

Sylvietta minima, Grant. Coast Green-backed Bush-creeper. ♀ 2, ♂ 2. Manda. A small species having the mantle washed with a decided green.

Cameroptera pileata, Reich. (?). Pale-bellied Wren Warbler. ♀ 2, ♂ 4. Manda and Lamu. This is a small species having the head brownish, the mantle green, and the under surface creamy, with the flanks washed with greyish. It is distinct from inland birds.

TURDIDÆ

Turdus tephronotus, Cab. Streaky-throated Thrush. ♀ 7, ♂ 10. Mombasa, Lamu, Manda, and M'koi.

Crateropus squamulatus, Shell. Scaly-feathered Babbling Thrush. ♀ 1, ♂ 4. Mombasa, Lamu, and Manda.

Argya rubiginosa Heuglini, Sharpe. Brown Babbling Thrush. ♀ 5, ♂ 7. Mombasa, Lamu, and Manda.

Geocichla Fischeri (?). Buff-breasted Babbler. ♀ 1. Lamu.

Cossypha Heuglini, Hartl., *rufescens* (?). Rufous-breasted Cossypha. ♀ 3, ♂ 2. Mombasa and Lamu. These birds are distinct from birds of Nairobi district. Their call note and song is distinct.

Cichladusa guttata, Heugl. Spotted Babbler. ♀ 3, ♂ 5. Mombasa, M'koi, Lamu, and Manda.

Erythropygia leucoptera, Rupp. Pale-breasted Babbler. ♀ 2, ♂ 1. Lamu and Manda.

KIKUYU 'ITHATHI'

BY H. R. TATE

The two Museum specimens of the above were obtained in Fort Hall district, but it was impossible to ascertain their origin or original owner, as those who once knew have either forgotten or refuse to disclose the information. The larger of the 'ithathi' (singular, 'githathi') is a circular piece of

red rock perforated in the centre, 16 inches in circumference and $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter. The smaller is more of a cylindrical shape, though one end tapers considerably ; it is also perforated,

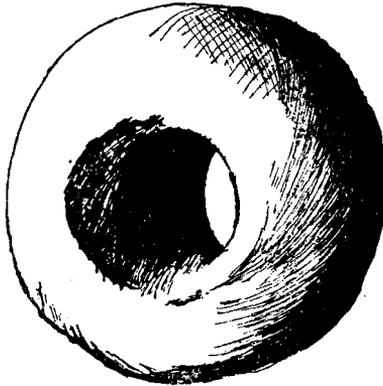
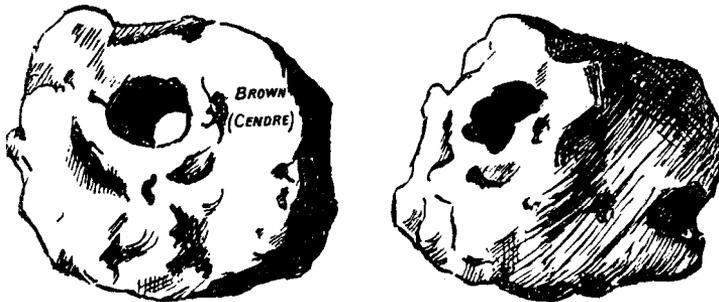


FIG. 1.—REDDISH BROWN STONE.



FIGS. 2 AND 3.—BROWN VOLCANIC ROCK.

and appears to be a piece of volcanic rock pierced lengthwise by artificial means. Height 3 inches, breadth $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, length $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, circumference $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. My Kikuyu informants are of opinion that the larger 'githathi' has been perforated by a native blacksmith, and there is no reason to suppose that it was formerly either the head of a stone or the weight of a digging stick.

'Ithathi' are (or were) used in the Kikuyu ceremony known as 'ku-ringa githathi,' literally 'to strike the githathi,' i.e. to swear a solemn oath on a magic stone.

I first obtained particulars of this ceremony in Kyambu District in 1909, and they appear in my article on 'Kikuyu Native Law' in the *Journal of the African Society*. I had not then been able to obtain a specimen of a 'githathi,' which I was informed was kept hidden away in a cave or hole in the rocks by the few natives owning such stones, but the ceremony as described to me was as follows:

When a native wishes to invoke vengeance upon an offender who may have refused to pay a particular debt, or compensation for an offence against tribal law, or who has been guilty of cheating or fraud, he invokes the aid of the 'ku-ringa githathi' ceremony, which is in this case a commination service, and not an ordeal. Two sticks of the 'mugeri' tree are stuck into the ground, and the 'githathi,' which is brought to the ceremony carefully wrapped up in dry leaves, is poised between. The elder conducting the ceremony stands in front of the 'githathi' and lays a switch of 'mugeri' thereon, invoking vengeance upon the offender at the same time. The words used are 'Arorio ni muma uyu wa githathi,' 'May he be eaten by this curse (or oath) of the githathi!' The ceremony is a public one, all the elders of the neighbourhood being present, and three goats (given by complainant) are eaten. The ceremony is conducted in an open place or under a tree, and the 'githathi' is housed inside a temporary grass booth. The oath has to be repeated every day for seven days, meat and other refreshment being consumed by the elders daily. After seven days the elder who has conducted the ceremony has his head shaved, and, a fourth goat having been killed, he wears a piece of the skin on his wrist as a charm. Owing to the fact that after conducting this commination service an elder may not have intercourse with his wives for three months, complainant generally engages an aged man for this purpose, he himself providing the goats. These two eat the fourth goat. The ceremony is concluded by the sacrifice of one more goat, and the elder who has conducted it finally spits on the ground to indicate that he spews out the curses which he has

invoked on another in order that they may not recoil on to his own head.

The offender who is the subject of the commination dies in a few months unless he puts himself right by paying the compensation demanded of him. My three informants, Kikuyu elders, all knew men personally who died after being cursed.

Mr. Hobley, in his 'Akamba and other East African Tribes,' describes a trial by ordeal with a 'githathi' at which he was fortunate enough to be present in person. It is evident therefore that the 'githathi' was (and probably still is) used by the Kikuyu as a means of cursing a tribal defaulter and available for use by the latter if he consented to submit his case to trial by ordeal.

In the latter case the accused man at a largely attended public ceremony swore on the 'githathi' by holding up the latter by means of two twigs held in his left hand and placing another twig on the burnt clay tube which is used as a 'githathi' in South Kikuyuland and swearing his innocence thereon. The procedure adopted by him was to discard from his right hand a twig at the end of each declaration. Thus 'If I killed the persons of whose death I am accused' (naming them), 'may the "githathi" kill me.' 'If I went to Embu to buy medicine, may I die, &c.'

Purification from contact with the 'githathi' was afterwards effected by accused rubbing a little china clay on his hands, and also eating a little of the same, those present rubbing their feet in the contents of the stomach of a slaughtered goat before leaving the place.

The accused, I am glad to say, did not subsequently die, but enlisted as a policeman.

The Hon. Charles Dundas, in a recent article on the Kikuyu in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, states that home-made 'ithathi' are sometimes used, but are naturally not much respected. He mentions a famous 'githathi' owned by a Kikuyu who inherited it from his father, who claimed to have found it in his hand one day when he awoke from sleep. It was apparently a piece of petrified wood.

To-day Kikuyu elders profess to be sceptical as to the power of the 'githathi,' and state that its possession was utilised

formerly by unscrupulous owners as a means of gaining profit and notoriety. These men, however, would not handle the two 'ithathi' presented by me to the Museum, and their attitude is that of a superstitious European to whom the breaking of a looking-glass or the sitting down to table as one of a company of thirteen constitutes the running of a risk which every consideration prompts such a one to avoid.

Nevertheless, the Kikuyu are becoming detribalised so rapidly that superstition is dying fast, and I doubt whether in another ten years it will be possible to witness a ceremony such as that seen by Mr. Hobley in the Kyambu District.

STONE BOWL FOUND IN SOTIK

By C. M. DOBBS

While at Sotik Post, about forty-five miles as the crow flies from Kericho, Lumbwa District, in July of 1917, a native brought me a stone bowl very similar in appearance to the bowl discovered in the same locality by Mr. Duirs and described in JOURNAL No. 8, Vol. IV. p. 145. Just below the Government Bungalow at Sotik, and about a quarter of a mile away, there is a small stream, dry except in the rains, called the Konjosio, both banks of which are used as a salt-lick by the natives. This stream runs through a very deep nullah, narrow at the bottom and widening out towards the top. Apparently, when the salt-lick first began to be used, the natives dug the earth away at the bottom; and by degrees, as the roofs of these artificially formed caves fell in, they went on digging higher and higher up and farther and farther away from the stream. Most of the salt earth is now excavated from caves quite close under the surface soil and far from the stream and well above it. It was while he was digging on the side of one of these caves about 10 to 12 feet below the surface, that a native discovered this bowl embedded in the hard salt earth, and when