

ANTHROPOLOGY

"Healthy Savage" Myth Hit by Research on African Natives

Akikuyu Suffer From Monotonous, Ill-Balanced Diet; Women Better off Than Men Because of Tabus

POPULAR THEORY that savages are healthier than civilized men, chiefly because of their diet, has been well discounted in a report of a three-year research into the physique and health of two African tribes. This prolonged study was made by Dr. J. B. Orr, director of the Rowett Research Institute for Animal Nutrition at Aberdeen, Scotland, and Dr. J. L. Gilks, director of Medical and Sanitary Service, Kenya, East Africa.

The report, published by the British Medical Research Council, is a scientific study of the diets and diseases of two East African tribes, the Masai, famous as lion-hunters and the Akikuyu.

These two tribes, although they live according to nature, are not the healthy, robust creatures the native free from civilization's restrictions is generally supposed to be. They have not balanced their food ration. The Akikuyu diet is

too rich in carbohydrate and deficient in calcium, while the Masai have insufficient carbohydrate and cellulose vegetables, that is, not enough roughage. The report points out that improvement might be brought about by increasing the use of green vegetables by both tribes, and of milk by the Akikuyu.

A special study was made of the Akikuyu dinner-table. It was found that the ordinary meal consists of a thick porridge called "irio" and a gruel called "ucuru," but the women make a special "irio" of their own, which no males over five years of age eat. In this dish, green leaves and salt are added to the ordinary maize, legumes and plantains. The women have a virtual monopoly of green leaves, and also have a weakness for edible earths and for ashes.

Low in Minerals

Analysis of samples of these native dishes at the Rowett Research Institute showed that the ordinary "irio" and "ucuru" were very low in the mineral elements vital to nutrition, particularly in calcium.

On the other hand, the leaves eaten by the women were very rich in certain minerals, the percentage of calcium in some being higher than that previously

recorded in any natural foodstuff. Some of the edible earths were very rich in iron, and one special delicacy, a red millet, which is eaten before and after childbirth, contained fourteen times as much calcium and sixteen times as much manganese as ordinary millet.

The significance of these discoveries lies in the effect which the larger "iron ration" eaten by the women has upon their health, as they are admittedly superior to the men in physique, and appear to be more healthy and freer from pulmonary diseases.

One of the native chiefs was asked why the men did not follow the example of their wives and eat green leaves.

"Such food prevents them from being swift of foot if defeated in battle by the Masai," he replied.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Children Are More Alert Than Their Teachers

THAT children's queries show they are far more alive to their mental requirements than the educators who prepare courses of study for them is the belief of Prof. R. A. Baker of the College of the City of New York. Prof. Baker is secretary of the division of chemical education of the American Chemical Society.

It is the children who are awake and the educators who are asleep, declared Prof. Baker. "No child is too young to learn chemistry, for example, yet we have ruled that until a student reaches a certain year in high school he is not sufficiently advanced to undertake the study of this science. . . .

"It is time that we were awakening to the fact that chemistry does not belong to the chemists but to the whole world. There are many things about chemistry that, if properly presented, kindergarten children could grasp. Children have the right to a full and useful education and this of necessity includes a study of chemistry.

"Some of the makers of games and educational toys have been keen enough to appreciate the type of thing which naturally appeals to children and have developed various experimental sets to answer this need. Unfortunately, the misguided use of this material frequently leads to entirely incorrect conclusions and mistaken ideas. . . . The time is coming when educators will no longer be able to impose arbitrary age limits governing the study of science or any other subject."

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