



95. Kamba Game

C. W. Hobley

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The Serb tribe thus attacked is part of a tribe divided in half; one half is Montenegrin, and was wild to go to the rescue of its kindred. But the Powers put such pressure on King Nikola that he dare not. So over a dozen villages were burnt and 160 in all killed and wounded . . . I hope that you will put the "head-hunting" in MAN, not only because it is a "custom" to record, because it is a fact that ought to be widely known. . . .

M. E. DURHAM.

Africa, East.

Kamba Game. By C. W. Hobley, C.M.G.

Hobley.

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A rather novel children's game was recently observed among the A-Kamba near Ikutha, which is at south end of Kitui district, British East Africa; it is called *Kwatha ngu*.

About December in every year a lovely mauve crocus-like plant springs up in this area, and it is also very common around Kibwezi and Msongoleni; the leaves are very like those of a miniature canna, and the plant has a soft, fleshy stalk.

A collection of some thirty or forty stalks of this plant, which is called *Kisuti*, and a little wooden dagger about eight inches long called a *muku*, are the implements required for the game, and it is played by two or three persons. It has a great vogue

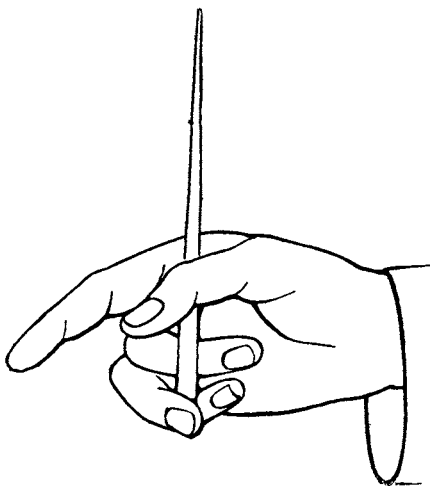


FIG. 1.

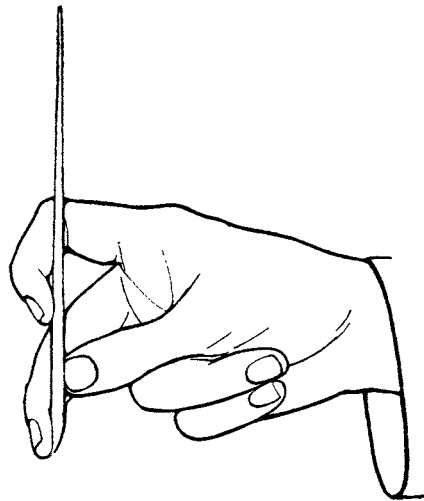


FIG. 2.

with the herd boys, and it is said that they become so engrossed that they sometimes lose in the bush the cattle they are sent to herd.

The *Kisuti* stalks are all cut to a length of about nine inches, and are placed in a common heap and, sitting down, each player takes an equal number from the heap, say five or six, or even ten at a time, and, holding the *muku* in his right hand, the player flicks it with considerable force at one of the *Kisuti* stalks which lie on the ground in front of him about twelve to eighteen inches away. There are two methods of holding the *muku* :—

- (1) The *muku* is held between the thumb and the third finger; the thumb is suddenly withdrawn, and the *muku* is projected point first in the required direction (Fig. 1).
- (2) The *muku* is supported on one side by the first and second finger, and is held in position by the thumb on the opposite side; the first finger is suddenly withdrawn, and the *muku* is projected forward in the desired direction (Fig. 2).

The object is to transfix the *kisuti* with the *muku*, and the players do this

time after time with extraordinary precision. Before the player flicks the *muku* he scratches a mark on the *kisuti* to help him to aim. Player No. 1 flicks at stalk after stalk, and those he hits he wins and places on one side; when he misses the next player has his turn, and when he breaks down the third player begins; the player who impales the last stalk in the common heap is the winner of the game. The accompanying sketches will show the method of holding the *muku* previous to its discharge at the *kisuti*.

The weapons of the A-kamba are the bow and arrow, and it may be that the arrow prompted the idea of the missile *muku*, and that the *kisuti* originally represented enemies which were picked off by arrows in war.

C. W. HOBLEY.

Australia.

Beliefs concerning Childbirth in some Australian Tribes.
A. R. Brown, M.A.

Brown
By **96**

The following information was collected amongst tribes of Western Australia during my work as Anthony Wilkin Student in Ethnology, in the year 1911. The tribes quoted all have totemism with inheritance in the male line. Each totemic clan or group possesses not one, but several totems, that are all equally the totems of every member of the group. A man may eat or kill his totem. The members of a totemic group, men and women alike, take part in certain localised ceremonies (here called *talu*, *tauara*, or *nuka*), which are supposed to produce an abundant supply of the particular totemic animal, plant, or other object with which each ceremony is connected. These ceremonies are similar in many respects to those of Central Australia called by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, *intichiuma*. Only men and women whose totem it is can take any active part in the ceremony for any particular totem. In almost all the tribes quoted it is usual to give a child a personal name that refers in some way, often very obscure, to one or other of his or her totems. There is no trace of any belief in the reincarnation of the dead or of totemic ancestors.

In the Ingarda tribe at the mouth of the Gascoyne River, I found a belief that a child is the product of some food of which the mother has partaken just before her first sickness in pregnancy. My principal informant on this subject told me that his father had speared a small animal called *bandaru*, probably a bandicoot, but now extinct in this neighbourhood. His mother ate the animal, with the result that she gave birth to my informant. He showed me the mark in his side where, as he said, he had been speared by his father before being eaten by his mother. A little girl was pointed out to me as being the result of her mother eating a domestic cat, and her brother was said to have been produced from a bustard. It may be noted that the girl (the elder of the two) was a half-caste, probably, from appearance, of a Chinese father, and had a hare-lip. The younger brother was a typical black-fellow boy. The bustard was one of the totems of the father of these two children and, therefore, of the children themselves. This, however, seems to have been purely accidental. In most cases the animal to which conception is due is not one of the father's totems. The species that is thus connected with an individual by birth is not in any way sacred to him. He may kill or eat it; he may marry a woman whose conceptional animal is of the same species, and he is not by the accident of his birth entitled to take part in the totemic ceremonies connected with it.

I found traces of this same belief in a number of the tribes north of the Ingarda, but everywhere the belief seemed to be sporadic; that is to say, some persons believed in it and others did not. Some individuals could tell me the animal or plant from which they or others were descended, while others did not know or in some cases denied that conception was so caused. There were to be met with, however,