BUSHMAN STORIES

by

E. W. Thomas

These twenty-seven free translations of tales told by a Bushman or Semi-Bushman from the Outjo District of S. W. Africa are a valuable contribution to South African Folklore.

lt is a pity the translator has used such sophisticated language, but that is a trifle. I think the tales well worth publishing, provided Mr Thomas supplies a different and more adequate introduction.

that his father was a Kalahari Bushman, his mother a Haikom.

There are many trabes of Bushmen in the Kalahari, speaking different languages; of these the Kung are the nearest to the Outjo District, so probably Gaira's father was a Kung.

akin to the Kung, but they have lived long under Nama rule, and now speak a kind of kitchen Nama, presumably the second language with 'Gaira' claims to speak. In which language did 'Gaira' tell his tales? or was Afrikaans the medium in which he communicated them to Mr Thomas? I suspect the last-named was the medium, as in NO XI. the lion's wife is called the 'wolf'. There are no wolves in South Africa, but the the name is applied in Afrikaans to the hyena. These particulars should be clearly stated.

many tales are about 'Heiseb', I infer that 'Gaira' lived chiefly in his mother's country and usually spoke her language. 'Heiseb' as a Remi-God is evidently akin to the 'Hishe' of the Naron Bushmen, and the 'Heitsi Eibib' of the Nama. He is not a kung God or Demigod.

The bulk of the stories have the characteristics of the lore of the Central Bushman tribes, a few of the Northern Bushman tribes. Some bear internal evidence that the tellers were accustomed to people of some elementary civilization with knowledge of gardens, chiefs and cattle. A few, such as No XV, are evidently borrowed.

The tales give a valuable picture of the life of these tribes of Bushman descent at the present day.

In his introduction Mr Thomas states, "the Little Brown Men and the wild animals appear to be travelling always North, retreating before the advance of civilization". That is an error. The Bushman tribes of the bouth, the 'pure Bushman' sought for the ritish Association in 1905, lived and died or were absorbed by other tribes in the South. The different languages spoken in the North show that the speakers are no southern Bushmen driven there, but tribes that have lived in the North for many generations.

If Mr Thomas will write a more detailed and accurate Introduction, I can recommend his work for publication.