

SOME EAST AFRICAN TRIBES.

THE Museum has recently acquired, through purchase, a collection of photographs representing several of the tribes in British East Africa.

The coast of that country, as is well known, is occupied by the Swahili, a people composed of a mixture of arab and negro tribes and professing the Mohammedan religion. The Swahili have been traders and slave hunters in time past, and in the course of their expeditions and slave raids into the interior have given their language a wide diffusion, until it has become a kind of *lingua franca* throughout a considerable portion of the protectorate.

South of Mombasa, and slightly in the interior, are the Anika, who are between the Swahili of the coast and the Akamba of the farther interior. The two last tribes are of pure Bantu stock. The religion of the Anika is not Mohammedan, but characteristic of the eastern Bantus. The hyena is the totem of this tribe. They regard it as their ancestor and severe penalties are attached to killing it. The Akamba are skilled in iron working and in the manufacture of spears. They are, however, a peaceable folk, devoted to agriculture and the care of their herds.

The warrior tribe, the Masai, long known by their semi-nomadic and predatory habits to their neighbors in east Africa, have made a great impression on the civilized world, but it appears they are doomed to extinction, for, unlike the neighboring tribes whom they have intimidated so long, they are quite incapable of adapting themselves to the changed conditions of existence which has come in with the Europeans. The only occupations to which they will condescend are tending their herds of cattle, which they move from place to place over their wide

stretches of grazing land, and the prosecution of warfare upon their neighbors, especially the Akamba and Akikuyu. The last named tribe is one of the most interesting in British East Africa. The best and most complete account of the Akikuyu is to be found in that excellent study of East African ethnology "With a Prehistoric People," by Mr. and Mrs. W. Scoresby Routledge, published in 1910, a book which supplies almost the only available information about this little known people. The following quotation may serve to indicate the kind of impression made upon the authors by this untaught and isolated tribe.

"In disposition the Akikuyu are naturally cheerful, merry, loquacious, and laughter-loving, soon forgetting their troubles and lacking the spirit of vindictiveness; they have a great sense of justice, and endorse the infliction of the severest punishment if they know they are in the wrong.

"They are naturally polite in their intercourse with one another, and a very definite code of good manners exists. It is the custom for women and children to stand aside for warriors to pass on the path, but the warrior will always yield the road to an old woman. The order kept at all functions is very striking. Even the children, though never harshly treated or spoken to, behave considerately and courteously; very differently from the little European wild beasts who are permitted by their parents to conduct themselves in such a way as to render life a scourge to all the other passengers on board the mail steamers to East Africa.

"The custom of spitting on an object in order to secure good luck is found amongst the Akikuyu. This habit exists amongst our own lower orders in the custom of spitting on a coin.

"To spit upon a person or thing is also an expression of good-will. The blacksmith spits upon the sword he has forged before handing it over to the owner; so, too, courtesy demands that a man should spit in his hand before offering it to a friend, and the female visitors spit on the

the goat is relished. Fish is declared by custom and tradition to be unfit for food and the person who eats it becomes unclean. In fact, the food supply is obtained entirely from the products of agriculture, together with the flesh and milk of their herds and flocks. A poor



Fig. 37.—Group of Akikuyu men.

newly-arrived youngster as a sign of welcome."

The Akikuyu inhabit the mountainous country around Mt. Kenya. They are peaceable and devoted to agriculture. They possess goats and sheep, but farming is their principal mainstay. Custom prohibits them from eating wild game, although the flesh of the sheep and

man lives with one wife and occupies a single hut. The rich man's household consists of eight or ten huts, one for each wife, since each wife is entitled to a house of her own.

In the collection of photographs to which reference has been made are several which appear without doubt to portray the Akikuyu.

One of these photographs, shown in Fig.



Fig. 38.—A Massi warrior with shield and iron spear. The point of the spear when not in use is protected by a pad. The headdress is made of a lion's mane.

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37, represents a group of Akikuyu men. It shows the single cloak made of goat-skin and fastened over the shoulder, the quills that are worn in the cartilage of the ear, the rings or plugs that are in-

serted in the lobes, and the cap made from the goat's stomach, which is sometimes worn on the head. It also shows three distinct methods of treating the hair among the men. In the figure at the

left the head has been shaved. In the one at the right, standing, the hair has been twisted with shreds of bark into little cords. When these have been formed over the entire head, they are



Fig. 39.—Anika girl with water jar.

serted in the lobes, and the cap made from the goat's stomach, which is sometimes worn on the head. It also shows three distinct methods of treating the hair among the men. In the figure at the

parted on a line passing from ear to ear over the crown. All of the cords in front of this line are gathered forward and their ends whipped together to form a pendant which hangs over the middle of



Fig. 40.—Akikuyu warrior with shield and iron spear. The dark plumes of the vulture stripped from the vanes of the feathers in long curls are whipped to the tufts of the hair.

the forehead. The whole is then anointed with red ochre mixed with tallow. The commonest way of wearing the hair among the men is seen in the other individuals in the group. This consists sim-

mirably the method of standing at ease with one foot crossed over the other, and also the practice of sitting on the heels. Perhaps the most pleasing method of hair dressing in vogue among the men is that



Fig. 41.—Two Akikuyu women.

ply of having it lengthened by twisting it up into tufts with shreds of bark to any desired length, giving the hair a ropy appearance which produces a striking effect. The same photograph shows ad-

seen in the young warrior in Fig. 40. Taking the long, dark plumes of the vulture, and, stripping the vanes from the stem, they whip the curling bands of feathers thus obtained to all the tufts



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Fig. 42.—A group of Akikuyu maidens.

of hair on the crown of the head. The head is then anointed with mutton fat and red ochre, in such a way that the bright black feathers contrast with the colored ointment and harmonize with the color of the skin.

With the women, hair dressing is a much simpler matter. Young women

extensively worn by the women by way of ornaments. For both sexes every age and every occasion has its corresponding dress and ornaments. Several of the women seen in the photograph, Fig. 56, are decorated about the abdomen by means of scarification.

The supreme event in the life of every



Fig. 43.—A group of Akikuyu women.

have their heads shaved with the exception of a certain area on top. As they grow older the tuft is made smaller until among the oldest women the entire head is shaved.

The costume of men and women alike is carefully prescribed by custom. The garments seen in the illustrations are made of goat skin. Cowrie shells and beads are

individual is the entrance into manhood or womanhood, which is made with elaborate ceremonies of initiation.

The interesting group in Fig. 42 seems to portray girls during the period between initiation and marriage. The fringed head bands and the painted pattern on the legs of the girl at the left appear to be emblematic of this condition of life.

The iron working of the Akikunya, admirably described in the book referred to, presents an interesting illustration in the history of metallurgy. It is a very primi-

The winning of this ore is the work of women and children. It is obtained by washing out the earthy material and concentrating the iron bearing sand by means



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Fig. 44.—Akamba women.

tive practice and stands very close to the beginning of man's knowledge of metal. The ore is all gathered from the surface and consists of finely divided particles of magnetite, the products of disintegration.

of water, just as the gold prospector obtains the free particles of gold in a pan. After this the ore is placed between layers of charcoal in a primitive furnace and reduced by means of an equally primitive



Fig. 45.—Akamba warrior with bow and arrow.

bellows. From the metal thus reduced the blacksmith, who is the most skillful craftsman among the Akikuyu, fashions such articles as spears, arrow heads, axes, wire, chains and personal ornaments, as well as the tools used in making these articles. The blacksmith's fee for making a spear is a goat, the goat being the ordinary medium of exchange and unit of value. The customer, however, always supplies the materials, that is to say, the lumps of iron, the charcoal and the beer, for custom prescribes that no blacksmith could execute a job without this last commodity, which is brewed from the juice of the sugar cane.

The production of iron is confined to one locality which seems to be surrounded by a great deal of secrecy.

The blacksmith may be called the only skilled craftsman, but pottery making and basket weaving are among the less accomplished industries of the tribe.

No native drawings have been found in Kikuyun land, but a great deal of artistic taste is shown in clothes, personal ornaments and the decorations of the dance shields.

Young girls choose their own husbands, but in each case the chosen man pays her father a certain number of goats. The price fixed by custom for a good wife is thirty goats or thirty times as much as a good iron spear.

The religious practices of the British East African tribes in general do not include temples or idols of any description. Nevertheless, religious observances possess certain strongly marked characteristics. Among the Akikuyu, these observances, according to the Routledges, depend upon the belief in a supreme God, to whom they address their prayers and make their sacrifices of goats. This divinity to whom they pray is called N'GAI and appears to be very much like

the Wakonda of certain tribes of American Indians. He lives exalted and alone on Mt. Kenya and yet he is addressed also in the sun and in trees and in other objects of nature which inspire admiration and awe. Anything that is mysterious or beyond comprehension is called N'GAI. In fact, N'GAI, like Wakonda, seems to be the mysterious and invisible force that is back of things generally and that animates all nature.

A secret society exists within the tribe in which the principal rite seems to be the worship of a snake—a practice which seems to have nothing to do with the orthodox religion.

The medicine man combines the offices of physician, prophet and to some extent priest. He knows how to find out what is determined by fate and how to alter that determination. He can explain the causes of everything, including disease and misfortune. These are the work of evil spirits whose angry moods can be pacified only by rites which the medicine man knows how to prescribe. The services of the medicine man may be employed with equal propriety to cure the employer or to injure the employer's neighbor. The medicine men are said to be honest men who believe in the high position and dignity of their profession and in the efficiency of their medicines. There are said to be about five to every thousand of the population.

Unlike the Masai, the Akikuyu are adaptable and seem to furnish the elements out of which a permanent native population may be developed under European control and subject to European laws and regulations. Industrious and peaceable and farmers by tradition and profession it seems very probable that they will become more and more important as a factor in the economic progress of East Africa.

DAHOMY SONGS.

An unusual opportunity for adding a series of west African native songs to the Museum's collection of primitive music presented itself recently when the services of a young native from the Yoruba country, a part of Dahomey, were secured. Aside from an interesting personality possessed by Inquátwa, as our Dahomey man is called, which enabled the museum in collaboration with the Department of Anthropology to make extensive use of his knowledge of Dahomey castes, secret societies and economies, some score of war songs, love songs, nature songs, wedding dance songs, lullabys, tom-tom and zanza (keyboard) tunes were recorded by means of the phonograph to be transcribed and presented at a later date. Inasmuch as no music from this particular region has been published, this collection comes in very advantageously.

The tom-tom or drum tunes represent an interesting phase of African music. These, it seems, form a certain type of amusement among the men of a village, much as in this country people whistle or play mouth organs or banjos. The drumming is punctuated at intervals with yells and snatches of song. Another type of African lyric illustrates the deep figurative similes and parable speech so characteristic of native negro literature.

WEDDING DANCE SONG.

Wúdyū, wúdyū, awá.
Joining, joining! [Wedding!]
Don't fail to make us happy.
It is commanded [according to the faith].
Hand on hand, forever they are [the bride
and groom].

Wúdyū, wúdyū, awá.
Joining, joining!
Raise your spirits!
They are forever [the bride and groom],
As true as nature.

Wúdyū, wúdyū, awá.
Joining, joining!
Stand ye all around.
Don't waste any possible pleasure,
On such an occasion as this.
Wúdyū awá, wúdyū, wúdyū awá, wúdyū.

A characteristic feature of all classes of Dahomey songs is the endless dwelling on the main theme and iteration of the leading phrase, together with frequent repetition of meaningless words or syllables.

The following is a translation of one of the favorite war songs.

"Our people have no equal,
Our equal cannot be found,
Drink ye chili,
We have the head,
It is a fair deal.
There is no mercy,
Ye báya!"

The chili mentioned in this song is a wine made from the conquered chief's brains.

Supplementary information on some of the African musical instruments in the Museum collection was volunteered by Inquátwa. During all the meetings students from several of the advanced courses in the department attended to witness and practice the methods of field research.