

## DESCRIPTION OF MASAI SHIELDS AND SPEARS.

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The patterns of shields vary according to the following groupings:

- (a) Circumcision age.
- (b) Sectional.
- (c) Marks of bravery.
- (d) Ornamentation.

Each generation may divide into a right hand age and a left hand age. This matter has been fully explained elsewhere, so I will refrain from doing so again. Most of the shields in the museum are of the right hand but there are two specimens of the left hand.

The general type of right hand circumcision marking consists of black and red serrated arcs on the upper half of the shield (fig. 1).

There is one red stripe, then three complete black stripes and another which is mostly hidden by the chain pattern. The red mark just below the chain pattern across the middle, is common to both right and left hand circumcisions. The stripes are called *Osambu*. They should be made thin; thick ones are considered vulgar and ostentatious.

An alternative pattern for a right hand shield is to have a broad blue-grey band in place of a stripe (fig. 2). The type of left hand shield is as in fig. 3 or alternatively as in fig. 4, which is called *Ol Lemutoroki* from a supposed resemblance to the Crested Crane. It has a broad red edge to the top half.

There are no specimens of figs. 2 and 4 in the museum.

The section patterns are common to certain groups of sections, i.e.

- (i) Purko, Kakonyuki, Il Dalalogotok have a pattern common to all three and are indistinguishable from one another. All the specimens in the museums are of this group.
- (ii) Il Damat.
- (iii) Kabutei, Matapato, Lodokilani, Loita, Siria and Laitayok.
- (iv) Loitokitok.

The broad red mark just below the middle of the shield in figs. 1 to 4 is typical of the Purko and Kakonyuki and Il Dalalogotok sections.

The Il Damat have this red mark and in addition a black mark on the top half. Fig. 5 shows an Il Damat shield of the right hand circumcision. For a left hand circumcision shield the three black stripes would be omitted. In Kabutei, Matapato, Lodokilani, Loita and Siria the black and red cross over the centre (fig. 6). These sections have not had a left hand circumcision within the last 20 years.

The Loitokitok markings are similar to the Il Damat (fig. 5) except that the broad band which is black in Il Damat is blue-grey in Loitokitok. There has been no recent left hand circumcision in Loitokitok.

### MARKS OF BRAVERY.

Fig. 7 shows the highest mark of bravery. It is a red mark with a serrated black line round it on the bottom edge of the shield.

The small red and black mark depicted on the top edge of fig. 1 is a mark of bravery of a lesser degree. The rosette on the lower half of fig. 2 is another sign of bravery equivalent to that in fig. 1.

### ORNAMENTATION.

The red and black chainlike marks across the middle of the shield are for ornament. Red must come next to black and vice versa. The number of links depends on the number of stitches which are fastening the wooden backbone of the shield to the hide.

An optional ornament is formed by two parallel vertical serrated lines on the lower half of the shield (see fig. 5). There are specimens of all the bravery and ornamentation marks in the museum.

### COLOURS.

The black is made of the charcoal obtained from burning calabashes of *Acrocanthera* (Ol Moricho). This charcoal is powdered and mixed with some ox blood. Red is made from a powdered red stone called Osindi mixed with ox blood.

White is burnt ox bone mixed with water.

Blue-grey is the burnt femur of an ox mixed with water.

### SPEARS.

Long ago the spears of the Masai warriors were leaf shaped. The long bladed spear was probably introduced about sixty years ago, when the Laimer age, of whom very few now survive, were warriors. Their spears were much broader than the modern ones. There is very little to distinguish one type of modern warrior spear from another. The Purko and Kakonyuki have a rather narrower blade than the rest, with smaller lugs at the base of it, but there is nothing sufficiently distinctive to indicate by drawing. The cuts on the socket of the butt end of the spear are customary ornament and have no other significance. The giraffe hair commonly found at the socket of the blade is also ornament.

Old men and boys carry lighter spears with short and unpolished blades.

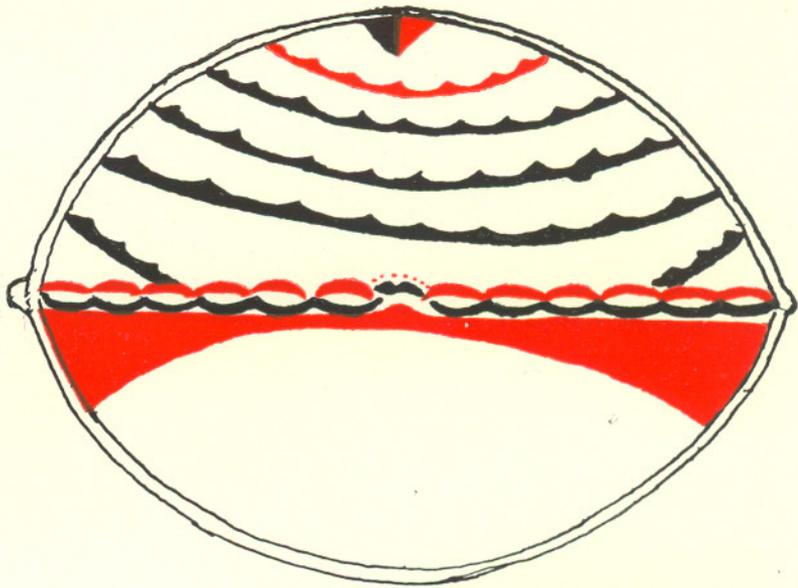


Fig. 1.

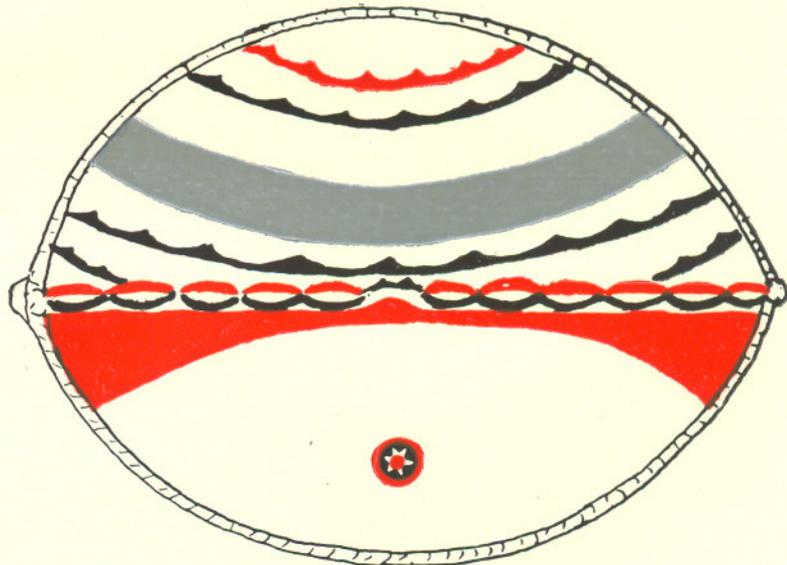


Fig. 2.

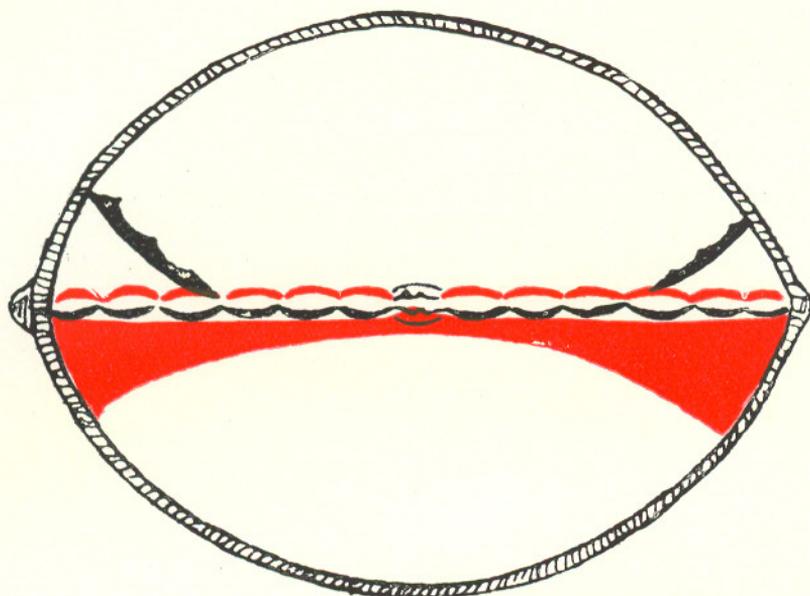


Fig. 3.

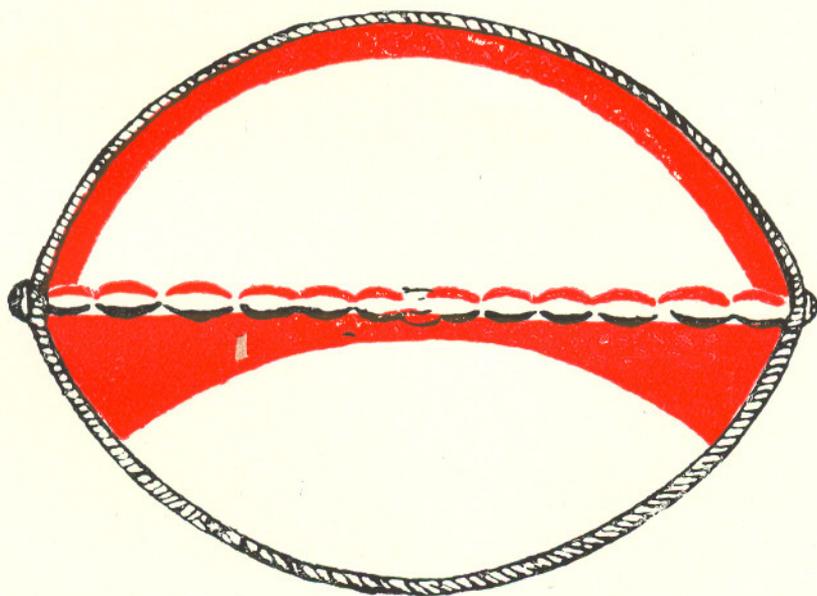


Fig. 4.

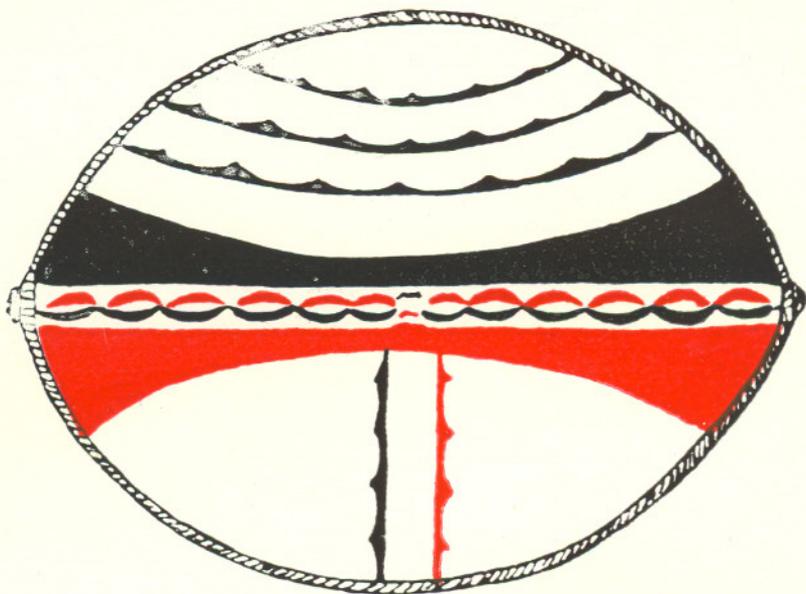


Fig. 5.

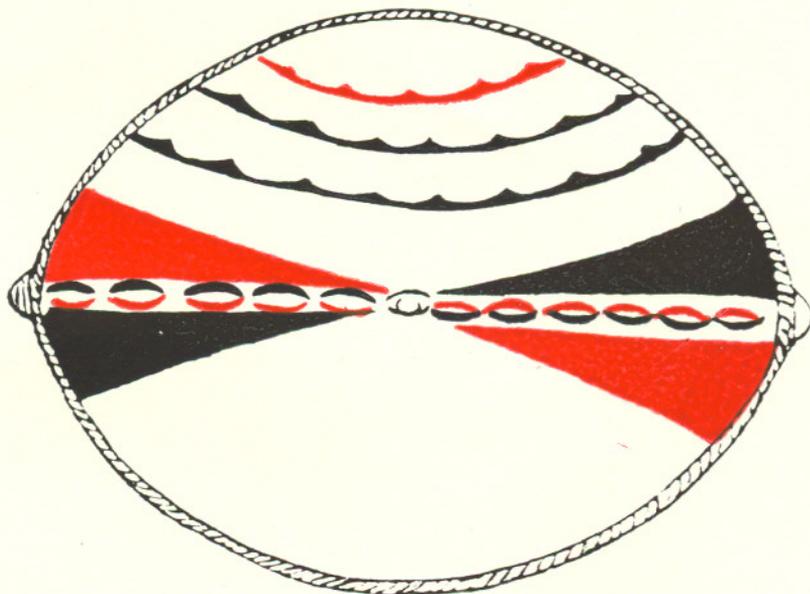


Fig. 6.

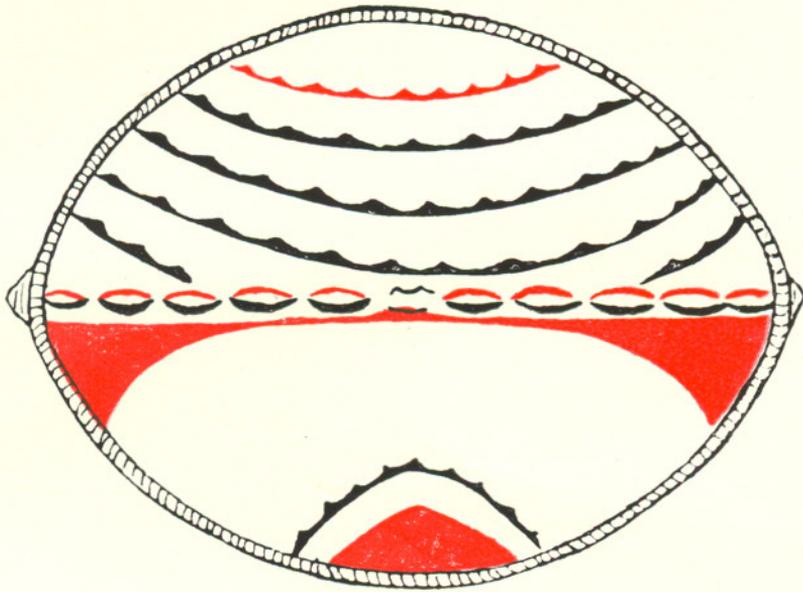


Fig. 7.