

Quelle:

ZEITUNGSARTIKEL AUS DER ZEITUNG THE GLOBE ZUM THEMA VÖLKERSCHAU (APRIL / MAY 1895); [TRANSKRIPT]¹

Somalis in England. Strange Scene at Tilbury Docks, in: The Globe (Saturday, April 27th 1895)

Yesterday a strange scene was to be witnessed at Tilbury Docks during a large part of the day. There had arrived in the Docks overnight, in the Clan Ross, the Somali troupe, consisting of upwards of sixty men, women, and children who are to people the East African village which will be one of the features of the African Exhibition during the summer at the Crystal Palace. For the first time these adventurous natives were to set foot on civilised shores, and for the first time natives of Somaliland were to be seen here. In every sense they came bag and baggage. In his native state the Somali native has very little personal impedimenta. A very scanty amount of rough white linen, a gaily-coloured loose flowing robe, which he wears with a sort of barbaric grace, a long stick, a piece of peculiar twig which is at once a dental medicament and a tooth brush, some dye for his hair, and a mat to sleep upon form: the whole of his portable property. But as all this would present the curious public but few elements of the picturesque, it was decided also to import his native surroundings even to the extent of the wild beasts which prowl around his rough and rude tent, the chattering monkeys, that roam the forests, the wild horses which he tames, the dromedaries with which he races, and a host of other animals. It was all this heterogenous assemblage which created so strange a scene in the docks yesterday. The Somalis, who soon made themselves quite at home in the midst of their strange surroundings, were themselves landing the horses, with whose quick and queer tempers they were well acquainted. There were twenty-five of these animals, and while they gladly left the steamer where they had been tied up for weeks, they looked upon a railway horse box with the greatest distrust, and getting them in was a source of great excitement. The Somali men, although it was all quite new to them, took in the situation at a glance, and the way in which they tugged and pulled and goaded the kicking and rearing animals until at last they were penned up in the boxes, was full of amusement for the onlookers.

[...]

The horses all being in the train, a long string of dromedaries, 20 in number, were brought from the ship. Fine, strong animals they were, but in contradistinction to the horses, quite quiet and lamblike, gazing with a placid stare that might indicate either contentment or stupefaction. They gave no trouble at all. Nor did the four wild donkeys, which, though a trifle rough-coated, were quite attractive animals, two of them being pure bred wild asses, distinguishable by zebra-like markings on body and legs. The other two were cross bred, and very little marked. Then there were the wild sheep to gather together and separate from the goats. Of these there were sixty in all, and though they had lived in their native country in a wild state, a month at sea had, as a sailor put it, "taken all the nonsense out of them." They were browsing about, feeding on the straw and other edibles they found in the docks, all being untethered and allowed the fullest liberty. The sheep are specially curious in consequence of their long drooping dog-like ears, perfectly black heads, with sharp defined marks round the neck, and white bodies and fat tails, on the fat of which they can live for six weeks in a desert country, as the dromedary does on his hump.

Meanwhile there had been transhipped packing cases large and small, from which strange noises and strange odours emanated. There were forty of these in all, containing lions, monkeys, hunting cheetahs, jackals, wild dogs, monkeys, baboons, gazelles, and antelopes. A second ship is to arrive later with 20 lions, 11 elephants, four zebras, 19 ostriches, six leopards, four pythons, more monkeys, and other small animals, so that there will be quite a menagerie in connection with the village. Owing to the exigencies of packing, only a glimpse could be caught of some of the animals, but enough was seen to show that they were all very young. And that being new to captivity, they were in a very wild state. The lion promises to grow into a very fine animal,

¹ Quelle zu dem Essay: Annika Dörner, Auftritt: Löwe, Giraffe, Zebra und zwölf Jäger. Tiere auf Völkerschauen im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2023, URL: <<https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-131481>>.

and was in a specially snappish mood. The hyenas and cheetahs also snarled at everyone, and made frantic efforts to get at a fox-terrier which stood for some time gazing unconcernedly at them.

In charge of the party was Herr Joseph Menges, the agent of Herr Hagenbeck, who undertook to form the show. Herr Menges, who has been almost constantly in Somaliland for some twenty years, had accompanied the natives from Berbera, where they joined the vessel. Questioned by our representative as to the personal character of the natives, he spoke of their great intelligence and adaptability to civilisation. The Somali tongue is only a spoken language, everything official being written in Arabic or English. None of the present party can speak English, but it is expected that they will soon pick it up, as they are quick at learning languages. At Aden, where many are employed as cooks, boatmen, servants, policemen, and coachmen, it is not uncommon to find Somalis who speak several languages, English, French, and Spanish being the European languages they learn. They are also very clean in their habits, and plain in their diet. During the voyage they were fed on rice, crushed dates, and captain's biscuits. The last mentioned they ate with relish, and with their sharp perfect teeth seemed to take a special delight in crunching the biscuits. No inducement could prevail upon them to live in the cabins. Whether the weather was foul or fair they camped on deck, and owing to the cold were supplied with rugs. They speedily showed that with them the woman is of quite secondary importance. The "new woman" has not arisen yet in Somaliland, and the old one is content to wait upon her lord and master. The sailors taking pity on the women, who were, like the men, exposed to the weather on deck, rigged up coverings for them. But the men soon turned the women out, and enjoyed the shelter while the women camped out in the open. No attempt has been made to accustom them to Western ideas, because the point of the show is to be a Somali village just as it exists in their native land. Judging from what could be seen yesterday, the show will be of an unusually interesting character.

The Somalis at the Crystal Palace, in: The Globe (Saturday, May 18th 1895)

The Somalis, of whose arrival in this country we gave a long account a few weeks ago, have now settled down in their quarters at the Crystal Palace, and to-day the first public performances are being given in connection with the South African Exhibition which is to be the feature of the summer programme. The large sports arena has been transformed into a Somali village, to which a background of the canvas mountains hiding the switchback railway lends an air of realism. Here a picturesque display is made. The tents are erected and arranged exactly as in Somaliland; and a little drama has been arranged to illustrate the daily life of the Somali people. Of this a private view was given yesterday. First, there is seen the peaceful village of reed mat huts, and the villagers following their usual daily occupations, the women preparing food, and the men looking after the dromedaries, tending the horses, and keeping the ostriches within bounds. A fine group of the last-mentioned roam around the precincts of the village with stately head. Presently shots are being heard, and soon swoop upon the village a band of brigands, who attempt to steal the dromedaries and to secure the animals. The villager, both men and women, defend their homesteads, and are aided by a small band of European hunters, who arrive on the scene, and drive the brigands away. Some of the brigands are detained as hostages, and have to be ransomed by presents of sheep, goats, and ostriches; the brigands receive in return one of the maidens in marriage as a guarantee of peace. The usual festivities follow: Dances of love and war, throwing the spear, shooting with the bow and arrow, dromedary races, and horse races, all of which are exceedingly entertaining. Then the European hunters arrange a zarefa in the village to buy animals, illustrating how young animals, birds, and reptiles are nursed, trained, and bartered. Most of the hunters leave the zarefa for the hunting grounds. For a time all is peaceful and quiet, and some of the tents are struck and loaded on the camels. Next comes the return of the hunters' caravan, with elephants, zebras, and all large animals obtained during the hunting expedition, this forming a great caravan (kafila), which is by far the finest scene in the whole display, all the natives and all the animals taking part. After parading the village the caravan finally disappears behind the mountains. The escort on horses and dromedaries return, and conclude the display with shooting, racing, &c. It was a cold day, and the natives seemed to feel the piercing wind very much, but they entered into the scene with zest. At first they were amazed at the applause of the audience, all of them standing still and gazing in wonder towards the well filled gallery, but Mr. Menges, who acted the part of one of the British hunters, and who brought the show over, explained what

the to them strange sounds meant; expressions of wonder gave place to signs of pleasure, and the sports went on.

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Annika Dörner, Auftritt: Löwe, Giraffe, Zebra und zwölf Jäger. Tiere auf Völkerschauen im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2023, URL: <<https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-131481>>.