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M.M. GLUCKMAN JUNE, 1934.

"THE REALM OF THE SUPERNATURAL AMONG THE SOUTH-EASTERN BANTU"

(A Study of the Practical Working of Religion and Magic)

(Thesis presented for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Social Anthropology of the University of the Witwatersrand.)

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION.

"The sea of danger, doubt and denial,
Around man's little island of certainty
Challenges him to dare the unknown."

In this short verse of Rabindranath Tagore's are implicit the problems of the supernatural, of the origin and functioning of magic and religion. For it is characteristic of man that he surveys the total knowledge of his culture and contrasts that knowledge with the outer voids of the infinite. And furthermore, for reasons which I shall try to analyse, man apprehends the infinite and attempts to interpret and attain it. These attempts are religion and magic.

An examination of man's voyage into the infinite, in terms of Tagore's metaphor, may point out an approach to the problems of this thesis. In the first place, why does the "sea of danger, doubt and denial" constitute a challenge to man? And why does he accept this challenge? That is to say, what is the origin of religion and magic? If man is compelled to accept the challenge it must, clearly, be a functional origin. The first problem is, then, the crude matrix of religion and magic, the needs which they satisfy and the manner of satisfaction.

But when man at last sets sail on the ship of his feelings and imagination, he must first have built that ship. And to do this he must draw on the materials provided by his culture. So the actual

beliefs /

beliefs, rites, customs, magical substances, etc., that make up the formal content of religion and magic are socially coloured and constituted. And, moreover, this social construction of religion and magic is rendered even more important by the fact that man, in exploring the depths of the seas and the outer isles, colours his maps on what he knows or believes of his own home: the life of the bays and caves of the "little island of uncertainty" is multiplied and magnified in "the sea of doubt". The essence is much the same. For, in the words of Ingersoll, "Each nation has created a God, and the God has always resembled his creators"; the Eclectics, of course, had argued that the gods of lions were lions; of oxen, oxen; of Ethiops, Ethiops.

In short, these two aspects of the thesis are expressed in Thomas Hardy's "God's Plaint to Man":

> "Wherefore, oh Man, did there come to you
> The unhappy need of creating me,
> A form like your own, for praying to?"

The third question is, who are the sailors? What men in particular are chosen to man the vessels of religion and magic? What is their relationship to their fellow-men and to each other? Who is captain, who mate? The answers to these questions are the roles of chief and patriarch in religious ritual; the relationship of magician, diviner, leech and sorcerer; and of these men or women to the priests - that is, the whole sociological background of religion and magic.

Fourthly, and I think finally, there is the problem of the inter-relation of religion and magic with other cultural mechanisms. It is unnecessary for me to do more than repeat that a culture is not a mere aggregation of traits but is a complicated and mutually inter-dependent composition of parts into an harmonious whole, of which the workings of each part affect every part and the whole. The Supernatural is an integral, not a superimposed, element in primitive life, and enters into all spheres of activity. Magic and religion, therefore, must be considered in relation to science, medicine, government, law, economic organisation, education, philosophy, social life, literature, art, etc.

Chapter /

Chapter 2. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE.

The South-Eastern Bantu.

During the early centuries of the Christian era the peoples of the Great Lakes region of East Africa began to stream southwards. There were several of these Bantu migrations into Southern Africa; the tribes which form the subject of this thesis came south across the East African steppe, apparently turned west towards the sources of the Zambesi (probably to avoid the tsetse fly) and then went south-east again to strike the Indian Ocean coast where Natal is today. Here this migration (which may have been of two or three sets of tribes) began to follow the seaboard. The vanguard, the Xosa (of AbeNguni origin) were slowly passing along the coast towards the Cape when they met the European settlers on the banks of the Great Fish River.[1.] [2.]

The South-Eastern Bantu are, then, a section of the great Bantu people (who are distinguished on purely linguistic criteria) who occupy the Southern two-thirds of Africa, stretching from West coast to East coast, and from the Fish River north to a line, at approximately 5° N. Latitude.[3.]

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1. Soga, J.H., "The South-Eastern Bantu", (1930) passim, "The AbeNguni and AbaMbo".

2. Bryant, A. T. "Olden Times in Zululand and Natal", (1929) p., the Ntungwas, eMbo Ngunis, and Tonga Ngunis. These last two groups are fundamentally one, Tekela Ngunis.

3. Today the Bantu have spread south of the Fish River, and over all South Africa. Tribes, too, are becoming more and more united.

Those Bantu who came into South Africa wrested the land from the Bushmen and Hottentots, but did not penetrate into the South-Western regions which were the chief home of the latter. On the west coast there is also, among the Herero and Ovambo, a Negro people, the BergDama; the Bantu themselves are probably of mixed Negro and Hamitic origin, with traces of Semitic blood.[1]

The Bantu have been divided by anthropologists, "on a basis primarily of geographical distribution, but taking into account cultural and, to a lesser extent, historical factors," into three groups. The tribes to be considered in this thesis belong to the Southern group, which occupies "a vast region including Southern Rhodesia, southern half of Portuguese East Africa, east and central parts of the Union of South Africa, Swaziland and Bechuanaland Protectorates, and South-West Africa."[2] Although the fundamental bases of culture are the same among all the tribes of the steppe area - its mode of life, social organisation, and religious system - yet there are sufficient differences in culture to justify the re-division of the Southern Bantu into four sub-groups. This thesis will be confined to the eastern section, who are generally known as the Zulu-Xosa after the two most noteworthy tribes. The Zulu-Xosa tribes which I intend to study /

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1. Seligman, C.G. "Races of Africa". (Home University Library) 1930, p. 181.

2. Ibid, pp. 183-5. Vide quoque, Schapera, "A Working Classification of the Bantu", Man, May 1928, No. pp.84-5.

study are the Thonga of Portuguese East Africa and the Transvaal; the Zulu themselves with occasional reference to the Swazi, the Matabele, and the Bangoni who have broken away; and the peoples popularly known as the Kafirs[1] who include the Xosa (who have split into the Gcaleka, Gaika and Ndlambe), the Pondo, the Tembu (or Tambookies) the Bomvana and the Fingo.[2]

Into the history of the division and amalgamation of the various South-Eastern Bantu tribes, it is not necessary to enquire. It is sufficient for my purpose to point out that when the Europeans came into contact with these Bantu the latter were settled on the fertile east coast beneath the shadow of the Drakensberg. South Africa, like the rest of Africa, rises in a series of terraced uplands from the sea, and here, on the South-Eastern verge, the plateau-hinterland is protected by a great scarp. The Drakensberg rise 12,000 feet above the narrow coastal plain, and as the sea-ward slope faces the South-Eastern Trade winds the land is well-watered in summer and covered with luxuriant growth throughout the year. By 1576 the Bantu had already arrived in this pleasant province. Perestrello, a Portuguese navigator, in his log described the Natal coast, "In the distance," he wrote, "are seen undulating mountains undulating /

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1. Throughout the thesis I use "Kafirs" for the Transkeian Natives.

2. vide Soga, op cit, passim.

mountains, adorned with verdure and rugged. It abounds with trees. Among them we found the wild olive: in the valleys and on the borders of rivers mint and Beril, and other European plants. The soil is rich, and a great part fit for cultivation. Consequently the country is populous, and well stocked with animals, both tame and wild."[1.] And a shipwrecked sailor reported on Natal, in similarly eulogistic terms, "that the natural fertility of those countries he travelled through made the natives lazy, indolent, indocile and simple. Their rivers are abundantly stored with good fish and waterfowl, besides manatees (or sea-cows) and crocodiles: their woods with large trees, wild cattle and deer, elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, tigers, wolves, foxes, for game: also many sorts of fowls with ostriches."[2.] These descriptions of Natal apply, with small variation, to the Transkei, Zululand, and Portuguese East Africa. In the last area Junod describes a coastal belt of sanddunes which produces abundant crops: a rich black, earth amid the sands, which often forms "a curious marsh, covered with beautiful tropical growths;"[3.] and two extremely fertile tracts inland. The grass in the valleys of the Drakensberg is thick and lasts the whole year, affording excellent pasturage. In short, if it were not for the droughts,

dry /

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1. Bird's "Annals of Natal (1495-1845)" Vol. 1. P.24.
2. Ibid, pp.24-25. Vide quoque pp.31-32, 35.
3. Junod, H.A. "The Life of a South African Tribe" (1927) Vol. ii. p.25.

dry and hot, the home of the South-Eastern Bantu would be a veritable Paradise.

I shall, in discussing these people, confine myself in the main to their religion as it was before Christianity was preached to them. In the last two centuries many of them have been converted and many customs have been created which are compromises between the old and new. Miss Hunter has made a study of these Christianised natives among the Pondo but otherwise, so far as I am aware, most available descriptions refer to their old culture. This was undoubtedly affected by influences from the East and by contact with the Hottentots and Bushmen, but, at the arrival of the missionaries, it constituted Bantu culture, the subject of this thesis.

Chapter /

Chapter 3. BANTU CULTURE.

A. The Tribe.

From the political, social and economic points of view the most characteristic feature of Southern Bantu organisation is its division, on a basis of polygynous marriage, into a number of separate "huts" (izindlu - Zulu) all owning allegiance to a headman, the patriarch of the group, who is in turn subordinate to sub-chiefs and chiefs. The chief is the apex of the social structure, it is by him that the tribe is distinguished. The clearest statement of this fact is to be found in Lestrade's description of the political organisation of the ~~Ba~~ Hurutshe a tribe of the Sotho - Chwana, or South-Central Bantu group. But Lestrade's summing up applies with full force to the Zulu-Xosa tribes. He says that among the Bechuana "the tribe, in the political sense, is a local community, ethnically essentially homogeneous, more or less concentrated in one area, and owning direct allegiance to the person of one chief, whether or not that chief in turn owes allegiance, politically if not otherwise, to another chief in whose territory the tribe is located."[1] Dr. Richards, without citing particular authority, sums up the position among the South-Eastern Bantu: "The Bantu chief is the apex of a complex political structure, kraal linked to kraal under one sub-chief, and the sub-chiefs bound themselves under the authority of the paramount chief or king of /

1. Lestrade, G.P. "Some Notes on the Political Organisation of the Bechuana," 1928. S.A.J.S. p.428.

of the tribe."[1] But the chief is also the head of the religious, economic and social systems of the people. The tribe may well be x defined as "a community the members of which form a social and political organisation under the government, control, and leadership of a chief, who is the centre of tribal life."[2]

Before the genius of Tshaka welded the Zulu nation, there were more than a hundred of these small tribes scattered over Natal and Zululand.[3] The history of a Bantu tribe is a tale of disintegration and internecine strife - wars between princes, heads of different clans, or disputes caused, as among the Thonga, by the complicated rules of succession,[4] often split a tribe in two. The custom by which the heir to the chieftainship was born late in his father's life and left as a boy to succeed to the throne, necessitating the appointment of a regent, also led to tribal division. The regent, usually an uncle of the heir apparent, would attempt to become chief: the tribe would divide and war ensue. This was one of the main reasons for the battle of Amalinde between Ndlambe and Gaika, after whom the two tribes which were split from the main stem, were named.[5] But

there /

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1. Richards, A.I. "Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe," (1932) p.144.
2. Seligman, op cit, p.192.
3. Ibid, loc cit.
4. Junod, op cit, Vol. I. pp.410 seq.
5. Soga, "The South-Eastern Bantu," op cit, pp.157 seq.

there is another side to Bantu history, that of integration. "The core of the Xosa tribe," says Soga, "as with all Bantu tribes, is composed of clans and families of one stock. That is to say, it is an aggregation of clan units, as the latter is of family units, all descended from one progenitor ..... (But) to this core become attached fragments of broken tribes of other stock, in families and single individuals, who join themselves and their fortunes to the central core. They become nominally part of the tribe, but they retain their original clan and tribal name."[1] Among the Thonga the act of going to a new chief to pay allegiance to him is kondza, from a Zulu word[2] "conveying this meaning."

B. Social and Territorial Organisation.

The tribe is then more than an aggregation of more or less related families. But it usually has a certain core built upon the lines of kinship; though the various original clans of the tribe are named after their own great chieftains they claim descent from a common ancestor who gives his name to the tribe. This core is joined by other groups who ultimately may come under the protection not only of the chief, but also of his ancestors, through their attachment to the soil, but these, at any rate among the Thonga[h], must "luma" the first fruits with their own medicine, not the /

1. Soga, J.H. "The Amm-Xosa: Life and Customs" (1931) p.17. Soga describes the AmmGcaleka, the senior branch of the Xosa.

2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.433.

the medicine of the land,[1] so that it seems that they are not, for a long time at least, fully incorporated into the tribe. But in the clan, be it of royal (i.e. descended from the ancestors of the chief) or common descent, there is a further division into lineages (usapo wing. Pondo) which, among the South-Eastern Bantu, are of more economic, political and religious importance than the clan. The lineage, constituted by allegiance to a living patriarch, is one of the fundamental social units. The South-Eastern Bantu "usually live in small settlements, which are scattered irregularly over the country at some little distance apart. Each of these settlements, or kraals,[2] as they are commonly called in South Africa, is inhabited by the members of a single domestic or household group, so that in these tribes the household group is also the local group."[3]

I must repeat here, however, that this local village group does not necessarily consist entirely of kinsmen. There are usually present other people, and they - who correspond to the Roman clientes - are clearly distinguished from the relatives of the kraal-head, the gentiles. For example, Miss Hunter, in her unpublished notes on the Pondo, says that "the social and economic unit is the umzi, a kinship group consisting of one or more individual families, the men all being /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.433.

2. I shall use the native term umzi (sing.) imizi (pl.) which is present in all the languages, for this group.

3. Seligman, op cit, p.194.

being descendents in the male line of a common grandfather. Thus an umzi may consist of one man, his wife and their children, or there may be a father with two or more wives, his sons their wives and children, his unmarried daughters, and his brothers and their wives and children. Unpaid for, illegitimate children of daughters of the umzi also belong to the group. Non-relations, or distant relatives, may also join it, as the people who come to buza (ask), or children borrowed but the basis is the patrilineal kinship group." Apparently these imizi were formerly larger than they now are.[1]

The family life of the umzi showed a clear division of the sexes.[2] The men hunted; tended the cattle; cleared the bush for hoe-culture; helped build the huts; worked on wooden articles, on skin garments and on baskets; played games, etc, drank, smoked and gossiped together. The older boys tended the cattle, the younger ones the goats, and trapped birds and rodents in the veld. The women worked in the fields, accompanied by their daughters and unweaned sons; they prepared and cooked the food (except for the meat), plastered and cleaned the huts, cared for the children, fetched wood and water. At meal times the father ate with the other men, the children with their mother; but it must be borne in mind that each wife had to send food to the umzi-head and to each of the other huts; "so each member of the community", says Junod, "when he or she has /

1. Hunter, MSS. (1932) "Social Groupings of Pondo."
2. vide Junod, Vol. 1. pp.355 seq.

has finished the meal, will have eaten a little of all that has been cooked on all the fires." For the Thonga village "is a living organism. All its members form a whole whose unity is remarkable."[1] It is the duty of the umsi-head to watch over the umsi he must maintain peace and justice among the inhabitants, punishing those who steal or commit other offences; he can enforce "statute labour" in the interests of the community; he presides over the discussions on matters affecting the umsi; he prosecutes the legal claims of his family, and is responsible for claims lodged against it.[2] It will therefore be understood that, as the child grows up with his mother, it is about her that he creates his tenderest sentiments. His relation to her, says Junod, "is very deep and tender, combining respect and love ..... She is very weak with (her children) and is often accused by the father of spoiling them."[3] But the sentiment about the father, who is responsible for, and has authority over, the children; who is the representative on earth of the ancestors, is one of "respect and even fear."[4] Absolute obedience is due to him. But the Thonga father is fond of his children, and kisses and plays with them, so that the child is aware of his father /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.317.
2. Ibid, pp.330-2.
3. Ibid, p.330.
4. Ibid, p.328.

father as a kindly and benevolent, but stern, despot.[1]

The plan of the umzi is, varying with differences in social organisation, much the same throughout this region. Among the Thonga, for instance, there is an external circular fence of branches, pierced by the main entrance and several smaller entrances. On either side of the large gate is often a growing tree, and nearby, on the left as one comes in, the bandlu, or men's place. Opposite the entrance, across the circle, is the hut of the headman's chief (his first) wife, to reach which one has to cross the main square of the village and pass round the cattle and calves' kraal, which occupies the centre. On one side of this kraal is a hut without walls, the goats' kraal. Near the chief wife's hut (the indlu enkulu) is a large tree, the mystical stem of the village. To the right and left of the indlu enkulu are placed alternatively the huts of his second, third, fourth, etc. wives. At the sides of the umzi dwell the headman's younger brothers, with their wives; a married son, perhaps a nephew, a son-in-law, or a stranger who has sought the headman's protection. On either side of the main entrance are the huts of the unmarried boys and girls. There are also hen-houses, pig-kraals, store-houses, ash-heaps, tobacco-gardens, etc. near the fence.[2]

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1. C.f. Richards, op cit, pp. 76 seq. makes the father out to be a veritable tyrant. But from early on he plays lovingly with his children.

2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp. 311. seq.

Pondo

Miss Hunter's plan of a village also illustrates the social structure of the family among them. The first wife married is the great wife, and her hut may face the entrance of the cattlekraal, which here occupies the diameter of a semi-circle of huts and granaries; but if the mother of the kraal-head is alive it is she who occupies the indlu enkulu; the inkosikazi (chief wife) lives in a hut to her left. The second wife married is the right hand wife, (umfazi wasekunene) the third is a rafter (qadi) to the inkosikazi, the fourth is qadi to the umfazi wasekunene, the fifth to the inkosikazi, and so on. The huts of the qadis of the inkosikazi go to the left (facing the cattlekraal), those of the kunene to the right. There are the usual adjuncts of granaries, kraal for small stock, etc., and perhaps a hut for children, adherents, or guests near the horns of the semi-circle.[1] The wives have the same order of precedence among the Xosa, though a chief's inkosikazi may be displaced when he succeeds to the chieftainship.[2]

The general construction of the Zulu kraal is similar, but it is very different in details. The cattlekraal occupies the centre, and faces east to the gateway in the fence surrounding the kraal. Opposite the main entrance is the indlunkulu of the great wife, who, save for chiefs, is the first wife married. On both sides of the indlunkulu are the huts of its supports (amaqadi) or affiliated wives, i.e.

wives /

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1. Hunter, MSS. cita.

2. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, pp.36-7.

wives lobola'd (given bride-wealth for) with the cattle of the indlunkulu. On the left (facing the entrance) is the hut of the igadi, the wife who provides an heir if the inkosikazi is sterile or produces girls only. Rounded her are her affiliated huts. On the right are the huts of the ikohlwa, the right hand wife, and her affiliated wives. The Amakohlwa of headmen and chiefs, whose inkosikazi are lobola'd late in their lives, are usually the first wives married. Near the gate are the huts of various dependants. Around the huts and in the ground are the cattlekraal and the granaries, and in various parts of the umzi are the hen-houses, etc.[1]

The complicated disposition of the village shows the intricacies of the polygynous social organisation of the Bantu. Among these tribes cattle or hoes (and latterly money) are given as bride-wealth, known among the Zulu and Thonga as lobola,[2] among the Kafirs as ikazi.[3] Generally, except in the case of chiefs, the first wife married is the great wife, the umfazi omkulu, who is to supply the heir. Among the Xosa[4] and Pondo[5] the second woman married is the right hand wife, and thereafter odd numbers become supports of the right-hand house.[6] The importance of /

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1. Samuelson, H.C. "Long, Long Ago", (1929) pp.348 seq.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.101. footnote 1.
3. Kropf, A. "A Kaffir-English Dictionary", (1899)p.178. Bryant, A.T. "A Zulu-English Dictionary", (1905)p.360.
4. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit p.36.
5. Hunter, MSS. cita.
6. Of course most members of the tribe are of necessity monogamists.

of the distinction between these two houses lies in the law of succession. Xosa chiefs, says Soga, marry their great wives late in life; the umfazi omkulu of a chief must be the daughter of a chief herself and her ikazi is supplied by the tribe. Her son succeeds to the throne, and failing an heir by her one is taken from a minor house of the great house. The right-hand house is on an almost equal footing to the royal house but it seldom, if ever, provides an heir to the chieftainship. In time this house tends to establish itself independently as the royal house of a new tribe. Among the Xosa a left-hand house may also be established, but this is rare.[1] The Zulu build up their houses on similar lines, save that the eqadi (support) of the indlukulu forms a separate section;[2] among them there is also another hut, that of the isizinda, the heir of which takes the father's place, in a formal way, after the latter's death.[3] The Thonga apparently rarely differentiate the indlu enkulu from the huts of the other wives.[4]

The ibandla, the district group, is clearly distinguished by Miss Hunter from the isiduko, a kinship group, "an exogamous, unilateral group of persons, all members of which are believed to be descended from a common ancestor, descent being traced in the male line." The principal function of this group is to control sexual relations, and it has absolutely no economic function. There is a strong feeling of solidarity and brotherhood between /

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1. Soga, "Ama-Xosa," op cit, pp.48. seq.
2. Bryant, "Dictionary", op cit, "i-nDhlunkulu," pp.106-7.
3. Ibid, "Isi-Zinda," pp.729-30. R.C.Samuelson, op cit p.350.
4. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.318.

between members of the same isiduko (clan) but within the clan various lineages are recognised and these tend to hive off. Formerly, says Miss Hunter, the isiduko probably corresponddd more nearly to the ibandla, which consists of "the followers of one chief distinguished from another," the term is also applied to the small group attached to a private individual, or a house of a petty chief, or to the large ibandla of a chief which comprises a number of smaller amabandla.[1] That is, the ibandla has as its core member of a certain isiduko, but also includes members of other isiduko; and representatives of the main isiduko are found in the other amabandla.

The clan and local, district group are related in much the same way throughout the South-Eastern Bantu tribes; everywhere, too, there is a tendency for the clan to split up into lineages. (The kinship groups are all patrilineal and exogamous; among the Zulu and Xosa, however, marriage is in addition forbidden with anyone with whom one can trace blood relationship, through either father or mother. Among the Thonga, as will be seen, there is preferential marriage with certain relatives.) The clans are ranked according to their filiation to the royal stock, but they have been replaced in general importance by the local grouping; thus among the Bomvana the chiefs or heads of imihlaba (local areas) have an inkabi name. This inkabi is used on various occasions, as a rallying cry in the chase or in war and by it beer

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1. Hunter, MSS. cita.

is doled out at the beerdrinks. The clan group's name is of much less importance.[1]

Among the Gcaleka section of the Xosa the clans are divided, in the standing army especially but also in peace, into two great sections. The first division, called the I-Ntshinga, includes all clans of royal descent to Gcaleka and his ancestors; and a second division, the I-Qaukà, which includes all those clans whose descent is so far down in the scale of royalty that they are considered to be commoners. To this division are added all clans of alien blood.[2]

Within the lineage relationship is of a classificatory nature. I propose to set out, at some length, the Thonga relationship system though it is a typical of the South-Eastern Bantu; but Junod has given a clear description of the Thonga[3] while our information on the Zulu is scattered and practically none is available for the Kafirs. I shall, after summarizing the Thonga system, point out where the other tribes differ.

I have already described the relation of the children to the father (nwana to tatana) and to the mother (mamana). All brothers of the father, and all cousins called brother by the father (i.e. orthocousins) are called father, and distinguished as they are senior or junior to the father in affiliation to the ancestor of the clan.[4] Their wives are all called mother. The

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1. Cook, "Social Organisation and Ceremonial Institutions of the Bomvana," pp.19. seq.

2. Soga, "Amo-Xosa," op cit, p.22.

3. Junod, op cit, Vol. I. pp.226. seq.

4. i.e. a young son of the inkosikazi may be senior to an older man, son of another wife of the father.

term mother is also applied to the mother's sisters, because if the true mother dies one of her sisters will probably take care of the children. Their husbands are batakana. The father's other wives are also bamamana: "I respect them but they are further from me than my mother's sisters." This system is fairly typical for the Zulu and Kafirs, but the Thonga are aberrant in applying the term mamana to the daughter of the maternal uncle, "because she is the potential wife of my father," and similarly, a man calls his wife's brother's daughter, wife; and from the possibility of a man's marrying his brother-in-law's daughter a whole set of terms has originated. Junod gives[1] as the reason for this use of mamana the fact that a wife may fetch her niece to work for her: but it appears that a man has a right of pre-emption over his wife's younger sisters and the daughters of her brothers. These women are known as tinanu. Neither party is forced to acquiesce in such a marriage, but they are welcomed as cementing already existing bonds of friendship. Other tinanu are women I may inherit, the wives of my elder brothers. A man may also inherit one of his maternal uncle's wives.

The father's sister is mamana or Habane which means female father. She enjoys great respect, yet, amongst the paternal relatives, she is the one to whom a boy or girl will tell their secrets; her nephew or niece will go to her in order to get advice in their difficulties. Occasionally she will intercede for them with their father and her influence may be decisive. The mamana may be

called /

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1. ak p.261.

called on to officiate in a sacrifice offered on behalf of her nephews, the children of her brothers, if the latter are all dead." Any female who is a near relation of the father or paternal ancestors is also, by extension, a rarana. The husband of the rarana is 'brother-in-law' because, as we have seen, he has a potential right to his wife's brother's daughter.

The mother's brother is maluse, or male mother. Generally the relations with the mother's relatives "are of a much freer, more agreeable and kindlier nature than those with their father's relations." This is expressed par excellence in the maluse - nephews (bantukulu) relationship. The pattern is one of extremely easy relationship and lack of social restraints. The nephew acts with extreme familiarity in his maluse's village, takes anything he likes without asking, cuts short his uncle's prayers and eats the god's share at a sacrifice. He jokes freely about his future inheriting of his maluse's wives. Generally, too, a man is much more lenient to his daughter's than to his son's sons. After all, he is not responsible for the former's as he is for the latter's misdemeanours.

Between siblings of different sex a reciprocal term, makwabu, is used; as regards siblings, the hierarchy of age is strictly observed, and the elder brother is called kosi (chief) as well as by the term mhandjwa. "The elder brother is treated with great respect and gives orders to his younger brothers with almost the same authority as the father. It must be noticed also that the position of the elder brother is not only a matter of age, but, in the polygamic family, all the children of the first wife or of the first house, are

tihosi /

tikosi to the children of secondary or posterior wives or houses, though they may have been born after them. They take precedence of them. Amongst girls, an elder sister is often called mamana, mother, whilst an elder brother is never a tatana, father, but a kosi, chief." Children of people called father or mother are, of course, treated as siblings, as are the rarana's children. As regards cross-cousins, Junod says that a man has a prior right among the Zulu to marry his mother's brother's daughter; but, as noted above, the Zulu do not marry blood relatives; such a marriage is strictly barred among the Thonga. Among them, as stated above, the mother's brother's daughter is mamana.

Paternal and maternal grandparents, male and female, are kokwana, a term also applied to the mother's brother, the malume. Respect for the paternal grandfather is very great, because he is, perhaps, the living representative of the ancestors; relations with the mother's father are much easier.

Relations by affinity fall into two great categories, that of tinamu, the women who are one's potential wives and with whom intercourse is easy, and that of bukoŋwana, "a word that is generally pronounced with a peculiar feeling of uneasiness." According to the Thonga, bukoŋwana arises because of the relationship of wife to husband. She may cause him endless trouble by quarrelling with or deserting him. This is a plausible explanation for the bukoŋwana (c.f. Zulu ukuhlonipha) taboos are lightened with the passage of time, as the marriage proves successful. More probably, though, there are other explanations of this behaviour pattern of awe, respect /

respect and avoidance, even of fear. The first bukoMwana are the wife's father and brothers, who are her protectors. This relationship soon becomes easy. Then there is typical mother-in-law avoidance, a pattern extended to the wife's elder sisters; after years there may be a lessening of this fearful relationship. Then there is the great mukoMwana, the wife's brother's wife, who is, of course, a potential mother-in-law. In addition, she has probably been lobola'd with cattle given for her sister-in-law, and should the latter's marriage fail these oxen will be claimed back. A wife must show great respect towards her relatives-in-law, and this respect is reciprocal; but here again, as the marriage proves successful the pattern is eased.

The Zulu and Kafir systems follow, in general, the Thonga system, save that there is not the potential marriage with the wife's brother's daughter. But these tribes are much more markedly patriarchal, and the mother's relatives have less influence over the children than among the Thonga. Thus the Zulu malume has very little to do with the children: he is like a mother but with less authority.[1]

C. Education.

Education is the basis of culture in that it gives culture its transcendent element and renders it transmissible. Among the South-Eastern Bantu the main

educative /

1. Krige, E. Information obtained by the author and set out in an unpublished thesis on the Zulu, p.57.

educative processes are indirect.[1] language, economic tasks, handling of weapons, behaviour to elders, etc. are all learnt by the boys and girls as they play and work with their elders. The ceremonials at puberty have, as will be seen, little educative value, and in general education is only directly given where a deliberate attempt is made by the elders to instruct the youngsters in some particular task. But the Zulu did have one direct educative process, the training at the military kraals (amakhanda) established by Shaka. Bryant describes the young warriors' life: "while ease and freedom were abundant, stern discipline continuously reigned, but it was a wholly moral force, the young men being thrown entirely on their honour, without standing regulations and without supervision ..... They were there for the sole purpose of fulfilling the King's behests."[2] They had no drill but they amused themselves by dancing and frequently the movements were similar to those of soldiers in battle and so this was in a sense good training for war.[3] The amakhanda were, of course, peculiar to the Zulu military organisation.

D. Economic Organisation.

The South-Eastern Bantu were pastoralists, hoe-culturalists and hunters, as well as collectors, especially in times of scarcity, of bulbs, roots and insects. These tribes are more predominantly pastoral than /

1. Richards, op cit, pp.58, 67, 70, seq.
2. Bryant, "Olden Times," p.78.
3. Stuart, J. "History of Zulu Rebellion." p.76.

than the other South African Bantu, but they rarely killed cattle for meat, save on ceremonial occasions. Schapera describes the mode of subsistence of the Transkeian peoples, and it applies to all the tribes of this area save the Thonga, who, having lost most of their cattle, live on vegetable food, goat's milk and meat obtained in the chase. Schapera writes; "For their subsistence the Natives depended mainly upon pasteralism and hoe-culture. They kept cattle and goats, which supplied them with much of their food, in the form of milk, which was drunk sour, and with the raw material (leather) for some of their industries. The cattle were rarely killed for food, save on ceremonial occasions, meat being obtained chiefly by hunting. In addition, crops were cultivated chiefly of maize and millet, but supplemented by vegetables such as pumpkins, peas, and beans. The cattle were herded and milked by the men, while the care of the fields was in the hands of the women, who were prohibited by religious sanction from having anything to do with the cattle."[1.]

The pastoral bias of the peoples has been heavily emphasized but at the outset it must be remembered that, as Dr. Richards points out, though "the Southern Bantu are not described as typical agriculturists,[2.] yet in fact vegetable produce provides the bulk of their diet. Meat is a rare luxury, and the daily food consists almost entirely of cereal foods and vegetables."[3.] In times of drought and famine they have recourse to herbs and /

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1. Schapera, I. "Economic Change in South African Native Life." Africa, October, 1928.
2. Many authors use agriculture where hoe-culture is the correct term.
3. Richards, op cit, p.17.

and grubs, which normally only the children, and perhaps the women, eat. Only the Thonga eat fish.

There are certain tribal operations in the economic system, but since these are in the main ceremonial they will be considered in the body of the thesis. The economic units of the South Eastern Bantu are the umzi and household (indlu), the group of dependants about each wife. Certain huts have cattle allotted to them, and each woman cultivates her own fields for herself and her children. As regards the implements of material culture, these were made by either the women or the men; there was a certain degree of specialisation.[1]

E. Government and Law.

I have already defined the tribe as a group which is distinguished by the allegiance it owes to a chief. As a recognition of this allegiance the tribesmen have to pay tribute of varying kinds to the chief, and he usually re-distributes this tribute in the interests of his subjects. The chiefs functions are various; he is the religious, magical, political, judicial, social and economic head of the tribe. The first two functions will have to be considered in the body of the thesis, so I propose briefly to summarise his other functions.

The Bantu chief was not usually - Tshaka and his successors were aberrations - a despot. The information goes to show that he acted much more as an interpreter of the general will of the people. He was guided /

1. Schapera, Africa, op cit, p.174.
Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. p.175.

guided in his decisions by a number of councillors, men and women of the blood as well as certain outstanding commoners. Moreover, he was always subject to deposition at the instance of a full gathering of the tribe, and Junod actually records a case of this being done. All appeals lay to the chief's court, but he had to decide according to custom; he initiated new laws, but these had to be approved of by the tribe; he was head of the economic system and distributed of land, but he had to carry out his tasks fairly and in accordance with traditional usage. The Bantu revered their chiefs, but only if they were worthy of it, and the chauvinistic Soga eulogises the dignity and restraint of Xosa chiefs.[1] Cetewayo, the Zulu king, said in evidence before the 1883 Commission on Native Law and Custom that "tradition and sentiment are great factors in the loyalty of a tribe towards their chief, and it is only when driven to exasperation that their tolerance becomes exhausted." This happened when "there were foolish chiefs, who thought they were brave and could do as they pleased. They did strange things without consulting anybody, such as eating their people's cattle, killing without just cause, waging war, and sleeping young girls of the tribe. In such cases when it became evident that the tribe was discontented and not likely to tolerate such oppression much longer, the fathers of the tribe would hold a great pitso,[2] and in the presence of the tribe denounce the chief for his wrong doings, and intimate that /

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1. Soga, "Ama-Xosa," op cit, p.11.
2. Pitso is really a Sotho-Chwana word.

that some other member of the royal household had been elected to act in his stead. A chief so deposed would be murdered if he remained to contest the position."[1]

The chief exerted his judicial powers through sub-chiefs who ruled over various districts, and these in turn delegated authority to the umzi heads. The ibandla, as is quoted above, is both an administrative district and an umzi grouping; from the last appeal lies to the sub-chiefs, and thence to the chief. Certain cases, especially those which dealt with direct offences against the chief, went straight to the court at the capital.[2] The chief was also commander of the army.

Chapter /

1. cited Hartley, C.L. "The Laws and Customs of the Bapedi and Cognate Tribes", (1929) pp. 88 and 87.

2. On the chief vide Gluckmann, M, unpublished thesis: "A Comparative Study of the Economic Position of the Chief in Certain Southern Bantu Tribes."

Chapter 4.

DICHOTOMY OF NATURE INTO THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

A. Man's Emotional Reaction to the Universe.

There are accredited, and discredited, accounts of the abilities of different animals. The Elberfeld horses were embryonic mathematicians; Burmese elephants provide a satiric parallel to Pittsburgh labourers, and Kohler's chimpanzees, according to Heard, show rude signs of group worship and activity.[1.] But Hamlet, one makes bold to say, is exclusively a product of mankind and its culture. Man alone ponders on the question, "To be or not to be?"; man alone looks at the stars and sings, "How I wonder what you are." In fact, one of the criteria on which man is distinguishable from the rest of the animal world is that he does literally ask the question of the old nursery rhyme. Professor Eddington writes: "What is the truth about ourselves? We may incline to various answers. We are a bit of a star gone wrong. We are complicated physical machinery ... puppets that strut and talk and laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath. But let us remember that there is one elementary inescapable answer. We are that which asks the question. Responsibility towards truth is an attribute of our nature."[2.] Eddington has clothed our natural response to the Universe in the language of sophisticated philosophy, but /

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1. Heard, G. "The Social Substance of Religion," (1931) pp.78-82.

2. Eddington, A.S. essay in "Science and Religion," (1931) p.119.

but it can scarcely be doubted that the so-called primitive man feels the same. Thus Radin, after a survey of representative primitive societies, concludes: "that the thinkers among primitive peoples envisage life in philosophical terms, that human experience and the world around them have become subjects for reflection, and that these ponderings and searchings have become embodied in literature, and ritual."[1] Myths of creation, old folk-tales, rites and beliefs, evidence that man, at all times and in all cultures, confronted by the vault of heaven and its bodies, contemplates them:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are?"

Simply and practically primitive man asks the question; the sophisticated man of modern civilisation asks less simply, less poetically, the same question:

"Scintillate, scintillate, globule vivific,
Fain would I fathom thy nature specific."

Junod describes a Thonga whom Eddington, or at least Dean Inge, might take by the hand as a fellow-seeker. Rangane was very worried about the creation of the world, and only found a satisfactory answer to his curiosity in the Christian explanation of creation. But the conventional answers of the old man did, apparently satisfy the bulk of the tribe.[2] Probably, or so at least it seems to me, if Rangane had lived before the Thonga were /

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1. Radin, P. "Primitive Man as Philosopher." (1927) p.388.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. p.303.

were in contact with the Europeans, he would have developed into one of those "religious geniuses" (Lowie prefers to call them philosophical geniuses)[1] who may occasionally appear and shape their tribal religion. But Rangane is not eccentric in thinking about creation, though he is eccentric in not accepting his culture's explanation. Were it not for the presence of the missionaries, Rangane might have developed the Thonga religion and beliefs; he could only have done so, however, on the basis of the culture as it existed. For while one must fully admit the influence of the intense individual on his tribe's outlook, one must remember that the individual is circumscribed by his tribal culture.

This point raises two extremely difficult problems - how does the individual, and how does the social group, contribute to the formation of religious rites and beliefs; and what exactly is to be taken as the belief of the society, where different members of it have different ideas? It is, fortunately, not part of my thesis to deal with these problems. Briefly, the first may be answered by saying that the individual, in all his activities, is a socialised individual, and it is through a number of individuals socialised more or less to one pattern, that the social group asks any question and postulates the answer. As regards the second problem, it has been effectively dealt with by Malinowski in his article on "Baloma; the spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands."[2]. In the 1st section of the article, the author analyses the relationship

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1. Lowie, R.H. "Primitive Religion." p.240.

2. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 46. (1916) pp.353-430.

between accounts of beliefs, etc. given by individuals, and social ideas, and concludes that a social idea "is a tenet of belief embodied in institutional texts, and formulated by the unanimous opinion of all competent informants."[1] Malinowski points out the fallacy of obtaining information from one or two natives and then citing the data as social ideas, i.e. of turning a "one-dimensional" account into a set of "social ideas."[2] This, unfortunately, applies to many of the authorities cited in this thesis, but I am afraid that, as this is a purely theoretical work, the difficulty cannot be obviated.

I shall, then, in speaking of "society," mean a number of socialised and acculturated individuals, and by "social ideas" as far as possible, the conceptions common to those individuals and embodied in ritual, mythology and other institutions of the community.[3]

Returning now to the theme on which this chapter opens, I think I may fairly say that society (man in culture) wishes to find its place in the scheme of things. One should rather say society must find its place in the scheme of things. This is an emotional compulsion; man must be able to convince himself either that the forces of the Universe are on his side or that he can control those forces. He must be at home in the Universe.

The social group exists, that is evident. But within the group and without mighty forces are at work. The Universe is vast, the tribal group is relatively small. As the individual man has developed an ego /

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1. Ibid, at p.424. Vide Groupe Gumod, op cit, Vol II p.386 sq.
2. Malinowski, Ibid, at p.420.
3. vide Murdock, G.P. "The Science of Culture," American Anthropologist, April-June 1932, p.298, for the fundamental distinction between society and culture.

ego that is, to the best of our knowledge, lacking or very deficient among other animals, so the group of men, society, must necessarily have an ego. It must be conscious of its own existence. It stands out as against other societies and the Universe at large. It has traditions of itself, it has a culture, it has a definite territory. But "the historic depth of tradition is slight ..... (and) the knowledge of facts and events, historically so shallow, is also closely limited geographically. The width of the cultural span is no less restricted than its depth. The group is thoroughly conversant with the human, animal and material factors of its immediate environment. Outside of this, a very fragmentary and unreliable set of data is available, referring to the peoples and regions with which some sort of contact is maintained. But there the world of humanity ceases. Beyond is the void, the realm of imagination, with its grotesque creatures and fantastic happenings."[1] The group as humanity, the void of the Universe - what is their relation? Here is a question which must be answered. Humanity must feel at home in the Universe, it must find its place in the scheme of things, and it must be a dominating place. A community of Schopenhauers would soon cease to exist.

Society's response to the Universe, its search for truth, varies in a number of ways. It may be philosophical, scientific, artistic, religious, magical. What has to be determined is the nature of the religious and magical responses, chiefly as contrasted with the scientific.

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1. Goldenweiser, A.A. "Early Civilization," (1922) pp.402-3.

When Sir James Jeans describes a star "as a solitary body, alone in endless space, which continually pours out radiation and receives nothing in return," it is poor English, but, one assumes, good science; and when Eddington writes that "our home, the Earth, is the fifth or sixth largest planet belonging to an inconspicuous middle-grade star in one of the numerous islands of the archipelago of island universes, we say again, "This is Science." It is equally science when the Zulus say that the stars are the children of the sun and the sky; it is not superstition. In short, we cannot distinguish religion from science on the basis of the knowledge of any society but the one we are considering. To us the Zulu belief seems absurd, superstitious; to them it is fact, and, what is more, scientific fact. It is true that Jeans and Eddington are consciously trying to find out what is the nature of the Universe, that they are ready to change their theories in the light of new facts, that they are always seeking to get nearer to objective truth, while the Zulu are content with the bare answer they have been given. But that answer, such as it is, constitutes part of their science and, as such, is entitled to our respect so long as we have no guarantee of objective truth for our own theories.

Ignorance cannot be the criterion by which we are to distinguish the natural from the supernatural. Malinowski in his treatment of magic has a slight tendency to do this. The extremest version of this philosophy is that of Spencer, which has been summed up: "Science thus extends so far as knowledge actual and possible extends. Religion lords it over that territory where all conceivable knowledge ends - that is, in the region /

region of immemorable ignorance."[1] This theory is rightly characterised by Cohen as "amusing", but it is a theory that can still claim authoritative support. The difficulty, of course, is that for the worshipper God is real, for the hag-ridden, witches and pixies are. They know that these beings exist. The agnostic, the man who honestly says, "I do not know", he alone is ignorant in the full sense of the word. The Xosa, who believed that each evening a fresh moon was placed in the sky and who, when asked by Soga, "By whom was it hung up?", replied, "Andazi," (I don't know)[2] was not, of course, an agnostic. He was indeed ignorant, in his own opinion, but he knew that there was someone who positioned the moon. The agnostic knows not what there is.

B. Primitive Science.

The attitude of this Xosa and of the Zulu is even more scientific than that of the modern scientist, in the sense that it is utterly dispassionate. But in general the primitive scientist is less deliberative and more utilitarian. "Science," says Malinowski, "primitive as much as civilised, is the solid achievement of the human mind, embodied in the tradition of rational knowledge and put to practical purposes. As far as primitive man has really obtained the mastery over nature, and of the forces in his own nature, he relies on science and science alone."[3] Elsewhere he describes this as knowledge of soils, hydrodynamics, etc.[4] Goldenweiser adopts a similar opinion. "As the aim of all these pursuits is not /

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1. Cohen, Chapman. "God and the Universe." (1931) p.9.
2. Soga, "Ama-Xosa," op cit, p.420.
3. Malinowski, B. Essay in "Science & Religion" op cit, p.71.
4. Malinowski, B. "Magic Science and Religion," essay in "Science and Religion and Reality," (1925) edited by J. Needham, at pp. 29, 31 sq.

(For footnote 4, see over.)

not to know but to do, not to understand but to achieve, the realm of matter-of-fact becomes a happy hunting-ground for the pragmatist, not an abode for the pursuer of idle curiosity! There is satisfaction when the thing works out and, barring accidents, no further changes are made. Henceforth, the mind accepts these condensed depositories of reason traditionally. They become part of the technical equipment of behaviour, not of thought and understanding.

"This explains, at least in part, why the matter-of-fact experience of early life fails to bring its full intellectual harvest. The observation, knowledge, invention, potential science, of this realm remain psychologically dormant, in solution, as it were, in the psycho-physical flow of behaviour; until centuries later, under other conditions of life and inquiry, these precious fragments of the semi-unconscious mind become precipitated as clear-edged crystals of science and critical thought."[1]

The Bantu do possess science in this sense of "Scientia est potentia." Anyone who has watched a native making string from the crushed stem of a thorn-bush or the leaf of an aloe, would admit that the Bantu have, too, like all primitive hoe-culturalists, knowledge of soils, seeds, trees, etc. But there is a school of anthropologists who would convert the proposition "Scientia est potentia" to "Potentia est Scientia" in primitive society. This they cannot logically do, nor is the converted proposition empirically correct. Goldenweiser[1] admits./

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4. (Continued from page 36). Malinowski, B. "Magic Science & Religion," essay in "Science Religion & Reality," (1925) edited by J. Needham, at pp.28, 31 seq.

1. Goldenweiser, op cit, pp.406-7.

admits the possibility of consciousness and ratiocination arising in the mind of a primitive inventor or worker, but concludes that "they are presently submerged, the objective results alone being passed on to the following generation," for the ends are always "direct, pragmatic, teleological."[1] Malinowski allows primitive man much more of science, as the following quotations show: "If by science be understood a body of rules and conceptions, based on experience and derived from it by logical inference, embodied in material achievements and in a fixed form of tradition and carried on by some sort of social organisation - then there is no doubt that even the lowest savage communities have the beginnings of science, however rudimentary." He goes on to say that the native can criticise his knowledge, bear its principles in mind when applying them to some practical task, in which he will work with plans and charts; that natives can be found who passionately and disinterestedly search for stories, pedigrees, etc. and the native naturalist, "patient and painstaking in his observations, capable of generalisation and of connecting long chains of events in the life of animals, and in the marine world or in the jungle." But Malinowski has a tendency to adopt, like Goldenweiser, the point of view that primitive science is always pragmatic, that it "is not detached from the craft ..... it is only a means to an end."[2] Thus he criticises "Notes and Queries on Anthropology" because under the heading "Stories, Sayings and Songs" it says that "this section includes many intellectual efforts of peoples."[3] With some/

1. Ibid, p.406.
2. Malinowski, "Magic, Science & Religion," op cit, pp.35-6.
3. Quoted from "Notes and Queries on Anthropology", pp.210-1.

some apprehension Malinowski is led to ask, "where is left the emotion, the interest, and ambition, the social role of all the stories, and the deep connection with cultural values of the more serious ones?" [1] Malinowski in quoting from "Notes and Queries" chooses to emphasize the word "intellectual"; his attention should also be directed to "includes." For where are the elements referred to by Malinowski, present in this extract from Junod? "On the seashore in the Manaketa district, according to Mboza, people believe that the sun emerges from the water. The reflection of light which remains on the sea, after the appearance of the sun, is considered as a kind of source of light from which the sun emerges and renews itself every morning: it is 'cut out from the provision of fire', sticks to heaven, follows its course and dies in the West. Tomorrow another sun will come out from the 'provision', and so on. But other people make objections to this explanation and assert that the sun passes under the earth and comes back the following day; so there is only one sun - to which theory the first retort that the earth having no bottom, the sun cannot pass under it." [2] Given the premise that the earth is "infinite, ... endlessly prolonged downwards and has no bottom," [3] here is perfectly logical, scientific, reasoning, and, moreover, the argument seems to be marked with less acrimony than is usual among modern scientists. Now the account of the passage and setting of the sun, I take to be one of those conceptions, frequently crystallized in /

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1. Malinowski, B. "Myth in Primitive Psychology". (1926) p.40 (-1.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. pp.281-2.
3. Ibid, p.281.

in stories or tales or myths (call them what you will) which I would describe as intellectual, scientific efforts of primitive man. To Malinowski we owe a great debt for his masterly analysis of the functions of myth and legend, but I cannot help feeling that he has gone too far in ruling the aetiological entirely out of mythology. But in pointing out the emotional value of <u>certain</u> myths, he gives us a clue to what criterion to adopt in distinguishing the scientific from, say, the religious. It is not, as he would frequently make out, ignorance: if it works, Malinowski tends to say, it is science. I think it more correct to distinguish science and religion not from the point of view of the anthropologist, but from that of the native, viz., by the emotional attitude of the latter.

The attitude of the Thonga in the argument about the sun, of the Xosa and Zulu in their beliefs concerning the moon and stars, is calm, disinterested, dispassionate. But their reaction to lightning, to drought, and other cosmic phenomena is very different. It is alive with emotion. For the reality of the supernatural is determined by the attitude which man and his society take up to life and the universe. The scientific approach is calm, as is the philosophical; it is the approach which men like Sir Oliver Lodge would ultimately adopt after a few years' hobnobbing with the spirits. The artistic approach is tinged with certain emotions; the religious and magical with others. It now remains to determine the actual emotional (and to a lesser extent intellectual) content of supernaturalism.

I can...

C. The Powers of the Supernatural.

I can perhaps do this best by relating my own single mystical experience. About half-past two one morning I was walking along a lane which was reputed to be haunted. I had been discussing the supernatural, was physically tired and mentally depressed. As a natural rather than a supernatural consequence of these facts, I suddenly saw hordes of dancing skeletons and ghosts, for me an unusual, though strangely not a discommoding, spectacle. All at once I seemed to sense a presence above and around me, an almost physical power in which I could rest. The bizarre figures all vanished; I had, so to speak, found peace in God.

Here is the raw matrix of religion, the sense of powers working around us. And now, to distinguish the religious sense from the scientist's sense of these powers, one must refer to the fact that most men (so-called civilised as well as primitive) fail to distinguish between the causes of their sensations and the emotions evoked by the sensations themselves. Indeed, psychologically speaking, the emotions are an element, the affective element, of sensation. Lévy-Bruhl says of primitive man that his "mental activity is too little differentiated for it to be able to regard the ideas or images of objects by themselves, apart from the sentiments, emotions, and passions which evoke them (or are evoked by them)." The result is that not only has primitive man actually "an image of the object and believes it to be real, but also that he hopes or fears something from it; that some definite action emanates from /

from it or is exercised upon it. This action is an influence, a virtue, an occult power, varying according to its objects and circumstances, but always real to the primitive, and forming an integral part of his representation."[1] Lévy-Bruhl, on the basis of this psychological fact, rears a remarkable edifice in which he houses a primitive man who, ~~utterly~~ unlike Rousseau's natural man, is utterly supernatural. He cannot distinguish any natural process; for him all the world is "mystical." But, as we have seen and as Malinowski, Goldenweiser, and competent workers in the field have shown, primitive man is logical, and does distinguish certain acts as natural from others that are supernatural. Lévy-Bruhl, however, indicates the real source of man's sense of supernatural powers: man is aware of the forces, but their "mystical" power comes from the emotions of fear, hope, despair, triumph, etc. which they stimulate within him as he senses them. And, of course, man projects the emotion caused by objects he perceives on to the objects themselves. Thus primitive man fears lightning, and because of his fear he invests lightning with the power of killing at will, deliberately. I shall return to this affective side of sensation again in this chapter. In the meantime, I propose to examine the sources of the mystical powers which man feels to be working around him.

In the first place, I suggest that one thing which never fails to oppress with its magnitude is the Universe, and the inexorable sweep of circumstances: "Kismet! the will of Allah!" says the Mahomedan; "blind

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1. Lévy-Bruhl, L. "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Societes Inferieures". Vol. I. p.29.

"blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way," writes Bertrand Russell in an essay appropriately entitled "The Free Man's Worship"; the Thonga have a belief in Tilo or Heaven, "something more than a place. It is a power which acts and manifests itself in various ways. It is sometimes called Hosi, a lord. But this power is generally regarded as something entirely impersonal. Thonga appear to think that Heaven regulates and presides over certain great cosmic phenomena to which men must, willingly or unwillingly, submit, more especially those of a sudden and unexpected nature."[1] It is this sense of the majesty of the universe which best fits the definition of religion given by Otto, a Christian theologian who says, aptly if ...cularly, that the Holy consists in a sense of "numinous". It is to the universe as a whole that Alexander's words apply most significantly: "One of the elements of the religious feeling is the sense of mystery, of something which may terrify us or may support us in our helplessness, but at any rate which is other than anything we know by our senses or our reflection. And it is natural to believe that there is something real, some feature of actual existence, which calls forth this sentiment in us. Mr. Otto calls this the 'numinous' element in the world."[2] As Otto himself says, this mystery is "felt as objective and outside the self."[3] Alexander later continues: "But I do not in the least mean that there is some rare specific /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. p.592.
2. Alexander, S. Essay in "Science & Religion". op cit, p.55
3. Otto, "Idea of the Holy". p.11.

specific quality in things which we can discover, which is the numinous, which is the object of religious feeling as frost can be felt by our sense of cold. On the contrary, I should say we have no organ which enables us to apprehend the numinous, and that many persons do not have the religious feeling at all ..... It may be accounted for in many ways, but when all is partially known there remains this mysterious somewhat in nature. I am inclined to think it means the way in which we with our bodies respond to the world as a whole, instead of the particular parts we get to know by the senses, that the world, as it were, takes us all of a heap, and we respond in this vague sense of mystery."[1]

It is clear that the response to which Alexander refers is an emotional response, and that the emotion of awe with which one is oppressed on comparing one's own insignificance with the vastness of creation, is projected in an inverted form into the Universe; i.e. one's sense of powerlessness becomes contrasted with powers outside. Now if Alexander's individual approach be changed to that of society, we have one source of the religious feeling.

I wish to emphasize here that I do not intend to imply that this reaction to the universe as a whole must necessarily express itself in the conception of a High-God.[2] I have, it is true, cited Tilo, of the Thonga, as representing that reaction; for I do believe that where a society has erected anything in the nature of a High-God that God represents those elements in the universe /

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1. Alexander, loc cit, pp.133-4.

2. Tilo is not a High-God, but is the nearest conception to a Deity that exists among the Thonga.

universe that are most transcendent. But the point I wish to make here is that it is society's recognition of the wholeness and oneness of the Universe, its being taken "all of a heap" by the world, that creates a large amount of the power which is the matrix of religion.

I would repeat, moreover, what has been remarked above: that society must find its place in the Universe. It is true that Junod writes, "I believe that the origin of man preoccupies the Bantu mind much more than the origin of the world. They can live their whole life without being troubled by this question which has perplexed so many hearts in other lands." [1.] Apparently the BaThonga have not troubled so much about their place in creation. But this is obviously a surface interpretation. There have been far more heart-burnings over the story of the Garden of Eden than over Genesis itself. Even then, it may be argued, the Bantu myth of Unkulunkulu breaking off the nations from a bed of reeds [2.] is lacking in the "numinous" element. The reply is, however, obvious. The ultimate origin of man and society may be passed over like this, but what of the destiny of every individual of the society, i.e. the destiny of society itself? The intense ancestor-cult evidences that the Bantu have attempted to determine man's destiny and destination, and their intense dislike of the chameleon [3.] shows the emotional context of the myth about the origin of death.

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. II. p.303.

2. Seligman, op cit, p.301.

3. Callaway, "The Religious System of the Amazulu." (1870) p.3. footnote 10.
Junod, op cit, Vol. II. p.351.

Their beliefs about birth are much vaguer, though they have, of course, rites and taboos round pregnancy and labour; nevertheless the relation of the birth of twins to cosmic phenomena[1] is an indication that they realise that certain forces are at work to produce children.

These myths and beliefs show that the South-Eastern Bantu have reflected on man's place in the world and they recognise his aspirations and fears. Among the Zulu, it is said that Unkulunkulu created all things and initinted the life of man. He sent the chameleon to tell men not todie. The chameleon dallied by the way, but the lizard who was sent with the message that men should die hurried on and brought death with him.[2] Man's fundamental aspiration, the will to live, to be immortal on this earth, was thus cheated, and this myth expresses that aspiration but fits the the facts. The belief in continued existence after death acts, with the chameleon myth, as an outlet for the desire for immortality. Death is, to man and his group, a fearsome thing; it evokes in all who come into contact with it a vast number of emotions and so it, too, like the Universe at large, becomes charged with supernatural power.

But in addition to adopting this attitude which I call "supernaturalism" to the whole of the universe and to man's destiny in it, society also takes up that attitude to various parts of it. To the sense of wholeness, to death and his ultimate destiny, man's outlook must be emotionally coloured. He reacts similarly to particular /

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1. Vide, infra, pp.104 seq.
2. Callaway, op cit, pp.3-4. Junod, op cit, Vol.2. pp.350-1

particular impressive manifestations of natural forces, such as drought, disease, thunder, etc. Society is, in the words of ~~Lowie~~ Lowie, compelled to "recognise in some form or other awe-inspiring, extraordinary manifestations of reality."[1] There is an autonomous power in nature, a number of seemingly infinite, incalculable forces - and man lives always in their shadow. Primitive man responds to these forces with deep, instinctive emotions, and so, as has been explained above, the power of these forces is increased. Thus the Zulu speak of two heavens, the male and the female; the latter is attended by shrill thundering, forked lightning and hail. "If it meets with a man in the open country he cannot tell where to go; and even indoors the house seems small, and he wants a second house into which the lightning cannot enter; and the world itself seems small at the time of its shrill thunderings, and men seek for a place where they can hide themselves. The female heaven causes much pain. The pain it causes is that it does not give a man time to take courage; it presses upon him suddenly with constant repetition; it therefore tears a man with terror, and a man cannot see that to-morrow will ever come; he says, 'No, there is no to-morrow;' and he can no longer see that the light of another day will shine in the heaven and pass away; he sees that the heaven ~~is~~ I pass away with him."[2] One sees clearly from this translation of a native text how the emotions roused in a man by a cosmic phenomenon are projected to increase the awesomeness of

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1. Lowie, op cit, ~~pp.~~ Introduction, p.xvi.
2. Callaway, op cit, pp.401-2.

the phenomenon.

One other thing in the external world impresses society. Sustenance has to be obtained from the physical environment, and society in its struggle for economic life has to exert to the full its powers. Naturally, it feels that it is working with certain powers in the environment, and against others. "In a simple community such as that of the Andaman Islands, in which the necessary food has to be provided from day to day, food occupies a predominant position, and is the chief source of those variations or oscillations between conditions of euphoria and dysphoria that constitute the emotional life of the society," writes Radcliffe Brown. "Food is obtainable only by the expenditure of effort, and the effort is a communal one. The obtaining of food is the principal social activity and it is an activity in which every able-bodied member of the community is required by custom to join."[1] According to Malinowski, "food is the main link between man and his surroundings, ... by receiving it he feels the forces of destiny and providence. To primitive man, never, even under the best conditions, quite free from the threat of starvation, abundance of food is a primary condition of normal life."[2] Dr. Richards in "Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe", has shown how much these statements apply to the South-Eastern Bantu: sentiments are built up on the nutritive process; social status is marked by plenty; the rhythm of the year is marked by the change in food; and eating itself, as well as particular foods, evokes distinct emotions.

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1. Brown, A.Radcliffe, "The Andaman Islanders". (1922) p.370.

2. Malinowski, "Magic, Science & Religion", op cit, p.42.

Clearly, then, nutrition is surrounded by intense emotional sensations, and the struggle for sustenance creates in ~~him~~ a sense of the powers of the universe.

A further source of power is that society is conscious of its own force, not only as it opposes and controls its environment, but also as it manifests itself against itself - i.e. in the hold of the tribe over the smaller groups and over the individual tribesmen, and in the relation of the smaller groups to each other and to their own members. The weight of tradition, that "heavy hand of the past"; the force of tribal, clan or familial gatherings; the transformation of the individual as his sentiments towards his fellows crystallise; these are almost physical powers. Durkheim has clearly shown the power of society over the individual; so clearly that he made "Society" equivalent to "God". But we owe to him, and latterly to Radcliffe Brown, the true valuation of the tremendous forces generated at social gatherings. This is one of the largest sources of "numinous" power. But as every individual must recognise the power of society, so society must recognise the power of each individual.[1] As a child grows up its social personality is enhanced and expanded; the baby drops like a piece of wood into the pool of social life, and ripples gradually spread out from it which may touch the furthest edges of the water. These ripples are pregnant with power. Moreover, the individual senses the will and power of his fellows, and in himself he feels will and power. At puberty that power mysteriously increases in himself and in society,

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1. Vide, Radcliffe Brown, op cit, pp.334-5.

and therefore we have initiation rites at that crucial period. That power is changed at maturity, and shifted at marriage, at parenthood and again there are rites to recognise this altering. This power of the individual which has been cited last, is fundamental. On the basis of it power is projected into the whole world. Within itself Society recognises the force and conflict of centres of will, and interprets all phenomena in terms of it. And it is obvious that all human relationships are heavily charged with emotions which are the source of mystical power.

It is the consciousness of all these powers and the emotional reaction to them, which, I believe, stimulates the sense of the numinous. Professor Niall Edwards, after reviewing various anthropological theories, concludes: "Religion in its origin is thus seen to be a sense of awe and mystery in the presence of the indefinable and incalculable power - supraphysical power - manifested in things, persons and events, together with the attendant effort on man's part to adjust himself negatively and positively to that power, with a view to satisfying certain felt needs of his life."[1] I am, for the present, only concerned with the first part of this quotation: the presence of the indefinable and incalculable power. (I take it that "supraphysical" is a synonym for "supernatural".) I would immediately stress that Edwards, whether by accident or design I know not, has not said "unknown" power. Every society believes it knows what those supraphysical powers are, for if it believed them unknowable or uncontrollable or unapproachable /

1. Edwards, D.M. "The Philosophy of Religion." (1924) p.47.

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1. Edwards, D.M. "The Philosophy of Religion." (1924) p.47.

unapproachable, would it ever attempt to cope with them?[1] In the magical rite man appreciates and uses these forces. The Melanesians know what mana is: it is the supernatural power of the gods; personal power, fame and majesty; authority, strength, competence, ability. The North American Indians can define wakan, manitou, orenda. The South-Eastern Bantu have no such general conceptions, though the Pondo, according to Miss Hunter, believe in a neutral power, X, which may be tapped for social or anti-social ends;[2] which is not very informative. But the South-Eastern Bantu recognise powers that act through heaven, through the ancestors (amatongo), wizards (abatakati), magicians (izinyanga), magical substances (imiti), etc.

In what sense, then, are these powers recognised as supernatural - indefinable, incalculable - as opposed to definite, natural powers? This distinction, which has given its name to the present chapter, is extremely difficult to draw. Lévy-Bruhl, writes that "to the primitive mind the mystic properties of things and beings form an integral part of their representation, which is at that moment a synthetic whole."[3] That is to say, everything /

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1. Malinowski must be wrong in saying ("Magic Science, & Religion", p.34.) that man clings to magic "wherever he has to recognise the impotence of his knowledge and of his rational technique." Magic is, to the natives, also rational technique, though one of a different order from science.

2. Hunter, MSS. "Medicine and Magic."

3. Lévy-Bruhl, op cit, pp.38-9.

everything has its natural and its mystical aspect and these are not separated by primitive man - nor, indeed, are they separated by Bergson. Malinowski, on the other hand, maintains that the Trobrianders, at any rate, draw a clear-cut distinction: "in his relation to nature and destiny, whether he tries to exploit the first or dodge the second, primitive man recognises both the natural and the supernatural forces and agencies, and he tries to use them both for his benefit."[1] Malinowski's observations in Melanesia may have shown that the natives of that area move from magic to science and back again, drawing ruling clearly the distinction between each process. But this is certainly not true of the South-Eastern Bantu, among whom magic and science are so inextricably mixed up, that one hesitates whether to say all is natural, or, with Lévy-Bruhl, all is supernatural. (I shall later try to distinguish religion from magic, and for the present would say that these Bantu clearly recognise superior powers when they supplicate and thank.) Is it possible to separate the natural from the supernatural? A Zulu woman plants seed, and keeps a certain root in her seed gourd all the time she is sowing to increase the productiveness of her field.[2] What, in her opinion, stimulates the growth of the crops - the seed itself, or the root-charm? I think she must recognise that the crops grow from the seed, for the natives are careful in their selection of seed. But does she believe that the gourd has special powers? I cannot help feeling that the Bantu must distinguish between the

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1. Malinowski, "Magic, Science & Religion", op cit, pp. 33-4.
2. Bryant, Dictionary, op cit, "isi-Dwa" p 134.

way in which the seed gives forth fruit and the way that fruit is increased by the use of the root. The root contains a certain virtue which produces, not its own kind as the seed does, but another kind, and not by being planted in the ground, where the crops will spring, but only by being carried with the seed. Surely even the most unsophisticated native would recognise this difference. Or, to cite an example from the Transkei, the natives there beat a bull with a shrub, isi-Betankuzi, which excites the bull and makes it seek its mate.[1] The shrub, I infer from a similar Zulu practice, is prickly, irritates the bull and makes it cover the cow.[2] This, I take it, is a perfectly natural step to take. It is a very different practice where a girl, attaining marriageable age, rubs the gate of the cattle-kraal with the u-Buka climbing plant to make the cattle strong and fat.[3] Here is a rite where some of the girl's new power must be transferred through the u-Buka to the cattle, and I am certain that the Kafirs must recognise the difference. I am therefore tempted to say that the South-Eastern Bantu recognise the difference between practical and magical processes, though they probably have not elaborated any theories how these processes transfer power, or what power is transferred

In Malinowski's theory magic is the attempt to control the capricious forces of nature, to master the elements of chance and luck.[4] This interpretation of the

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1. Kropf, op cit, p.31.
2. Bryant, Dictionary, op cit, "um Hlwazi-mamba," p.263.
3. Kropf, op cit, pp.44-5.
4. Malinowski, "Magic, Science & Religion", pp.27-34.

the function of magic applies to our great as the following significant paragraph from Junod, on "the problem of rain and the way the Thonga deal with it", shows: "All over the earth the question of rainfall is of primary importance, but this is especially the case in Subtropical Africa, even more than anywhere else. Rain may not fall during seven months, from April to October, and nobody worries about it. But if it fails in November and December, at the beginning of the rainy season, this is a dreadful misfortune, a calamity more serious than any other. The life of every individual, and consequently of the whole clan is threatened. Famine will inevitably follow, as cereals can only be sown during these two months and famine means not only suffering and anguish, but often death, in a primitive tribe which is totally ignorant of trade with outlying countries, and does not possess any means of conveyance for food bought in other lands. No wonder, therefore, if the imagination of the South African native has invented ways and means in order to regularize the rainfall, if rites and charms, all the powers of magic have been resorted to with the view of ensuring the precious rain to the tribe at the right time."[1] Livingstone, writing on the same necessity in the drought-threatened interior, anticipates Malinowski: "The natives, finding it irksome to sit and wait helplessly until God gives them rain from heaven, entertain the more comfortable idea that they can help themselves by a variety of preparations."[2]

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. pp.292-3.

2. Livingstone, D. "Travels and Researches in South Africa", (Harmsworth Edition, 1905.) p.14.

Society must rise superior to nature - not unknown, but capricious and incalculable.

I think I have now reached a stage in my argument where I can say that man, from his very nature, is conscious of certain powers, (which exist objectively and/or in his emotional reaction to them) working round him. In theory these powers are vague and infinite; above all, they are potentially ambivalent, capable of working to his advantage or his detriment. For years rains fall steadily every spring, and the Thonga hoe and plant their gardens; then drought comes, beasts are sacrificed, prayers recited, the country is cleansed. An universal round of magico-religious ritual begins, a round which the Thonga must clearly distinguish from their ordered life of the previous year. The forces of the infinite have turned against them and they react with fear, awe, submission, hate; they attempt, on lines ordained by tradition, to supplicate and control the powers that give rain.

And here I return, in a measure, to the point of view of Lévy-Brühl. I think that wherever primitive man has any idea of great forces acting round him he conceives of that force as supernatural. In making string from vegetable fibre; in smelting iron ore; in cooking; in selecting, on the basis of experience, fertile soils; he does not see that one thing changes, through the action of certain forces, into something else. To primitive man there is no idea of force in the natural process: it merely, though always, happens thus. But as soon as some special force, or power, is felt by him, he considers that force

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that power, as supernatural, as extraordinary. It does not just happen: there is a cause of misfortune be it ritual impurity, the work of a sorcerer or an ancestor, or the will of heaven; and special success results from the social use of those powers. Primitive man, I would say, apprehends infinite powers, and these are all supernatural - he apprehends them in that he experiences them and is awed by them.

D. The Functioning of Religion and Magic.

Now that I have differentiated the supernatural from the natural on the grounds that the former is an oppression of power felt by man, the latter merely a thing that follows, my next task is to analyse man's reaction, his emotional attitude, to the supernatural; why, to return to the quotation from Miall Edwards, he makes an effort "to adjust himself negatively and positively to that power, with a view to satisfying certain felt needs of his life."

The first problem is, what are "these certain felt needs," ? Primarily, I believe, man wishes to feel at home in the universe, and this, I would emphasise, is an emotional, as well as an intellectual, need. Man must feel that his role in creation is vastly important. He may say, "Thy Will be done, thy Kingdom come," but creation is that man may realise God's will, and God has to die for him. Mephistopheles' version of creation in Goethe's "Faust" is very sophisticated scepticism. Even Schopenhauer had to look on himself as a piece of the "Will" turned back on itself; a mistake that could negate its creator by contemplation. But generally, man

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adopts some weltanschaung such as that creation is that he may strive for a moral kingdom, that he may glory in battle till he fights forever in Valhalla, etc. The South-Eastern Bantu had reserved for themselves a prominent part in life, which was spoilt by the white man's appearance, and the Hottentots, debased and despised by the Bantu, called themselves Khoi Khoim, the men of men. The Zulu-Xosa believe that Unkulunkulu led them from a bed of reeds and gave them everything - he instituted the present order and gave them the amatongo, and doctors for treating disease and diviners; he arranged that an itongo should cure a man if had made ill if it was sacrificed to and lauded, and that the amatongo should make known their wishes in dreams.[1] The story of the chameleon and death shows that originally man was intended to be immortal, and it is through the fault of the chameleon - here not of man himself - that death came into the world.[2] Above all, man does not perish at death and continues his life elsewhere, so that the spirits of the dead - on the whole beneficient - work the unseen powers in man's favour. The existence of evil is explained away by beliefs in ubutakati, abathakathi, in ritual uncleanness, etc.

All man's other needs arise from his desire to be at home in the Universe. These needs, I have later to examine, and for the time being I would only cite them as: the need to feel that in his striving for subsistence he can control his environment; that his society, law and order, should be stable; that he continues to exist after death; that he himself is of value. The whole universe is blotted out /

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1. Callaway, op cit, pp.5-6.
2. Ibid, pp.3-4.

out by man's shadow and exists for him. He must feel that the supernatural powers are on his side.

The next problem that arises is how religion (and magic) satisfy man's needs, i.e. the manner of their working. Jastrow maintains that "religion is too complex a phenomenon to be accounted for by the growth and spread of a single custom. Worship, of however primitive a character, is not the expression of a single thought, or a single emotion, but the product of thoughts so complex, so powerful, as to force an expression in the same way in which a river, swollen by streams coming down the mountains from different directions, overflows its banks."[1] This is, I would say, only partially correct. To interpret Jastrow's own simile differently, all the streams carry water. All the sources of religion and magic are senses of powers at work in the universe, though these sources are themselves different. Religious and magic ritual and belief is the attempt to use and interpret this power in terms of social values. Society, in its desire to exist in the universe, conscious as it is of this power, must conceive of the infinite as something that can be used by ~~the society~~ it for its own ends. In other words the power of the "numinous" is present vaguely in the universe. We have seen how scattered are the sources of that power, and that the power is potentially ambivalent. Ritual is the negative process of protecting society against the malevalent manifestations of this power, and the positive process of using that power to social ends by directing it to some particular purpose or concentrating it in some thing or person of social value.[2] Society, in short /

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1. Jastrow, M. "The Study of Religion" (1901) p.185.

2. I am not here discussing the anti-social use of this power in sorcery.

short, must turn these powers to social account; it must persuade itself that the powers of the unseen are on its side and that it can use those powers.

Before analysing the ritual processes which use the supernatural powers for social ends, I wish briefly to set out the persons and things that are of social value to society. And, curiously, the socially valuable objects which are the subject of ritual are also the objects which, as shown above, are the sources of supernatural power. There is, in the first place, the world at large, which is of social value insofar as the tribe must establish itself within it, i.e. the beneficent side of the tribe's physical environment in which it gains its life and builds its home. Secondly, the tribe itself, and the smaller social groups within it, are of immense social value, and they are ritualised. Tradition and morality, especially, are of vital importance to society, and as such come under the protective cloak of ceremonial. "In primitive conditions," says Malinowski, "tradition is of supreme value for the community and nothing matters as much as the conformity and conservation of its members."[1] Then the individual tribesmen are of social value and are therefore surrounded through life by ritual acts, through birth, puberty, marriage, disease and death. This value depends on the individual's social personality, and in the South-Eastern Bantu tribes, the chief is of particularly great value. The umuzi heads, too, have this great value, and generally the social hierarchy, which is very marked among these tribe, is of value. Another set of individuals who are of great importance to the tribe is the magicians, diviners, leeches. At death the individual, so far from decreasing in value, increases. By becoming an /

1. Malinowski, "Magic Science & Religion", op cit, p.39.

an ancestral spirit he gains power which he can use in the interests of society, so that the autonomous powers of nature are manipulated by persons friendly to the tribe, a fact which must give the group confidence in itself. Finally, food, fire, and various other economic and cultural necessities such as the home, are things of social value.

The necessity for, and methods of, sacralising objects of social value has been brilliantly demonstrated by Radcliffe Brown. On the basis of Shandian psychology, he briefly sets out an hypothesis on which to interpret ceremonial customs and beliefs. "(1) A society depends for its existence on the presence in the minds of its members of a certain system of sentiments by which the conduct of the individual is regulated in conformity with the needs of the society. (2) Every feature of the social system itself and every event or object that in any way affects the well-being or the cohesion of the society becomes an object of this system of sentiments. (3) In human society the sentiments in question are not innate but are developed in the individual by the action of society upon him. (4) The ceremonial customs of a society are a means by which the sentiments in question are given collective expression on appropriate occasions. (5) The ceremonial (i.e. the collective) expression of any sentiment serves both to maintain it at the requisite degree of intensity in the mind of the individual and to transmit it from one generation to another. Without such expression the sentiments involved could not exist."[1]

Radcliffe Brown's theory is that the task of ceremony is to maintain and strengthen these sentiments, for the /

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1. Radcliffe Brown, op cit, pp.238-40.

the social value of any object is expressed in the sentiment that centres in it. Part of the power of the supernatural which is made to concentrate in these objects of social value, is created by emotional elements in the social sentiments.

The ritual process is therefore, in a sense, a circular one, though not completely so. For, as shown above, the power of the supernatural, arising in large measure from the social sentiments themselves, is potentially good or evil (i.e. it is neutral) and by religion and magic social good is achieved. In ritual the ambivalent power is transformed and shifted to social ends and values. If I may anticipate by way of example, the triumph of the tribesmen after a bountiful harvest may disrupt the society by jealous strife and pride; in the first fruits rites, or religious sacrament, this ebullience is analised in different ways and concentrated in the chief, the ancestors, the tribe and the crops.

E. The Processes of Religion and Magic.

In the preceding paragraphs I have hinted at a distinction between religion and magic, and I shall now attempt to clarify that distinction. Before analysing what I consider to be the essential difference between the two, I shall briefly review a few of the current theories. Malinowski defines "within the domain of the sacred, magic as a practical art consisting of acts which are only means to a definite end, expected to follow later on; religion as a body of self-contained acts being themselves the fulfillment of their purpose,"[1] i.e. the difference is that in the /

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1. Malinowski, "Magic Science & Religion", op cit, p.81.

the magical act the underlying idea and aim is always clear, straightforward and definite, while in the religious ceremony there is no purpose beyond the rite itself. The native can always state the end of a magical rite, but if questioned about a religious ceremony he will say that it is done because it is the usage or because it is ordained by myth.[1] Yet if one asks a Xosa why he sacrifices a beast when a relative is ill, he will reply that it is to appease an angered itongo.[2] In nearly every sacrifice the end is clearly before the officiant, and sacrifice is surely a religious act. Its bare existence is a contradiction to Malinowski's theory to which other objections might also be raised. But two points of value do emerge from his analyses. The first is that he is correct in saying that in all magical acts (begging, for the time being, the question of what is magic) the end is clearly before the performer. And secondly, Malinowski has attempted to distinguish between magic and religion from the point of view of the native. One has to ask, do the natives draw the distinction? It is impossible for me to say, on the information available, whether the South-Eastern Bantu do or do not. But as will be seen in the text of the thesis there are two distinct classes of men who act respectively as priests and magicians, though the chief becomes high-priest and chief magician of the tribe. Even he, however, tends to delegate this last office to some-one. Moreover, different ceremonies are resorted to on different occasions, according to the causes ascribed for some misfortune, and some /

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1. Ibid, p.38.
2. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.146.

some of these are magical, some religious. So I think I can safely say that the Bantu do recognise a distinction between the two approaches to the supernatural, though I doubt whether even their wisest men would define the difference. I think, therefore, that the anthropologist must base his theories on the natives' classification, but that he may distinguish the two processes from his own, the objectively scientific, point of view.

Let us return for a moment to Frazer. Frazer conceived of magic as a pseudo-science, barren and false, which preceded religion in man's evolution. His analysis of their functions is, however, also revealed in the following citation: "it becomes probable that magic arose before religion in the evolution of our race, and that man essayed to bend nature to his wishes by the sheer force of spells and enchantments before he strove to coax and mollify a coy, capricious, or irascible deity by the soft insinuation of prayer and sacrifice."[1] Divorced from its evolutionary context, this distinction may be valid. Magic is the attempt to control, religion tries to mollify and propitiate. For most purposes, it seems to me, this distinction is valid enough. But I feel, in the first place, that it does not go deep enough in its analysis, and secondly that the magician is made too dominating (spirits may be invoked to bless the rite) and the priest too supplicant (for he may castigate his gods).

I believe a more satisfactory solution can be arrived at by distinguishing the two processes as they work within the officiant. Here are two descriptions from Junod. First let us take the process by which the diviner "smells out /

1. Frazer, J. "The Golden Bough" (Abridged Edition, 1929) p.55.

out" a wizard. "The diviner arrives, decked with amulets and all the insignia of his power. In his hands he carries his magical tail, by way of a whip, and an assegai. He begins to dance, the crowd seated all round him, clapping their hands (wombela), and singing a chorus peculiar to the occasion:

"Nwashongana Khalo! Pamba u ya teka, u ya teka, mungomi..."

"Beautiful dancer of splendid figure! Seek for it, seek for it, diviner!"

"He goes on dancing; like Pythia of old he falls into a condition of extreme excitement, ecstasy, inspiration. He brandishes his tail, dilates his nostrils, inhales the air on all sides, as if to smell out the spot from whence the evil influence has emanated, then takes to his heels in a different direction, the assembly still clapping their hands and singing."[1] Here, clearly, the whole process is one of concentrating power in the diviner - he wears his powerful charms, dances and works himself up, is exhorted by the crowd. All their attention is concentrated on the diviner. He is the central figure of the performance.

This is a specific magical process carried out to discover a wizard who has caused someone to fall ill. When it is the ancestors who have sent the disease the cure is very different. A sacrifice must be performed. "The offering may consist of a hen or an ornament like a bracelet. If it is a hen, my malume will kill it in accordance with the ceremonial rite, take a few of the feathers of the neck, which have been soiled by the blood, put them to his mouth, and spit on them, making tsu (the blood of the victim thus mingles with the saliva of the priest), and say /

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1. Jumod, op cit, Vol. 2. pp.529-30.

say (bulabulela): "You, our gods, and you so and so, here is our mbamba (offering)! Bless this child, and make him live and grow; make him rich, so that when we visit him, he may be able to kill an ox for us ..... You are useless you gods; you only give us trouble! For, although we give you offerings, you do not listen to us! We are deprived of everything! You, so and so (naming the god, to whom the offering must be addressed in accordance with the decree pronounced by the bones, i.e. the god who was angry and who induced the other gods to come and do harm to the village, by making the child ill), you are full of hatred! You do not enrich us! All those who succeed, do so by the help of their gods! — Now we have made you this gift! Call your ancestors so and so; call also the gods of this sick boy's father..... So come here to the altar! Eat and distribute amongst yourselves our ox (the meat) according to your wisdom." [1] Now this is a typical religious act among the Bantu, and though Frazer's definition would cover it he still does not explain it. In comparing this sacrifice with the smelling-out of the wizard, one patent fact, it seems to me, emerges. And that is that though in the sacrifice the priest stands out like the diviner, the concentration and interest of the people is not on him, but on the ancestors, the unseen. The priest working up powers to benefit society but they are all outside him.

I would start, therefore, with the preliminary observation that in the magical act, as the end is clearly before the magician, and is im licit in the act, so the power used /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. p.396. The brackets contain Junod's interpolations.

implicit in the act. That is to say, the magical act uses the power of the supernatural directly, through magician, rite, spell or medicine. In the religious act, the power of the supernatural is transmitted indirectly through the offering to social ends.

Before I interpret these definitions more fully, it might be as well if I examined the phenomena of possession.[1] And I do this with some diffidence. The fact of possession is described by Junod as being religious - "the possessing spirits among the Thonga are spirits of deceased people." But the rites of treatment, he says, are magical, and those who have been exorcised "often become recognised magicians, claiming to possess supernatural powers."[2] I think this is correct. When a spirit seizes a person it is the manifestation of an external force, and is, as such, if anything a religious belief; the disease is treated with rites, spells and medicines which carry efficacy within themselves, i.e. they are magical. Subsequently, the exorcised person uses the power given him by the possessing spirit, and the knowledge of drugs his exorciser gives him, in a magical process. A Zulu account of the method of cure adopted by a doctor possessed by spirits (i.e. an umngoma) is more difficult to place. The cure itself was magical - it consisted in the recovery of bags of medicine used for bewitching. But what of the struggle over these bags between the umngoma's spirits, assisted by the ancestors of the afflicted people, with the spirits of the bewitching person?[3] I cannot help feeling, though the umngoma apparently /

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1. These will be fully analysed in Chapter 7.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol.2. pp. 479 seq. It is a pity that Junod did not describe more fully the force of "claiming to possess supernatural powers."
3. Callaway, op cit, pp.353. seq.

apparently does nothing during the struggle, that here we have a magical process in which the umngoma uses his powers (i.e. his control over his possessing spirits) to conquer a wizard. The ancestors of the sick people are not invoked: it seems that either they interfere of their own accord or the umngoma's spirits compel them to. Callaway does not say what the native telling the tale believes to be true: if it was the first that is true, this part of the cure was religious, if the second, it was magical. Incidentally, the patient died.

To return to the difference between magic and religion, I find it hinted at by Goldenweiser. They are both distinguished, he says, by "the religious thrill," which is the subjective attitude to the supernatural. But "the magical situation may be contrasted with the religious one by the element of constraint involved, the will or power of the magician dominating the situation, whereas in the religious setting the will of the devotee is at best but a will to believe, whereas the will of the god or other divine personage becomes the dominant determinant factor, bringing in its wake worship, supplication, prayer and the like."[1] The shortcoming in Goldenweiser's analysis is that while he distinguishes the source of power and the concentration of will, he fails to realise that religion and magic are processes by which the supernatural powers are involved and concentrated for social ends. It is faltering to say that they are processes marked by the religious thrill, with merely the will to dominate being centred in one case on the gods, in the other in the magician.

Rivers, I believe, set out clearly another essential /

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1. Goldenweiser, op cit, p.347.

essential side of religion and magic. By magic, he meant "a group of processes in which man uses rites which depend for their efficacy on his own power, or on powers believed to be inherent in, or the attributes of, certain objects and processes which are used in those rites"; by religion, "a group of processes, the efficacy of which depends on the will of some higher power, some power whose intervention is sought by rites of supplication and propiation. Religion differs from magic in that it involves the belief in some power in the universe greater than that of man himself."[1] The merits of Rivers' definition are that he recognised that magic and religion are groups of processes (and, I take it, "social processes"[1]) and secondly, that he realised that in the magical act the efficacy of the process depends on powers carried by some part of the act itself. The third merit is that, in distinguishing magic and religion, he uses for both the criterion of where the supernatural power lies. But he ought not to have said that the efficacy of the religious process depends on the will of a higher power. In some religious rites, such as part of the marriage ceremony, no question of the will of a higher power arises, nor is a belief in a power greater than that of man essential, though it is true that in most religious ceremonies, at some time or other, higher powers are involved.

Is it possible, then, to define magic and religion, having reference both to the ends they achieve and the processes by which they do so? I believe it can be done on the following lines: Religion and its ceremonial consists /

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1. Rivers, W.H.R. "Medicine, Magic, and Religion." (1927) p.4.

1. The fifth of the chapter in Rivers' work.

consists essentially in a group of social ideas and processes in which the supernatural powers of the universe are directed to some good of the society, so that these powers indirectly concentrate in objects of social value; and the process of translating these powers takes place outside of the officiant or his ritual procedure.[1] Magic and its ritual, on the other hand, consist essentially in a group of social processes in which supernatural powers residing in a person, words, action or substance are used for social purposes, the power being concentrated in the officiant, his words, actions or substances, and radiating thence to the desired end.

To illustrate these processes I would refer to the two citations from Junod. When the diviner has discovered that a man's disease is due to the working of a wizard (nowi) he works up, within himself, power that is to discover that nowi. As we shall see, these processes are social because they are standardised through the society. He works up the power, translates it, and it radiates from him to the guilty person who is delivered up to the chief. Society is re-stabilised: the social value of magical ritual is apparent.

But where an ancestor is causing a disease the priest does not work on this power within himself. The social process is emphasised because he must behave in a traditional way, but, as we shall see in a later relevent section, the power is working outside of the priest to bring the shikwembu (ancestors) to the spot, and it is their social value is emphasised in the process. they who remove the disease. Of course, the man do feel power working within them, for their relief after the performance /

1. I am not yet concerned with sorcery, which is magical practice designed to anti-social ends. (Vide Chapter 7.)

performance of the sacrifice is very real. But here the officiant is essentially a centre of power, rather than a source of power.

It may be thought that the definitions of religion and magic which I have given tend to be too mystical, but the processes can briefly be elaborated in this way. In a magical act the magician takes some substance of special power and using it in a traditional rite produces a certain end - the power of the substance is largely the emotional attitude of the magician, and the people to it. This emotional power it is which really has effect. In a religious ceremony a large amount of emotional power is already present, and frequently it is heightened in its intensity; there are also, of course, other powers, but these are chiefly the affective side of sensation, as, e.g. at the harvest the sense of the power of the crops. This emotional and other power is present vaguely, and undefined, socially ambivalent: by the ceremony it is used to social ends, and translated so as to concentrate in objects of social value.[1]

F. The Specialist in Religion and Magic.

Hubert and Mauss were the first anthropologists who accurately analysed the role of specialists in ritual and ceremony; they even went so far as to make the existence of these specialists a determining criterion in the distinguishing of religion and magic from other cultural activities. In this section I wish briefly to anticipate problems which will become evident in the text.

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1. Goldenweiser (op cit, p.346, footnote 1.) points out that magic and religion become routine, conventionalised techniques, so that "the original emotional content vanishes". Marett is quoted for his theory of "evaporated emotions". Marett, R.R. "The Threshold of Religion."

The priest among the South-Eastern Bantu occupies his position by virtue of his precedence in the social hierarchy, which is very strongly emphasised in this culture. The chief is priest at tribal ceremonies, the umzi head at ceremonies affecting the umzi, the head of the family at familial sacrifices. He has, then, a special power, not inherent in himself but allotted to him from birth; he occupies his position on account of his relation to the ancestors and to his kinsmen.

The magician among the South-Eastern Bantu is very much of a specialist. As we shall see in the body of the thesis, there are rain-doctors, doctors for storms with hail and without hail; war doctors; diviners; magician-leechers; doctors who deal with birth and doctors who drive away birds, and many other kinds in addition. There are, however, certain rites and charms which can be practised by anyone who has knowledge of them. Thus midwives know special birth charms; the women use well-known fertilisers; travellers have charms. But generally a specialist is required to carry out any magical act - the question arises whether they do so by virtue of special knowledge or special power.

As stated above Schapera and Miss Hunter consider that among the Kxatla and Pondo respectively mere knowledge of the substances to be used (the materia of magic are all important among the Southern Bantu) is sufficient. Thus Miss Hunter in her manuscript on Pondo "Medicine and Magic" says that the Pondo believe, as quoted, in a certain neutral power which is apparently tapped by using amayeza (either medicines with therapeutic properties or charms, the Pondo making /

making no distinction). "Everyone who knows an iyeza can sud does tap X directly, only amaggira (doctors) and amaxwele (herbalists) - being specialists in amayeza - have greater powers of tapping it." Apparently these "greater powers" are obtained only from their "greater knowledge". There is a good deal to be said for this conclusion, but as against it I would cite Junod's reference to the special supernatural powers of the exorcised and the fact that the magician continually invokes his ancestors to strengthen his medicines, which, as there is a tendency for the craft of the inyanga to be hereditary, would indicate that he and only he can practise the craft. Moreover, the greater the social importance of the magic the greater is the tendency of the craft to be hereditary. As against this is must be admitted that where a person who does not inherit the magical art becomes aninyanga his main education consists only in learning; but he has also to undergo a ritual process of initiation. In certain magical rites, moreover, such as rain-doctoring, the inyanga must observe certain rules. And finally, there are many accounts of izinyanga testing their skill against other doctors to see if they are "proper doctors" who have the right to practise. I think that these contests are a trial of power and knowledge, not of knowledge alone. I shall however, leave this problem here, and try to answer it later.

CHAPTER /

RELIGION AND MAGIC IN THEIR PRACTICAL WORKING.

A. In Social and Individual Life.

(1). Birth Ceremonies.

(a) Before Conception and during Pregnancy.

The Bantu rejoice if they have many children, as they do in large herds of cattle. Every girl is raised with the ideal of motherhood before her; her lot in life is to bring forth children to perpetrate another line. Barrenness is a sore affliction. With Bantu women, says Soga, "procreation is not only a divine institution, but also a natural obligation."[1] "A large family," in the words of Macdonald, "is regarded as a mark of special honour."[2]

The close connection of mother with child is socially recognised, as is shown by the fact that among the Zulu, though the child becomes a member of the father's clan, the womb of a female (isi-Zalo) means also the origin of a person, i.e. his tribal name or that of his clan.[3] And as every girl is considered as much a potential mother as an individual, she has throughout her life to observe certain taboos lest her future children be ill affected. These taboos are chiefly on food. In the Tembe and Maputju clans of the Thonga a girl (from the text I infer that this applies throughout her life, though Junod does say they "concern girls before child-bearing and cease after parturition", without saying if they apply to the first gestation

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1. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.289.
2. Macdonald, J. "Manners, Customs, Superstitions and Religions of South African Tribes", J.A.I. (1890 & '91) Vols. 19 & 20; at Vol. 19, p.267.
3. Bryant, "Dictionary", op cit, p.721.

or not) must not eat pork, because pigs root nervously with their noses; her child would also move its head from side to side, when on the verge of birth, thus making delivery difficult. The hare is taboo as too cunning, and the nhlengane antelope because they have an idea that its leg is hollow and that it perceives sound through it; the child "would be unable to hear with its ears, only with its hands!" Apparently only married women need abstain from the nkopfu parts of oxen's bowels, which "would spoil the child inside;" from monkey and porcupine flesh lest their offspring resemble these animals; and from eggs, for fear that either the child would be bald or run about like a hen, making parturition difficult.[1] Among the Zulu the idea against which these taboos are directed is called ulufuza, the "supposed peculiarity possessed by certain animals of passing on their physical characteristics to human beings whose mothers might have eaten them, that is to say, a girl who might eat a guinea-fowl would reproduce children with a long flat head, one who might eat a hare would have long-eared children, one who might eat a swallow would have children who couldn't even make a decent nest, i.e. but for themselves."[2] Other animals which girls should not eat for this reason are the iBoyi (grey-backed bush warbler) lest the children have scraggy legs;[3] the brain of a house-fowl, which would have the same effects as the brain of a guinea-fowl;[4] the koodoo, for reasons unspecified /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.183 seq.
2. Bryant, Dict. op cit, p.162.
3. Bryant, Dict. op cit, p.50.
4. Ibid, ubuCopo, p.80.

unspecified;[1] the reed-buck, which might give the child ugly blue eyes;[2] the lower lip of a bullock, lest the child should have trembling lips;[3] rock-rabbits, against long front teeth;[4] pigs, lest the child be as ugly as a pig.[5] Young men as well as girls abstain from the flesh of a cow which has died after producing a still-born calf (probably from fear of the same thing happening to their children), and from elephant meat, the girls especially dreading that they will give birth, not to children resembling an elephant, but to an elephant itself.[6] From a similar fear Xosa girls do not eat marrow or the flesh of fowls.

Chapter 8 of this thesis will be devoted to a full analysis of the kinds and functions of taboo, and I propose here merely to set out what I take to be the general principles on which taboo is based. The first point to be settled is what kind of power is believed to radiate from these animals so as to render their flesh noxious. And here I must refer to a law of primitive thought that is fundamental in many magical rites, viz., what Lévy-Bruhl has named the law of participations. According to Lévy-Bruhl primitive man's mind is very different from civilised man's mind. "The former is not presented, as we are, with a natural /

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1. Ibid, umGamura, p.171. Wanger, The Collector, No.181
2. Bryant, ibid, inFlanga, p.634.
3. Farrer, J.A. "Zululand and the Zulus", (1897). Callaway, "Nursery Tales of the Zulus", p.282.
4. The Collector (1911), op cit, No.134.
5. Callaway, "Nursery Tales", op cit, p.281.
6. Ibid, p.280. Dudley Kidd in "Savage Childhood" (1906) p.8. gives other taboos, but I am reluctant to quote him as he does not specify his tribes & much of his information is second hand.

a natural world built on a framework of cause and effect. The natural world he lives in presents itself in quite another aspect to him. All its objects and all its entities are involved in a system of mystic participations and exclusions; it is these which constitute its cohesion and its order. They therefore will attract his attention first of all, and they alone will retain it. If a phenomenon interests him, and he does not confine himself to a merely passive perception of it without reaction of any kind, he will immediately conjure up, as by a kind of mental reflex, an occult and invisible power of which this phenomenon is a manifestation."[1] I think that Lévy-Bruhl, in making primitive man thus conjure up occult powers manifesting themselves in phenomena, makes him far more intelligent than he is. But the first part of the quotation suggests what primitive man does do: he experiences the emotions he attaches to a sensation as an essential part of the sensation, and he fails to distinguish the various causes of his emotions, so that he tends to confuse, above all, the part with the whole and the whole with a part. For to him the whole of any being is dispersed in every part, and the properties of each part attach to the whole. Thus he may be nauseated or terrified by the ugliness of an animal; then every part of that animal can transmit that ugliness to him. And similarly, if it is one part of the animal that affects him, the whole (i.e. each and every part) can affect him.[2]

I take it that the power of ululuma possessed by these animals is extraordinary, since not all animals have /

1. Lévy-Bruhl, L. "Primitive Mentality", (English translation, 1962), pp.35-6.
2. cf Junod's "communistic" magic, Junod, op.cit, Vol. II p.370

have these taboos attached to them. It is impossible to say why these particular creatures are singled out unless one were to conduct research on the spot. But the evil power radiating from them has to be guarded against, and the taboo does this. Since the taboo is directed against power which acts directly through a substance it is a magical taboo, which might be defined as an abstinence to prevent supernatural powers, working directly through persons and things, from effecting anti-social ends.

Medicines, in this particular instance, could apparently circumvent the danger. It is curious to note, for example, that the Zulu men behave in exactly the opposite way to the women, and take a mouthful of the flesh of animals generally not eaten (as the porcupine) so as to guard against having children with any resemblance to those animals.[1] I have, though Levy-Bruhl would not have difficulty in accepting these contradictory practices as correctly recorded. But elekezela, in its primary meaning, is to "fortify oneself against evil by eating medicinal charms," and this custom of the men is cited by Bryant as an example of elekezela. I was therefore, on first reading it, tempted to assume that the flesh was first medicated. Since then I have noticed that, according to Kidd, the doctor gives women medicated porcupine flesh to eat, freeing them from the danger of passing the animal's ugliness on to their future children.[2]

The Zulu taboo on the women eating of the fat of the eland falls into a different category. Originally, according to Delargorgue, anyone eating of it would lose his /

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1. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "elekezela", p.129.
2. Kidd, "Savage Childhood", op cit, p.8.

his or her power of procreation. Then, apparently, men were allowed to eat it, and it was taboo only to girls of young married women.[1] Later still, it became taboo because it is "supposed to be used by abatakati to cause sinking of the fontanel with hydrocephalus in their children."[2] Here the basic idea at the root of the taboo has changed from a fear of sterilisation to a fear of the abatakati (wizards). Now, it seems, the idea would be that since the abatakati use the fat, the power of causing hydrocephalus has come to be believed to reside in the substance itself, and not in the wizard's evil intention. The taboo is therefore a precaution against the substance, not the wizard.

Women have to observe other taboos besides those on food. For example, a Zulu woman, according to Delargorgue, would refuse to let her husband come near her if his fingers had touched a boa-python, crocodile or hyaena.[3] The reason for this taboo is, I suggest, lest the qualities of the animal or reptile be communicated through the man to his wife, and thence to her embryo or future children.

A woman should not laugh at a deformed person for if she does her child may be deformed too.[4] This I take to be a ritual or religious sanction, enjoining decent behaviour in conformity with the standards of the society /

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1. Bird, op cit, Vol. 2. p.474. Colenso, "Zulu-English Dictionary", p.118.
2. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "iNpofu", p.396.
3. Bird, op cit, Vol. 2. p.474.
4. Krige, op cit, p.234.

society, for, writes Soga of the Xosa, good taste does[1] not permit the ridiculing of physical infirmities. i.e. If a woman should behave in this way, some power, it may be of the spirits or merely undefined, will punish her.

Before I pass on to the observances of pregnancy, I wish to deal with sterility and its cure. The only reference in the Zulu-Xosa literature to the manner in which a child is created that I know is in Bryant, who writes: "Whereas the fabled Unkulunkulu is credited by the Zulu with having created the first human pair, all subsequent reproductions of the species (i.e. in the wombs of the mothers) is regarded rather as the work of the ancestral spirits, of whom it is said, ... they can make a man (in the dark) without seeing him!"[2] According to Kidd, the amatongo grant fertility or sterility, and favour the course of gestation.[3] The Thonga also find it evident that children are given by the gods.[4] It is therefore logical that a sacrifice to the ancestors should be offered to remove the curse, and this is done by the Thonga. A goat is killed, and from it a garment is made for the sterile woman who also wears the gall-bladder in her hair.[5] The Zulu offer up sacrifice for a barren woman, since the ancestors have the power to cause the birth of children.[6]

Soga does /

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1. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.295.
2. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "isiTntu", p.666.
3. Kidd, "Savage Childhood", op cit, p.8.
4. Junod, Vol. 1. p.190. He always refers to the ancestral spirits as gods.
5. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.190.
6. Krige, op cit, p.316; citing in chief Callaway.

Soga does not mention a sacrifice to cure sterility among the Xosa,[1] but since Macdonald ascribes sterility to the ancestors[2] it is probable that sacrifice was made in these circumstances. I presume that, in all the tribes, the offering was to the father's ancestors. Sacrifice is here, as everywhere in ritual, a religious process in which power outside of the officiant, the offering or the prayer, i.e. the power of the ancestors, is involved for social ends. Moreover, the gathering at the sacrifice, and the communal meal which follows on it, involve the translation of supernatural power. The power of the ancestors who can give or withhold their blessing, the intense emotions of the woman for whom the sacrifice is made, and the emotional concentration of those present are the sources of this power. The sacrifice is a catharsis for the woman: her doubts are relieved in so far as that is possible, and she is uplifted by the power of the ancestors and of her fellows - she is of social value and the social sentiments about her are reinforced, i.e. new power is concentrated in her. Furthermore, since the sacrifice is to the ancestors and all the people present are centring their interest in these spirits, the farmer's emotional power is crystallized to concentrate in the ancestors, who are another social value. Then the priest, the head of the family, gains prestige, for his descendants are made to realise that they are dependant on his good offices. And finally the medium of sacrifice, the goat or ox, has further established its social value.

"But, in addition to the religious rite," says Junod, "native doctors have many drugs to militate against this /

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1. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.297.
2. Macdonald, op cit, Vol. 20. p.276.

this misfortune."[1] Bryant has shown that the Zulu have many medicines for impotency and barreness, and these apparently are thought to have an objective effect.[2] A Xosa woman who is barren resorts to "a diviner (ixukazana) of the ukuqubula (kneader) variety;" he prescribes a remedy of roots ground and mixed with water to a paste. The woman must also cook a cake of millet and eat it on her own.[3] Here we have an instance where it is almost impossible to distinguish the processes where the drugs used convey supernatural powers from those where they are natural. Apparently the natives themselves make no distinction, for, as quoted on the Pondo from Miss Hunter, they make no "distinction between a medicine with therapeutic properties and a charm." All the treatment of sterility I would class as magical, and not medical.

The Zulu, at least, have medicines connected with birth and used to other ends. Thus if a child of particular sex is desired, the wife, before coition, drinks a decoction of orange lily (gloriosa virescens) which has some roots the shape of the male organ and some like the female. She uses the roots shaped like the organ of the sex she wishes her child to be.[4] A woman who hitherto has only borne female children takes medicine of iliHlanya, a shrub, (apparently the same as the above) to procure male offspring.[5]

This is /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1, p.190.
2. Bryant, A.T. "Zulu Medicine and Medicine Men", (Vol. 2. Pt. 1. Annals of Natal Government Museum, 1909) pp.58.seq.
3. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, pp.287-8.
4. Bryant, "Zulu Medicine", op cit, p.57.
5. Bryant, Dict. op cit, p.240.

This is magic on the principle "like makes like".

Another Zulu belief affecting children in the pre-conceptual stage, is that the Zulu mother is able, by dreams when she is about to conceive, to foretell the sex of her child. "Should she about this time dream of a green or black snake, or a buffalo, etc., she will conceive a male child; but if she dreams of a puff-adder, that she is crossing a full river, etc., she will conceive a female child."[1] It is a pity that Bryant did not elaborate this belief, but it seems from the description that it is the dream that determines the embryo's sex, possibly the dream is sent by the ancestors who make the child so as to fix the sex, i.e. it is a manifestation of an external power, not quite a divine revelation. This, of course, is the interpretation that Lévy-Bruhl would put on it, for according to him, the dream is reality, to the primitive mind, as much as waking life is, and carries the power of making real what it presents.[2]

The next set of customs to be considered are those during pregnancy itself. A Thonga practice during a woman's first pregnancy illustrates the difficulty of separating natural from supernatural. When the breasts begin to swell, the physician makes small incisions near the breast and on the legs. The pregnant woman also drinks a decoction to remove the blood, because the Thonga think that as the menses are suspended the blood must accumulate in the body. This I class as a natural treatment, though it is based on erroneous beliefs, and I place the following observances in the same category: a pregnant woman must not drink water when standing up. She must kneel down, otherwise the water would /

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1. Ibid, "Pupa", p.518. (2) Lévy-Bruhl, "Primitive Mentality" op cit, pp.27. seq.

would fall violently on the head of the child and hurt it. She must keep her belly and shoulders bare, lest the child be born with membranes on its head; she must not take the sauce of her porridge too hot, for there would be a chance of the baby being scalded and having black spots when born.[1] It is more difficult to classify a taboo against her eating pigeons, which, since they have no blood in their breast muscles, would cause her to have no milk; this supposed effect is an example of what Sir James Frazer calls homoeopathic or imitative magic.[2] I incline to doubt whether the Thonga would regard it as a natural process. The pregnant woman must not even look at a monkey, lest she "take to herself" (tekela) its form and the child be like it.[3] Here again, on the information available, it is virtually impossible to classify this taboo, but I think it is also a magical precaution. The taboo on preparing the ntehe (the skin in which the baby is carried on its mother's back) before the birth, is explained as existing because no one knows what will happen. "The child might die!"[4] On the surface there is no causal relation here, but perhaps the fear is of tempting providence.

"Pregnancy", according to Junod, "is not considered as a tabooed period," and sexual relations are even encouraged as favourable to the pregnancy. But I think there must be some idea among the BaThonga that the woman is in a state which threatens danger, because of the new forces at work inside her, for "a woman, in the beginning of pregnancy /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.190-1. (2) Frazer, op cit, p.12
3. Junod, loc cit. (4) Junod, op cit, Vol.1 p.191.

pregnancy, must not visit a sick person. The latter might die."[1] This conception is more developed among the Zulu.

During pregnancy the Zulu woman must be very careful, for there are many dangers which threaten her unborn child. A class of these dangers is the imikondo, arising from the tracks of certain animals, such as the eland. If the expectant mother passes over these tracks the child will be afflicted by a sinking of the fontanel. As a prophylactic against this disease the woman wears a charm of the umkondo plant about her ankle.[2] I think that this plant is a charm and not a therapeutic medicine, in the eyes of the Zulu; it is probably believed by special powers inherent in itself to counteract evil influences radiating from certain animals against the child. Now the Zulu probably, as I have stated before, make no distinction between natural and supernatural forces as such, but I think they must recognise the influence exerted by these animals as extraordinary. They here, by the law of participations, invest the tracks with the properties of the animal. The idea that these forces are extraordinary is in a measure validated by the fact that when a woman becomes pregnant she is immediately treated by the doctor and takes medicines till two or three months after delivery, to counteract evil influences; by that time the child is strong enough to resist of itself.[3]

There are a few indications that the Zulu woman, when pregnant, is in a marginal state; she must cover her abdomen /

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1. Ibid, pp.191, 187-8.

2. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "umkondo", p.315.

3. Lugg, H.C. "Notes on Some Puberty and other Customs of the Natives of Natal and Zululand", Man, Vol. 3. 1907, No. 73. at p.118.

abdomen and breasts from sight with the isiCayi garment, which she substitutes for her usual dress.[1] In the Nongoma District of Northern Zululand she wore a long kaross, covering her from head to feet.[2] But clearer evidence is afforded by precautions the husband must take. Thus even a doctor "whose occupation it is to enable others to cross deep rivers" will be quickly carried away if he goes into the water while his wife is pregnant.[3] Callaway[4] and Kidd[5] (I think after Callaway) write that "it is not liked" that a newly ~~married~~ married man should go out with the army. According to Kidd, this is till after the birth of their first child, to keep the family alive, and "because men who are just married are supposed to be tender-hearted, and therefore a hindrance to the army," but Callaway says it is because "the enemy quickly stabs the man who has made his bride cover her head," i.e. just married. This suggests that the man is more open to danger, and it may well be because it is assumed that his wife has just conceived.

The fact that the woman is in a dangerous condition has been clearly shown by Miss Hunter, who worked among the Pondo. The Pondo have a conception of umlaza, ceremonial impurity, and a woman is in this state while she is pregnant. The umlaza lasts from the time of conception till the beer-drinking which takes place ten days after the birth, the

washing /

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1. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "gcaya", "ingcayi", p.174.
2. Griffiths, J. MSS.(July) 1929.
3. Callaway, "Religious Systems", op cit, p.443.
4. Ibid, pp.442-3.
5. Kidd, D. "The Essential Kafir", (1925) pp.306-7.

washing of the hands and the coming out of the hut. It is a disputed question, says Miss Hunter, whether umlaza is dangerous to a sufferer. It works upon the outside world, affecting the cattle. (A pregnant woman is the only one of those in a state of umlaza who can drink milk.) It also negatives the value of medicine; aggravates pain; is dangerous to sick people; to abakwata (circumcised boys) but not girls at intonjane; makes warriors and their weapons soft. A pregnant woman must avoid all men save her husband. Cook does not mention any such conception among the Bomvana, nor Soga among the Xosa, and Kropf does not give the word "umlaza" in his dictionary. Macdonald writes that "during pregnancy there is a certain restriction ordained by custom, but departure from it is not regarded otherwise than as unusual conduct on the part of the woman, and no evil consequences are supposed to follow."[2] But in view of Miss Hunter's emphatic analysis of umlaza, and the suggestions of it among the Thonga and Zulu, I incline to think the conception exists throughout the South-Eastern Bantu area. The reasons that underlie it Miss Hunter does not give; probably the woman is in a state of ceremonial impurity, threatening danger to her fellows and the cattle, because she is literally pregnant with new forces. The child that is to be born will affect many people, and the society at large, but particularly her and her husband, who therefore must take special care of his life. These forces are tremendous forces, for on the phenomenon of conception, pregnancy and birth depends the future of the society, and they

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1. Hunter, MSS.
2. Macdonald, op cit, Vol. 19. p.267.

therefore threaten danger, through their very existence, to the sick, to medicines, etc.[1]

(b) Birth.

The birth of a child has two main effects. In the first place, it places in jeopardy the life of the labouring woman, and that of the child, and to guard against their death the doctor uses the magical powers of certain medicines. Secondly, the new-born child, dropped into society, must affect its relatives, those that are dead and those that are alive; its very existence, and its potential social personality, exert a force that must be translated in terms of social value. This is the basis of the religious side to birth ceremonies. Moreover, birth is a characteristic rite of passage: the mother passes through a period of transition whence she emerges with enhanced status, whether it be her first or her fifth child, though the advance is greatest when it is her first; and the child makes its entry into society. On these principles I shall analyse birth ceremonies among the Bantu, but before proceeding to do so I wish to make one observation.

Birth pangs can act, among the Thonga, as a sort of ritual sanction on adultery. The penalty for bringing forth a child conceived in unconfessed adultery is that the birth pangs will be unduly protracted. The Thonga woman who knows hers is an adulterous child confesses it secretly to the principal /

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1. Soga notes a taboo: (Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.290):- "An enceinte must not go to her father's house without her husbands permission, or the child will die." This is a social taboo, probably expressing the rights of the husband's family to the child as against the wife's. The breach of it is punished by either the religious of the ritual sanction.

principal midwife. If the birth is protracted the mother must drink a decoction containing the husband's semen. If the child "feels his father" he will emerge promptly. The woman must confess all her lovers till the real father is named, "as it is absolutely necessary that the true father of a child be known on the day of its birth."[1] Later, if he passes by the baby, the midwife will throw a pinch of sand from his footprints on the fontanella of the baby. The Zulu do not apparently have this belief, though Griffiths notes that "as soon as a woman realizes that she is about to become a mother, she informs her husband of the fact, lest he become suspicious that she had committed adultery,"[2] nor is it recorded in the Transkei. (But we are told by Kropf that if the child will not take the breast it is a sign that the woman or man has been unfaithful in heart at least.[3] Soga, however, says that if the child should do this the mother is thrashed to make her tell what is the reason, for it is supposed to be due to her having dreamt of Tikoloshe or other spirits, dreams which prevent the child from getting nourishment. If the thrashing is not effective the diviner is called in, and he may order the ligament under the infant's tongue to be cut.[4])

It is impossible to say why among the Thonga the real father must be known. Since Junod says that the husband will not care particularly whether he is or is not the father,[5] it can scarcely be a full ritual sanction on adultery /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.40-1.
2. Griffiths, Mss.
3. Kropf, op cit, "uku-Bula", p.46.
4. Soga, "Ama-Xosa", op cit, p.298.
5. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.41.

adultery, though that it is some sort of sanction is the best suggestion I can make.

I propose now to distinguish the magical element in birth ceremonies. Here again there is the difficulty of deciding whether treatment is medical or magical. Bryant in his "Zulu Medicine and Medicine-Men" has set out the specifics used for uterine disorders, miscarriages, parturition and puerperal fever.[1] Most of these I class as ordinary medicines. But where polyps of the womb are caused by a wizard, so as to obstruct parturition, the treatment must be considered magical. The woman is taken to the river, where the polyps are cut off with intsikana grass. Profuse bleeding follows, delivery is effected, and an ilikambi (infusion of herbs) completes the operation.[2] To cause the disease the umtakati uses umu-si poison.[3] Now it is possible that such a poison would have the objective effects ascribed to it, but nevertheless I feel that, in the opinion of the Zulu, an extraordinary power must radiate from it, especially as it is used by an umtakati. The treatment, therefore, though apparently purely medical, must nullify the workings of the wizard. It is true, however, that it is probably carried out by the midwives - generally, as will be seen, the inyanga does not officiate at the birth - and the cure may not involve any use of special powers. This could only be settled by an investigation on the spot.

An example of the way in which the Zulu treat the child with various medicines is afforded by the prevention of the strong sexual desires they know as ulugqoyi.[2] This is done by a special cleansing ceremony at birth, described /

1. Op.cit, pp.56-7. (2) Bryant, Dict. op cit, "umu-si" p.585.
3. Ibid, p.200

described by the verb gweba. "Every native child is supposed to be tainted at birth with a constitutional defect called isi-gweba, which is held to be the cause of several ailments, as unusual sexual irritation causing lecherous inclinations in adults, disposition to eczema, etc. To get rid of this taint the stem of a castor-oil or umsenge[1] leaf, or a stalk of fibre, is thrust by the mother into the rectum of the child and vigorously twirled round between both hands (as when beating up an egg), until, by scraping on the membrane of the bowels, blood is copiously drawn. Not unfrequently children die as a result of the proceeding."[2] This, though of doubtful utility, is a medical, not a magical, practice. But sometimes a magical belief creeps into medical practice. Thus an infusion of certain plants, isihlambezo, is kept in a covered pot by a pregnant woman. She drinks a spoonful from this now and then during the latter months of her pregnancy, which the medicine is supposed to render successful, with easy delivery. This is pure leechcraft, but there is one precaution to be observed in the use of the isihlambezo which I think is magical. No person must look at this medicine, lest the child take on his likeness -- "the reflection in the water being presumably swallowed," says Bryant, "by the woman in the drinking and transferred to the child."[3] I take this to be a magical precaution because it is actuated by a fear of a man's personality acting directly, though not of his active intention, through a certain medium. The magical principle at work is the law of participations: the reflection carries the man's personality into the

medicine /

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1. The cabbage tree, Ibid, p.567.
2. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "gweba" p.214.
(3) Ibid, "isi-Hlambezo", pp.238-9.

medicine which comes to partake of his likeness and passes it on through the mother to the child.

A Zulu medicine used to different ends is the uMalali plant, used for washing a new-born babe to make it grow up a quiet child, not given to crying.[1] Here again, it is impossible, save by local investigation, to say how the uMalali works. I take it that the plant is used by the midwives.

Junod gives a poor description of Thonga birth medicines[2] so I prefer to quote the better records on the Transkeian tribes. Thus Kropf[3] gives various plants used as purgatives for the child on the day of its birth, viz., uJojane (p.161); uSikiki (p.369); the isiTakidi (p.58) plant to procure easy delivery; and um-Nuka-mbiba (p.278) to make the child strong, a process known as Pehlelela (p.310). But this process is also to cleanse the child of iHashe, of which Kropf says (p.141) that it is "the natural impurity of new-born infants, believed to be from an internal swelling, of which they are to be purified by enchanted medicines, when the rite of ukupehlelela is performed, by saying: Hashe, hashe! when swinging a new-born child through the smoke of umNikambiba." Here there seems to be some idea that the child is filled with forces, dangerous to itself and its fellows, which must be discharged by a magical process, in the same way as the Zulus use imiti enhlope (white medicines).[4] Soga gives fuller descriptions of the isi-Takati and usikiki medicines which would show their use to be purely therapeutic.[5]

Other /

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1. Ibid, p.378.
2. Dictionary, op cit.
3. "Ama-Xosa". op cit, pp.290-1.
4. op cit, Vol. I. pp.48-9.
5. Vide infra.

Other medicines and observances are more clearly magical. The best evidence we have of these is also on the Zulu, so that I shall chiefly cite from their culture. One class of dangers to be guarded against is the inyamazane, "a certain class of diseases supposed to be caused by 'animal' medicines or charms, as the sinking of the fontanel (from spurious hydrocephalus) in an infant." Of the treatment Bryant writes: "When a child is born it is washed and immediately held in the smoke of burning animal charms, comprising a small particle of every possibly obtainable animal of ill-luck. It is afterwards given to drink of the same. This is supposed to act as a prophylactic against all kinds of i-nyamazane disease which it may have contracted while in the womb. Should the child grow up to enjoy sound health, it is said kapulela kinyamazane (they were all rightly combined, were the animal charms); but should it grow up e.g. to be more or less stupid, it is said kwavama ivondwe (there was too much of the water-rat); and so on."[1] My reason for distinguishing this treatment as magical is that here the disease to be treated results from the influence of certain animals on the child through the mother. The cure is the use of parts of the animals themselves: their power is used to neutralise their power. In other words, in terms of my definition of magic, the power of these animals is used, through parts of their bodies, for social ends against their own evil power. Umkondo, as was shown in the section on pregnancy, is the same disease and in Bryant's description of it he gives additional precautions taken against it. Thus if the mother has to travel she

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1. Bryant, Dictionary; op cit, "inyamazane"; pp.465-4.

collects rubbish from each path she traverses; when she reaches home she burns these on the hearth and holds the infant in the smoke, and this is supposed effectually to "expel any injurious influence she may have brought back with her from those paths".[1] The principle of this magical treatment is the same as that for the inyamazane. But other people may introduce the disease, and so for a day or two after the birth they are rigorously excluded from the hut. Afterwards, for a month or two, anybody entering must perform the ukulumula rite. This is only suspended when the child is deemed old enough to crawl outside and so to withstand the evil influences with which the outer world is supposed to be reeking full." The visitor nibbles a peice of charm-grasses, herbs, etc., which are hung up over the doorway and spits upon the child, so that any injurious umkondo which he may have introduced is rendered innocuous.[2] Here the influences feared act, as in the inyamazane disease, through another on the child, but instead of the power of parts of the influence itself, or of paths over which it has passed, being used as antidote, the magical power inherent in certain grasses and herbs is used. Even more clearly magical in its processes is the rite as described by Kidd. Powdered whiskers of a leopard, the skin of a salamander, the claws of a lion and parts of other animals are used, and each one is supposed to impart to the child the special quality of the animal from which it is made; (i.e. the rite is based on the law of participations). More important still is a powder of meteorite, which "has the power of closing the anterior fontanelle of the baby's skull /

1. Ibid, "um-Kondo"; p.315.
2. Ibid, "ukulumula"; p.367.

skull, of strengthening and of making firm the bones of the skull, of imparting vigour to the child's mind and of making the infant brave and courageous.[1] The use of the animal charms clearly shows the principle of magic that part of a thing conveys all the qualities of that thing; the power transferred to the child is not power within the animal part, but the whole essence of the animal. As regards the meteorite, I think that there is much in Junod's suggestion that its power comes from its close connection with heaven.[2] A further magical rite is the smoking of the child so as to repel wizards; but apparently the child is not so much strengthened against the evildoers, as that the latter dislike the odour of the smoke.[3]

The Thonga doctor puts into a shard pieces of the skin of all the beasts of the bush - antelopes, wild cats, elephants, hippopotami, rats, civet cats, hyaenas, eland and snakes of dangerous kinds - and roasts them, exposing the baby to the smoke and rubbing it with an ointment made from the powder. This treatment is to protect the baby from the animals themselves, not from a disease emanating from their influence, but it is based on the principles of the Zulu inyamazane magic. This treatment is also a preventative for convulsions.[4]

The religious element in birth ceremonies beside the passage rites, is sacrifice. The Thonga, shortly after the birth, kill a fowl for a girl, a cock for a boy, and later a goat,[5] but Junod does not say whether these are or are not sacrifices. The first prayer on behalf of the child /

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1. "Savage Childhood"; op cit, pp.12-13.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.44. footnote 4.
3. Kidd, "Savage Childhood"; op cit, pp.18-19.
4. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.43-4.
5. Ibid, Vol. ' pp.42, 45.

child to the ancestors occurs in Junod's description of the rite of presentation to the new moon, three months after birth. From then on, I gather, the ceremony is repeated twice every month, at new and full moon. The mother and her child are given a steam bath; then the doctor incises them on forehead, sternum, between the shoulders, on elbow, wrist and knee, and puts medicines into the incisions. The medicine is also infused with water; the mother pours some on the hands of the doctor who spits out, utters the sacramental tsu and throws it on the child. The mother rubs the child's whole body with the medicine, while the doctor invokes his ancestors to render his medicine powerful and through it the child. The mother invokes her ancestors; apparently the father's are not yet approached.[1] The distinction between the doctor's and the mother's prayers is important: the former asks that his ancestors strengthen his medicine, the latter that her ancestors care directly for the child. There is a sacrifice of a chicken when the child is weaned, offered by the doctor to his and the child's ancestors.[2]

According to Kidd's description of the smoking of the infant the most important ingredient is "some dirt scraped from the forearm and other parts of the father's body." This dirt contains a part of the father's personality and "has therefore an intimate though undefined connection with the itongo or spirit of the grandfather and so of the clan." This ceremony "was the recognised way of imparting a portion of the itongo or ancestral spirit to the child."[3] It is clear that a thanks-offering in the form of an ox is offered to the /

1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp. 58-55. (2) Ibid, Vol. 1. p.58.

3. "Savage Childhood"; op cit, pp.12-13.

to the ancestors on the birth of the first son. Kidd states emphatically that this is only done for the first child, and then only if it is a son,[1] but the same writer says elsewhere (though I cannot say if it applies to the Zulu) that the father is bound to sacrifice an ox, apparently for every child, in order to induce the ancestral spirits to take special care of the child throughout its life.[2] From Griffiths' information (which describes Zulu custom long after contact with the Europeans) the father makes the offering only for twins[3] the birth of which will be shortly discussed.

Kropf describes a special sacrifice, Bingelela, which is offered for a child at its birth, on the day the mother ceases lying-in, by the father or other member of the village,[4] but not by the priest-doctor, i.e. clearly a sacrifice to the ancestors. According to Macdonald, the father offers a sheep, a goat or an ox, as a thanksoffering to his ancestors and to secure their favour on behalf of the child during the first few years of its life. In the event of the child being sickly, or if it is the successor of children which have died, there are further sacrifices.[5] Cook's description of the Bomvana states that the sacrifice is for the mother and not the child,[6] but Soga states clearly that the bingelela sacrifice is performed on behalf of the child.[7] On the tenth day, among the Bomvana, a bulungu necklace (i.e. a necklace made from the tail of one

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1. "Savage Childhood", op cit, p.86.
2. Kidd, "The Essential Kafir" op cit, p.203.
3. Griffiths, MSS.
4. op cit, p.34.
5. op cit, Vol. 19. p.267.
6. op cit, pp.49-50.
7. "Ama-Xosa"; op cit, p.238.

of the cows brought by the bride to her new home) is put round the baby's neck, probably to gain for it the favour of the mother's ancestors.[1]

These sacrifices, in general, serve to introduce the child to the ancestors, and propitiate them on its behalf. The emotional translation at the back of the sacrifice is fairly clear. The new life has come into being, and the minds of the family are oppressed with doubts and hopes of its future. In the sacrifice, over which the ancestors preside, this feeling is positively fixed as hope, for the outside powers have been invoked on behalf of the child. Some of the ambivalent emotions about the child are therefore converted into positive social emotional power and this is consentrated in the ancestors who give this relief; if it is, as is usual, the patriarch who presides at the sacrifice he gains in power, for here he sacrifices on behalf of the new member of the clan, as he and only he, can sacrifice for any member of it; and finally attention is drawn to the baby, about which sentiments are clearly beginning to crystallise.

But birth ceremonies are clearly a rite de passage as is shown particularly among the Thonga,[2] where they are spread over a year before the child is properly recognised as a member of the tribe. From the moment that the birth-pangs begin,[3] men, girls and the woman's female family-relations must not come near her. The place of delivery is generally the back of the woman's hut; the umbilical cord

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1. Cook, op cit, pp.48-74. (2) Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. p.86 seq.
3. I shall not, as it is unnecessary, describe the process of birth. This, in all the tribes is carried out fundamentally the same way. Vide. e.g. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.86-87.

is tied some three inches from the navel, cut and anointed. When it falls off, generally at the end of a week, it is a sign that the period of confinement is at an end. The placenta is buried behind the hut, deep, with great care. The child is then washed with water which is thrown away, as being polluted by the blood of the birth. During the period of confinement the mother "is restricted to a special diet, and this is a true marginal period for her. She is absolutely outside the pale of society." The doctor gives her a dish of mabele mixed with medicines which is called shimbimbi and has two purposes: (i) to expel the unclean blood which follows birth, and (ii) to stimulate the production of milk. It is eaten with a special spoon, lest unclean blood enter it and cause the mother to become phthisic. During this period there are various mediations, but of main importance are the taboos: the husband must not enter the hut, for though he is not contaminated himself, he would put himself in danger if he approached his wife; all married people, i.e. those who have regular sexual relations, are excluded, for should they touch the child it would die. The end of the confinement period raises these taboos and it is marked by two rites. Th mother of the delivered woman has to smear the floor of the hut with clay, a rite which takes away the dangerous blood. The second rite is that of the broken pot, described in the magical rites. As the child has been medicated against animals, it can safely be brought out of the hut.

This confinement period, in which the danger radiates partly from the mother who is polluted by the blood of the lochia, which menaces her husband particularly, and partly from other people against the child, removes the

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ritual impurity to which she is subject. It ends with the falling off of the umbilical cord and the cleansing of blood from the hut. The mother, producing new life in the shadow of death, is surrounded by dangerous forces, and the mere relapse of time (possibly, too, the ceasing of the fluxes) is sufficient to allow of the villagers' being innoculated against these forces. During this period, in addition, sentiments may begin to crystallize about the living child, and those centred in the mother can accomodate themselves to her new status. The child, weak and tender, comes out only after being strengthened by magical processes. Now comes the first introduction of the baby, and the re-introduction of the mother, to society. After the child's maternal grandmother has smeared the hut she goes home, and, if it is a first-born child, she returns attended by her female relations. They bring food, smear parents, baby and villagers with ochre, marking the new event. For a subsequent child the mother's parents merely send a basket of food. The difference between a mother newly introduced to maternity and a mother who has merely added to her offspring, is obvious. In the former instance a new village has been founded, the parents have "grown roots". For a first-born child the maternal uncle should, though it is not commanded by ritual, provide the ntcha skin, symbolizing his relationship to all his sister's children.

During the ensuing weeks the child is nursed and regularly medicated, but it passes through few rites till the third month, when normally the mother's menses will begin again. The mother washes her clothes and then puts

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on new garments, preparatory to presenting the child to the moon (the yandla ceremony). When the new moon appears the mother takes a brand of fire and, followed by the grandmother (Junod does not say which one, but probably it is the mother's, since the ceremony takes place at his village) carrying the child goes to the ash-heap behind the hut. She flings the burning stick towards the moon, and the grandmother throws the child in the air, saying, "This is your moon! ". She puts the child on the ashes, it cries and rolls over; the mother takes it up and nurses it, and returns to the hut. Now certain taboos are lifted, of which the chief is that previously the father could not take the child in his arms. "Up to that day, this was taboo, as the child being continually with his mother was perhaps polluted by the dangerous blood following the birth; but now she has washed her clothing and has been purified by the reappearance of the menses; so the danger no longer exists." The phenomena of the ceasing of the menses symbolises, perhaps, to the native mind the dangerous power, (c.f. the Pondo umlaza) that is stored in the mother, and only when they are resumed can the father closely approach her and her child. She also is subject to danger and this indicates his close relationship with the two. But the yandla is also a further aggregation - placing the child on the ash-heap and nursing it there, the woman doubtless introduces it in a measure to the household life of the indlu. Why it should be specially presented to the moon it is difficult to say. The new moon is always received by the Thonga with joy [1] perhaps the baby, also represented by the brand, is introduced /

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1. Junod, op cit, Vol. 2. p.506.

introduced to it for good luck.

The last aggregation rite[1] performed is boba puri, "the tying of the cotton string", when the child begins to crawl. The parents have intercourse, but the mother must not conceive, i.e. coitus interruptus semine non immisso. The mother smears "their filth" on a cotton string and ties it round the child's waist, where it is left till it falls to pieces. Now the child is "grown up" and can be buried, if it dies, on the hill, in dry soil. (If a child dies before this rite is performed it must be buried in wet soil, near the river, as is done with twins and children who cut their upper teeth first). The child can also participate in the ceremonial purification which takes place after the death of one of the inhabitants of the village, and the parents can resume sexual intercourse, though the woman must not conceive till the child has been weaned, after another year or more. "It is clear" writes Junod, "that the tying of the cotton string means the official reception of the child into the family, ever into human society. Before that, he was hardly considered as a human being, he was shilo (a thing; khuma (an incomplete being). Now he is nkulu, a grown up child." The essence of this aggregation rite is the ritual resumption of sex relations between the father and the mother, and the investiture of the child with their sexual secretions, which must contain the very essence of their personalities.

The rite de passage is complete, though the child remains in the care of the doctor till it is weaned, a process that is also marked with ritual.[2] The doctor sacrifices a chicken and prays to his ow[illegible]s and those of the /

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1. Ibid, Vol. 1. pp.56.seq. (2) Ibid, Vol. 1. pp.58-9 I am describing the rite in the Northern clans.

the child's ancestors (this is a very exceptional approach) to bless the child. The beak, a claw and a feather of the hen are fastened round the child's neck, and it is smeared with oil and powder brought by the inyanga, and bran from mealies pounded by the mother. Particles are collected on a mat and made into a ball by the mother. She thrusts the ball into an ant hole and returns without looking back. This rite of weaning reveals, according to Junod, that for the natives "these three first years of the child's life are a period of disease; so many perils threaten the little one's well-being that he can hardly be considered healthy. He is during the whole time under the supervision of the physician, who takes leave of the little patient on the day of the weaning." The doctor with his protective medicines departs, and as a last measure he invokes his ancestors to bless the child. The mother's breast is now forbidden to it, and it must be purged of its infancy. The ball thrust into the ant's hole, and which the ant carries away, represents the passing of this period. Moreover, to symbolise that the child has passed from the nursing care of its mother, it is sent, the next day, if it is a first-born child to the mother's parents, otherwise to the father's parents.

The manner of working of these rites de passage is typically religious. The child is a source of power, as a potential social personality, and it must be introduced into society. But as birth is the fount of society's permanence the child must be introduced with care, and gradually, till there is some assurance that it will grow up to become an adult member of the tribe. (It is not fully recognised till initiation). This is therefore

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done in a series of liberations, in which the mother participates, till gradually she returns to her normal mode of life, conceives, and passes through the whole cycle again. By these rites firm, and socially determined, sentiments are formed about the child, sentiments that will be enhanced and strengthened as it passes through puberty, marriage and parenthood.

The extra rites of jubilation and aggregation at the birth of a first-born son further validate the above conclusions. Among the Zulu, who rank men higher than women, the mother is secluded in her hut eight days for a male child, five days for a female child, [1] for the forces that produce the former are socially more important. A chief requires still more gradual introduction into society. The Thonga queen retires on becoming pregnant to a remote part of the country; the infant's birth, if it is a boy, is kept secret; and he is only taken to the capital at boyhood, and then only if, after consulting the bones and offering sacrifices, it seems well to do so. Now for the first time the heir meets his father, and a sacrifice is offered to "proclaim to the gods the return to the capital of the heir to the throne." [2] According to E.C. Samuelson, a Zulu chief's child "was not considered to be a human being" till six months after birth as against a period of one month for a commoner's child. [3] Kidd, in "Savage Childhood" when he does not specify the tribe of which he is writing, in referring to the birth of a chief does not detail differences in the separation or aggregation rites, but only in the doctoring. According to him the chief sends men to dig

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1. Bryant, Dict. op cit, "Goya", p.194.
2. Junod, op cit, Vol. 1. pp.368-9.
3. op cit, p.354.

out a large, succulent herb, called ipakama. A man of conspicuous character is killed and buried in the hole from which it is dug; the root is powdered and mixed with water so as to form an intelezi, a medicinal wash. With this the heir to the chieftainship (and apparently the chief's subsequent children) is daily washed in the chief's private hut in the cattle-fold, and some of the intelezi is rubbed into a hole in the base of his right thumb, which can make its authority felt.[1] These various ceremonies show that the chief needs extra strengthening by magical substances, at birth, and also, in view of his potentially greater social personality, a more gradual introduction into tribal life.

The great social value of birth itself is clearly shown in the extra rites that attend the parturition of a woman who has had several children which have died. A Thonga woman in this position is considered to be in a special condition, known as bowumba,[2] and when she bears another child she carries it in an ntshe of sheepskin, not of antelope or goat skin. If it is a boy it is dressed in girl's clothing, and vice versa, while the breasts of the mother are smeared with a special medicine, for they are "breasts of the dead." The child must be weaned and sent to its grandparents as soon as possible. The treatment of the mother's milk and the removal of the child from the mother are magical precautions to counteract the bowumba. Other rites are practised to protect the baby against bad luck. The first is the kunga, a rite of silence. When visitors come to see her the mother remains silent till they have given her presents which she puts on the ntshe. The silence of the kunga rite probably signifies the doubly dangerous /

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1. op cit, pp.19-20. (2) Junod, op cit, pp.194-8.

dangerous marginal period in which the mother is, the gifts express the sympathy and help of her visitors. The silence of mourning visits is different: in the case of the bowumba rite the mother has now cause for rejoicing, though there is great danger that death may again kill off her offspring. Another rite is also observed in the Northern clans, known as ringela bowumba, to precede the bowumba. The child is buried up to its neck in the ash-heap; then somebody runs to the village, takes a handful of grains of maize and throws them on the child. Afterwards it is dug up, washed, smeared with ochre and brought home. According to an old Spelonken Thonga the bowumba will be deceived, & it will no longer desire the baby which has been thrown together with all the refuse of the village on to the ash-heap. "It is no longer able to eat mealies, even if it is given mealies; it is dead. Let the bowumba take no notice of it!" But the great doctor Mankhelu called the rite "ringela bowumba," an attempt to bring some influence to bear, the misfortune of the bereaved mother. Probably it was both: the deception on the lines indicated and the attack on the misfortune by burying the child in the village ash, letting it (as I suggested before) in the family life, and marking its status with ochre.

The Zulu call in the doctor to assist a woman whose children die in infancy. Callaway translates a tale of a woman who was thus affected, a condition which the Zulu apparently call death. Resource was had to a diviner with familiar spirits, who said a wizard had bewitched her by working on her urine. A struggle ensued between the familiar spirits and the wizard's spirits and according to their own reports the former were successful: but the woman

subsequently /

Author Gluckman M M
Name of thesis The Realm Of The Supernatural Among The South-eastern Bantu: A Study Of The Practical Working Of Religions And Magic. 1934

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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