

# **BLACK TALES FOR WHITE CHILDREN**

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Black tales for white children by Mr. C. H. Stigand & Mrs. C. H. Stigand

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**MR. C. H. STIGAND & MRS. C. H. STIGAND**

**BLACK TALES FOR  
WHITE CHILDREN**



*These BLACK TALES for WHITE CHILDREN, being a collection of Swahili Stories, have been translated and arranged by Capt. C. H. STIGAND, interpreter in Swahili and author of "The Land of Zinj," and Mrs. C. H. STIGAND, and have been illustrated by JOHN HARGRAVE, author of "LONECRAFT."*

# BLACK TALES

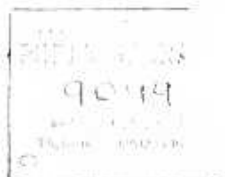
FOR



# WHITE CHILDREN



BOSTON & NEW YORK: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY



*First published 1914*

NEW YORK  
CHICAGO  
LONDON



## FOREWORD

MANY hundreds of years ago Arab sailors began to explore the east coast of Africa, being driven southwards in their sailing vessels by the northerly winds or monsoons of one part of the year and returning to their homes by the help of the southerly winds of the other half of the year.

As trade with the coast grew, Persians and Arabs founded settlements on the coast, and the numerous islands and towns and kingdoms grew up. These original settlers mixed with the black races of the interior, and it is from this mixture that the people now called Swahili have sprung. The word Swahili, or Sawaheli, comes from the Arabic word Sawahil, meaning coast, and hence the east coast of Africa.

A language derived partly from Arabic and partly from several African Bantu tongues came into being. This is called Kisawaheli, or the Swahili language, and different dialects of it are spoken practically the whole length of the East African coast and the islands close to it.





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The stories which follow are drawn from a number heard at different times and in different places, and they have been written down as nearly as possible as told by the Swahili himself. Some were told by story-tellers in the coast towns, others were overheard on the march in the interior or round the camp-fire at night.

These stories have not been kept in any book or written document, but have been repeated from mouth to mouth, perhaps for hundreds of years. Either they are narrated by a professional story-teller of a coast town, who hands on his stock of them to his son after him, or they are told by mothers to their children almost from the time they can toddle. These children, when they grow up, tell them, in their turn, to their children, but the story is always told in the evening.

During the day-time there is work to do and no good woman has time to waste in idleness. She must go out into the fields with her baby strapped on her back and hoe and weed the crops in the hot sun, she must grind the maize or millet into flour between two stones, winnow the grain, cook her husband's dinner, draw the water,

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collect firewood, and perform many other duties.

When the day's work is done and the evening meal is finished they sit round the fire outside the hut, for they have no lamps or even electric light. Perhaps they sit in a little courtyard, surrounded by a high palisade, for fear of the lions, or perhaps, no lions having been heard of late, they sit in the cleared space in the centre of the village, each family by its little fire. Then the mother tell her stories to the children, who soon get to know them all by heart, yet never tire of hearing them again and again. "Tell us, mother, the story of Nunda, so that we may join in the chorus—

"Siye mwanangu siye, siye Nunda mlawatu."

(It is not he, my child, not Nunda the eater of folk.)

Or it may be on a journey after a long and tiring day's march, the evening meal is cooked and eaten, and then the tired porters lie round the camp-fire and call on one of their number to tell a story, "So that we may forget the toil of the day."

As the Swahili is himself a mixture of the

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Arab and the African, so his stories form a curious combination of the elements of both races. The finer and more witty points are generally of Arab origin, whilst the more homely and jungle scenes are drawn from Africa. The jin or fairy, both good and bad, has been brought from Arabia with the Sultan and the idea of wealth and precious stones.

The folk-lore, certain kinds of demons, and the jungle folk are entirely African.

Such stories as "The Cat's Tail," "The Fools," and "Shani and Tabak" were told in the dialects of Shela, Pate and Lamu, in which places there is a greater proportion of Arab blood. "Kajikarangi," "The Hunters and the Big Snake," and "Segu" are types of tales told by more African natives in the dialect of Zanzibar and the Mgao and Mrima coasts.

The Sultan is the king or chief. As the African coast kingdoms were often very small he was, as often as not, the chief of only one town or island, whilst in the next town another Sultan reigned.

The Wazir, or Vizier of Turkey, is his prime minister or head man.