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24. Pre-Bantu Occupants of East Africa

Author(s): Mervyn W. H. Beech

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these stones were carved to represent heads, in which respect they resemble the Cross River (West Africa) circles described by Mr. Partridge. If there were no other traditions these might suffice to establish the belief that dances of some kind were performed in all the circles, but sometimes the tradition is of soldiers, as at the Roll-rich in Oxfordshire, and in Brittany; or of a wonder-working cow, as at Mitchellsfold, in Shropshire; or of footballers playing on Sunday, as at the "Hurlers," in Cornwall; so that perhaps the most we can say is that something was probably done in the circles on the weekly day of the sun in pagan times which was not approved by later ecclesiastical authorities. The gentlemen who now go about the country playing at "Druids," and setting up small circles which may mislead archæologists in future years, do not include dancing amongst the ceremonies they claim to have derived from earlier sources; if they could be induced to do so their proceedings would be even more amusing than they are now. A. L. LEWIS.

Africa, East.

Beech.

Pre-Bantu Occupants of East Africa. By M. W. H. Beech, M.A.

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Apropos of Sir Harvy Johnston's most interesting survey of the Ethnology of Africa and Mr. Emil Torday's remarks thereon in Vol. XLIII (1913) of the *Journal*, the following note, which I took a year or two ago, just before leaving the Kikuyu country, may perhaps be of interest as showing a Kikuyu tradition concerning the occupation of their country by two pre-Bantu peoples. During a conversation with some A-Kikuyu elders I was informed that in the land they now occupy in the Dagoneta district, which was until quite recently covered with dense forests but is now cleared and cultivated, if they dug down low enough (which they seldom do) they not unfrequently came across pieces of ancient pottery of a workmanship entirely different from their own.

Although I left the district before succeeding in obtaining a piece, all the elders agreed that this pottery was the work of the "Gumba," a people who inhabited the Kikuyu country after displacing a race of *cannibal dwarfs* called Maithōachiana, and that further information could doubtless be obtained from the elders of the Fort Hall district, whence the present occupiers of Kikuyu had come less (probably) than 100 years ago.

Mr. Northcote, the District Commissioner of Fort Hall, kindly questioned his elders, and sent me the following:—

"The Maithōachiana appear to be a variety of earth-gnomes with many of the usual attributes: they are rich, very fierce, very touchy, *e.g.*, if you meet one and ask him who his father is he will spear you; or if he asks you where you caught sight of him first, unless you say that you had seen him from afar, he will kill you, the inference being, I suppose, that you have seen what he was doing, burying treasure, &c. This is only a guess on my part.

"Like earth-gnomes in most folklore, they are skilled in the art of iron-working. They originally lived round this part (*i.e.*, south of Mount Kenia), but they were driven out by another legendary people called the 'Gumba,' who dwelt in caves dug in the earth, and who disappeared one night after teaching the Kikuyu the art of smelting. Another account says that they lived in the earth themselves. It is a Kikuyu insult to say 'You are the son of a Maithōachiana.'

The references might well be to Bushmen, Pygmies, or both, and it is, perhaps, not unreasonable to suppose that the Maithōachiana were an indigenous pigmy or bushman race of the Stone Age who made and used the many stone implements which are to be found everywhere in the Kikuyu district. In this case Mr. Northcote's informant may have erroneously attributed to them the skill in iron work which was in reality only possessed by their successors, the Gumba.

The Gumba are said to have made pottery and to have "taught the Kikuyu the art of smelting," which is equivalent to the A-Kikuyu admitting that they did not bring a knowledge of iron with them or find it out for themselves.

Assuming the tradition to be substantially true, and unless the Gumba who, be it noted, are not described as dwarfs, were pre-Bantu Harnite invaders (a supposition for which, as far as I know, there is absolutely no warrant) the legend would appear to be in favour of the first discovery of iron having been in Africa.

MERVYN W. H. BEECH.

Australia.

Breton.

Stone Implements. *By Miss A. C. Breton.*

25

The splendid museums of Australian cities must have been a surprise to visiting members of the British Association, and an illustrated account of the principal contents is highly desirable for those who can never hope to see them. A volume would be needed to deal with the great variety of stone implements, although only recently have they been treated with the attention they deserve.

PERTH, W.A.—The museum contains several axes and scrapers that appear to be of considerable age, also serrated spearheads of glass. In the office of the Aborigines Department there is a fine patinated implement of early type.

ADELAIDE, S.A.—A number of grooved axes are in the museum, all from one district of New South Wales. They have not been found in South Australia. There are some very fine glass spearheads, also some made from porcelain insulators. One almost like obsidian was made from a square brown bottle. The best are produced by native prisoners at Broome for sale. Flaked hatchets or stone picks used for fighting at close quarters by the Warramunga and some other tribes north of the Macdonell Ranges, S.A., have small sheaths. Other sharp and pointed flaked quartzite knives have sheaths painted each with a different design. The most interesting objects here were some large and long stone axes, thin but heavy, and seemingly unwieldy and out of proportion to their handles. These were of wood split in a certain way for the insertion of one end of the stone, which was fixed in position with porcupine-grass resin. Some rounded and smoothed stones were "supposed found on men's graves," whilst some curious lumps of gypsum, burnt, mixed with sand and water, and moulded with the hands so that they look like a natural composition, are "supposed found on women's graves."

BALLARAT, VICTORIA.—The little museum has forty-five stone implements, consisting of ground and polished axes of moderate size and with only one edge smooth, pounders, two flaked knives, two axes grooved all round, two grooved at sides only.

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA.—The ethnographic gallery of the museum has eighteen grooved stone axes and wedges (some made from pebbles) of varied shape and size, but all large. There is a good general collection of local stone implements. In another gallery Messrs. A. S. Kenyon, of the Water Commission, Melbourne, and D. J. Mahony, had arranged 114 table cases of their wonderful collections from aboriginal camps (about 10,000 examples), with a 16-page guidebook. A few notes from this guide may be added.

The principle on which the collectors have worked was to gather up indiscriminately everything from the camp sites. Then they arranged: (a) a type classification set (cases 1-12) with a few examples of each implement, exclusive of ceremonial stones; (b) a bulk classification set (cases 13-59), showing a large variety of the more important types; (c) a camp series, for the great range of implements at any one camp; (d) prehistoric sets from the other continents, Tasmanian stone