

AFRICAN BOYS PROVE FORTITUDE AS MARRIAGE ESSENTIAL

BY WILFRID D. HAMBLY
CURATOR OF AFRICAN ETHNOLOGY

When traveling through hilly country in east central Nigeria some years ago (while conducting the Frederick H. Rawson-Field Museum Ethnological Expedition to West Africa), my attention was attracted by a group of people arranged in a circle from the center of which came sounds of drumming and dancing. One could see at a glance that an important ceremony was in progress, as a dignified chief was in charge, while two "janitors" were enlarging the arena by a liberal and impartial use of their long whips.

All the people were of the Fulani tribe, who might almost be described as a *race*, so clearly distinguished are they from other Africans in appearance and language. There is a mixture of Negro blood in the Fulani,

ward and removed his tunic so that he was naked from the waist upward. From the circle of spectators rushed an elderly woman, the mother of the lad, who threw her arms about him, and in this protective manner sought to draw him back to the crowd. This, however, she was not permitted to do, and after a brief scuffle the boy stood holding a sword above his head.

Another boy of the same age came forward, testing the suppleness of a stout pliable stick that he swished through the air with great satisfaction as evidenced by his broad smile. The boy holding the sword appeared to take a less cheerful outlook, but despite the punishment he was about to receive he stood still and held the sword firmly. The music was accelerated, and in time to the rhythm the boy with the switch

came a transfer of roles. The sufferer proceeded leisurely to dress and take the whip, while the boy who had wielded it before now prepared to play a less happy part. Again an attempt was made at rescue, by the mother, but she was thrust back into the ring of spectators. The lad who had received three blows undertook his new task with relish, dancing slowly and threatening his victim repeatedly before actually delivering a blow.

WIVES CHOSEN AT ONCE

The second victim emerged as triumphantly as the first, and both were surrounded by admiring girls from whom the lads quickly selected their mates. The ceremony, though forbidden by the colonial government, is still considered by the Fulani as a necessary prelude to marriage. One cannot but wonder whether there are any boys who prefer to enjoy a painless bachelorhood.

In Sennar, far away from this site, I have seen men flog each other with rhinoceros hide whips as part of a wedding entertainment. Each man gave and received three blows, and all concerned appeared gratified with this crude exhibition of fortitude.



How African Boys Prove Their Manhood

The flogging ceremony, a part of the initiation of the youths of the Fulani tribe in Nigeria. Note the marks on the body of the boy who is holding up the sword. The photograph was made by Curator Wilfrid D. Hamby, who was permitted to witness the ritual while in Africa conducting the Rawson-Field Museum Ethnological Expedition.

but the light brown skin color and refined features betoken basic traits of another race. Many of the Fulani are nomadic cattle keepers who wander over wide areas of west Africa, and without design I had the good fortune to arrive at the beginning of a rite of initiation into manhood. This pain test is an indispensable prelude to marriage, for no girl among those standing around would accept a coward.

MATERNAL INSTINCT THWARTED

The chief secured for me a place near the orchestra whose principal instruments were slender drums one of which was held under the arm of each player. Louder grew the music, and more energetic were the efforts of the janitors with their whips, but when at last a space was clear a boy stepped for-

danced round his victim, pausing now and then to raise his weapon as if about to deliver a blow, then once more resuming his gyrations. The boy who held the sword stood still with downcast eyes, giving no indication of emotion when the blow threatened. His exhibition of stoicism drew applause from the onlookers.

At last the blow descended with a sickening thud, leaving a conspicuous welt. The sufferer bent double for a second, and an elderly man ran forward and rubbed him. Then the victim made a few rhythmical steps and smiled, rather faintly, at the crowd which was vociferous with applause. The actions of the victim were intended to indicate his contempt for pain. Three times the performance was repeated. Then

Additions to Mammal Exhibits

Recent additions to the systematic collection of mammals in Hall 15 include a screen on one side of which are displayed several species of hyena, and on the other side specimens of the varied assortment of interesting animals comprising the raccoon family. To the exhibit of monkeys has been added a specimen of the strikingly marked Indo-Chinese species known as the douc langur.

Hopewell Flint Discs

The largest single cache ever found in America of flint discs fashioned by prehistoric men is on exhibition in the Hall of North American Archaeology (Hall B). They come from the famous Hopewell Mounds of Ohio, and have been installed as nearly as possible in the same position in which they were left by the early Indian inhabitants of that region.

WILD FLOWER LEAFLETS—

Of special interest and usefulness to those interested in recognizing the wild flowers appearing at this season are illustrated leaflets, *Spring Wild Flowers*, and *Spring and Early Summer Wild Flowers*, published by Field Museum. J. Francis Macbride, Associate Curator of the Herbarium, is the author. The booklets are on sale at the BOOK SHOP of the Museum—25 cents each.



1939. "Hopewell Flint Discs." *Field Museum news* 10(5), 4-4.

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