied a snail,  
And I said this is a good beast to carve on my gourd.  
I thus went back to my house and carved it at once on my gourd.  
I then went to where the elders were seated,  
All the people saw it and were greatly amused.

There are traces of an archaic dialect in the songs of the *kichandi* for instance :—

*Njata kairumbi* means the evening star in the *kichandi* songs, whereas in ordinary speech the evening or morning star is *nya kiakia*.

The phrase *njata kairumbi* also sometimes has another meaning in the *kichandi* poetry, and that is the veiling of the moon by a fog, and if next morning the fog, *thatu*, is still enveloping the country the owner of a *kichandi* will call a medicine man who is skilled at rain-making, *muhuku mbura*, and present him with two goat skins and two bundles of sugar cane; the medicine man will then make medicine, and the sun and the moon will re-appear once more.

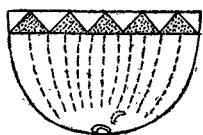
The appropriate song on this occasion is as follows; it is supposed to be addressed to the medicine man when he begs him to come and remove the fog by his spell :—

I have come to seek you,  
And this *kichandi* is yours,  
But what have you written thereon?  
For you have forbidden the children  
To go to the shamba to seek for food;  
But I must go from my village  
To cut sugar cane for the children to eat.

I must cut the sugar cane into bits  
 And pack them away in my basket,  
 The basket wherein the *kichandi* lies.  
 When this is done I beg of you  
 To spit on the children for luck,  
 To dry the rain and drive away the mist.

When a Kikuyu sees a morning star he picks up a little earth, spits on it and throws in the direction of the star; he then takes a little mutton fat and rubs it over his face. This is said to be done because the star is looked upon as a manifestation of *Engai*, the Supreme Being.

THE PICTOGRAPHS ON A KICHANDI KIKUYU DANCING GOURD.



*Ligito*—leather belt worn by women.

*Itinira ya ngondi*—the hind quarters of a hartebeest.

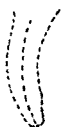


*Ruochi mwiri*—a stooping person. Another interpretation was *mbura*—rain.



*Iruri ya thongo*—the iris of the eye.

*Njoya*—the feathering of an arrow.



*Njata kairumbi*—a comet, also evening star,  
 or  
*Mburia ya wairetu*—cicatrization on a woman's abdomen.



*Nya kininjango* or *nyungu*—cooking pot.



*Juwa*—the sun and the rays coming from it at sunset,  
 or  
*Mboi mbui*—spider.



*Mweri*—moon, or *Ziaka*—a quiver for arrows.



*Ukunja ya mbura*—rainbow,  
 or  
*Musongorima*—the winding hole of a snake below the ground.



*Itara*—a loft in a hut to stack firewood.



*Mwarati*—a trough for goats to eat salt from,  
or  
*Thomi*—the elders' meeting-place.



*Ngotho ya Ngotho ya wathuri*—ivory armband worn by elders.



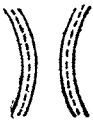
*Ira*—udder of a cow.



*Njata kilimila*—the Pleiades,  
or  
*Kizambo*—an ants' nest in a tree.



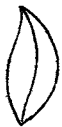
*Kiturwa*—stool.



*Mburia*—the tattooing on the breast of a girl,  
or  
*Kichocho cha kichandi*—the bag to carry the *kichandi* in.



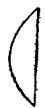
*Ndundu*—the meeting of the elders in council (they sit in a circle).



*Ngonyongo*—snail (slug),  
or  
*Songori*—greater Kudu antelope.



*Mugwi*—arrow point.



*Uta*—bow.



*Tama*—cotton cloth.



*Kiondo*—woven bag carried by women,  
or  
*Nguru*—tortoise.

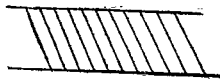


*Nyama*—ant bear, *arcteropus* Mohanga in Swahili.

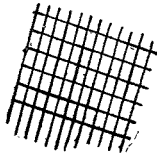


*Thagana*—Tana river, or *Sagana*.

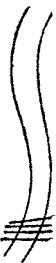
This word is probably an inverted form of the Galla word *Galana* for river.



*Njege*—porcupine.



*Thatu*—mist or fog,  
or  
*Wumbui*—spider's web.



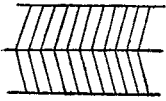
*Njira*—the road from the village to the river.



*Ngethia eigomani*—the meeting-place of two persons on a road.



*Njuki*—honey.



*Nderi*—the pestle used for husking grain in mortars.



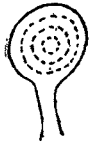
*Mukwa*—a leather strap used for carrying loads,  
or  
*Ndundu ya wathuri*—secret conference of elders.



Wire wrapping on mouth of gourd.  
*Njomoya*—the wire bracelet on a man's wrist.



*Nyamu ya athi*—snake.



*Chuma cha mchugu*—the sacred bead,  
or  
*Mwere*—the moon,  
or  
*Ukungu ya mbura*—rainbow,  
or  
*Ndiri*—a mortar for crushing grain.



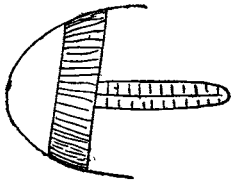
*Thomi*—the meeting-place of the elders.

The cowries sewn on the outside of the gourd are called *ngugutu*.

The seeds inside to make the rattle are called *mwethia*.

It will be noted that sometimes there appear to be two or more interpretations, the reason of this is that the gourd studied was not obtained direct from the original owner but at third hand through a chief. The interpretation of it was obtained through two separate individuals, and when their versions varied there was nothing for it but to record the differences. If the gourd had been obtained from the maker or from the original owner, he would have only had one version of the significance of the pictographs.

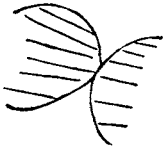
The following are representations of the pictographs on another dancing gourd or *kichandi*, with the explanation of each one. In this case the explanation was that given by the artist who inscribed the designs on the gourd. The impression, current among other *kikuyu*, was that he did not excel as a designer, and had not executed his work very well; he admitted that the pictographs might be better done but complained that he had not his proper tools. There is little doubt that if he had had to please the critical eye of an important chief he would have taken more trouble.



*Itinira ya ngondi*—hind-quarters of a hartebeest.

*Iindi ya ngondi*—backbone of hartebeest.

(Nearly every *kichandi* commences with this design.)

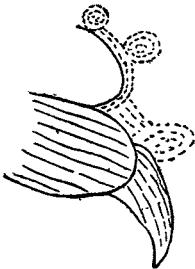


*Murugu—Fumbwi (Ki-Swahili Syn.)*—a bird which lives among the sugar cane.

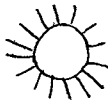


*Kithambo*—ants' nest in a tree.

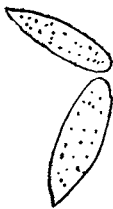
(These are common objects in the Kikuyu forest, they are made of a black paste, which is moulded in a more or less spherical shape around one of the upper branches of a tree.)



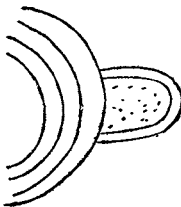
*Mundu wa Kichandi*—the owner of the *Kichandi*.



*Mwei*—the moon.



*Ndumwa cha wairetu*—cicatrization of women.



*Kihochia*—a pole erected inside a hut to hang bags, etc., on, the branches on it are lopped off short to form pegs.



*Mugwi*—arrow.





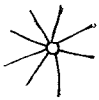
*Mkunga mburu*—rainbow.



*Ngugutu*—cowrie.

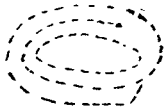


*Ndiri*—pestle for crushing sugar cane; this design is really intended for a representation of a woman using an *ndiri*.

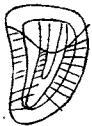


*Chuma cha mchugu*—the sacred bead.

(Possibly the rays represent the magic supposed to emanate from the bead.)



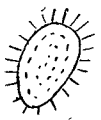
*Iyu ma thuthuthuma*—a man whose abdomen becomes distended owing to excessive flatulence.



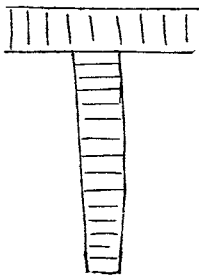
*Ngare*—leopard.



*Njata kairumbi*—morning star.



*Kirimira*—Pleiades.



*Thagana*—River Tana.

This, an incised band running transversely round the gourd—a conventional representation of this river—appears on nearly all these gourds, possibly the Tana valley was the place of their origin.

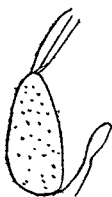
*Thomi*—the meeting-place of the elders.



*Umei*—dew—probably a conventional representation of a dewdrop.



*Njuki*—bees—a swarm of bees settling on a tree.

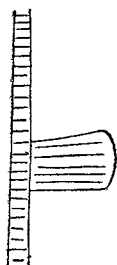


*Ngayo*—a shield.

*Muwimi*—a hunter.

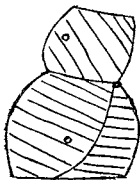


*Muria ya mbura*—a rain-maker.  
(The vertical lines probably represent the rain falling.)



*Munyenyi*—a forest tree.  
(This design runs from one end of the gourd to the other.)

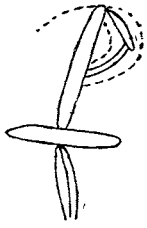
*Ngigi*—locusts.



*Ndundu ya athuri*—a meeting of the council of elders.



*Ndundu ya moranja*—a meeting of the tribesmen of the degree below the councillors.



*Thiaka*—a quiver of arrows the elder is wearing.

*Muthuri*—an elder.

*Mututhi*—the bunch of sacred leaves carried by an elder.

*Muthegi*—the staff which only elders are allowed to carry.



*Mweretu a kigirwa kwa ithe*—a girl being taken from her father's house by her husband.



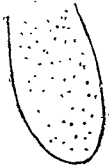
*Thongori*—a horn trumpet.



*Ugimbi*—*mtama* grain (Sorghum).

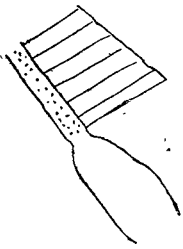


*Mwethia*—the seeds inside the *kichandi* which make a rattle when it is shaken.

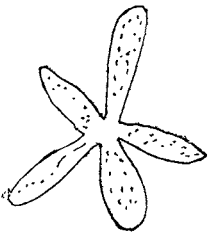


*Rumuru*—sand flies or midges.

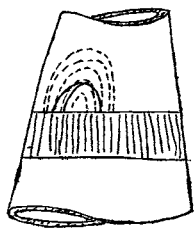
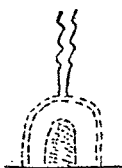
(A graphical representation of a cloud of insects.)



*Mwai wa miatu*—a beehive maker.



*Bumbwi*—spider's web.

*Miura*—bellows for forge.*Irumbi*—mist.*Thongorima*—burrow in which the larvæ of the tiger beetle live.*Nguyo*—colobus monkey.*Munyori*—fine chain to carry *kichandi* by.*Nyura nyura*—the cork or stopper of the *kichandi*.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS.

At the risk of wearying the reader's attention, it is desired to make a few remarks in conclusion and in explanation. It is frankly admitted that, although the writer has lived in close touch with the Kikuyu for some years, and maintained a lively interest in this branch of study, he had no idea of the extent and variety of the ceremonial connected with the *thahu* beliefs and cognate subjects.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to demonstrate the practical utility of research into these phases of native sociology, but it may be of interest to describe how attention came to be directed towards this subject. The Kikuyu people form the bulk of the labour supply of the upland colonists in British East Africa, and complaints are often received from employers of its capricious nature, and upon investigation it was found that, apart from the natural ebb and flow of this supply, the charge of caprice was well founded, *i.e.*, there were many cases of desertion and often without any suspicion of ill-treatment, further, in some cases it was discovered that this desertion was traceable to a belief on the part of the individual that it was necessary to go away to get *darwa*, which is the general local synonym for medicine, whether of the nature of drugs or magical in character. The question then arose as to why such frequent calls occurred, and it was a long time before a definite clue could be obtained, but the principles gradually unfolded and became clear and were found to rest on the necessity of obtaining ceremonial purification to free the individual from either a *thahu* or the impurity left by a death in the family, as has been described in this and the previous paper, in fact, it will be realized how complex a native's social life may be. It may not at first sight be obvious how a knowledge of these beliefs can ameliorate the difficulty, but the point is that



FIG. 1.

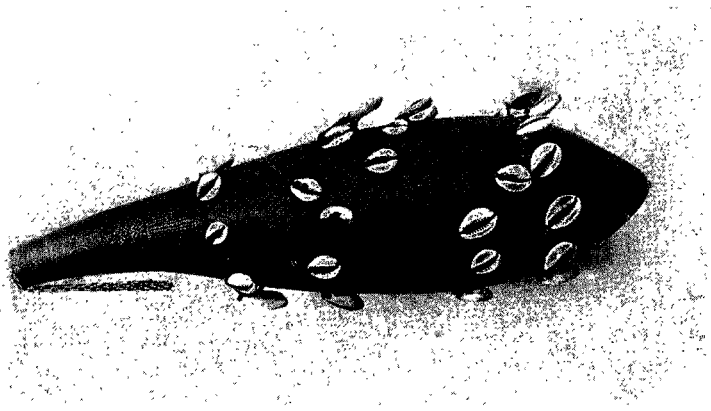


FIG. 2.

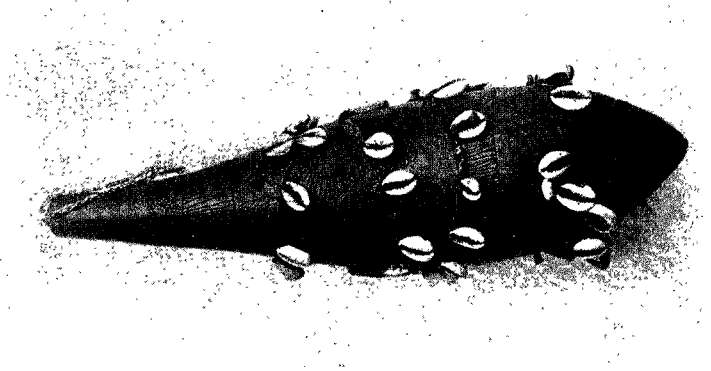


FIG. 3.

KICHANDI KIKUYU DANCING GOURDS.

FURTHER RESEARCHES INTO KIKUYU AND KAMBA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS.

if a man deserts without leave he breaks his contract of service and dare not venture back for a long time in case he should be identified and punished, whereas if he knows that his master understands his beliefs he will probably go and tell him and ask if he can go away for a day or so and carry out the necessary ceremonies, and will then usually come back. It may be a little tiresome to the master, but the better feeling and mutual confidence which is induced pays in every way. This is not mere theory, for the men who do get into close touch with their employés lose very few, and can generally get more men than they require. This is quoted as an example of the practical value of ethnological inquiry in daily life, which after all is not a bad working test.

The method employed in collecting the material has been to discuss the questions with as many responsible elders as possible selected from both guilds of the tribe, and compare and correct the statements so obtained. It has been a work of great interest, though often very tedious, but probably more tedious to the informer than to the recorder. Theories as to the explanation and insignificance of the various features of the ritual have only been rarely attempted, as it is believed that it is generally foolish for the field worker to dogmatize on these matters, that that is better left to the professional ethnologist who has the field work of a continent to guide him, and whose intellect is trained in the habit of deduction or induction with regard to these difficult problems. There is, however, one warning which it is desired to impress upon persons living in the country and have opportunities of research, and that is that the last word has not been said upon these questions, and it is hoped that these observations will only encourage further research and the keenest criticism. It must be remembered that very few, in fact hardly any, of the ceremonials described in this paper have been witnessed by Europeans, and if they have, they have not been observed and described by eyes trained to note the important features, and it may well happen that with the best intentions the elders may have from time to time omitted some point which, when accurately described, may throw a flood of light upon some apparently obscure point in the ritual. This is where the district officer and the missionary can, if they choose, play such an important part; we have many missionaries who have a thorough knowledge of the vernaculars of the tribes, and district officers who, if not such good linguists, are in intimate touch with these people; what chances these men have if they would only train themselves for the task. Signs of a renaissance are, however, not wanting, and it is believed that administrative officers are yearly taking more and more scientific interest in their people, and one of the missionary societies it is said, has formed a committee for the study of native customs. The missionaries must, however, realize the necessity of caution in collecting observations of pagan customs from persons who have been for some time in close contact with their teaching, which often has the effect of causing their pupils to ridicule time-honoured ceremonial and, moreover, missionaries are, as a rule, only in close touch with the rising generation who are not initiated in the procedure, and have little to do with the elders of the tribe.