

oral en style écrit. C'est évidemment la troisième hypothèse qui offre le plus de chances pour sauver ce que le style oral possède de viable. L'auteur termine son étude en faisant quelques remarques très judicieuses, pour que la codification du style oral se fasse, tant pour la forme que pour le fond, sans le schématiser ni le déformer. (*Communication du PROFESSEUR N. DE CLEENE.*)

*Fostermothers in Africa (Lactatio serotina).*

REPORTS from various parts of Africa relate the fact that older women are capable of 'bringing back their milk' in order to nourish a child whose mother has died or is unable to suckle her baby. David Livingstone, in his book *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, says (p. 111): 'I have examined several cases in which a grandmother has taken upon herself to suckle a grandchild. Masina of Kuruman had no children after the birth of her daughter Sina, and had no milk after Sina was weaned, an event which usually is deferred till the child is two or three years old. Sina married when she was seventeen or eighteen, and had twins; Masina, after at least fifteen years' interval since she last suckled a child, took possession of one of them, applied it to her breast, and milk flowed, so that she was able to nurse the child entirely. Masina was at this time at least forty years of age. I have witnessed several other cases analogous to this.'

The subject of 'creating fostermothers' is dealt with in an article 'Fostermothers in Ulanga', by A. T. and G. M. Culwick, published in *Tanganyika Notes and Records* (vol. i, pp. 19-24). The article is particularly valuable because it is based on personal observation and gives a detailed description of the custom and of all the proceedings connected with it. Both women with whom the experiment was made were middle-aged and were not far from the menopause. They had not got young babies of their own nor were they pregnant. The treatment to which they were submitted was as follows: they drank quantities of a thick hot soup made with the pounded leaves of four plants, ground ginger, ground seeds of one particular kind of pumpkin, and plenty of salt. Their breasts were gently but firmly massaged with a hot infusion made from the pounded inner barks of the wild fig-tree, and two other trees, with the root-bark of a fourth. The child (who was the woman's grandchild) was constantly put to the breast. The result was that after a few days the women were able to express from their breasts, first a watery liquid, and soon after milk.

The practice is known to exist in several parts of Africa and in other parts of the globe, and the authors quote examples. Attilio Gatti devotes a whole chapter to it in his book *Hidden Africa* (London 1933). The subject is extensively treated in M. Bartels, *Das Weib in Natur- und Völkerkunde*,<sup>1</sup> he

<sup>1</sup> The exact title of this important publication is: H. Ploss u. M. Bartels, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, 10. Auflage, herausgegeben von P. Bartels,

calls the phenomenon *lactatio serotina*, or *Spät-Laktation*. When Mr. Culwick spoke of his experience to medical men he was accused of 'unbounded credulity', because 'the thing was impossible'. It can, however, hardly be doubted that it is in fact possible and that Mr. and Mrs. Culwick's report is accurate, and that it is probably more wide-spread than we know at present. When Professor Westermann questioned his Ewe informant about it, he gave him in his own language the following information:

'When a woman has borne a child and dies soon after, they give the baby for the first days to another woman who is nursing a child, and she suckles it. In the meantime, if the baby's grandmother is alive, they ask the old people to prepare a cure for the grandmother, or, for the sister of the deceased. They pluck young shoots of *abrus precatorius*,<sup>1</sup> pound them and rub them on the woman's breast. She is given to eat cooked cassava of the rainy season,<sup>2</sup> together with the flesh of half-ripe coco-nuts and cooked maize; she also eats raw cassava with half-ripe oil-palm kernels, and she continues to do so until after some days milk comes into her breast. The pounded shoots of *abrus precatorius* taste sweet like the juice of sugar cane, therefore they rub them on the woman's breast before putting the child to the breast; when he sucks, milk will soon come forth. The grandmother nurses the child as his mother would have nursed it; the two sleep together so that the child can take his grandmother's breast at any time. When the grandmother goes to the market she carries her grandchild on her back, and if God helps them so that the child does not fall sick, it will survive and become strong.'

### *Togba, a Women's Society in Liberia.*

This society is found among the Mano and Dan in north-eastern Liberia. The Dan are also called Gio or Geh. The two tribes live between the rivers Mani (St. John's river) and Nuon (Cess). The *Togba* society seems to have been imported through Kono traders, who live in many parts of the country. Though they freely marry local women, one of their wives is always a Kono woman, and it is she who establishes the *Togba* society among the women of her new home.

Only women who have been initiated and have been trained in the

Leipzig, 1913. The subject of *lactatio serotina* is treated on pages 507 ff. Bartels has also published the following articles on the same subject in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*: 'Die Spät-Laktation der Kafferfrauen', xx, Berlin 1888, p. 79.—'Lactatio serotina in Java', xxviii, 1896, pp. 110-12.—'Die Spät-Laktation', xxviii, 1896, pp. 267-70.

<sup>1</sup> A shrub bearing small red and black seeds which are used as ornaments in many parts of Africa. The German name for the shrub is *Paternosterstrauch*.

<sup>2</sup> This cassava does not become soft through cooking and the natives therefore say that it retains all its valuable contents.