

# SCIENCE.—SUPPLEMENT.

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1887.

## ETHNOLOGICAL NOTES.

### *The tribes of Sierra Leone.*

THE journal of the Anthropological institute, for February, 1887, contains a description of the tribes of Sierra Leone, by T. R. Griffith. The colony is not the place to study the characteristic features of African man, as its population is a conglomerate of an enormous number of African tribes, the colony having been for many years the place to which were carried all liberated slaves rescued by British men-of-war. It is of considerable interest to study the development of such an aggregate of natives of various parts of Africa, particularly as they are under the influence of powerful and homogeneous tribes which inhabit the interior. Griffith states that the amalgamation of these elements is going on very slowly, and that exclusive tendencies still prevail. A peculiar dialect of the English language is now spoken by the inhabitants. Besides the population of liberated slaves, we find the so-called Nova-Scotians and the Maroons. The former are the descendants of American negroes who had fought under the English flag in the American war, and were first transferred to Nova Scotia, then in 1792 to Sierra Leone. The Maroons had lived in the mountains of Jamaica, and had claimed their freedom when England took that island from the Spaniards. The latter are mixed with Spanish and probably Carib blood. They have a quarter of their own in Freetown. Both Nova-Scotians and Maroons are remarkable for their dislike of agriculture. There are some permanent residents from other parts of Africa, who form a distinct part of the population,—the Akus, who are liberated slaves from Yoruba, a state west of the Niger and near Lagos; the Ibos, from the same country; and the Krumen. The last-mentioned people are the well-known seamen of Africa, who serve on European steamships, and are the most industrious of the coast tribes. Their home is east of Cape Palmas. In Freetown they occupy a quarter of their own, the population of which is almost entirely masculine. There are several large rivers in this district, of which the Sarcies and Rockelle are the most important. The country between these rivers is inhabited by the Timene (Timmani), who formerly possessed the

peninsula of Freetown also. Their northern neighbors are the Susu,—a people of mixed origin, being originally a branch of the Mandingo, who conquered their present country, and intermarried with its former inhabitants, the Bagas. The Mandingos occupy the highlands east and south-east of Sierra Leone. It seems that the state of all these tribes has little changed since the beginning of this century: for the description of Major Laing, who travelled in the Timene country in 1827, agrees well with Griffith's remarks. The Mandingos are Mohammedans, while among the other tribes the ancient belief still prevails. The Mendes, who live south of the Timene, are, according to Griffith, "thorough pagans, and probably there is no tribe near to Sierra Leone that indulges so much in superstitions of every description." Among the Susu and Timene there are many Mohammedans. Besides these, the Sherbro and Vei live in the colony, the latter being well known on account of the invention of a written language.

Among the peculiar institutions of these tribes, the secret societies, which have a great influence on public life, are particularly remarkable. There is a society of women, called Bundu, and another one of men, called Porô. The initiation, which takes place when the children come of age, is celebrated with great ceremony. The girls are led into the woods and kept in seclusion for one moon and one day before they are allowed to return into the village. At the end of the term they receive Bundu names with great ceremony and gesticulation by some who personate 'Bundu devils' with hideous masks. The girls are then publicly pronounced marriageable. The following illustrations are three of these masks which were exhibited in the London colonial exhibition. Fig. 1 is a large white mask with red mouth and black mustache and hair, ornamented with white bark. The dancer wears, besides this mask, a belt and arm and leg ornaments of white bark. Fig. 2 is a 'Bundu devil' of the Sherbro. The whole mask is black, and so are the fringes of bark that are fastened to its lower rim. Fig. 3 is another 'Bundu devil' with a beautiful hair dress, earrings, and shells in place of the eyes. Masks of this kind are used all over West Africa. In Central Africa masks are not unknown, some being found on the left tributaries of the Kongo, others in Lunda.

The initiation of the men is called Porô or Purû, and so is their secret society. Griffith distinguishes two kinds of Porô,—the religious and the

political. The Porô is a very powerful institution, which exerts a great influence over the destiny of those countries, and in reality supersedes the power of the chiefs. The Porô arranges the affairs of the tribes, settles disputes, and makes laws. Even intertribal wars are sometimes stopped by its arbitration. Its representatives or messengers are always held sacred, and nobody dares to disobey its commands. All travellers who have entered the interior of this part of

Besides these specimens, unworked pieces of nephrite were found in Alaska by Capt. A. Jacobson, who affirms that the Eskimos find it *in situ*. This proves that the material is found in several parts of north-western America. According to Dawson, the implements occur as far inland as the Caribu and Gold mountains, while farther inland they are rarer. The late Prof. H. Fischer and other scientists were of the opinion that jade and nephrite came exclusively from Asia, and consid-

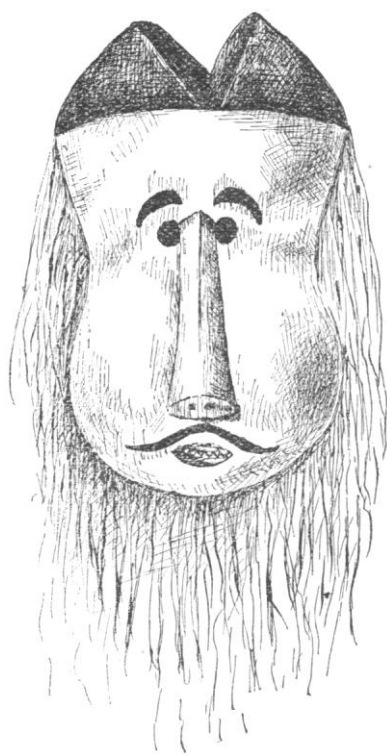


FIG. 1.

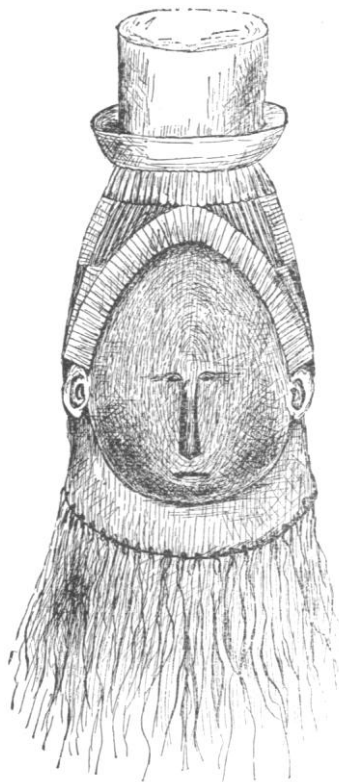


FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

Africa tell of the predominant influence this institution exerts in the states of the Mandingos and their neighbors.

DR. GEORGE M. DAWSON contributes an important paper on the much-discussed jade question (*Can. record of science*, April, 1887). He describes two partially worked bowlders of jade which were found at Yale and Lytton in British Columbia. The occurrence of these pieces makes it evident that the material was worked at that place by cutting the hard stone by means of a thong or a thin piece of wood in conjunction with sharp sand.

ered its occurrence in Europe and America as a proof of early migrations. In a paper published after his death (*Archiv für Anthropologie*, 1886, p. 563), Fischer gives a very complete list of nephrite, jade, and chloromelanite objects found in Europe, which is illustrated by a map of Europe showing their distribution. The principal features of the map are the absence of nephrite in France and Germany, while jade and chloromelanite implements are scattered all over the country. Speaking in a general way, the Elbe forms the eastern limit of the distribution of these implements. Nephrite is almost exclusively found on

the lakes of Switzerland, particularly on the Lake of Constance. A few specimens have been found in Sicily, Greece, and Asia Minor. Fischer concludes from these facts that the implements were brought to Europe by a nation immigrating into France from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and that the material came from Asia. He supposes the same to be the case with the nephrites of the Swiss lakes. His principal reason for adopting this theory is the failure of all attempts to find the material in Europe. He is convinced that geologists and mineralogists would be just as able, to find it as the natives, in all parts of the world who discovered the usefulness of the hard and tenacious mineral, and found it in considerable quantities, which are now scattered over countries where it does not exist *in situ*. As Fischer does not prove that the European nephrite is identical with any Asiatic variety, and his conclusions derived from the distribution of the objects are rather forced, his views on the subject fail to convince us.

—A Catholic missionary was sent by Bishop B. A. Thiel of Costa Rica to the Tule or Cunos Indians of the villages of Paya and Tapaliza in Darien. His observations on these tribes have been published in *Petermann's Mittheilungen*, 1886, No. 9. Though a great number of the natives have become Christians, some of their ancient customs still prevail. The men leave the greater part of the work to the women. They go fishing or hunting, and cut wood: the women cultivate the fields. All of them drink great quantities of chicha, an alcoholic drink made of corn. They are monogamists, and the women are very chaste, adultery being of rare occurrence. The marriage is concluded in presence of the chief. Illegitimate children are drowned in the river, and the mother is severely punished. Their mortuary customs are remarkable. They dig a pit between two trees, and put the corpse into a hammock, which is fastened to the trunks, so that it hangs over the pit. Then it is covered with branches, boards, and earth. Chicha and corn are deposited in the grave. They believe that the soul does not come to rest until the ropes of the hammock are rotten and the corpse is fallen into the pit. The Indians of Tapaliza are more civilized, and do not practise these mortuary customs. Illegitimate children, however, and widows who give birth to a child after the death of their husband, are drowned. The missionary made a reliable census of the villages, which shows that Paya has 218, Tapaliza 112, inhabitants.

—In the *Archiv für Anthropologie*, 1886, p. 591, we find a German edition of B. A. Thiel's vocabu-

laries of the Costa Rica languages, which were published at San José de Costa Rica in 1882. W. Herzog compares these Bribri dialects with other American languages, and finds that a great number of Tupi roots occur in the words of these dialects, and that the language probably belongs to the same stock.

—*Nature* says that Tippto-Tip, the famous African trader, came upon a remarkable tribe on the Kongo, to the north of Nyangwe, who do a great deal of work in copper, and whose inlaid work in that metal is of a highly artistic character. Among the same people, enormous spear-heads of very thin copper are made, some six feet in length, which serve as a kind of currency. Probably these are the Basonge, who make work of this description. It is well known that the tribes of

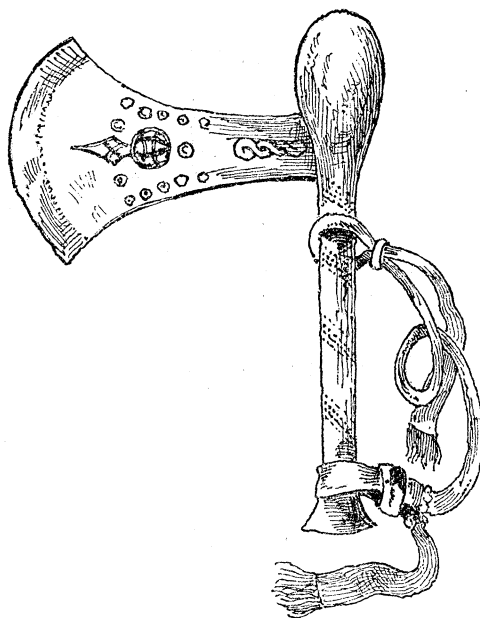


FIG. 4. — BATTLE-AXE OF THE BASONGE FROM LUKASI RIVER (15½ by 9¾ inches).

central Africa are very skilful blacksmiths and carvers. Wherever explorers entered those parts of the continent where the native industries were not deteriorated by contact with the whites, the spears, arrows, and fetishes are beautifully made. The accompanying sketch is drawn from an ornamental battle-axe of the Beneki, a tribe of the Basonge. The ornaments are of copper, laid into the iron blade. The handle is covered with the skin of a snake. Iron spear-heads of enormous size, which are used in festivals or as a kind of currency, are in use among the tribes of the upper Kongo,