

Abstracts of Some Recent Papers

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

P. P. HOWELL and W. P. G. THOMSON, 'The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the installation of his successor', *Sudan Notes and Records*, Khartoum; vol. xxvii, 1946 (received September 1947). The king or *reth* of the Shilluk (a Nilotic tribe who occupy a narrow strip of country mainly along the west bank of the Nile from about Lake No to about Lat. 12° N.) is a classic example of Frazer's 'divine king'. He has power over nature; is considered the dynamical centre of the universe; upon his actions and the course of his life depends the well-being of all things. The soul of Nyikang—the first *reth* and founder of the royal house—is reincarnate in every *reth*; it thus exists both in the past and in the present. Nyikang is the principal medium through whom the Shilluk approach Juok, the all-powerful being who exists in their minds as a remote and amoral deity but present to a greater or lesser degree in all things. Juok, Nyikang, and the *reth* represent the line through whom divinity runs—the *reth* is the human intercessor for mankind with God. He affects the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. He is the central figure of tribal religion as well as the actual symbol of political unity. His physical condition is all-important and must not be impaired. If he shows signs of senility or physical imperfection he must be removed by killing and a successor substituted. According to tradition he may be strangled by his wives if his virility declines (or he may at any time be killed by a rival claimant to the throne). Reth Fafiti Yor, who had held office for twenty-six years, died in September 1943 after a series of bad harvests and famines. 'Whether he was ceremoniously strangled . . . we do not know, and cannot find out. We incline to the view that, as his death became certain, and he and his family held no further hope of recovery, he was smothered. . . . It might be put in this way: it is possible that he was "assisted" to die.' The authors record what they witnessed of the ceremonies which were designed to ensure that Tafiti was safely laid to rest and his soul conducted peacefully to a new status in the ancestral hierarchy of the royal house, and to establish his successor firmly upon the throne. The law is that all *reths* must be sons (*nyireths*) of previous *reths*. Some thirty or forty men were eligible for election. The electoral college (whose composition is given in detail) unanimously chose Anei, son of Kur, a predecessor of Fafiti; the defunct had treated him as a favourite. The *reth*-elect was not fully *reth* until Nyikang had installed him. After his election he was taken stealthily by night to Fashoda where the spearing of a bull and the tying of a string of beads to his ankle symbolized his new status. He now began to receive the informal homage of the chiefs. During the interregnum the link between Nyikang and his people is temporarily broken; the *reth*-elect lacks certain attributes of divinity; and the period is marked by abstentions and prohibitions, e.g. grass fires may not be lighted, building in the style associated with Nyikang must not be done, and there must be no inter-sectional fighting. Great preparations for the installation were now carried out—the hunting of Mrs. Grey antelope to provide robes of honour; the lighting of fire for the special blacksmith to make the fifty sacred spears; and the bringing of the effigies of Nyikang and his son Dak from the shrine at Akurwa. These effigies, made of ostrich feathers and bamboo, are not merely symbols. 'The soul of Nyikang is manifest in the effigy for the occasion and he must march from Akurwa to Fashoda to test the qualities of his new successor and to install him at the capital. This march, the opposition shown by the *reth* and the final ritual performed at Fashoda are the essence of the installation ceremonies.' The march is described in detail. As soon as Nyikang arrived at Nyigir the *reth*-elect hurriedly went into partial

seclusion at Debalo as if he shrank from meeting him. This is a period of amnesty for adulterers and seducers; they escape by paying small fines. Then followed a symbolic struggle between Nyikang, supported by people of the north, and the *reth*-elect, supported by those of the south. A mock battle, in which corn-stalks were used for spears, ended in the capture of the *reth*-elect by his opponents and he was led by Nyikang to Nyikang's shrine in Fashoda. There the effigy of Nyikang was placed upon the sacred stool, then lifted and carried into the shrine, and Anei was seated in its place. This act symbolized the possession of the new *reth* by the spirit of Nyikang. 'We saw that the *reth* was seized with a trembling fit at the critical moment.' After sitting on the stool for about twenty minutes, Anei retired into seclusion where he was bathed and clothed in new robes. All fires had been extinguished in Fashoda and a new fire was now kindled by friction. An interval of two days, during which certain secret rites were performed, was followed by another mock battle around the *nyakwer*, 'the girl of the ceremonies', regarded as the *reth*'s wife, at any rate for the duration of the ceremonies, and in the battle the *reth* wrested her from Nyikang. All hostility between Nyikang and the new *reth* now ended; Nyikang had accepted him as his successor. Finally, in a general assembly of chiefs and people, the *reth* was confirmed as supreme judge of the Shilluk. After his installation he took a day or two to recover and later a hornless cow, the colour of a hippopotamus, was sacrificed by him on the river bank. This was done to make the hippopotami increase and prosper the Shilluk hunters. There was some departure from the custom by which the *reth* slaughters a bull the colour of rain clouds to bring on rain. The rains were late and by the end of June the *reth* was worried. 'The sequel is interesting. An old woman of Lemmo dreamed of the departed *reth*. This showed that his spirit had not been laid to rest properly, and had not the Funeral Dance been cut short by two days? So another and smaller funeral dance of two days' duration was held on the 2nd and 3rd July. . . . A few days later it started to pour with rain, and continued, so that it was for the Shilluk a year of plenty.'

R. VAN CAENEGHEM, 'Gebeden der Baluba', *Aequatoria*, Coquilhatville; 10th year, No. 1, 1947. In this, his second article on the prayers of the Baluba, the author maintains, with ample vernacular documentation, that many of the prayers are offered not to the *bakishi* (ancestral spirits) but directly to the Supreme Being, especially when no help is forthcoming from *bakishi* or *buanga*. The words employed leave no doubt as to this. The occasions on which the prayers are offered are at a birth, hunting, travelling, crossing a river, making palm-wine, planting and harvesting, making protective 'medicine'. They are said to be ancient and known mostly to old people only in these days. The Supreme Being is invoked by the names Mvidi Mukulu, Maweja, Mulopo. The *mpaka-manga* (manipulator of *buanga*) offers this prayer when preparing a protective charm for an infant: 'Mulopo, Maweja a Nangila, who art lord of all men, let this child grow to be a man till he have grey hair and have nourished many children to be thy children. May evil men not look on him (to do him harm)!' After offering this prayer to the Supreme Being he addresses the spirits, letting his arms sink towards the earth where they live. Another prayer is made when he prepares *buanga bua lubanza*, a charm which a Muluba hangs in his garden under a shed: 'Mulopo, Mvidi Mukulu of Tshiana, let us have success (with this *buanga*); come thyself into our *buanga* (*ubwele mu buanga buetu*); the evil-doer drive off with the water (of the stream).' He then proceeds with the preparation while calling upon the ancestors of his client. *Buanga bua Mulopo* is the most powerful of all, both for protection and for good fortune. God himself reveals by whom and how it is to be prepared. When, bearing it, the medicine-man is on the road to visit a patient he invokes the help of God in this prayer: 'Mulopo, I go to help a man in his sickness; give strength to my *buanga* (*kadi ubwele ku buanga*) so that the man's sickness may depart. I am (like) Ntambwe who climbed, Ntambwe who climbed high, to

put his case before God saying, 'Why hast thou made some men fruitful and some childless? Come, give me a child from above and I shall not need to ask more.' There is here a reference to some tale about God and men. The medicine-man likens himself to Ntambwe and is asking for virtue to be given to his art.

G. E. J. B. BRAUSCH, 'Les Associations pré-nuptiales dans la Haute Lukenyi', *Bulletin des juridictions indigènes et du droit coutumier congolais*, Élisabethville; 15th year, No. 4, July-August 1947. In the territory of Kole in central Belgian Congo there are four closely related ethnic groups, Ohindu, Ankutshu, Bangongo, and Owila. The Ohindu (known also as Basongo Meno, 'they who file the teeth') have adopted some customs of the invading Akuba while the Ankutshu remain faithful to their ancient traditions. Among the Ohindu the postponement of marriage is accompanied by institutionalized prenuptial relations and a high percentage of illegitimacy. Among the Ankutshu early marriage, even of immature girls, is common. Ohindu girls enter marriage sexually well experienced; they have opportunity of choosing husbands from among their lovers; Ankutshu girls usually accept the suitors proposed for them and have little prenuptial experience. This may explain the stability of marriage among the Ohindu and its instability among the Ankutshu. In this article¹ M. Brausch studies the prenuptial associations of the Ohindu the purpose of which is an empirical sexual initiation in addition to the theoretical initiation in the Serpent society. Four associations are distinguished: (1) adolescent houses; (2) the amorous escapade; (3) the amorous visit; (4) concubinage. In 1944 a census made by the author showed about 70 per cent. of the adolescent boys and 40 per cent. of the girls living separately in houses set apart for them. Life in them is the first stage of independence. The amorous escapade is a visit of a group of girls in one village to a neighbouring village where they live with a group of boys for an indeterminate period. The escapade (*mpumbu*) is organized by the girls without the knowledge of their parents and authorities of the village. It is kept secret lest the suitors or lovers of the girls should prevent their departure. The amorous visit (*okembu*), on the other hand, is organized by the boys after consultation with and approval of the village heads on both sides. These institutions are a prelude to a more or less prolonged concubinage. One form of this is a pseudo-conjugal liaison in which a girl goes to live with her lover in his village for about a year; the man has no right in any offspring. It differs from *oshile* concubinage in which the girl continues to share in the activities of her family and joins her lover in the evening at his home; the liaison is known and consented to by the parents; the girl may draw water and cut firewood for her lover and receive gifts from him but he has no rights over her and she is free to have other lovers. These forms of concubinage are a kind of trial marriage and often issue in legal unions with the passing of bridewealth. M. Brausch analyses the sexual, social, and economic functions of these prenuptial associations and discusses their juridical status. Children, he observes, become conscious of sex at the age of six or seven. The separate houses are not designed for the purpose of empirical sexual initiation but the circumstances are such that these become a very important factor in that initiation. If the houses serve the purpose of liberating parents from the troublesome presence of prying adolescents they also free the young people from the vexatious control of their parents. The girls are authorized to receive lovers and sleep with them in their clubhouse. To be virgin at marriage is no honour but dishonour. The sexual freedom of the girls is complete (presumably within the laws of kinship); parents do not intervene in any way. Mothers accompany their daughters on the amorous visit. The purpose of these associations is sexual gratification; there is no thought of parenthood. An important factor is what M. Brausch calls the beauty cult, the use of means to render the sexes reciprocally irresistible. He notes that amid the many changes that result from forty years of contact

¹ For résumés of previous articles by M. Brausch see *Africa*, vol. xvi, no. 1, and vol. xvii, no. 4.

with Europeans there has been no change in this matter; photographs taken by Torday and Joyce in 1907-8 show dress, hairdressing, and ornamentation identical with those of to-day. It is chiefly the medicine *longandji* ('desire') that is reputed to confer glamour; it is administered by vaccination on the jaws, above the right breast, and at the xiphoid cartilage, said to be the seat of love. The amorous visit is preceded by prolonged and public preparations on the part of the girls—hairdressings, scarifications, and tattooings, which have an aesthetic and erotic purpose, the plentiful use of cosmetic powders, and rehearsal of dances and songs. Girls must remain strictly continent during these preparations, the effect of which is to whip up their sexual desire to the maximum degree before they meet the boys of the other village. The associations have a social status; they are incorporated in the social structure by rights and mutual obligations between individuals and in regard to other social groups. From the exclusive point of view of the community they divide into two groups; in the first are the houses of the adolescents and the ordinary concubinage (*oshile*) which are interior affairs; in the other are the escapade, the amorous visit, and the other kind of concubinage, which fall into the domain of intercommunal relations. The first category is a matter of private contract, not of public law or the intervention of official persons; it is otherwise with the second category. The escapade is indeed organized without the knowledge of the community to which the feminine group belongs and, since if the plot is discovered parents and authorities oppose it, it may be considered illegal; but on the other hand if the girls' group of another village choose that same village for their escapade all the notables of the leopard brotherhood give them hospitality, the musicians lend their aid in organizing the dances, and all the community joins in feeding them. The amorous visit is thus completely a matter of public law; all preparations are organized officially. If a group of adolescent boys decide to invite a group of girls in a neighbour-village, they go to a member of the leopard brotherhood, proffer him calabashes of palm-wine, and expose their desire; if he is willing to enter into the plan they ask what recompense they can offer; generally he asks them to clear a field or build him a new house. He then goes to the village and through his brethren of the leopard puts the matter to the parents and if they consent he returns home with the news. The boys go hunting and hand over to their ambassador two or three antelopes which they have killed; he conveys them to his brethren who in turn give half of each beast to the girls and eat the other half with the inhabitants and the ambassador. The acceptance and eating constitute the conclusion of a contract—a treaty in the true sense of the term between two villages through the medium of the leopard brotherhood which is officially invested with the exercise of intercommunal diplomatic relations. The musicians' society also takes an active part. A dignitary entitled *yulu* accompanies the girls as protector and sees that they are received properly by their hosts. And indeed even the ancestors are thought to take their part in protecting the participants. All these procedures are meant to regularize the event.

M. Brausch asks in conclusion: What attitude should be adopted in regard to these associations? It is indubitable that the institutionalized libertinage is contrary to Christian moral principles; and that it is an obstacle to the success of missionaries. They manage with effort to get a score of girls into school; and suddenly these all disappear—they are off on an amorous visit. The indigenous morality allows prenuptial relations; but at the same time regulates them, controls the sexual liberty which it accords to the young, establishes rules of conduct, authorizing certain liaisons and interdicting others. The simple abolition of the associations would not throw the young into the arms of the missionaries but on the contrary would break down barriers and create anarchy; the young would feel free from customary bonds and would be led along the path of debauchery which characterizes many groups whose social structure has been demolished without consideration of the functions which it exercised. It is that rupture of social equilibrium which is the cause of the social traumatism which are said to be responsible for the fall in birth-rate. The demographic

indices of the Ohindu are better than those of the Ankutshu; syphilis does not exist and blennorrhagia is extremely rare among the Ohindu and more frequent among the Ankutshu. Are we to say that prenuptial associations hinder or favour the birth-rate? 'I would not venture to answer such a question: the problem of natality is extremely complex and the numerous studies that have appeared recently have not succeeded in disengaging the elements which lie at its base.' From the purely social point of view there is no call to take administrative measures against the prenuptial associations. Better to let the influence of cultural contact act normally; an effective mass education may obtain much better results than administrative measures leading to unconsidered repressions.

FOLKLORE

ANTONIO CARREIRA, 'O Céu, Deus e Terra (lenda de manjacos)', *Boletim cultural da Guiné portuguesa*, Lisbon; vol. ii, No. 6. A legend of the Manjacos of Portuguese Guinea. Long, long ago, after the creation of the world, Heaven and Earth lived close together and shared common interests. Then, after the dispersion of mankind, there arose a conflict between those potentates, for each claimed supremacy over the other. Animals with great spread of wings—birds—small reptiles, and men (who in those days had hairy bodies and lived in caves) that lived on earth announced after obstinate discussion that they could live without Heaven for he gave them no help or benefits. In face of this attitude of the animals Heaven asked for the intervention of Nassin-Bati (God) to decide the matter. All living creatures gathered in a great assembly over which God presided. Everyone brought forward his arguments. There was an angry discussion and because of the attitude of men and animals God dissolved the assembly and declared that he would retire with Heaven, seeing that in his opinion Heaven possessed greater power than Earth. He invited those who wished to accompany him but none moved except the angels and Spider; and together with these God departed to Heaven, deserting Earth and its inhabitants. To punish the audacity of Earth and the animals Heaven ceased to send rain, the sun hid itself, and on earth everyone began to suffer privations. The lack of rain resulted in famines, the want of sun caused diseases; the earth cracked and split in various places, the seas dried up as well as rivers and springs; fleshy animals died as did also small creatures such as frogs and lizards. Few birds survived thirst. The animals met together to consider how they might get into communication with Heaven and God. Jagudi volunteered to make the journey. He mounted high, very high indeed, but grew weary and returned to earth. Then Ganga tried and succeeded in getting a little higher. When he perceived that he had not sufficient strength to reach Heaven, he cried and cried loudly saying that Earth begged mercy and was disposed to submit to Heaven. The angels heard Ganga's lamentations and conveyed them to God. And God ordered Spider to get into touch with Ganga to know what Earth was prepared to do. Using the threads of silk that God gave him Spider climbed down to where Ganga was and Ganga told him why he had come up to that height. Spider returned to God and told of Earth's supplications and those of men and animals, and the sufferings through which they were passing. God then discussed with Heaven the best way of demonstrating Heaven's superior powers to Earth. They sent Spider to advise Earth that next day the sufferings of all creatures would be lightened; that first all frogs, even those mummified, would be brought back to life; and that the time would be announced beforehand by means of a noise so loud that it would never be forgotten. So it came to pass. Spider was entrusted with a great reservoir of water to pour out on earth as soon as Heaven should give him a signal on the thread which held him secure. On receiving the signal Spider let go the reservoir and then released a very great noise. (This was the thunder which comes before rain.) It rained torrentially; it thundered and thundered again. Animals and men, terrified

by the noises and by the flashing of lightnings (things which had till then never been), fled precipitately and hid themselves in caves and in hollows of trees dried up by the drought, and many were killed by lightning and flood. The torment passed and all survivors came together to discuss the way of placating Heaven and God. Spider continued to act as mediator. He carried the words of repentance and supplication from Earth, men, and animals to Heaven and God; and in their name prayed that all might meet together anew so that Earth and animals might do eternal homage. Neither Heaven nor God believed the words of Earth and the animals. They sent Spider down to say that as soon as they received the submission for the sake of which their superior powers had been demonstrated, they would give water periodically for filling the seas, rains for the fields, and many other benefits, including warmth of sun; and also at the same time, in order that men should not easily forget the past and that all might have continually in mind the prodigious powers of God, the approach of the rains would be announced by means of noise and flashes of flame—these would serve above all to intimidate future generations. All living creatures expressed their thanks; some more articulately than others, but all by methods and processes according to their abilities. The peoples transmitted the legend to their children and in this manner the knowledge of Heaven's superiority to Earth is perpetuated—and for witness thereto is Heaven's arch above us. And the Manjaco say that their race always maintains due respect for the legend and submission to the power of Heaven. To Heaven they show their gratitude by holding the yearly festival of Cacau during which many young people marry and are initiated with the intention that they should multiply and so propagate the species. And they say that next to the festival it is Frog who in the most visible manner gives thanks to Heaven for sending rain, he being almost the only one of small animals to utter his praise by croaking loudly when rain is near.

LITERATURE

ABBÉ ALEXIS KAGAME, 'La Poésie pastorale au Rwanda', *Zaire*, Brussels; July 1947. The pastoral poetry is devoted to praises of the long-horned cow, *inyambo*. These cows are divided into two clans. The first is named *ibihogo* ('the brown') and is composed of descendants of the original cattle of Rwanda; the second, named *amagaju* ('the chestnut brown'), derives from ancient raids on the Hima peoples of the north. In spite of the names colour is not the basis of classification. The two clans comprise bovine armies and these are subdivided into troops; these bear names given by the chief pastor while the names of the armies were given once for all by one of the ancient kings. So among the *amagaju* there is the army *umuhozi* ('the avenger') whose creation goes back to the reign of Mibambwe II Gisanura, ninth ascendant of the present king. The first troop, nucleus of this army, was placed under the authority of Prince Gahindiro; a later king changed its name from *umuhama* to *umuhozi* and attached it to the feudal army which he created, the *abashakamba*. All the cows owned by warriors of this army together form the bovine army *umuhozi*. In the same way all cows in Rwanda are organized in bovine armies and attached to a feudal army; under the ancient régime no cow was independent, unattached; its acquisition by any individual placed it automatically in some bovine army. Every Munyarwanda, from the last pygmy of the forest up to the king himself, must belong to a feudal army and be subject to a superior in the hierarchy.

The pastoral poetry is named *amazina y'inika* ('names of cows'). The dynastic poet is *umusizi*, the war-poet is *umuhimbyi*, the pastoral poet is *umwisi*. All composers of dynastic and pastoral poems (these being 'exclusively Hamitic') are immediate servants of the 'Crown', for tradition reserves to the king the sole right of receiving the homage of such poems.

A troop of cows when officially formed contains 45 heifers. About 30 of these are of first

quality, such as could be entered at official exhibitions; the remaining 15 are a reserve. At their first calving the most beautiful of these young *inyambo* are already distinguishable. The chief of the bovine army invites a poet of his choice and about 15 of the 30 are brought before him and on each one he composes an eclogue of a score or two of verses. These poems are called *incutso* ('weanings') and each one must contain a common term placed ordinarily in the third verse: this term is the *impakanizi* and serves to identify animals of that troop. When the poet's task is so far completed he receives one of the 15; he also has a right to take one (? for milking) until the calf is weaned.

When the cows bear their second calves they have reached full growth; their shape and horns are fixed. Now the *indatwa*, the queen of the troop, the fairest of them all, is easily recognizable. The poet is called again. To his former eclogue on the cow now recognized as queen he adds other songs called *imivugo* of which the last verse, called the *impakanizi* of the enlarged poem, is always the same. If then you come across a piece devoted to a single cow, but in which one song ends in a verse different from that which ends the others, you can reject it without hesitation as not belonging to that particular poem. So all the initial eclogues on the same troop are known by the *impakanizi* placed in the first verses of each song; while the unity of a poem exalting a particular beast is indicated by the identity of the last verse closing all the songs. The poem thus developed is named *umuzinge* and its first song is no longer *incutso* but *impamagazo*. The *umuzinge* of the queen and the divers eclogues of her companions form together a complete piece which the bards declaim and transmit from generation to generation. Of the poems collected up to now the longest is devoted to the troop *izamuje* ('the slender') of the bovine army *akaganda* ('the little sheaf') of the chestnut-brown clan. The *umuzinge* of the queen is divided into seven chants, totalling 355 verses. The eclogues of her companions so far collected number 10 with 385 verses. These were the work of the poet Ndangamira. When the queen died the king of Rwanda enthroned another cow and the same poet composed 6 chants of 424 verses about her but fell sick before finishing the work; the king invited Rukazambuga to complete it and he added 2 chants of 214 verses. So that in all 25 chants of 1,378 verses form the complete poem on the troop *izamuje*. Translations are given of some selections from these poems, the author warning his readers that the native language, *kinyarwanda*, has a rich vocabulary of terms in regard to cattle for which there are no equivalents in a European tongue.