

Abstracts of Some Recent Papers

ANTHROPOLOGY

AD. E. JENSEN, 'Elementi della cultura spirituale dei Conso nell' Etiopia meridionale', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Rome; Sept.-Dec. 1942.¹ The Conso live in mountainous country south of lake Ciomo in Ethiopia. They are predominantly Negro and speak a Cushitic language. At the centre of their religious and social life is an age-grade system called Gila. There are five grades: Fareita, Chela, Gada, Orsciada, Gurra. Every male Conso enters at a certain age and proceeds after eighteen years to graduate. The characteristic feature is that graduation is hereditary in the sense that a son always follows his father at a distance of two grades. When a father reaches Gada, the third grade, all his sons enter the first, Fareita; and when he goes on, eighteen years later, to the fourth, Orsciada, they are promoted to the second, Chela. There is then between father and sons always an interval of thirty-six years. The system differs in this respect from the more common Ethiopian type of age-grade (called Gada) and the author gives reasons for believing that Gila is the original form. It is the Conso belief that procreative power is conferred by the Gila ceremony. Whatever be the age of a Fareita he cannot beget: 'his seed is like water.' With some exception no young men of the first grade may marry; and when that grade is completed they all marry. A man's sons at that moment of transition may vary in age from less than 10 to 30, but they all marry at once, though the marriage of the youngest is not consummated until later. The exception to the rule is in the case of the sons of a man who has married regularly and is still alive: if they are so inclined they may marry before the passage rite; but since they are supposed not to be able to beget children, any of their wives who become pregnant are accounted adulteresses. (There is another kind of age-grade, named Harriya, which the Conso say was borrowed from the Galla; this is endogamous in the sense that a male Harriya must marry a female Harriya.) Among the Conso there are nine matrimonial classes (called Gaffa) which, according to tradition, derive from the time when so many endogamous groups migrated into the country and on amalgamating made a law that a man must take a wife from a group not his own. It is said that each of the nine migrating groups carried a parcel of soil from its original home; all these parcels were afterwards lumped together in one mass and the tumulus was divided into two; according to their preference the men then stood by one tumulus or the other and so the people became divided into Angaffa and Cudissu. In ancient days there were two Gila institutions, two high priests and two sanctuaries in which the ceremonies were performed. There are still these two functionaries but precedence is held by the one who is in a superior age-grade. When he attains to the fourth grade (Orsciada) he retires from public life, dresses as a woman, may no longer have commerce with the other sex, not even with his own wife; he has now lost his procreative power and is circumcised. The author describes the Gila feast, the most important event in the life of the Conso, which takes place every eighteen years. As soon as its approach is announced, the youths of the Fareita grade go out (without carrying food) into the bush to kill a hare. From that day all men must remain continent; they dress in festive garments and march in silence to the two sacred places. The Fareita adolescents come with their hare, cut in strips. There is singing; all stand; the promotions to higher grades follow, and there is a wild dance. Only now may the name of Dauruahellu (*l'Essere Gila*) be pronounced: never except at the feast; the young men are insulted in his name; and they, now initiated into the Chela grade and about to marry, dance and insult the wives.

¹ Issues of *Rassegna* for the war-years have only recently come into our possession.

The author proceeds to describe the villages, the functions of the priests (*Bogalla*), the magicians (*Iuba*), funerals and the wooden figures erected in memory of the dead together with megalithic monuments.

R. BOURGEOIS, 'Mœurs et coutumes de Banyarwanda', *Bulletin des juridictions indigènes et du droit coutumier congolais*, Élisabethville; 13th year, no. 5, Sept.-Oct., 1945. A lengthy paper so full of detail that a full summary is here impossible. In each of the three groups, Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, Rwanda society is patriarchal and patrilocal. The desire of every man is to possess as many cattle as possible. A Mututsi bewails the death of one of his cows, not of one of his children; a Muhutu is more saddened by the loss of a heifer than by the loss of his wife. Ninety per cent. of cases in the native tribunals relate to cattle. A long list of names is given which distinguish cattle according to colour, shape of horns, age and sex; and another list of terms applied to cattle according to the customs which attach to them. Some of these customs are described at length. Thus, *ubuhake* (from *guhakwa*, to court, make love to) is a cow given as part of a contract of vassalage. This most important of contracts is made between a patron (*shebuja*) and a client (*umugaragu*). If a man desires to become another's vassal he may spend a year in courting him; to begin with, he tells his intentions to the *shebuja's* intimates and then brings him gifts and does him certain services. When the *shebuja* is satisfied he gives the suitor some cattle to use and herd, and the contract is thereby sealed. Generally only men are concerned, sometimes two women, and rarely a man and a woman. To become *umugaragu* is at once an honour and an advantage because he is sure of the patron's protection and favour (if he is a chief) in the matter of *corvées*. The client never considers himself to be in servitude. The contract is for life unless the patron repudiates it. The client is bound to obey blindly every order given; if he commits a fault he may be fined a cow. If he dies, leaving no heirs, all his cattle go to the patron; if there is an heir the patron exchanges a beast with him and holds him accountable for the cattle held by the deceased. When the patron dies all the cattle of his clients are assembled and the heir takes the heifers; to gain his goodwill and deter him from making exacting demands the clients each give him the *indorano* (heifer of grief). The assemblage of cattle is called *umurundo*; it is summoned on other occasions and indeed is used as a means of exacting cattle from the clients; so that it has had to be regulated by the Administration.

The author describes other forms of contract; marriage; land tenure; succession; and the tribunals.

S. F. NADEL, 'Notes on Beni Amer Society', *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum, vol. xxvi, part 1, 1945. The notes deal primarily with the sections of the tribe (numbering 30-40,000 souls) living in Eritrea: the remainder are in the Sudan. Some few sections are agriculturist, the majority nomadic. The seventeen sections, 'clans' (*badana*), are linked by religion but chiefly by a bond of common descent: they all trace their origin to a single ancestor named Amer. Some speak a Hamitic tongue (*Beja*); others the Semitic Tigre; others are bilingual. Each clan is subdivided into kinship groups: descent is patrilineal. There is a rigid division into Nabtab ('nobles', the ruling aristocracy, who comprise one-tenth of the tribe) and Hedareb ('serfs'); the latter not being reckoned as of common descent with the former. Each kinship group is a political unity under its sheikh; each clan has its 'omda' who is elected by a small committee of the clan council, sons of the previous 'omda' having first consideration: he has no judicial powers and to-day is little more than a tax-collector. The Italians tried to enhance the authority of these clan-chiefs by supplying them with arms but did not succeed. The paramount chief, Diglal, is chosen from members of the Dagga, the royal twin-clan: he is without judicial or executive powers. Serfs have no political identity and their only civic right is protection from private abuse. They could not change their masters; they could not be

sold but might be transferred by bequest within the kinship group. As a result of Italian action numerous Nabtab families now have no serfs. The author traces the growth of serf-groups under serf-headmen who are subject to the Diglal. Serfs are distinguished from slaves, the descendants of captives taken in wars and raids. Slavery has been abolished but many ex-slaves remain economically dependent upon their former masters. Between masters and serfs there are mutual obligations: serfs pay annual dues in money and otherwise give tribute and service; and the master is bound to protect his serfs 'like a father'. Cultural differences between the two castes have been largely obliterated, but the distinction remains. Nabtab men and women never milk cows and the women never grind corn: if one broke this law he or she would not find a spouse of the same status. Intermarriage was forbidden though Nabtab men might have concubines of the serf-caste. The chastity of Nabtab women is guarded with extreme jealousy. Serfs have grazing rights and, in agricultural communities, land rights: some of them have grown wealthy. The author traces the steps which lead in the direction of disruption of the caste distinction. Now among the sedentary tribesmen a poor Nabtab frequently marries into a serf family. Indolence among the serfs is a reaction from their former servitude.

After noting various trends—the economic decline of some of the aristocracy, the increased prosperity of some of the serfs—the writer expresses the view that it is the task of the government of the country to plan for the social readjustment towards which Beni Amer society is moving. No sound administration can afford to leave to their fate the indolent masses of the serf population. As they are to-day, they bar all progress in the field of education, of health services or of general cultural improvement; deprived of political responsibility and devoid of civic sense they endanger, by their very presence, security and political stability. The class conflict calls for readjustment, as does also the strengthening of tribal cohesion. The first approach is through the reconstruction of clan chieftainship: adequate pay of the clan chiefs, their election by the clan-council and the complete separation of feudal overlordship from political office. The individual chief must be encouraged to assume (or re-assume) his judicial duties as well as his seat on the revived clan-council. The British Administration has already created a tribal court composed of clan-chiefs and headed by the Diglal and his Chief of Chiefs (Sheikh al Mushayikh). The second approach concerns the rehabilitation of the serf-class: both the serf-groups still under individual masters and those dependent on the clan-chief must be reconstituted as sections in their own right, under their own heads. This emancipation of the serfs may take generations to achieve. Universal education must obviously play its part in this development. Dr. Nadel tells how he has turned the tribal court into a travelling court, which has instructions to encourage the serfs to submit to its disputes with their masters. This literally revolutionary innovation has already met with remarkable success.

FATHER J. ZUGNONI and G. K. C. HIBBERT, 'Yilede, a Secret Society', *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum, vol. xxvi, part 1, 1945. Among the Gbaya, Aja, and Banda tribes of the Western District of Equatoria the Yilede society is composed chiefly of women. Its chief aims are independence from husbands, freedom from motherhood, enjoyment of feasts and dances, mutual help in case of need, and the gratification of private revenge. It is divided into groups, each under a sub-chief who is usually a woman, and all are under a female chief whose decision in cases is final. The sub-chief collects fees, fines, and other sources of income, of which the most important are the first-fruits of crops, the hunt and fishing. All officers are paid. At initiation the chief forbids initiates ever to leave the society or to reveal its secrets: the penalty for disobedience is death. Men are only admitted because they are influential or in order that they may perform duties that women are unable or unwilling to do; they too have to undergo an initiatory rite. Yilede is a spirit closely

associated with water; it is regarded as the source of life. It is invoked on certain occasions; e.g. when a woman member has been beaten unjustly by her husband she may invoke Yilede and thereafter it means death for her husband to have sexual intercourse with her; if a woman is unduly pressed by her husband, after she has refused to accord him marital rights, she may struggle with him and invoke Yilede. When the moon is new members dance all night in honour of the spirit, and a similar ritual dance is performed on the death of any member: after such a dance any man may lie with any woman member and children so begotten are devoted to Yilede. Father Zugnani considers that the society is the main cause of the low Banda birth-rate. In four localities he found that out of 555 married women, 320 were childless. The society supplies abortifacients such as gunpowder and pawpaw seeds. He thinks that the excision which Banda girls undergo at puberty is one of the reasons for their aversion to motherhood for it renders parturition extremely painful.

ABBÉ ALEXIS KAGAME, 'Ceux qui ont fait le Rwanda', *La Voix du Congolais*, 1^{re} année, no. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1945. National legends are silent as to the kings who are said to have reigned in Rwanda between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries; but twenty later kings are 'historical' in the sense that their deeds are celebrated in oral chronicles. The dates are calculated by allowing an average of thirty years to a generation. A king seems almost invariably to have been succeeded by his son.

c. 1400, Ruganzu I Bwimba; kingdom limited to four of the provinces of to-day. Killed in battle.

c. 1430, Cyilima I Rugwe; added to the kingdom.

c. 1460, Kigeli I Mukobanya; won a great victory over the Banyoro.

c. 1490, Mibambwe I Sekarongoro I Mutabazi I; Rwanda invaded by Banyoro; enlarged the kingdom.

c. 1520, Yuhi II Gahima II.

c. 1550, Ndahiro II Cymatare; Bashi invaders made common cause with rebels, the king was defeated and slain and for 11 years there was anarchy.

c. 1580, Ruganzu II Ndoli; returning from Karagwe, where he had taken refuge, he restored order and raised the kingdom to a height of glory never surpassed. He added greatly to the kingdom. In his reign final form was given to the dynastic poems.

c. 1610, Mutara I Nsoro II Semugeshi; entered into a pact of peace with the king of Burundi.

c. 1640, Kigeli II Nyamuheshera; extended his dominions on the west to the Congo forest and on the north to lake Edward (Rwicanzige).

c. 1670, Mibambwe II Sekarongoro II Gisanura; made no conquests but was named the Magnificent because of his impartial justice and beneficence.

c. 1700, Yuhi III Mazimpaka; suffered intermittent madness; the king of Burundi broke the pact and seized Rwanda territory; permanent armies date from this reign.

c. 1730, Cyilima II Rujugira; extended conquests to the south and recovered lands lost during his father's madness.

c. 1760, Kigeli III Ndabarasa.

c. 1785, Mibambwe III Mutabazi II Sentabyo; died of smallpox after a reign of five years spent in fighting his brothers.

c. 1790, Yuhi IV Gahindiro.

c. 1820, Mutara II Rwogera; annexed the kingdom of Gisaka.

c. 1860, Kigeli IV Rwabugili; made numerous expeditions, one against Ijwi island; died September 1895 after the visit of the German explorer Gotzen.

1895, Mibambwe IV Rutalindwa; usurped the throne; killed in a revolution December 1896.

1897, Yuhi V Musinga, young brother of Mibambwe; his mother governed; conflict between two rival parties; the Germans now ruled but did not intervene in the civil strife; the ancient régime perished in proscriptions of entire families. When the Belgians were given a mandate over Rwanda after the first world war they restricted the royal power. The young generation turned against the king and his authority became a memory. For the good of the country he was deposed in November 1931; he died 25 December 1944.

1931, Mutara III Rudahigwa; enthroned 16 November; has shown himself an enlightened ruler under the Belgians.

R.P. PLESSERS, 'Les Bakaji ba mpinga (femmes de remplacement) chez les Baluba du Lubilash', *Bulletin des juridictions indigènes et du droit coutumier congolais*, Élisabethville; 13th year, no. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1945. Among these Luba the bride-price has always been heavy; nowadays from 1,500 to 1,700 francs, formerly as much as 100 goats. In consequence, say the old folks, the age of marriage was postponed to 30-35 years and only the rich could marry easily. It was natural that a widower, having given so much, should insist upon having a substitute-wife (*mpinga*); a supplementary bride-price, however, varying with the age of the deceased and of the *mpinga*, had to be provided. Formerly it was easy for heads of families to produce the *mpinga*, for their authority was uncontested and there were usually plenty of nubile girls. If one was not available an immature girl was substituted; her lot was generally unenviable, for the husband's clan wreaked upon her the rancour they felt for her family because a proper wife had not been furnished. In these days the family rocks upon its base; the position of the head is not what it was. Sometimes a Christian is called upon to deliver up his daughter, nubile or not; sometimes a young man's fiancée is taken from him to be the substitute-wife of another man. No wonder if the question is asked: Is this custom, so contrary to the respect due to human personality, still to be tolerated? In the absence of any law on the subject a spontaneous reaction has set in. If a father has no daughter to fulfil his obligation, or having one does not intend to give her up, he hunts through *le dossier familial* (always rich among the Luba) for some old dispute which enables him to make a counter-claim; and this claim easily leads on to others. However good the custom may have been at one time, it is now a nuisance, toleration of which is incompatible with a healthy development of native society.

ECONOMICS

G. C. I. JONES, 'Agriculture and Ibo village planning', *Farm and Forest*, Ibadan, vol. vi, no. 1, Jan.-Mar. 1945. The agricultural value of the land in an Ibo village will be enhanced if the existing pattern of compounds, interspersed among gardens and trees, is preserved, and if rubbish and night soil are composted and returned to the land instead of being burned and buried as in townships. The existing layout of most Ibo villages can, with little difficulty, be adapted to suit modern requirements. As such it is better suited for preserving the essential horticultural basis of Ibo society than the 'modern villages' planned by health experts with an urban basis. This paper attempts to show how this adaptation can be made. It is illustrated with diagrams.

R. S. STENHOUSE, 'Agriculture in the Matengo Highlands', *East Africa Agricultural Journal*, vol. x, pp. 22-4 (reproduced in *Tropical Agriculture*, vol. xxii, no. 11, Nov. 1945). The Watengo are a small tribe living in the Songea district of Tanganyika Territory. Faced with the problem of surviving in a restricted area of steep mountainous country, in the days when they were harried by the Angoni, they responded to the challenge by evolving a system of agriculture which is probably unique and which enabled them to maintain fertility of the soil and prevent erosion. It is a system of box-ridging. Grass is cut and laid in rows forming a grid: from a distance the appearance is like a chessboard. Women dig out the

soil within the squares and heap it on the rows of grass. The sub-soil is exposed. The pits are 4-5 feet across and so are the soil beds. In one field women plant maize on the raised beds, and in a second field beans and peas. Weeds are pulled out and thrown into the pits, as also the crop residues, so forming compost. The following season new beds are made over the old pits: where maize was grown legumes are planted and vice versa. Careful cultivators keep the land going for some years before fallowing is necessary: the land then reverts to grass and the old pits remain to check erosion. The hillsides are so steep that it is impossible to climb them without using one's hands; yet there is no erosion. Shifting cultivation was unknown to the older generation. Recently the introduction of cash crops is leading to cultivation in the plains and the break-down of the old system, though the women still keep to it. The writer asks: 'Is the Matengo pit system of agriculture the answer to some of the ills of erosion from which Africa suffers?'

P. TOPHAM, 'Land Conservation in Nyasaland', *Farm and Forest*, Ibadan, vol. vi, no. 1, Jan.-March 1945. This is an account of personal experience in trying to get reforms in land use adopted in some degree throughout the Protectorate. A programme capable of being applied on a very wide scale was drawn up—a sort of first-aid measure. One main difficulty in putting it into operation was that native authorities were not sufficiently organized and enforcement of orders devolved on departments of the central government. The weak link was generally the village headman. Nevertheless much progress was made in the introduction of ridge-planting, pretty well on the contour, and in the protection of natural vegetation on steep slopes. The burial of rubbish between ridges after harvest encountered much apathy and opposition. But soil erosion was reduced. The author urges the importance of getting the easy things done first—and universally. 'The great problem is not the small area which has obviously become severely eroded but the vast area with a declining fertility. Deep gullies are local and therefore of quite minor importance. I contend that, because deterioration of soil structure is so widespread, which in turn leads to the erosion of the vital top few inches, available resources would be better employed causing a million people to conserve soil fertility over an area of two million acres, according to a minimum standard, than causing fifty thousand to do so up to a maximum standard.'

EDUCATION

MARY HOLDING, 'Adult Literacy Experiment in Kenya', *Oversea Education*, London, vol. xvii, no. 1, Oct. 1945. The problems facing the Methodist Mission were to provide a motive for literacy and to convince the adult woman of her ability to read. A Church rule imposing a reading test on all candidates for baptism did not bring the desired result. In 1942 a desire to read their husbands' letters from military camps motivated some women. The campaign which ensued was largely carried on by volunteers who were barely literate but who became fired with enthusiasm: these were more successful than some well-trained teachers. 'This is not an argument for using untrained people as leaders, but it does prove that lack of teachers with adequate training or educational qualifications need not be regarded as an unsurmountable obstacle and is no excuse for delay.' A sentence method based in the first instance on a Meru song proved successful. During two years nearly 200 women are known to have learned to read. The conviction has spread among the Christian community that adult men and women can learn to read and write. The first few women took more than two years to learn; now the average time is under a year and the brighter pupils learn in three to six months. Booklets are being produced to meet the new demand; small village libraries have been started in five centres. 'Any scheme is doomed to failure if the people who ought to be giving voluntary service begin to regard it as another avenue of lucrative employment.'