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COLLECTANEA.

SECRET SOCIETIES AND FETISHISM IN SIERRA LEONE.

THE objects shown in Plates VIII., IX., and X., most of which were exhibited at the Society's meeting on June 19th, illustrate the appliances of some of the highly-developed secret societies and the fetish beliefs of the tribes in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. They were obtained from traders and officials who have travelled in the interior.

The most important society is the *Porro*, a detailed account of which is given in *A Revelation of the Secret Orders of Western Africa* (Dayton, Ohio, 1886, 99 pp.), by Rev. J. A. Cole of Shaingay, who was of pure negro blood and had been initiated. A description is also given by Mr. T. J. Alldridge in *The Sherbro and its Hinterland*. The society in its usual form appears to be a kind of freemason and benefit club for men only, and Mr. Cole describes signs, passwords, and seven grades which he compares to grades in European freemasonry. He explains Porro or Purroh to mean "the ancient and sacred laws of the fathers." The society trains, circumcises, tattoos, and re-names the boys of the tribes, and is substantially the native government of the country. The oaths of secrecy taken are enforced by fetish sanctions and ceremonies, and the society can put a rigid taboo on any person or thing. The mask shown in Fig. 1 was worn by a personator of the *kriffi ka porro*, or porro "devil," a spirit who may not be seen by women or non-members, and who is supposed to devour candidates for the society, and afterwards give them birth again, returning to the sky. The mask is carved from a solid block, and is

about $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, with an internal diameter of $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches. It is perforated with a number of holes to allow the wearer to breathe, and the dressing of the hair is carved in high relief. Holes near the lower rim of the mask serve for the attachment of a long robe of shaggy, black-dyed palm fibre. One of the principal officers of the Porro society is the *tasso* or *ba-kasey* (lawyer), who wears attached to his knees rattles of one of the forms shown in Figs. 11 and 12. The rattle in Fig. 11 is a bent plate of native iron containing a loose iron lump, while in Fig. 12 it is a longer and narrower bent plate (which may originally have contained a loose lump), with two loose jingling rings suspended at each end (Plate X.).

The *Bundu* or *Bondo* society is the initiation society for girls, and the *normeh*, or Bundu "devil," who avenges all interference with Bundu laws and taboos, and leads the girls at galas, etc., wears the mask shown in Fig. 2 (Pl. VIII.). This mask is not perforated, and it is therefore necessary from time to time for the *normeh* to take it off, which is done under the shelter of a large mat unrolled round the "devil" by an attendant. The mask has been carved from a solid block of cotton-wood and blackened, and the carved hair-dressing is of a pattern greatly favoured by the native women. The dress worn with this mask is of rough black palm fibre, sewn up at the ends of the arms and legs so that no part of the body can be seen, and the dress in my possession has a number of jingling seeds attached to the waist. This "devil," although the women's devil and personated by a woman, never *speaks*, but conveys her orders by signs. The Bundu girls, during their training in dancing, deportment, medicine, and so on, by the *mesu* or "mother of the maids," are painted all over with *wojeh*, a mixture of white clay and animal fat which is credited with magical and protective properties, and the *wojeh* is used from the palette shown in Fig. 3. The palette ends in a head, on the neck of which are two horns having a fetish meaning. Similar horns appear on the neck of a *minsereh* figure (see below) in my possession which is not illustrated. *Wojeh* is also used to trace devices by the finger on the foreheads of the country belles.

PLATE VIII.

MASKS, ETC., OF PORRO AND BUNDU SOCIETIES.

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PLATE IX.

YASSI SOCIETY MINSEREH FIGURE, ETC.

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A third society, the *Yassi* or *Yasey*, consists of women who already belong to the Bundu and of Porro men. The Yassi official Ya-mama can enter the Porro lodge by a private passage. Everything belonging to the Yassi must be spotted with coloured patches, except the black *minsereh* figures, Fig. 4, which are kept in the Yassi house near the fetish medicine. To obtain information from the fetish, the Ya-mama anoints the figure with the medicine, brings it out from the Yassi house with certain ceremonial, and holds it out by both hands at the waist, so that it can swing, the figure being made of light wood. Should the answer to the question put be favourable, the figure gradually inclines towards the Ya-mama. The figure shown is 32 inches high. (Plate IX.)

The *Human Leopard Society* is one charged by most accounts with cannibalism, either ceremonial or with a fetish excuse for obtaining human flesh in time of peace. The main object of the society appears, however, to have been to obtain human fat to anoint, and so bring into activity, a made-up fetish such as Bai Bureh's *bofimah* or "medicine-bag,"—shown in Fig. 7. Bai Bureh was the principal leader of the Timini against the British in the rising of 1898-9, and used this fetish for thought-reading and forecasting events. It consists of a hardened paste surrounded by several layers of cloth covered outside by red cloth, stiffened by pieces of cane, and bound in sausage form by cord. A small horn was originally attached, but has unfortunately been lost. The Human Leopard Society began about 40 years ago, and each member was required, on entry and, some say, also every fourth year, to supply a victim. The society's slayer lurked in the bush until the designated prey passed, and then leaped on him from behind with a leopard's cry, and drove into the back of his neck the forked knife shown in Fig. 9. The body was then cut open to obtain the fat which enabled the *bofimah* to grant any wish. Sometimes the leopard's claws were imitated, not by the forked knife shown, but by a leopard-skin glove fitted with curved sharp blades. A new member was recruited by inviting him to a feast, giving him a little human flesh 'unbeknownst,' and then telling him what he had eaten, and that he would die

unless he became a member. The natives appear to have themselves tried to exterminate the society. According to evidence given at the enquiry before Sir D. P. Chalmers into the insurrection in Sierra Leone in 1898, it appears that about 1880-1 the chief of Tyama detected nearly 100 members, and burnt them. In 1883-4 a chief of Mano, called Cardini, burnt a sub-chief and about 80 others as members, and there are other instances. Nevertheless the society survived, and it was found necessary in 1896 to pass "The Human Leopard and Alligator Society Ordinance" for its suppression. It is the native story that the *bofimah* was originally kept alive by goats, but that a tribe whose ambush had been betrayed by the Imperri people in revenge sent the fetish into the Imperri country and decreed that human sacrifices were in future necessary.

A fetish spoon is shown in Fig. 5 (Pl. IX.), and an example of a fetish which is practically only an amulet in Fig. 8 (Pl. X.), which represents a charm called *banyehn*, 11½ inches long, and made of country iron in the form of tongs or pincers with spirally-twisted handles. Tongs or pincers are not uncommon as amulets. A pair occurs, for example, amongst a number of objects depending from an amuletic necklace in my possession which came from Nish in Servia.

The wandering Mohammedan "Mori men" or "book men" are looked on in the Protectorate as magicians, and have a monopoly of the supply of written charms. These are made up as *sebbehs* in leather cases, and Fig. 6 (Pl. IX.) shows some specimens attached to Bai Bureh's war cap. This cap is made of skin prepared in alternate strips of white and brown. Six *sebbehs* of various sizes are attached to the sides of the cap, and one large one with eight cowries to the top.

Fig. 10 shows a specimen of the steatite *nomori* or "farn devil" figures, which differs somewhat from the figures described and illustrated in *Man* for 1905 (pp. 97-100). Such figures are found by digging in the fields or in mounds far inland, and, as the present natives do not know how to carve steatite, the figures are probably the work of an extinct tribe. They are greatly valued, and are set up in the fields and whipped in

BOFIMAH, NOMORI, AND OTHER FETISH OBJECTS.

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order to induce them to steal rice from the fields of others to plant in their owner's land. Sacrifices are offered to them, and their powers are greatly increased if they have been stolen. (*Cf.* vol. vi., p. 196.) The figure is $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, and has the usual vertical hole in the top of the head. It is seated, and perfect, except that the portion of the legs between the knees and feet is missing.

A. R. WRIGHT.

FOLK TRADITIONS OF THE MUGHAL EMPERORS.¹

THE following tales relating to the Mughal period in India were collected by Muhammad Husain Khān of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, India, from peasants in the Panjāb. They are very popular among the higher classes. I am not aware whether variants of them are current among the people of other parts of Northern India; but, as far as it has been possible to ascertain, they are found in much the same form throughout the whole of the Panjab.

The Mughal period may be said to commence with the overthrow, in 1526 A.D., of the reigning king, Ibrahim Lodi, by Bābar, a descendant of Genghis Khān and Timūrlang or Tamerlane. On his death in 1530 he was succeeded by his son Humāyūn, who was driven for a time from his throne by an adventurer of Afghān descent, Shīr Shāh. On his death in 1556 the crown passed to his son Akbar, whose long reign of 49 years covers the greatest period of the Mughal Empire. His son Jahāngīr was followed in 1628 by Shāh Jahān, to whom we are indebted for some of the finest architectural monuments of his dynasty—the new city of Delhi, the Tāj Mahal at Agra. The reign of his son Aurangzib (1658-1707) marks the decadence of the Empire, largely due to the growth of the new Mahratta power in the Deccan.

KARIM HAIDAR LODI.

¹With Notes by W. Crooke.