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## EDITORIAL.

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There is, we believe, amongst members a modicum of feeling on the subject of the size of the Journal. Some complain that the articles are too few, others that the advertisements are too many. In the present number we shall have appeased at any rate the latter company, though many no doubt as they catch their first glimpse of this slender form beneath its wrapper will be smitten with apprehension lest their Journal be vanishing altogether.

The main controlling influence over the Journal is, as in so many other cases, money. The spate of advertisements in the last few numbers was due to a well-meant endeavour to raise more of this necessary evil. But as, in the opinion of many, they appeared rather disproportionately to dwarf the reading matter and furthermore were found to cost slightly more to produce than the remainder of the Journal, it has been decided to abolish the major part of them.

We find ourselves then limited by the present income of the Society to a total of approximately two hundred pages for our four numbers, and if members consider this too mean an allowance they must remember that the publishing of the Journal is not the Society's only expense, and that their annual subscription is not inordinately large.

As regards our contributions the Committee has decided that in future six separates shall be issued free of charge to all those whose articles are published. In the case of those who contribute notes, they will receive six copies of the notes bound together. Any additional reprints required should be ordered from the Editor at the time the contribution is sent in.

In conclusion we would like to make an appeal for more short articles and notes. There is a reasonably steady supply of good strong meat, and we are duly grateful to those who expend so much of their time and labour in supplying it. But of lighter fare there is a sad deficiency, and we would stress the facts that it takes a variety of dishes to make an attractive meal, that there is succulence for somebody in the smallest of them, and that there are six hundred critical guests to feed four times in a year.

## NOTICES.

We acknowledge with thanks receipt of the following publications sent in exchange for the "Journal":—

*Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, Tome VIII, Fascicule II.

*Bantu Studies*, Volume XII No. 1 March, 1939.

*Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*.

Tome XVIII,	Nos. 1, 2-3, 4.	1935.
" XIX,	Nos. 1, 2-3, 4.	1936.
" XX,	Nos. 1-2, 3, 4.	1937.
" XXI,	No. 1 Jan-Mar.	1938.

*Man*, April, 1939.

*Bibliographie Ethnographique du Congo Belge et des Régions Avoisinantes*, 1939. Volume II Fascicule 3.

*Sudan Notes and Records*, Volume XXII, Part 1, 1939.

*Africa*, Volume XII, No. 2 April, 1939.

*Bulletin of the Imperial Institute*, Volume XXXVII, No. 1 Jan-March, 1939.

*Journal of The Royal African Society*, Volume XXXVIII, No. CLI.

*The Nigerian Field*, Volume VIII No. 2 April, 1939.

We have also to acknowledge with thanks receipt of the following:—

*Séance Académique du 29 October, 1938*, Université Coloniale de Belgique.

*Wire-Drawing, Especially in Africa*, K. G. Lindblom (Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm.)

*Coutumiers Juridiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* Tome I. Senegal.

*Abhandlungen aus dem Landesmuseum der Provinz Westfalen Museum für Naturkunde*.

9 Jahrgang Heft, 1938, 1, 2, 3, 4.

10 Jahrgang Heft, 1939, 1.

*The Formenkreis Theory*, by Otto Kleinschmidt Dr. h.c. Presented by Rear-Admiral H. H. Lynes, M.B.O.U.

# The Sanders Saga.

By J. SYKES.

(Presidential Address for the year 1938-1939). (1)

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## I. Introductory.

The "Sanders Saga" of Edgar Wallace may not be thought worthy to rank with the "Forsyte Saga" of John Galsworthy or with the "Herries Saga" of Hugh Walpole, but it is a Saga nevertheless.

It consists of one hundred and twenty-nine short stories and one complete novel, all dealing with the activities and experiences of Mr. Commissioner Sanders, better known as "Sanders of the River," as ruler, under the British Crown, of a certain group of Native Territories in West Central Africa.

In the whole of them I can find but three references to Uganda, two to Tanganyika, and two to Kenya. It cannot therefore be said that they have any direct concern with East Africa, or a direct interest to its present-day inhabitants.

They have, however, an indirect interest, and that for two reasons.

The first of these is that the African peoples whom they describe are intended, as will be explained later, to be peoples of a Bantu type, and speaking Bantu languages.

The second is that, though, as is perhaps inevitable in any work of fiction dealing with such a subject, and more particularly if the author is a journalist, there is much that is sensational and much that is purely fantastic, there is also a certain amount which may be claimed to reflect a reasonably faithful picture of African society at a certain stage of development, and of the problems of Colonial Administration in contact with such a society a generation or so ago.

I should perhaps make it clear at the outset that, though in what follows I have taken Sanders as a kind of hero and he is the last man in the world whom I would wish to debunk, this does not mean that I am thereby expressing approval of all that he did. Rather do I share the common thankfulness that that stage of Empire-building in Africa which the régime of Sanders represents, has passed, or almost passed, away. And I would further claim that Sanders himself, though he usually found the problems of the present sufficiently urgent, was not unmindful also of the future, and fully realized that his primary duty was to lead his people, albeit slowly, up to better things, and to lay solid foundations on which his successors were to build. No more than Moses could he hope himself to enter the promised land.

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(1) Delivered at the Kampala Club on January 18th. 1939.

## II. The Inception of the Saga.

It is first necessary to examine sources, to throw what light we can on the inception of the stories.

Tales of West Africa first came to the ears of Edgar Wallace at an early stage of his career. After various unsuccessful attempts to earn his living in sundry capacities, which included those of news-boy, printer's assistant, hand in a rubber-works, hand in a boot-shop, hand on a Grimsby Trawler, builder's labourer, concrete-mixer for a road-maker, and milkman, he enlisted at the age of 19 as a Private in the Royal West Kent Regiment. From that Regiment he transferred later to the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Hospital Orderly, and in that capacity was posted in 1896 to South Africa, where he remained several years, as soldier and civilian.

In 1897 there took place a British naval punitive expedition to Benin, from which the wounded were evacuated to the Hospital at Simonstown where Wallace was stationed. It was through talks with these wounded men and the tales they told him that he picked up his first knowledge of the West Coast, though he did not utilize that knowledge till many years afterwards.

A more direct contact with the type of African conditions which he describes was obtained about ten years later, when he was sent out to report on the allegations of atrocities in the Congo Free State, in connection with the rubber trade, that had recently been made by Sir Roger Casement (1903) and E.D. Morel (1906). He spent a year as the guest of Missionaries at the station of Bonga-danga, 1000 miles up the Congo River, the same place from which Casement had written his report.

His missionary hosts were able to supply him with plenty of information about the subject of his enquiry, but he naturally preferred not to be content with second-hand evidence and so he spent a good deal of time visiting villages and interviewing natives with the help of a French-speaking interpreter. He soon became much more interested in native affairs in general than he was in the actual matters he was investigating. "He was fascinated by the life of these primitive tribes, their feuds, their witch-doctors, their artless logic and forest-born superstition." (2)

On the Congo River also he picked up all kinds of tales of British and other European Colonial Administrators, men of the type of Sir Harry Johnston, who had ruled half-explored Native Territories of the size of a European country, and whose life was a continual struggle against tribal warfare, cannibalism, secret societies, sleeping sickness and other diseases, and the peculiar beliefs and peculiar cunning of the peoples they ruled.

He also applied himself to the study of the Lomongo language, apparently of a Bantu type, simple and of limited vocabulary but rich in proverb and meta-

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(2) **Edgar Wallace. A biography.** by Margaret Lane. I am much indebted to this book for information concerning the inception of the Saga.

phor, and he is said to have spent much of his time in the evenings poring over the Grammar which one of his missionary hosts was compiling, noting down words, expressions and proverbs—not knowing then in the least how he was going to make use of them.

Though he wrote an article on "Congo Atrocities" for a missionary publication, nothing from the pen of Wallace about this subject ever appeared in the columns of the *Daily Mail*. Apparently he did submit a report but Lord Northcliffe (then Sir Alfred Harmsworth) had recently been landed with an expensive libel action through a report of Wallace's on another subject. He was not taking any more risks, and in fact dismissed Wallace from the staff of Carmelite House soon after his return from Africa.

After this our author passed through a lean period, from which he was delivered by the publication of the first of the "Sanders" books.

This occurred when he was on the verge of bankruptcy, with a bailiff in the house and all the family valuables in pawn, and when, owing to his unlucky record, no publisher or editor seemed to want his work. He had had, however, some articles accepted by a paper called *The Weekly Tale-teller*, of which the Fiction Editor was Mrs. Isabel Thorne. One day, when on his way to a meeting of the Congo Reform Association, at which he was to speak, he met Mrs. Thorne accidentally on the top of a bus, told her whither he was bound and related to her some of his African experiences and reminiscences. She at once said to him that if he wanted material for short stories he had already got it. The conversation continued while he accompanied her to London Bridge Station, where she was catching a train, and for some time after while they walked up and down the platform. Both were so thrilled with the possibilities that he forgot all about his Congo Meeting and she, deliberately, missed several trains, before they went their respective ways. Thus it was in the extremely un-African and unromantic, not to say sordid, atmosphere of a London Bridge platform that "Sanders of the River" was conceived.

When he got home Wallace at once dug out his Congo notes and set to work to sketch out a series of stories of Tropical Africa. He transposed the Congo into a great river running through the middle of an unspecified British Territory on the West Coast; he set in charge of it his Mr. Commissioner Sanders, apparently a composite portrait of several African Administrators, including Sir Harry Johnston; he converted the *Lo-mongo* of the Congo into the *Bo-mongo* <sup>(3)</sup> of the West Coast; and he transported some of the tribes that spoke it, with whom he was familiar, to that coast also. In some cases, as for instance in that of the Ngombi, he did not even trouble to change their names.

Within a very few days he was able to set before Mrs. Thorne an outline of several stories, and each one was discussed minutely with her. It appears that it was she who was in part responsible for the creation, as a foil, of Bosambo, the native chief who combined unswerving fidelity, and a hundred per cent. efficiency in all essentials, with a most engaging and unscrupulous rascality in minor matters, particularly in the picking up of unconsidered trifles.

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(3) I cannot bring myself to call it 'Mongo'.

The stories, later collected as *Sanders of the River*, were published in the *Weekly Tale-Teller* and were an immediate success. They were quickly followed by a second series, *The People of the River*, which proved equally popular. Wallace soon realized not only that this work was better than anything he had done to date but also that the theme was almost inexhaustible. Accordingly he became a serious student of African Ethnology and Folklore, but, while he embodied in the tales much of the results of his researches, he did not hesitate to invent also material of his own; so that while many of the customs, beliefs, superstitions, and proverbs of the river tribes are genuine Bantu, others are pure Wallace, and most likely to be so when they are supported by footnotes, apparently in the authentic manner of the learned investigator. Wallace particularly enjoyed this form of leg-pulling.

And so it went on through the whole of the eleven volumes of the series.

I am of opinion that, though all are good, the later books are not the equals of the earlier. In 1909 Wallace still considered that he had some claims to be thought a literary artist. The earlier Sanders books were written slowly and with considerable care. In his later years, with the encouragement of his publishers, by his own inclination and as a result of his journalistic training, the author came to attribute more importance to quantity than to quality. He was the mass producer *par excellence*. His vanity was flattered by the legend of the "weekly Wallace"—which eventually became the "mid-day Wallace"—and the later Sanders books were written under this handicap and with but little conscious attention paid to conscientious craftsmanship. It is also apparent that the atmosphere of the theatre and the cinema had grown upon him, and this accounts for the sensationalism that appears in such a book as *Sandi the King-maker*, the last of the series.

In spite of all this he remained to the end, so far as the Sanders books are concerned, an artist *malgré lui*, and a master of his own technique of weaving the various strands of the several plots and underplots, that characterize so many of the stories, into a neat conclusion.

After the completion of the first three series of tales, he found it necessary to introduce one improvement. Sanders was the strong and silent man of action, and strong and silent men in large doses are definitely a bore. It was impossible for him to go on for ever, or for Wallace to sell him for ever, dashing up and down the river with monotonous regularity, collecting hut-tax, hanging murderers and witch-doctors without trial, settling innumerable palavers, and preventing the outbreak of tribal warfare. Hence in the fourth book, *Bones*, Sanders was got rid of by being sent on leave for the space of one volume—though incidentally he had to return before the end of it as the *deus ex machina*—and his No. 2, Capt. Hamilton of the Houssas, was appointed Acting Commissioner in charge of the River Territories. But Hamilton himself, Wallace thought, was of the same type as Sanders, and to substitute the one for the other was not enough. What was wanted was more comic relief. The bare-faced dishonesties of Bosambo, and his quaint reminiscences of his early missionary training, could continue, but they were not enough. Hence the invention of Lieut. Augustus

Tibbetts, known as "Bones," a Colonial Officer of quite a different type. Bones certainly had strength of character, but silence was not one of his strong points. If the average speech of Sanders occupies about three lines, and that of Hamilton, except when sparring with Bones, five, that of Bones occupies at least twenty. The idiosyncrasies of Bones are in fact pure padding, but they ensured the continued success of the Sanders series. It has been observed with some truth (4) that they have made Sanders a best seller for a quarter of a century, for the same reason that P.G. Wodehouse has been a best seller during the same period. For Bones, though utterly different in many respects, certainly has much in common with Bertie Wooster and other congenital idiots in monocles and old school ties that Wodehouse fans never tire of. Incidentally there are points of resemblance between Bosambo and the imperturbable and indispensable Jeeves.

### III. The man Sanders.

The Christian name of Mr. Commissioner Sanders is never revealed to us, though certainly it began with an H; nor do we ever hear anything of his relations. But we do know that by religion he was a Wesleyan, and that his early education had included the study of Latin. We are also told a little of his personal history before he came to the West Coast, when we may assume that he was somewhere about 30 years of age. By that time he had had considerable African experience. Here are the words of Wallace himself:—

"Mr. Commissioner Sanders had graduated to West Central Africa by such easy stages that he did not realize when his acquaintance with the back lands began. Long before he was called on by the British Government to keep a watchful eye upon some quarter of a million cannibal folk, who ten years before had regarded white men as we regard the unicorn, he had met the Basuto, the Zulu, the Fingo, the Pondo, the Matabele, Mashona, Barotse, Hottentot and Bechuana. Then curiosity and interest took him westward and northward and he met the Angola folk; then northward to the Congo, eastward to the Masai, and finally by way of the Pigmy people, he came to his own land."

In another place it is stated that as a young man he had assisted in the war which broke Lobengula. This was in 1892. Also there was a time when he was only Assistant Commissioner.

We may infer that the period of his Commissionership began in the early years of King Edward VII's reign, when Joseph Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary, and that he retired immediately after the end of the Great War. We are at any rate definitely informed that he was dug out of his retirement, shortly after this, in order to take charge for a short time of the country of the "Old King", on the borders of his old Territory, mandated to the British Empire by the Peace Treaties, and that even after this he had thoughts of taking on a commercial job on the West Coast, though in the end he was dissuaded from so doing.

His pay as Commissioner was £2 a day, and in view of his frequent *safaris* up and down the river, he must have drawn a handsome amount in travelling allowances.

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(4) By Margaret Lane.

He was awarded the C.M.G., in reality for cumulative merit, but as it appeared at the time it was (a) for rescuing a Secretary of State who had come out to the Coast, and had been kidnapped by the tribesmen, and (b) owing to representations made to the proper quarter by Bosambo. It is hinted that for his final services in pacifying the "Old King's" country he was made a K.C.M.G.

In spite of his somewhat irregular, not to say highhanded, methods of administration, of which more anon, he enjoyed in general the support and confidence of his immediate superior officers, a succession of Administrators of the West Coast Territories, and also that of the Colonial Office. It is true that he did not see eye to eye with all the men who occupied the office of Administrator, but we are informed that at least one of the latter received a hint from the Colonial Office that, whereas new Administrators were not far to seek, Sanders as Commissioner of the River Lands was irreplaceable. In fact his name became a legend in Downing Street and on one of his leaves he had, much against his will, to accept an invitation to stay the week-end at the Secretary of State's country house.

In appearance he was spare and of medium height, and clean-shaven. His complexion was yellow. His hair was originally red, but was grey before he was 40, and was always very closely cropped. His eyes were grey and he had peculiarly keen eyesight. Usually, though not always, he was dressed in immaculate white. His hand-writing was particularly neat.

He was not free from certain mannerisms. He constantly tapped the toe of his boot with the black ebony cane he usually carried. When dealing with an offender, he perched his head on one side like a bird, he tapped his teeth, he wrinkled his nose like an angry terrier, he glared through narrowed eyelids, and, when in the throes of composition of an official report, he nibbled his penholder. He rarely smiled, though he had a grim sense of humour.

He was short of temper, particularly after a bout of malaria, caustic of speech, and he swore on the slightest provocation.

He was by no means infallible, for he made mistakes, at times, through over-precipitate action, and was on occasion deceived by a particularly plausible native.

He was sufficiently human to enjoy his morning tea and to take a *siesta* on Sunday afternoons, and sufficiently superstitious to touch wood occasionally; he had a very definite horror of snakes.

His habits were abstemious, though he kept some good champagne, port and hock in his cellar for special celebrations.<sup>(5)</sup> On only two occasions is it related that he drank whisky—albeit on each of them he mixed himself a "stiff peg." On a third occasion he indulged in a drink which by the description given was apparently a species of 'John Collins.'

(5) "O Abiboo, bring me from the cold cellar one bottle of the wine with the golden end and also one bottle of the wine with the dust of many days."

He was, however, an inveterate smoker—of thin black cheroots. Only once do I find him smoking a pipe, and never a cigarette, though he owned a cigarette holder, and also a gold cigarette case, until Bones borrowed it for a conjuring trick and inadvertently dropped it overboard the *Zaire*.

His favourite recreation was fishing, for which the river and the sea coast, where he lived, offered unlimited opportunities. He was also fond of walking and swimming, and occasionally did a bit of shooting, mostly for the pot. He devoted much care and attention to the Residency gardens. Indoors his occupations were reading the *Times*, <sup>(6)</sup> and, in the evenings, a hand at picquet.

He was the kind of man, who pretended to himself that he had no use for women, but, like many men of this type, he was a self-deceiver, and when confronted with ladies who would make him a suitable match, he fell for them pretty easily. Only two such are mentioned. One was an attractive lady medical missionary, who only forestalled a proposal by revealing the fact that her heart was already given to another man in England. The second was Hamilton's sister, Patricia, who came out to stay at the Residency, and eventually became Mrs. Sanders. Patricia was exactly the right type, and I have no doubt achieved the task of reforming Sanders from his bachelor habits with all due tact and circumspection. But I would hazard the opinion that Sanders might easily have fallen a prey to a designing female of a less desirable type, had such an one chanced to come along and set about him in the right way.

Though in general a simple soul in matters outside his official duties, Sanders was by no means devoid of business sense. He saved a good part of his pay, and made shrewd investments. In particular he had bought land for a song in Lagos in his early days, which afterwards, as he had expected, appreciated enormously in value owing to building developments, and before he was 40 he had accumulated a capital of over £10,000. Yet a further source of income was from damages obtained in libel actions. <sup>(7)</sup> He is described, as well he might be, as examining his pass-book with a complacent self-satisfaction. On one occasion, after his retirement, he nearly fell from grace, when he was on the point of investing £5000 in a fraudulent West African Trading Company, from which predicament he was rescued in the nick of time by Bones, then at the height of his successful career as a financier in the City.

Sanders is described as being usually extremely reluctant to go on leave, the reasons being that he had little confidence in the person or persons deputed to act in his absence, and that he did not know how to pass the time when he was in England, apart from aimlessly wandering about the streets of London; though he once, at least, gave a lecture on Tribal Customs and Folklore to a certain learned Society for African Studies. In consequence he allowed arrears of leave to accumulate, and, sometimes by preference, spent his leave locally in Africa. Here is an account of one such occasion:-

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(6) And sometimes **Blue Books**.

(7) See p. 14 below.

"The Commissioner whose work lay for the main part in wandering through a malarial country in some discomfort and danger, spent his holiday in travelling through another malarial country, in as great discomfort and at no less risk—He went by way of St. Paul de Loanda overland to the Congo, shot an elephant or two in the French Congo, went by mission steamer to the Sangar river and made his way back to Stanley Pool.

"At Matadi he found letters from his relief, a mild and enthusiastic young man, with a very pink face and gold-mounted spectacles, who had been sent up from headquarters (probably out of the Secretariat) to take his place as a temporary measure and was quite satisfied in his own mind that he was eminently qualified to occupy the seat of the Commissioner".

Having read the letter, Sanders only comment was, "I think I will go home", and home he went as quickly as possible to his River, to the great annoyance of the Acting Commissioner.

Among the subordinates of his early years there were several of the type of this young man, who for various reasons had to be got rid of, and this may have accounted for Sanders' ingrained distrust of assistants and deputies. It is true that he was not sparing of praise for good work done by Hamilton and Bones, and also by another promising young man called Carter, who was before their time and was unfortunately chopped by the tribesmen; and he sent all of these off at times on independent and responsible missions, and had full confidence in them, a confidence that increased with the years. But all the time I think there was at the back of his mind the unspoken feeling, that, without himself in constant action, or in the background behind his subordinates, the condition of the River Territories would not be all that could be desired.

On the other hand he had the superlative merit of accepting full responsibility for all that was done, either with or without his orders. He never tried to shift the blame on to the shoulders of his subordinates. Passing the baby was not one of his official habits.

#### IV. The Setting.

I have already explained that though the scene of the Sanders Saga is laid on the West Coast, the locality and tribes described are those of the Congo. Wallace, though purposely vague about geography, did attempt to give some verisimilitude to the West Coast idea by not infrequent references to towns such as Sierra Leone, Lagos, Cape Coast Castle, Grand Bassam, Dacca, etc. He implies that Togoland was on the border of Sanders' Territory, and occasionally gives an approximate Longitude and Latitude. One of these map references proves on investigation to be in Togoland, but another is in the Atlantic Ocean, somewhere off the coast of Brazil! There are also sundry allusions to neighbouring Territories under the rule of the French, Germans, Belgians, Portuguese and even Spanish.

All this is immaterial. What is more important is that Sanders' Territory had a definite geography of its own. He himself lived in a building styled "The Residency", situate on the coast, at the river mouth. The Elder Dempster steamer

called about once a fortnight with the mails, and occasionally dropped visitors. There was no harbour, and one landed somewhat precariously from a surf boat.

I will not quote any figures given for the size in square miles of the Territories under Sanders; they are incredible. But we may suppose that the river with its numerous tributaries was navigable for some 300 miles from the coast and that the Territories were spread out on both sides of it for that distance, some parts being only accessible by a painful walking *safari* through forest, of which most of the land consisted. Somewhere near the Northern frontier were Bosambo's headquarters, and a bit further on navigation was brought to an end because the river narrowed to a gorge, in which ran a terrific current, against which the steamers at Sanders' disposal could not possibly make head. Beyond again lay the "Old King's" country which could be approached only by this gorge or by crossing a range of mountains occasionally snow-capped. Up till 1914 it was nominally under German rule.

The population is given as about a million (sometimes as considerably less). The number of tribes was 23, of whom 5 are given quite definite characteristics.

The first of these are the Pigmies who need not detain us as the description given of them tallies fairly faithfully with what we know to be actually true of the Wambutti on our own borders. Except when provoked, they gave little trouble. The whole Territory was not unreasonably scared of their poisoned missiles.

Living on the river banks were the Isisi, Akasava, and Ochori.

The Isisi made their living chiefly as fishermen. They were expert swimmers, and noted for their good eyesight, their love of washing themselves and their superstition. (8) They were, however, a blood-thirsty fighting tribe, and hereditary enemies of the Akasava, who had somewhat similar characteristics, i.e. they were also a fishing people, and equally blood-thirsty. But there was much more agriculture among them than among the Isisi, and some of them were also iron-workers. In addition it is stated that whereas the ferocity of the Isisi was temperamental, that of the Akasava was cold-blooded.

The Ochori were also fishermen and cultivators, but, before Bosambo hitlered them into a first class fighting people, they were utterly spineless, noted only for their cowardice and gluttony. (9)

The fifth people were the Ngombi, who lived in the forest away from the river. They could neither fish nor swim. On the other hand they were expert craftsmen and notable iron workers, acting as spear-makers for the other tribes. Apart from this they were notorious for their thieving propensities, and for the fact that they wore next to no clothing, for which the other tribes despised them as the Baganda formerly despised the Bakedi. They were, however, just as good fighters as the Isisi and the Akasava, and no less quarrelsome.

(8) See Proverbs Nos. 1) and 3).

(9) See Proverbs Nos. 1) and 2).

All the tribes are described as being pure Bantu, except that the Ochori had a dash of Arab blood. Each, except the Ngombi, had its own peculiar type of canoe. Each again had its peculiar facial markings and system of extracting or filing teeth. Each also had its own dialect, though common to all was Bomongo, the *lingua franca* of the river. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Arabic was the language of the Coast and of Sanders' Houssa troops, and that Swahili was not without its uses.

Common characteristics of nearly all the tribes were cannibalism (except in the case of some Akasava), a low standard of sex morality, the usual beliefs in witchcraft and *ju-jus*, and a strong aversion to any prolonged spell of physical exertion. Most of them were partial to eating dog flesh, and fattened up dogs for this purpose. Several also were monkey-eaters.

Finally, though each had its peculiar fetishes, the tribes had several deities in common, of whom undoubtedly the chief was the Storm God, *Mshimba-Mshamba*, 'the swift walker', who spreads devastation in his track when he goes abroad.

"You sometimes find his erratic track showing clearly through the forest. For a space of twelve yards' width the trees are twisted, broken and uprooted, the thick undergrowth swept together in tangled heaps, as though by two huge clumsy hands.

"This way and that goes the path of *Mshimba-Mshamba*, zig-zag through the forest—and woe to the hut or village that stands in its way.

"For he will leave this hut intact, from this hut he will cut the propped verandah of leaves; this he will catch up in his ruthless fingers and tear it away swiftly, piece by piece, strewing the wreckage along the village street."

When resting from his labours he was thought of either (as Caliban thought of Setebos) as dwelling "i' the cold of the moon", or, alternatively, in the bowels of the earth. <sup>(10)</sup>

Of the numerous other tribes only two need be mentioned. One of these was the Bald men of Ifubi, who had discovered the secret of an infallible depilatory; and the other the People of the Well, who were thought by Sanders to be, possibly, one of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.<sup>(11)</sup>

We are told nothing of the tribal systems of land tenure, of puberty ceremonies, of marriage customs, (other than payment of bride-price in the familiar African manner), of what happened when twins were born or of other matters which appear to excite the curiosity of anthropologists, both male and female.

<sup>(10)</sup> For other deities see Appendix B.

<sup>(11)</sup> There were no cattle tribes. Cattle were unknown in the Territories, though they existed in certain parts of the "Old King's" country.

## V. The problems of administration.

The River Territories had reached that stage of administration where taxation had recently been introduced. It took the form of a 'hut tax', and was usually paid in kind, *i.e.* in manioc, in maize, in goats, and sometimes in brass rods (*matakos*) and salt, the principal local forms of currency. Sanders' principal duty as Commissioner was to collect this tax, which, as elsewhere in the world, was not paid with any enthusiasm on the part of the tax-payers, in spite of the Commissioner's occasional efforts to explain to them that they ultimately derived benefit by their contribution.

We are also to imagine that the Territories had come under the British Crown, as a result of a war of conquest, not very long before Sanders' time, and that previous to that time the words "*homo homini lupus*" would have been an adequate description of the state of society; that the "life of man" was as "poor, nasty, brutish and short", as in the imaginary "natural state" envisaged by Thomas Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, and that, furthermore, large sections of the population saw no reason why the good old days should not continue.

From time immemorial the various tribes, especially when their hearts were puffed up by reason of good crops, had raided each others' settlements, and carried off each others' women and goats.

From time immemorial, when things went wrong, when *M'shimba-M'shamba* had been more than usually destructive, when the crops had failed, and the goats had died of mysterious diseases, the correct thing to do had been to consult the local witch-doctors, who usually advised the sacrifice to the offended deity of one or more young maidens.

From time immemorial it had been considered ridiculous to support useless mouths, at the expense of the able-bodied. It was therefore the custom to take the old and the mad, put out their eyes, lead them into the forest, and leave them there for beasts of prey to do the rest; and not infrequently this form of *euthanasia* was applied to those who were not really due for it, but whose continued existence happened for other sufficient reasons to be undesirable—to wives who had seen their best days, or to rich relatives reputed to have treasures buried beneath their huts and who yet seemed indisposed to lend a ready ear to the importunities of their less fortunate kinsfolk. This practice Sanders found it particularly difficult to eradicate.

There still survived in Sanders' time Arab and other slave-dealers who entered the Territories by some back-door, and chiefs who were quite ready, as in the good old days *cala cala*, to dispose to them of superfluous subjects for a reasonable consideration.

Although we read occasionally of women acting as chiefs, by hereditary right, and women certainly exercised a considerable indirect influence on local politics, the condition of the female sex was in general depressed. From the beginning of time husbands had been in the habit of beating their wives unmercifully

on the slightest provocation, though the wives, if the practice was carried to an unreasonable excess, not infrequently retaliated by hitting their lords and masters on the head with cooking-pots, or, in extreme cases, putting poison in their *chop*.

From all this we may infer that Sanders' second main duty, that of keeping the king's peace and making the king's writ run throughout the length and breadth of the land, was no more of a sinecure than that of tax-collection.

A third main problem was the improvement of health conditions. The whole of the Territories was riddled with malaria and with sleeping sickness. There were occasional outbreaks of beri-beri and of small-pox, and, worst of all, of the dreaded sickness *mongo*, 'the sickness itself', a kind of bush plague, which was always devastating in its toll of human life, and for which apparently there was no known remedy.

Yet another major problem was the prevention of the introduction into the Territories of European brands of alcoholic liquor, which in effect meant the protection of the native from exploitation by the unscrupulous white man. Readers of *Trader Horn* will remember that "in the earlies" gin was the universal stock-in-trade of those who came to Africa to export ivory and rubber at a profit to themselves. In more than one passage Wallace (himself a strong advocate of temperance), draws a lurid picture of the devastating effects of gin upon the African community. Hence Sanders, though on one occasion early in his career he 'dashed' two bottles of 'square-face' to a witch-doctor who had done him service, <sup>(12)</sup> was in general a rigorous prohibitionist, and took the sternest measures with any trader who was found offending in this respect.

We may now consider in more detail how Sanders endeavoured to deal with the problems of Government, which have been described above.

The collection of taxes could only be made through the chiefs. The latter extracted what was due from their people, and the Commissioner made a half-yearly round to collect the proceeds. Such a system of course was open to the objection that may be offered to all systems of tax-farming, *viz*: that the middle-man (in this case the chief), always takes a handsome commission. In one of the tales it is stated that Bosambo's commission amounted to at least 360%. But Sanders apparently had no other alternative than to turn a blind eye to this sort of thing. He was, of course, willing to listen to reasonable representations of injustice, and, in time of economic depression, to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.<sup>(13)</sup>

The next problem was the preservation of the British *raj* in the Territories and the maintenance of law and order.

For this purpose Sanders had at his command an armed force, in the shape of a Company or so of the King's Houssas, who were Kano men, and good Mohammedans, and could be relied on not to fraternize with the local pagan.

(12) It is also recorded that on two occasions in his last tour he allowed Bosambo a glass of beer.

(13) He also increased tax-paying capacity by the introduction of new crops, e.g. rice.

He had also at his disposal Maxim Guns (the little guns that said "Ha Ha") as well as Hotchkiss Guns. But of course in case of real trouble he and his handful of troops could have been scuppered in no time, and even if he had lived to tell the tale his official career would have been at an end, because a considerable military expedition, at great cost to the British tax-payer, would have been necessary to retrieve the situation.<sup>(14)</sup>

For this reason Sanders had not only to employ his soldiers judiciously but also to use all possible means of anticipating trouble.

One thing that was of great assistance to him was rapidity of movement. He had two gun-boats at his disposal, the *Zaire* and the *Wiggle*, both running on wood fuel.<sup>(15)</sup>

Though navigation of the river was treacherous (night sailing could only be resorted to in an emergency) and the keeping up of the fuel supply needed constant attention, Sanders or one of his subordinates could usually be at the scene of possible or actual trouble in a comparatively short time.

Equally important was the Commissioner's method of diagnosing in advance the symptoms of unrest. This was through an extensive system of espionage. Up and down the river he had his spies, who seldom let him down. Sometimes they were local natives; more often Kano men like the Houssas. They maintained communications with headquarters by means of carrier pigeons. This system worked satisfactorily, except that sometimes the pigeon might be taken by a hawk, and that on one occasion an undesirable European, assisted by a native woman, who was a bird charmer, intercepted the pigeons and altered the messages. Use was also made of the *lokali*, i.e. the native drum-telegraph, and occasionally of helio.

Sanders may be claimed as an exponent of indirect rule, in the sense that he relied on his chiefs so long as they continued in the straight and narrow path, and endeavoured to educate them up to a sense of their responsibilities. Many of them served him loyally, and showed sufficient strength of character to keep their people in order, to repress at once the old, who wanted to revive the customs of the good old days, and the young, who wanted to gain *kudos* in the eyes of the women folk by blooding their spears on all and sundry.

Sanders would have been nowhere without the support of such loyal chiefs. In particular he would have been nowhere without Bosambo, the escaped Liberian convict, who by a series of judicious, though unprovable, murders, had made himself chief of the Ochori. Bosambo's headquarters occupied a strategic position at the head of the river on the frontiers of the "Old King's" territories, and he was thus able not only to guard those frontiers but also to attack the Isisi or Akasava in the rear if they seemed disposed to rebel.

Though he accumulated fabulous wealth by oppression of his own people, and by petty thieving and general dishonesty, Bosambo remained absolutely faithful to Sanders and the British Empire in all major issues. On at least a dozen

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(14) On one occasion he was urgently requested to postpone an inevitable native war until "after the end of the present financial year"!

(15) The **Wiggle** was later converted to petrol.

occasions he appeared, in the nick of time, with his trusty warriors to rescue the Commissioner or his assistants from an awkward predicament. He also acted as a super-spy in times alike of war and of peace and was a pioneer in road-making.

There were of course, apart from chiefs, many law-abiding tribes and individuals in the Territories, and from such Sanders derived moral support. But they also in themselves constituted a problem. What should a Commissioner do when faced with this sort of complaint? "Lord Sandi, the Akasava have come down upon us, and taken our women and our goats, and our hearts are sore, because the goats are very valuable. In the old days we should have, etc. etc." In such cases, unless he could settle the palaver by peaceful means, Sanders could only counsel self-help. On another occasion an enthusiastic chief, interpreting his instructions, as Africans are apt to do, somewhat too literally, completely disarmed his tribe, and Sanders had to explain to him that disarmament, if unilateral only, was not without its dangers,—as indeed the event proved in this particular case.

Perhaps that for which Sanders is most notorious is his rough and ready system of justice. Summary executions and summary floggings were admittedly a part of his régime. This is the sort of thing that happened. A native miscreant, as often as not a chief, is caught *in flagrante delicto*, or not long after. Sanders' words to the prisoner are few:—"O man, I think you have lived too long" or:—"O man, to-night you shall live with ghosts", and he glances significantly at the highest tree in the vicinity. Sergeant Abiboo of the King's Houssas steps forward with the length of rope, that he invariably carries about his person when on *safari*, and that is that! The condemned man usually shows a philosophical resignation, with some such remark as, "Lord, I have lived".

A less extreme sentence was a severe flogging, administered by the sturdy arm of the aforesaid Sergeant Abiboo, and there was also banishment, for a longer or shorter time, to work in a chain-gang at the convict settlement somewhere near headquarters. This place was known as the "Village of Irons," and was situated on a peninsular, and guarded on three sides by water, infested with crocodiles, and on the fourth by a barbed-wire fence. It must have been inhabited very largely by ex-chiefs and ex-headmen. Incidentally there was a section of it for the reception of female prisoners.

Without pretending to have made an exhaustive check, I find in the tales accounts of about 40 cases of summary execution and about 23 of summary flogging, in addition to occasional exhibitions of frightfulness by the burning of villages and crops, where mass-punishment was thought necessary.

All this of course did not pass without protest from certain quarters. There were sometimes Administrators who disapproved of such methods, who wanted copies of the depositions in triplicate, and of the judgment in duplicate, and so on. There were paragraphs in the English Press. There were questions in Parliament. But Sanders went on his way unmoved and never appears to have got into serious trouble over it, and on two occasions he even turned the tables on his detractors by suing them for libel, and obtained handsome damages.<sup>(16)</sup>

(16) See p. 7 above.

It is true that there was a High Court and also an Attorney-General at Headquarters, but it was not apparently part of their functions to revise the sentences of Commissioners. On one occasion Sanders found the Court very helpful. It was at a time when the outcry had been more vociferous than usual, and yet it was imperative to make an example of the King of the Ngombi. He reported the circumstances to Headquarters, which obligingly sent up a real Puisne Judge to conduct the trial and attend the execution.

Sanders, if asked, would have defended himself on two grounds. In the first place he would have said that he did not adopt such methods by preference, and that hesitation to act and any delay in awarding punishment would have been mistaken for weakness by the people he had to deal with, and would have had fatal consequences. Secondly, that what he did had the implied sanction and approval of the people of the Territories. Though they might easily forget the lesson, the majority recognized at the time that a sentence was deserved and was for the good of the community, and respected the Commissioner for taking what steps he thought fit to see that his orders as to what was to be done, or left undone, were implicitly obeyed. It may even be said that a stigma attached to the criminal.<sup>(17)</sup> Here is a complaint that Sanders once received:—"Lord, when I walk in the village, the children mock at me, because my father was hanged and my brother sits in the Village of Irons".

Be that as it may, Sanders certainly paid but little attention to a memorandum on Native Policy, issued at an unknown date, by a mythical Secretary of State for the Colonies, which ran as follows:—

"The customs of the country must not be lightly over-ridden or checked. Nor should its religious observances, or immemorial practices, be too rudely suppressed. The native should be approached gently with arguments and illustrations obvious to his simple mind. Corporal punishment should under no circumstances be inflicted save for exceptionally serious crimes, and then only by order of the supreme judiciary of the country."

He did, however, in his general dealings with the problems of government, employ, if not arguments and illustrations, certainly methods which had an appeal to the native mind. He made what use he could of his knowledge of native psychology. He was prepared to take devils, ghosts, ju-jus and witchcraft as a serious factor in native life, and even to avail himself of the influence they exercised. He once paid a celebrated witch-doctor £6 to put a curse on anybody who should transgress a certain law that he had made, and it proved a most effective means of preserving that law inviolate. Again, when he desired to prevent an aggressive tribe from poaching game in the territory of another, he set up on the boundary a notice inscribed, "Trespassers will be prosecuted", called the people together and said, "See, now, O people, I have set here a piece of wood with certain powerful devil-marks, and he who shall go past it, will become a prey to most horrible ghosts and *ju-jus*." This innocent deception also worked.

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(17) The question of whether or not a stigma attaches to the African criminal in the eyes of his compatriots, was discussed at a recent lecture given before the **Uganda Society**.

It is a fact that in Africa the boaster is often accepted at his own valuation, and Sanders was not above creating an impression of what a wonderful and terrible fellow he was by self-laudatory speeches at big palavers.

He was, however, wise enough to admit that there were no infallible general rules for the treatment of the African, and that the only possible rule was to deal with him as an individual.

He was also capable of an infinite patience and recognized that the African, even if trained to perform a certain task to mechanical perfection, is yet liable to have an off-day. On a certain occasion, for instance, when he was in a desperate hurry, he found that the wood-men fuelling the *Zaire*, had stacked all the wood in the bows, instead of distributing it evenly about the deck, as for years past they had been taught to do. All that the headman could say in excuse was, "Lord, we thought it would be quicker that way". Sanders did not go off the deep end, as might have been expected. <sup>(18)</sup> He quietly ordered the wood to be restacked.

There were occasions too when he found a native in real trouble, and then he could be as tender as a woman.

A brief word must now be said about the other two problems which, in addition to those of taxation and the preservation of law and order, confronted Sanders. They were:—"Health", and "Gin."

The latter was only an occasional problem and was dealt with by absolute prohibition, rigorous search of the baggage of any trader who landed in the Territories, and confiscation of contraband where necessary. If by any evil chance a smuggler got away with it at the coast, or entered the Territories at some other point, he was usually speedily detected and received a stiff sentence, for Sanders administered justice no less rigorously to Europeans and Arabs than to Africans.

The health problem was ever with him, and, as there was seldom a Doctor in the Territories, he could only adopt the most simple and obvious preventive measures, in which he was assisted as far as possible by the Missions. It is perhaps of interest that an attempt to introduce vaccination led to resistance as stout as that of our local Malakites to anti-plague inoculation, though not on religious grounds.

The experiment was once tried (and soon abandoned) of appointing Bones Acting Medical Officer of Health. He attacked his duties with his usual enthusiasm. The Residency was made uninhabitable with disinfectants; the cook found himself quite unable to comply with the regulations laid down for hygienic cooking and left hastily. Bones also insisted on sterilizing all the knives, forks, and spoons before each meal, and went about, while the craze lasted, in a gauze veil and rubber gloves.

Sanders was not without worries of a comparatively minor character. Among these may be mentioned the suitable entertainment and enlightenment of visitors. In general he disliked visitors of all sorts, but had to accept them as a necessary

<sup>(18)</sup> **A propos** of which Wallace truly remarks that some men fret their hearts out in Africa, dealing with such little problems as ill-stacked wood. ..

evil. They were of most miscellaneous character. There were political notabilities and high officials of the Colonial Office. There were scientific expeditions of all kinds,—anthropological, biological, astronomical, etc. There was a lady of a donnish type, who was interested in native administration. There was an American circus proprietor out to obtain a specimen of the 'Missing Link', whom Bosambo obliged by kidnapping a real live Pigmy. There were Pan-African agitators, who had to be carefully watched, and who also usually hailed from America, from which also came on one occasion two thinly camouflaged negro ex-pugilist gangsters, who had made New York too hot to hold them. There were gold prospectors, who were particularly unpopular; there were wasters and down-and-outs; and there were undisguised globe-trotters of both sexes with letters of introduction from the Colonial Office. Many of these had to be put up for longer or shorter periods at the Residency, and when the party included ladies. Sanders, having groaned heavily in spirit, ordered Bones to get the refrigerator mended, and put up the tennis-net.

There was always a certain number of missionaries <sup>(19)</sup> in the country, and Wallace, both through the mouth of Sanders, <sup>(20)</sup> and in author's 'asides', pays constant tribute to the work they did. I have already mentioned that he himself had spent several months on a mission station in the heart of the Congo, and in addition his first wife was the daughter of a missionary. His attitude to Missions was therefore fully sympathetic. Sanders, however, is represented as being conscious at times that difficulties might arise should the Church challenge the supreme authority of the State, as represented by himself. He also criticized missionaries sometimes for their failure to realize that some at any rate of their converts might have ulterior motives.

More serious was the fact that he was responsible for the safety of the missionaries, who insisted on living in lonely out-stations, constantly exposed to the possibility of native attack. In fact, at least a dozen missionaries were murdered in the Territories in his time, and he could do nothing to prevent it.

Apart from the spasmodic efforts of Bones, of which more anon,<sup>(21)</sup> it was the Missions that supplied such education as there was in the Territories. This consisted, as we might expect, of the Three R's, and some of the natives proved apt pupils. A few were taught English but I regret to have to place it on record that Sanders did not approve of this at all. He was the type of officer who refused to converse with a native in any language other than a vernacular, a prejudice due to his intense dislike of the pidgin English that was common in the West Coast towns, and that a man such as Bosambo was familiar with. <sup>(22)</sup>

The only exceptions to his rule that Sanders ever made were in the case of a very sporting elderly negro lady, a D.Sc. of an American University, who spent

(19) As elsewhere in Africa, Missions had been established in the Territories a considerable time before the advent of the British Administration.

(20) Sanders himself is depicted as a sincerely religious man.

(21) See p. 23 below.

(22) Typical of it is the remark of a boy applying for a job as cook:—"I make 'um cook fine; you look 'um for better cook, you no find 'um—savvy."

two years on her own in the bush collecting botanical specimens, and, very grudgingly, in that of a member of the royal family of the Isisi, who had obtained the degree of B.A. in an English University.

Apart from the missionaries, there were no unofficials except traders, and these were non-resident. I have already referred to their activities in connexion with gin-running. As well as this, they too often wanted to sell arms to the natives and at times used violent methods to make the latter collect rubber and ivory for them. I fear that, as a body, the commercial community do not come at all well out of the picture, though there were at least two traders who are depicted as honest, law-abiding men.

Our survey would not be complete without some mention of Sanders' relations with his official superiors, and others at Headquarters.

He never seems to have had any trouble with the Auditor and on only one occasion do I find him complaining that one of his votes was over-spent. Here he seems to have been lucky, as Military Headquarters, which maintained a semi-independent organization, were extremely strict, and frequently caused Hamilton and Bones great agony of mind over their accounts and store ledgers.

Sanders' main concern was with the Administrator, in other words the Governor, who lived some 100 miles down the Coast, and who occasionally paid a visit of inspection. Communication with Headquarters was normally by sea, but there was also a land telegraph, which was not infrequently put out of action by elephants.

The Commissioner had to spend a good deal of time in his office, engaged on official correspondence and reports, which were typed by a staff of moderately efficient Asiatic and African Clerks, and, from the specimens given, it appears that he could write Civil Service English in a manner to which no reasonable Secretariat officer should have taken exception. He could have the honour to be your obedient servant with the best of them.

Administrators changed pretty frequently, and most of them are shadowy figures. In the case of some, however, we are given definite particulars, and their sayings and doings are worthy of record. One, Sir Robert Sanleigh,

"was a stout, florid man, patient and knowledgeable. He had been sent to clear up the mess made by two incompetent Administrators, who had owed their position rather to the constant appearance of their friends and patrons in the Division Lobbies than to their acquaintance with the native mind, and it is eloquent of the regard in which he was held that—he was known familiarly along the Coast to all Administrators, Commissioners, and even to the Deputy Inspectors, as 'Bob'."

Needless to say Sanders had no trouble with Bob, and it was in fact in Bob's days that he got his C.M.G.

Here is a portrait of an Administrator of a different type:—

"Sir Harry Coleby had a reputation, which he had acquired in Bermuda, Jamaica and the Straits Settlements. It was not a reputation for loving-

kindness. He was stout, white of hair, bristling of moustache, and pink of face. He referred to himself constantly as 'the man on the spot.' He worked as a motor-engine works, by a series of explosions. He exploded at his over-worked secretary; he exploded at his officers; he exploded at anything or anybody that thwarted or annoyed him".

This man caused real trouble. Without any reference to the Colonial Office, he decreed that the rate of taxation in Sanders' Territories must be increased. Sanders reported that any such action would provoke a wholesale rebellion, and, when Sir Harry persisted, he cunningly issued orders for the evacuation of all the missionaries. Their Societies protested to the Colonial Office, which politely asked Sir Harry to explain what it was all about. This caused an explosion of more than usual severity, and in an evil moment the Administrator penned a vitriolic despatch to the Secretary of State, in which the importance of trusting the 'man on the spot' was definitely over-emphasized. On a previous occasion in his career, these tactics had worked, but not so this time, with Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office. Sir Harry was informed by cable that his successor had been appointed, and that he was to return to England by the first available steamer.

A third Administrator was a Scotsman, Sir Macalister Campbell Cairns. In appearance and temper he was not unlike Sir Harry, but he was much more manageable. By day he was the stern Administrator, talking perfect official English, and out to reform all abuses, particularly abuses connected with Mr. Sanders' monstrous methods of administering justice. But he had his moments of relaxation. His habits from sun-down onwards were convivial, and by the end of most evenings his speech became that type of Higher Standard Scots, which good Caledonian Societies telegraph to each other round about St. Andrew's tide; and the precincts of Government House resounded to the music of the bag-pipes on which Sir Macalister was an expert performer. At such times he was approachable, and reasonable, even on official matters.

He made a considerable favourite of Bones. The latter when summoned to Headquarters to answer for his sins, volunteered to learn the pipes, and the Administrator's heart at once melted towards him, and he proceeded then and there to instruct him, with a fair amount of success.

It was through the joint efforts of Sir Macalister and Bones on the pipes that serious trouble on Sanders' northern frontier, with possible international complications, was shortly afterwards averted. The "Old King" had been giving trouble and Sir Macalister insisted on taking the matter out of Sanders' hands and going up personally to the Ochori border to settle the palaver, and on taking Bones with him as guide, companion, and fellow-musician.

A meeting-place was appointed at which the "Old King" had prepared a very pretty little ambush. While proceeding to this *rendez-vous* the Administrator and Bones beguiled the time pleasantly by practising on the pipes. By a fortunate coincidence it so happened that the witch-doctors had recently, by dire prophecies, been putting the "Old King's" people in mortal terror of certain dreadful

'ghost music', with the result that directly the sound of the pipes came within earshot, the old man and all his warriors gave one wild simultaneous yell, and fled incontinently back across the Ghost Mountains, never once halting till they reached their own city of Rimi-Rimi.

#### VI. Living conditions.

Living conditions for Europeans in the Territories were much as we might expect. The Residency was a commodious building, situated quite close to the sea, at a place called M'piti. By day there was often a fresh breeze, strong enough to blow all one's papers on to the floor, but at night it was desperately hot and sleep was often a difficulty.

The main sitting-room is described as follows:—

"A great room, the walls of varnished match-boarding, the bare floor covered in patches by skins. There are twelve windows with fine mesh wire and looking out on to the broad verandah which runs round the bungalow. The furniture is mainly wicker-work,—a table or two, bearing framed photographs. There is also a huge gramophone, the property of Bones, and the pictures mainly consist of portraits of the royal family, from Queen Victoria onwards. There is a big table in the middle of the room, over which hangs an oil lamp".

We are not told much about the other rooms, save that Sanders had a sanctum, which was forbidden ground to his colleagues, and to the world in general, until the arrival of Patricia, who insisted on giving it a thorough spring-cleaning. Hamilton and Bones messed in the Residency but slept out in their own quarters near the Houssa lines. The latter, with his usual ingenuity, rigged up in his bath-room a somewhat Heath Robinson type of shower. Water was collected into tanks by gutters from the corrugated iron roofs.

Sanders paid his cook Shs. 10/- a month, but the latter sometimes got at the gin and was not very enterprising. Too frequently the *menu* consisted of a chicken of minute proportions, rice pudding and sweet potatoes. But on at least one occasion there was pork for lunch and on another Yorkshire-pudding. Here too the advent of Patricia brought about great changes for the better in the standard of living <sup>(23)</sup> and the efficiency of the boys.

On *safari* chicken was even more familiar, and a good deal of tinned food had to be carried.

All the officers appear to have been extremely moderate in the matter of alcohol, but they drank a fair amount of tea, coffee, lime juice, and, after fever, barley water.

Some of the soldiers acted as personal boys or *batmen*, and their wives undertook the *dhobi* work. Bones had a special henchman of his own, one Ali Abib, who had previously been in the employ of a Bacteriologist and talked *babu* English, with a strong scientific flavouring.

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(23) Such as cucumber sandwiches for tea.

Amusements were rather lacking. There was no golf, and no riding, and tennis only very occasionally. There is no mention of sailing, though the opportunity was not lacking. Sanders, as I have already said, was a keen fisherman, and the others occasionally followed his example. Hamilton and Bones sometimes took local leave for shooting, and the former was also fond of walking. Sanders devoted much time to the Residency Gardens and Hamilton kept chickens.

### VII. Bones.

The monotony of existence was relieved by the character of Bones.

With a man such as that at the Residency, life could never be dull. His sayings and doings afforded a perpetual source of entertainment, and often to Hamilton, though seldom to Sanders, of exasperation.

Lieut. Francis Augustus Tibbetts was a native of Surrey, as is evidenced by his frequent contributions, in defiance of Colonial Regulations, to such papers as the *Guildford Chronicle* and the *Hindhead Observer*. He had been educated at Clifton (Modern side) and Sandhurst,<sup>(24)</sup> and was seconded to the Houssas very shortly after obtaining his commission.

He started with certain advantages. His father had been a well-known Administrator on the Coast, and he had a wealthy uncle, who made him a handsome allowance, and whose business in the City, worth half a million, he eventually inherited. In addition he had learnt Bomongo and other vernaculars as a child and ultimately had an even greater command of African languages than Sanders himself.

Though he dropped a few bricks at the start, and always remained somewhat erratic, he settled down to the job of administration not only with courage but with a shrewdness that would have surprised any one who only met him when off duty. To such a superficial observer it would have seemed only that Bones was ridiculous of appearance, that he could not spell, or write English, that his conversation was a perpetual flow of Malapropisms and that he was possessed of a childish vanity.

All this was in a sense true but there was a good deal more in him than that, and he could be trusted to give a good account of himself in a tight corner.

He was certainly a dreamer, and invested all his own doings with an aura of romance. Steaming up the the river in the *Wiggle*, he was Vasco da Gama, finding the Cape Route to India. Surveying the country from a hill-top, he was "stout Cortez, silent upon a peak in Darien". He was steeped in Rider Haggard. Who knew but that another King Solomon's Mines might not be found in West Africa by an intrepid explorer such as he, or that in the heart of the Isisi Forest there might not lie the city of a long hidden white race, descendants of refugees from the lost Atlantis, whose beautiful young queen Bones was destined to marry; and then there would be headlines in all the papers about "Lieut. Tibbetts' astounding discovery," and his name would become a household word?

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(24) It is also stated that he was for a very short time a medical student at Bart's.

Besides this Bones was an omnivorous reader of magazines, particularly of such as came from America, and he was the kind of man for whom advertisements are intended. This was the sort of thing that appealed to him:—

“Missouri man makes 500 dollars in six months, in spare time! You can do the same! Cut out this coupon, sign your name on the dotted line and post with remittance to-day!”

Bones invariably did so, and thus involved himself in all kinds of correspondence courses, bought every possible kind of patent gadget and patent medicine, and in general took up with every possible kind of stunt. Here is a somewhat miscellaneous list of his interests, hobbies and activities:—

- (a) He was a great buyer of sweep tickets, and once actually drew a runner in the Cambridgeshire.
- (b) In addition to the bag-pipes (above-mentioned) he bought, and, oblivious of the discomfort caused to his colleagues, endeavoured to learn innumerable musical instruments. He also sang, and this too was not popular.
- (c) He adopted a native *toto*, who, while still an infant, was appointed chief of one of the tribes, in much the same way as the first Prince of Wales was imposed upon the Welsh.
- (d) At one time or another he studied either directly or by correspondence the following subjects:—archaeology, botany, biology, law, accountancy (in which he obtained a Diploma from an American College), eugenics, astronomy, invalid cookery and home nursing, native folklore, psychic phenomena and mesmerism, civil engineering and mountain-railway construction, electrical engineering, short-story writing, motion-picture production, and sociology. Perhaps his most remarkable feat was to learn aviation by correspondence in twelve lessons, without leaving *terra firma* or even seeing an aeroplane!
- (e) After two months' residence in the Territories, he wrote a book on West Africa. In this of course he was not unique. He also wrote a play, and several film-scenarios, <sup>(25)</sup> and he even tried his hand at poetry.
- (f) He imported a bull-dog.

A special hut had to be built to house the junk that Bones accumulated. In it reposed old wireless sets that did not work, and never had worked, volumes of self-improvers, such as the 'Hundred Best Books' and innumerable encyclopedias, discarded saxophones and banjoleles, thousands of samples, ranging from linoleum to breakfast foods, boxes of scientific and quasi-scientific instruments, every possible kind of patent lamp, and a unique assortment of safety razors and razor strops.

In more recent times, Bones might have produced cast-iron solutions of the various racial minority problems of Europe and devised schemes for the settlement of Jewish refugees in Africa. He would certainly have learnt the Palais Glide and the Lambeth Walk.

(25) Here is one of his captions (with spelling corrected):—“Far from the hum and competition of the busy world, the native goes about his daily tasks, under the watchful but benevolent eye of the Chief Commissioner.”

Not infrequently he essayed to apply in practice the theoretical knowledge that he had acquired. For example, when studying sociology he became a Communist, and addressed both white and black as "Comrade", and eugenics led him for a time to become a Nudist, or almost a Nudist.

He was a born Educationist, for he had a passion for passing on information to others. "Did you know, dear old Officer and Excellency, that the amount of the National Debt in pennies would, if placed end to end, reach three times round the world?" As a pedagogue, Bones found Sanders and Hamilton somewhat stony ground. But this did not deter him from trying his skill on the African, who proved much more receptive. The women of a certain tribe, as a result of a series of lectures on biology, decided that the methods of the female bee in dealing with the drones had much to commend them, and took immediate action on the male population.

On another occasion Bones translated a number of nursery rhymes into Bomongo, and taught them to native children. But the broadcasting of "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son" led to an epidemic of pig-stealing, and a knowledge of other rhymes produced equally unfortunate results. The vernacular version of "Mary had a little lamb" may be of some interest:—

"Miri-Miri had a small goat, with white hair,  
When Miri-Miri walked by the river,  
The goat also walked.  
It went to all places behind Miri-Miri."

Bones quite rightly held the view that physical fitness was a necessary concomitant of mental development, and accordingly endeavoured to introduce 'Rugger' into the Territories. It is stated that the Isisi and Akasava took quite kindly to the game. The difficulties that arose were due rather to over-enthusiasm than to lack of technique. This was the sort of thing with which the trainer had to contend. "Yesterday," said an Akasava forward, "when we laid our heads together for the little ball to be put under our feet, an Isisi dog pinched me behind. Now to-day I am taking with me a little knife! etc., etc."

On one occasion, with the approval of Sanders, who attended in person, it was agreed that a dispute between the Akasava and the Isisi should be decided on the issue of an inter-tribal Rugger match, Bones acting as referee. A little before half-time the Akasava opened the score with a penalty goal, and seemed likely winners. But shortly afterwards the play of some of their men became decidedly unorthodox, and before long the local Nakivubo was invaded by the supporters of both sides, and a general rough-house ensued, which was only terminated by the bayonets of the troops and a sudden and most providential down-pour of rain. Incidentally, in the confusion, Bosambo got away with the Cup, that had been donated by Miss Campbell Cairns, the daughter of the Administrator and a flame of Bones, for presentation to the winners.

## VIII. Twenty Years after.

It is now time to take our leaves of the River Territories, but in so doing we may perhaps be permitted to speculate on one or two of the developments that have probably occurred since the days of Sanders, and also to take a glance at our heroes in retirement.

Presumably there is now an aerodrome at every important station on the River. I have also every confidence that the Commissioner of to-day is well acquainted with the Bushe Report, and that a sound system of primary education with a strong agricultural bias has been established throughout the Territories; and, if that be so, what further need to seek for evidence of genuine progress? No doubt Bosambo, now somewhat elderly, but certainly rich, is still ruling over the "Old King's" Country, where Sanders in his final tour established him. His grandsons have perhaps been sent to Achimota—but not at the expense of their grandfather—and it is to be hoped that the eldest of them will, in due course, rule his people with as much success as the old man himself, though by methods somewhat less crude.

Hamilton is in the City, managing with his shrewd common-sense the considerable interests of the firm of Tibbetts and its subsidiaries, while Bones lives in the country, nominally engaged in farming, and in all probability losing money in weird agricultural experiments.

And what of Sanders himself? At any rate he is not like some retired officials, a prey to financial anxiety, dependent only on the monthly cheque from the Crown Agents. Thanks to his own worldly wisdom he resides in comfort in a villa at Twickenham. He has long outlived the desire to return to Africa, and is contented with such simple pleasures as a visit to Lord's or the Oval and an occasional fishing holiday in Scotland. He spends much of his time on the premises of the Sports Club, and the Royal Empire Society, reading the papers<sup>(26)</sup> and swapping yarns with his cronies, and I have no doubt attends the annual dinner of the Corona Club. And during the last few months he has probably been rendering useful service to his country in connexion with A.R.P.

## APPENDIX A. Some Proverbs.

No self-respecting student of the manners and customs of African tribes under-estimates the significance of Proverbs, as a revelation of native mentality. Edgar Wallace was no exception and puts a large number into the mouths of his African characters, and also into those of Sanders and his colleagues, who were all good linguists.

Some of these, no doubt, are genuine, and known in other parts of Africa, but others (we hope, the more cynical ones) are the creations of Wallace's own fancy.<sup>(27)</sup>

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(26) Particularly the **Spectator** and **Blackwood's**.

(27) See p. 4 above.

A few specimens, of a rather miscellaneous character, are appended:—

- 1) The Ngombi to hear, the Bushman to smell, the Isisi to see, the Ochori to run.
- 2) The Isisi sees with his eyes, the Ngombi with his ears, but the Ochori sees nothing but his meat.
- 3) As the hunter without a spear, so is the Isisi without a ghost.
- 4) The snake and the Tofolaka live in the grass, and the snake dies of shame.
- 5) Only the rat comes to dinner and stays to ravage.
- 6) A good wife does all things but fly.
- 7) No man turns his face to the sun or his back to his wife.
- 8) A lover has strong arms but no brains.
- 9) Men know best, who know most, but a woman's happiness lies in her illusions.
- 10) When a slave sits in the king's place, only slaves obey him.
- 11) A king is a poor man, and a beggar is poorer.
- 12) Between a slave and a warrior is the length of a spear.
- 13) Spears grow no corn. Rather are they terrible eaters.
- 14) If your neighbour be armed, take your arms and join him.
- 15) Speak only the words which high ones speak and you can say no wrong.
- 16) You cannot measure right with a string.
- 17) If you cannot find your enemy, kill your dearest friend.
- 18) Men who stand still do not step on thorns.
- 19) To every man there is an easy kill somewhere and, if he misses this, all kills are difficult.
- 20) That which is looked for is never boasted about.
- 21) A thing is worth its price and what you give away is worth nothing.
- 22) To-morrow is a different day, *or*, To-morrow is also a day.
- 23) Sandi's word has one face.

#### APPENDIX B. Some other deities.

In addition to *Mshimba-Mshamba*, the following deities are worthy of mention:—

(a) *Bimbi*—He is a god of the forest and stalks restlessly from one border of it to the other.

"*Bimbi* is older than the sun and more terrible than any other ghost. For he feeds on the moon, and at nights you may see how the edge of the desert world is bitten by his great mouth, until it becomes, first, the half of a moon, then the merest slither, and then no moon at all. And on the very dark nights,

when the gods are hastily making him a new meal, the ravenous *Bimbi* calls to his need the stars; and you may watch, as every little boy of the Akasava has watched, clutching his father's hand tightly in his fear, the hot rush of meteors across the velvet sky to the rapacious and open jaws of *Bimbi*.

"He was a ghost respected by all peoples—Akasava, Ochori, Isisi, Ngombi and Bush Folk.———Even the distant Upper Congo people feared him. Also all the chiefs for generations upon generations had sent tribute of corn and salt to the edge of the forest for his propitiation, and it is a legend that when the Isisi fought the Akasava in the great war, the envoy of the Isisi was admitted without molestation to the enemy's lines in order to lay an offering at *Bimbi's* feet".

(b) *M'giba-M'gibi*. He is an elusive devil:—

"He transforms himself into any manner of thing his fancy dictates. He is the one who walks behind you on dark nights, and, though you turn ever so quickly, he vanishes. His is the face you remember and then do not remember. So that when you meet a man on the highway and stop suddenly, half raising your hand in salutation, and as suddenly you discover that his is the face of a stranger, spit once to the left and once to the right, for this is *M'giba-M'gibi*, 'He Who Is Not'."

#### APPENDIX C. Bibliography.

The eleven volumes of "The Sanders Saga", arranged in chronological order, are as follows:—

- 1) *Sanders of the River.*
- 2) *The People of the River.*
- 3) *Bosambo of the River.*
- 4) *Bones.*
- 5) *Sanders.*
- 6) *Again Sanders.*
- 7) *Bones of the River.*
- 8) *The Keepers of the King's Peace.*
- 9) *Lieutenant Bones.*
- 10) *Bones in London.*
- 11) *Sandi, the King-maker.*

# The Ancestral Shrine of the Acholi

By THE REV. FR. A. MALANDRA,

Principal, Ngetta Normal School, Verona Fathers' Mission, LIRA.

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The Acholi people call the place where they exercise part of their acts of worship, the *Abila*. When they wish to offer sacrifice either for joyful or for sorrowful events, in thanksgiving or in propitiation, they gather together about this shrine.

Now, as all their sacrifices, whether public or private, are offered up at this *Abila* it may truly be called the centre of their religious worship.

If one visits these various villages and casually observes the *Abila*, whether in its complete or rudimentary state, one will not be greatly impressed; yet the inhabitants of the village always consider it a very sacred place.

And what is the object of their worship? Their ancestors. It is the belief of the Acholi that the souls of their dead must appear in the vicinity of this shrine some time after their death. The time of this is not definite. These souls have no permanent dwelling. After a period of wandering about, they indicate some particular signs, by which the people of the village may know their sacred duty; namely, to build a small temple as shelter for the souls of their ancestors.

Henceforth they are venerated, so that they may be of assistance to the bereft ones, and they will exercise their power so that the hunting will be successful, evil spirits will be deterred from entering their villages, sickness may be unknown among the inhabitants, women may not be barren, their children will enjoy health and happiness and their crops will be abundant.

Briefly, they are worshipped so that they may exercise their beneficial influence, in return for which their surviving relatives will offer them meat, pudding, semsem and beer at the proper time for sacrificing at the *Abila*.

The *Abila* assume various forms. It cannot be precisely stated whether or not there is a fixed rule for the construction of such miniature temples for all tribes, or even for a small group of people; as they vary in shape and size in the various villages. In some localities, the *Abila* takes the shape of a small hut, having a roof made of grass, with a rather pronounced slope, and supported by small forks fixed to the ground. In the centre there is a longer fork which reaches to the highest point of the roof. This last is not found in all *Abila*. In this case, the poles which are to be used for the building and the quality of the trees from which they must be cut, must always be designated in time by the minister

or priest of the village, who is called *Ajwaka*. The *Abila* in the form of a hut is usually of small dimensions, very seldom reaching a height of three feet. In some cases, however, it is very large, and this is dependent on the dignity of the man to whom it is dedicated. A chief, for example, would have a very large one dedicated in his honour.

In a place called Paico there is a village not far distant, that is directly west of Mount Ato. In that village of the elder Ali, I saw a newly made *Abila*, about four feet high and three feet wide, under a tall tree called *Oywelo*. Encircling it was a fence composed of little sticks, about three feet in length. Its purpose was to make sure that the wandering cattle did not do damage to it. I asked the purpose of that particular *Abila* and was told that it was erected in memory of an elder who had died some years before. When asked why they had built it so extraordinarily large, they assured me that it was to do honour to that elder who had had such a powerful influence on all his clan, and who is still very highly esteemed by his clansmen.

The quality of the timber to be used for such a building, is not determined. For instance those people of Patik and of Atyak, and a goodly number from Payira, use a quality of timber called *Olwedo*. Neither are they particular as to the number of small forks of *Olwedo* that are fixed into the ground to support the small grass roof of the *Abila*. Usually, though, the number varies from four to six.

In other villages, for example at Pabo, the *Abila* is not a small hut, but simply a small table consisting of a smooth stone, and supported all around by smaller pieces of the same kind of stone. The height is generally about nine inches. In the centre of the front side there is a tiny aperture, through which parts of the offering are inserted. (Fig. 1)

There is yet another form of *Abila* that one frequently sees, namely a single stone. I saw this in two different places, north-west of the village of the old chief of Pabo. I made inquiries as to the purpose of the small, square stone at the foot of a tree, and the old man who had placed it there said very simply that it was the small temple of his ancestors.

It is worth noting that while in most cases only one small hut or table is used as a temple, yet there are some cases in which there are two, three, four and even five small tables of stone, ranged according to their size. This may be seen in some villages in the neighbourhood of Pagak.

The *Abila* as constructed by the people of Payira is in the shape of a small hut. There is another, also, made of but three sticks, whose base is triangular, and which is tied at the apex with interwoven grass. At Payira, in a village comprising three families, I noted that one did not have any temple, and those of the other two were differently constructed. One of these had two sticks fixed across and tied at the top; the other had three sticks but of different wood. Both of these *Abila* were less than sixteen inches in height.

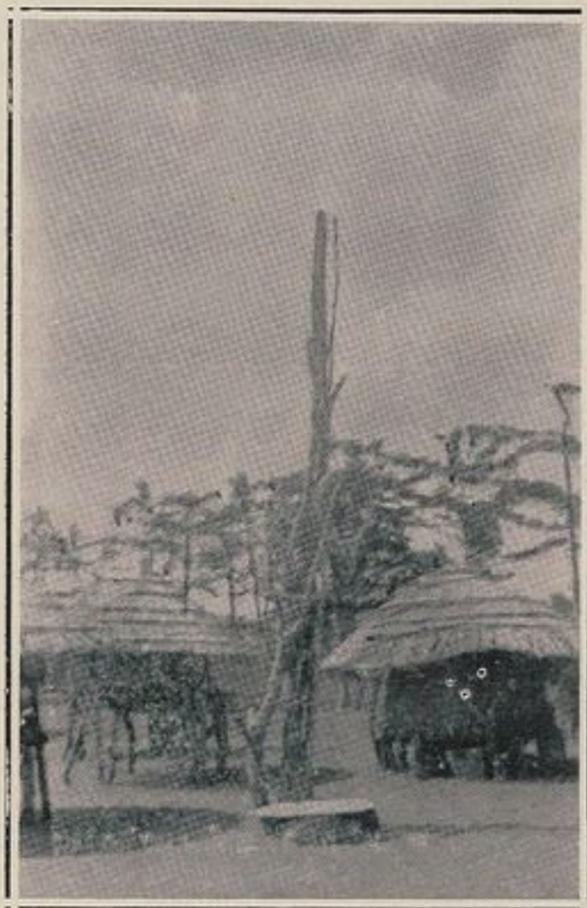
At Paico, I found that the sticks fixed into the ground were nothing else but bamboo canes, split down the middle, and they were nine inches long.

Fig. 1.



*Abila* consisting of smooth Stone.

Fig. 2.



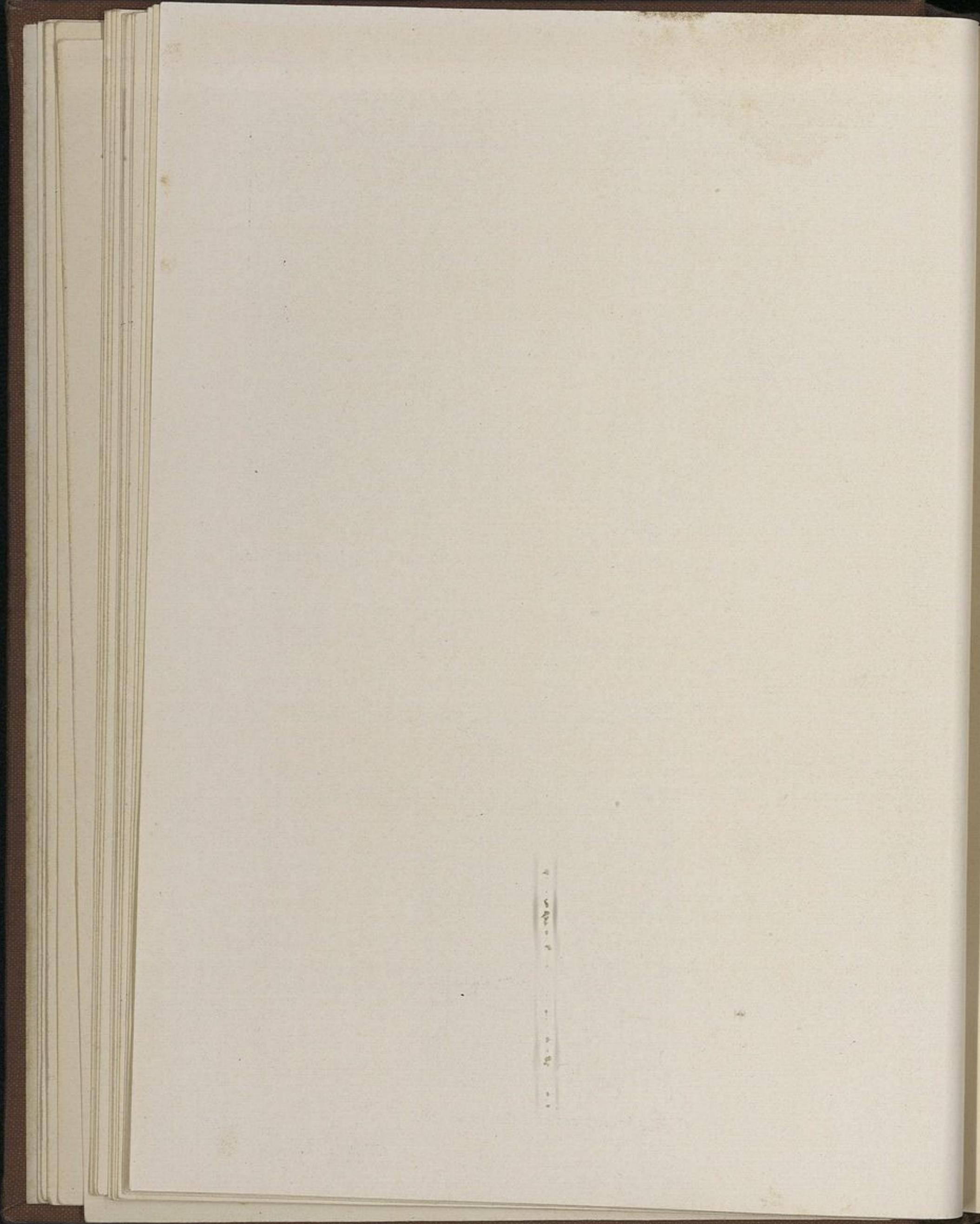
*Abila* which has the *boni* as a sacred tree.

Fig. 3.



Dry branch replaces the green tree  
in this *Abila*.

(Photos: Fr. Malandra.)



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While visiting the village of Olwacomoy, I met an old man who told me the history of the Acholi of Koc. Close by, one could see two graves, surrounded by sticks. They were the *Abila* which he had built for his father and his grand-father. The three sticks of each were tied at the top with interlaced grass. The first one—that of his father—was smaller than the second and its sticks were of different quality.

Whenever the *Abila* is small hut, very often you can see near it what is called *Kijere*, which is small table made up of four forks, twenty-four inches in height supporting sticks tied together. We are told that the son sits upon it when he wishes to communicate with the souls of his ancestors. It is, however, certain that its purpose is also to serve for the sacrifices during religious ceremonies, when the offering are placed upon it.

At the side of the temples of the ancestors, there are always a small tree or one or two big branches of trees, and it makes no difference whether or not they are dry or still green. At times two forks, five feet high and crossed at the top by a pole, may be seen at the side of the temples.

These small trees are not always of the same kind. Some plant the *Mulembe*, others the *Olwedo*, others still the *Boni*, the *Olu* or the *Akwo*. It appears that the *Okango* tree is used only for chiefs, but there are times when one might find them on the graves of common people. Some plant trees of different kinds, in a group, just above the *Abila*. As an example of this, I found the *Olwedo* and the *Akwo* planted together. In another place in Pagak, the *Olwedo* and the *Boni* were growing on the same spot; at Pabo, the *Boni* and the *Olu*; at Koc, the *Akwo* and the *Olu*. (Fig. 2)

Now, what is the purpose of these living trees near the *Abila*? According to the natives, it is to furnish a cool, shady, sequestered spot for the souls of the ancestors. The small green trees, as well as the dry branches joined with the pole, are used for displaying hunting trophies. Where there is no tree growing, one will see several dried branches. Their purpose is obviously for hanging hunting trophies and the skulls of the victims, slain for the sacrifice. (Fig. 3)

It appears that what is called the sacred tree has no such relation with the souls of the ancestors as some of the latest ethnologists claim. It is far from conclusive, from the information of the natives themselves, that the sacred tree and the small temple are the dwelling of the souls of the ancestors. It is only a rendezvous, where, according to the testimony of the living, the souls of the dead come to rest; and as they occasionally find food they are propitiated, so as to ward off evils and protect the village of which they are the guardians.

That the *Abila* is not the dwelling of the souls, is obvious; for when the *Ajwaka* is asked about the causes of this or that particular incident which occurred in the village, he makes a decision to this effect: "Build an *Abila*; the ancestors wish to eat." He does not say that they want a dwelling abode, but simply, a place to eat. This will be seen even more clearly when we discuss the inauguration of the *Abila*.

Furthermore, as great importance attaches to these *Abila* in the different stages of an African's life, one would think that they would be built rather quickly, and that care would be taken to maintain them, in view of their object of worship. Yet this is not done. Years and years frequently elapse before anything is done in the line of erecting an *Abila* in the village of the ancestors. During a trip which I made through the village of Koc Amar, I encountered an old chief whose family failed to build an *Abila*. I asked the reason for this neglect in so important a matter. He told me that the time for erecting it was not ripe. He pointed out the exact spot where he intended to erect it. It was just beneath a stately tree, above the grave of twins, (*Rut*). Once the *Abila* is built and has been inaugurated with the customary sacrifices, they do not take care of it, as one would suppose. In many villages, I noticed that the *Abila* were dilapidated, and when I asked the reason for this apparent neglect, the natives explained that they would build another, or that they would put the old one in condition whenever the need for this would arise; i.e., the occasion for a new sacrifice. It is as well to remark here that the sacrifices are not nearly so frequent as was remarked in a recent article. Those who offer the sacrifices are expected to make them once or twice yearly, when there is the crop-oblation about November or December, and in weather suitable for hunting, usually in February or March. The other occasions for offering sacrifices are indicated by the *Ajwaka*, and these are very few in number.

When the one who has built the *Abila* changes place and goes to a new village, he abandons the first one and takes with him a branch or two of the sacred tree in order to plant it near the new *Abila*, at the time when the new ceremonies are conducted.

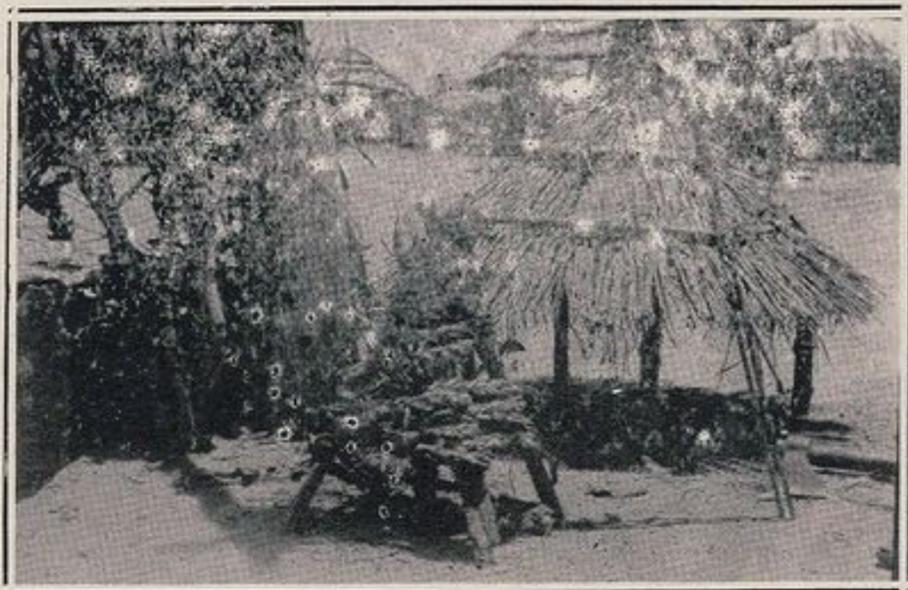
The *Abila* is dedicated to the so-called *Kwaro*, an ancestor. Just who this ancestor is, is not known in all cases; for he is not always closely related to the one who is building it.

The fact is, the *Abila* is sometimes called *Abila pa wora* (The *Abila* of my father) and at other times it is called *Abila pa kwaro*, (the *Abila* of my ancestors). It is called *Abila pa wora* when it has been dedicated only to the father of the one who built it. When it is dedicated to the father and grandfather or the great-grandfather, or to the chief of the clan, it is then called *Abila pa Kwaro*, the temple of the ancestors. Under this name are included all the people whom they wish to remember. It is called *Abila pa kwaro* regardless of the number of smaller temples.

At this stage it is well to see if, in the dedication of such temples, consideration is given only to the masculine branch of the family tree or if the feminine branch is likewise taken into consideration when the generic name *Abila pa kwaro* is applied.

I would answer affirmatively. There are cases in which one finds two temples, the second one much smaller than the first, or even at times of the same dimensions. I sought for an explanation of this fact, and the builder told me that

Fig. 4.



*Abila* to father and mother made of sticks tied with interlaced grass.

Fig. 5.



*Abila* :- the smallest in the middle is of the father.

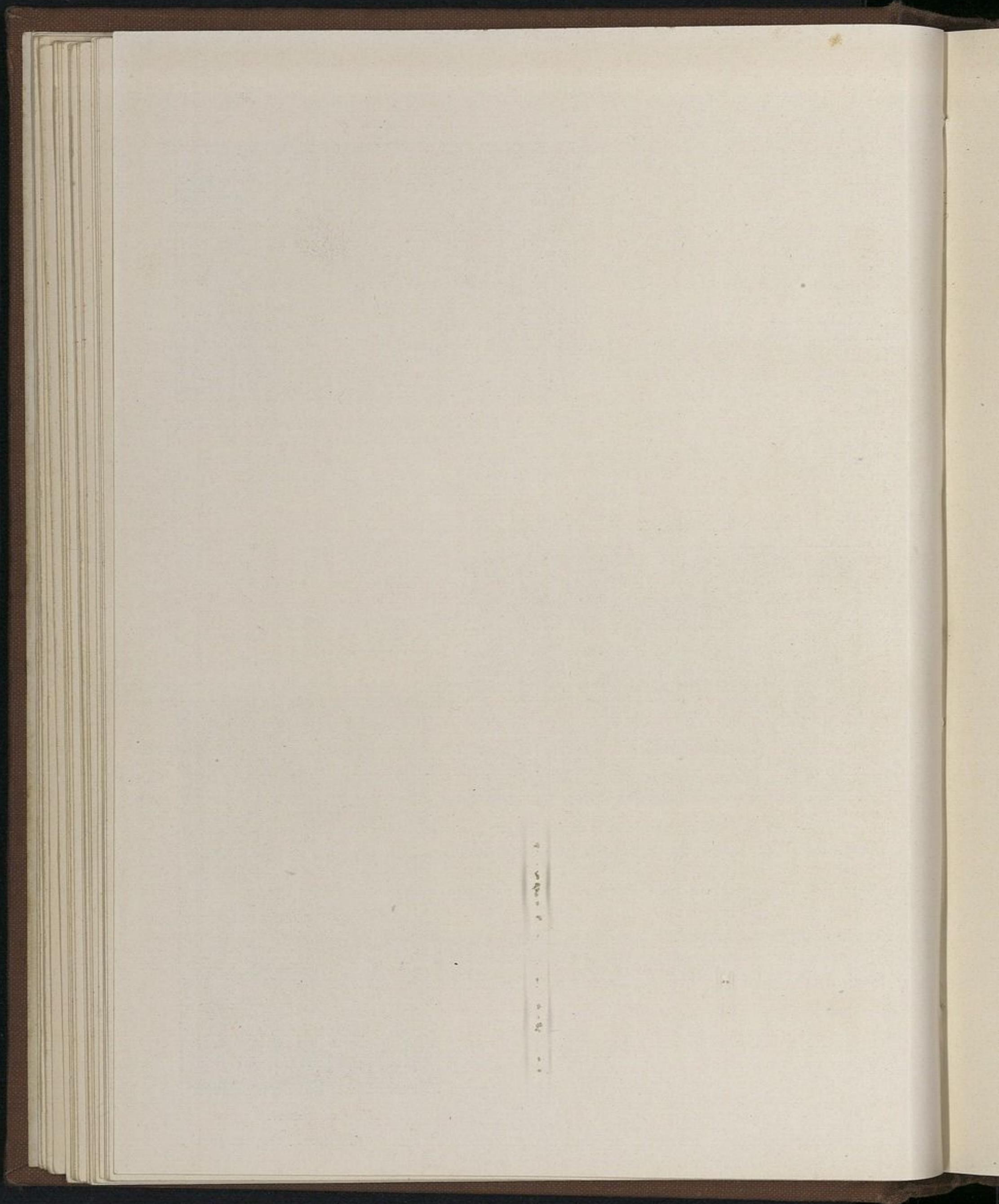
(Photos: Father Malandra.)

Fig. 6.



*Abila* of a chief.

(Photo: Father Sellegri.)



one was built for his father, the other for his mother. In a village called Kongo, west of Parabongo, among the tribesmen of Pagak, I found two temples erected to the memory of a certain man's parents. Their size was exactly the same. (Fig. 4)

Not far from the famous mountain of Kilak, among the villages of Kulunyang, close by the people of Pabo, I saw two *Abila* erected to a father and a mother, and they were not of the same size. Two others, similar to those of Kulunyang were observed near Mt. Ato. In the erection of these, it is well to note that the *Abila* dedicated to the mother is in some cases to the left, and in others to the right. In the case of the *Abila pa kwaro* (ancestors) there is not always one for the ancestors, but not infrequently each of the ancestors has one for himself, beginning with the grandfather. At Pabo and at Pagak *Abila* are arranged in this order. First that of the old chief Boo: second that of the great-grandfather; this is followed by that of the father, and last of all is that of the mother. This last was found in its rudimentary stage. The chief's was the greatest, and the sizes diminished in the descending order.

At Atyak I saw an *Abila* made of three small huts. The one in the middle was the smallest, and it was dedicated to the father. The one to the right was for the chief of the clan, and the one to the left was for the grand-father. (Fig. 5)

Such are the ancestors to whom the common people ordinarily dedicate *Abila*. It is not clear whether the *Abila* dedicated to the chiefs is intended for the immediate predecessor, or for the first member of the dynasty. It may even be for the most illustrious member, or for several chiefs conjointly. It was at Atyak that I saw a temple in an old village, which was dedicated to the fourth king of the dynasty—Labongo Lawierut; there was another to the last king, Olya.

All these *Abila* of which mention has been made, must be considered not as real dwelling places for the souls of the ancestors, but simply as places of shelter and of rest.

I would like to introduce here another argument in support of this opinion. This argument is taken from the very name which the natives give to their small temples. The name *Abila*, is a derivation of the verb *biilo* which means "to taste." From this we are to understand that the souls of the ancestor or ancestors come to taste the food which has been offered to them, with the solemn rites incidental thereto. Simply that, and not that they live there. As was stated in one of the preceding paragraphs, if the *Abila* were the dwelling place, and not a place to which the ancestors come only from time to time, it is difficult to explain the fact that they abandon the *Abila* or simply let it fall into disrepair. They do neglect the *Abila* for years on end, and only rebuild it when the ceremonies are to be re-enacted.

And in this latter case how could they hope to receive protection which had been sought from the ancestors, on the occasion of the opening ceremonies of the *Abila*?

Here is a second argument. When an evil befalls a village, or when some one becomes ill and the *Ajwaka* is called in to give an explanation or

to effect a cure, always he recommends this or that particular offering for the sacrifice. If there is no *Abila* it is built without further ado, so as to have a convenient place to make the sacrifice. If there is one already, the sacrifice is at once offered. The fact of the ancestors wanting food is quite obvious.

These reasons confirm me in the conviction that the *Abila* is not the dwelling place of the souls of the ancestors, notwithstanding all that has been written to the contrary.

*Abila* is not the only name that is applied to the small temple. One often hears this other name: *Kac pa wora* or *Kac pa kwaro*. Strictly speaking, *Kac* does not mean the small temple. It signifies the small tree under which the temple is built. Etymologically, *Kac* is a derivation of the verb *kayo* and means "to gather" or "to harvest".

Precisely what the word *kac* means in the sentence *Kac pa kwaro* is very hard to say.

The natives say that all such names are used for the sacred place as it is; that is to say for the *Abila* as well as for the sacred tree. Nevertheless, the opinion prevails that by the word *Kac* one is to understand "the sacred tree" even though there may be several *Abila*.

Then why is the sacred tree called *Kac*? The following explanation might be given. Because upon it are collected and displayed the skulls of the victims sacrificed. The skulls and horns of the animals killed in the hunting season are also hung from its limbs and not infrequently they hang up bunches of crops. Considering the derivation of the word *Kac*, this theory seems quite plausible.

This may also help to elucidate its use. The verb *kayo* from which *Kac* is derived, preceded by the word *Latin* (*latin kayo*) which means "son," is used to express the first-born. Therefore the way of saying *Kac pa Kwaro* evidently signifies the one who prepares the *Abila*, since he is the one who receives the father's inheritance. In other words, he is the first-born.

Ordinarily the first-born builds the *Abila*, although it is well to note that this is not always so. Quite often others erect it. This also is in confirmation of the above statement. These reasons may well explain the second interpretation of the name *Kac*, according to our own mind; because those natives whom I questioned were unable to give an explanation other than that it has been called *Kac* for the past generations.

The first-born has the duty of building the *Abila* and when he is dead the duty falls to the lot of his brothers; no account is taken of his sisters, if he is married. And if he is not married the duty falls upon the first married brother. If they were married about the same time, the elder one must do it. If none is married, no one is bound to build it. The reason assigned for this is that for the inauguration of the *Abila* beer is necessary and flour for making the bread to be offered to the ancestors, and to those who participate in the ceremonies. If the one who is to build the *Abila* is not married, he will find himself in an im-

possible situation, for there will be no one to prepare the beer (*Kongo*), to grind the millet or to attend to the other incidentals. Therefore he is no longer obliged to erect the *Abila*, and the duty devolves on another.

The circumstances connected with its erection vary. For one it might be sickness in the family; for another some dire calamity or bad luck in the hunt; for another help and deliverance in a moment of danger, in which case the *Abila* is built not to propitiate, but as a thank-offering.

There is the case also when the reason and desire for building the *Abila* is the result of a dream, in which the *Kwaro* (ancestors) clearly express the wish to eat. If the dream was confused, and there is still a lurking suspicion—which is always strengthened by their superstition—the dream is taken as an evident omen of exceptional importance. The *Ajwaka* is then consulted and he gives the answer according to the mind of the ancestors.

What is the time for the building of the *Abila*? It is the first months of the Dry Season—November and December. At this time also the people are ready to start their hunts, and they have plenty of food to inaugurate the ceremonies.

The place where the *Abila* is built is in the central part of the court-yard of the village, in front of the hut of the mother if she is still alive; if she is not, in front of the hut of the wife. If the builder of the *Abila* has several women, the *Abila* will then be erected in front of the hut of the one he first married.

The distance between the *Abila* and the hut varies from thirty to forty feet, and according to the space available. However, this rule is not a rigid one; for I have seen several *Abilas* at a distance of three feet only from the hut. In this latter case they were all to the left as one came out from the hut.

At the time of the inauguration of the *Abila* others beside the elders of the village, regardless of their family ties, participate; because they are familiar with the ceremonies all the members of the clan, of both sexes, the sons and their wives, the daughters and their husbands and their children, all take part. The women take what food is necessary. The beer is prepared in the village where the *Abila* is to be built. All the relations, near and far, must be present at the inauguration ceremonies. If they fail to put in an appearance they fall into discredit, and will call down upon themselves the chastisements of the ancestors.

When a man is prevented, for any reason whatsoever, from taking part in the ceremonies, the vengeance of the ancestors will not overtake him. On the contrary he will merit a special blessing. The *Ajwaka* is always consulted before the erection, and as a matter of fact he has the last say-so in the decisions. It is very seldom that he takes part in the inauguration ceremonies.

Suppose the builder is poor or unable to build it; as he is in no position to do so he is freed from the obligation, and the ancestors will not be vexed on this account. In this case, and when all the clan has disappeared, the souls of the ancestors will live along the banks of the brooks, where they feed on frogs or upon leaves. Every so often, they will return to their grave.

The inaugurations of *Abila* for chiefs are much the same as for those of the common folk. There are, however, a few minor changes. The successor of the deceased chief will build the *Abila* in the *Kal*—the village of the chief—and its proportions will be larger. The sticks which are to be used for the building are not always of the same quality. At the *Kal* of Patiko they use the Olwedo, and at that of Atyak any tree, so I was assured by an old chief. At times the size of an *Abila* of a chief is the same height as that of a common hut. (Fig. 6)

At Atyak the *Abila* are two in number: one to the Chief Labongo who was one of the first of that dynasty; the other to the last chief, Olya. They are both as large as common huts.

Of course in this case there is not a fixed number of poles, which might be taken as a sacred number for such buildings. In such a large *Abila* as that of a chief, which is the size of a common hut, there is a fork in the middle for supporting the roof. The royal drums called *Bul Ker* are depended from it.

If the chief's *Abila* is of the common type and is too small to house the royal drums these are kept in a special hut nearby, which is specially built for this purpose.

Near the chief's *Abila*, which is in the centre of the village, *Kal*, there is not an ordinary sacred tree, but a special one called *Okango*. Even for the chiefs, the *Kac*, (sacred tree) will be one only, even when the *Abila* are more than one.

For the inauguration of the *Abila* of a chief, a great dance takes place.

The duty of building the *Abila*, as was stated above, devolves upon the first-born, and when he is single his married brother will perform this work. If he has no brothers, he himself will do it.

When the time for building it has come, and it is important to remember that the ancestors indicate the time, the very first thing to be done is to consult the *Ajwaka*. If the sign is a sickness or some other misfortune, the *Ajwaka* then declares the need of building the *Abila*. After having drawn lots in his own hut he then declares who is to build.

If the sign was made known in a dream, the *Ajwaka* then says very solemnly that it is so, and says that the ancestors must have food. The quality of timber to be used is then pointed out by him, as also those things necessary for the ceremonies.

After having consulted the *Ajwaka*, the builder of the *Abila* returns home, and sends word around to all the relations, acquainting them of the *Ajwaka's* decision to build an *Abila*. They are so informed in order that they may participate in the rites and ceremonies. He likewise tells them the amount of flour they should bring for the bread and of leaven for the beer. If there are other food-stuffs to be consumed, he tells them.

When all the food is ready and all the relations have arrived, word is sent to the *Ajwaka* asking him if he wishes to attend, and if so to come at dawn. Then they set about building the *Abila*, following very minutely the instructions of the *Ajwaka*.

In every hut of the village beer is prepared in earthen jars. This is generally done at sunset. The *Ajwaka* then motions to the relations to meet together, and adorns his person with the signs and trinkets of his stock-in-trade. Over the goat skin that he wears he places the skin of an antelope. In his right hand he holds the *Aja* (a small empty calabash, containing small stones.) In his left hand there is a small stick, or a wand. Making sundry and majestic gestures, he enters into direct communication with the ancestors. He dances and prances, and every now and then rattles the calabash, so as to attract the attention of the spirits. They are expected to come and make known their wishes to him.

All in attendance, very particularly the elders, pay close attention and the silence is sepulchral. They are awed at the tremendously important act that is taking place before their very eyes, and they are awaiting the answer.

Suddenly the *Ajwaka* stands still; the rattling of the *Aja* ceases; he pauses, and his features are tense. He is in evident communication with the ancestors. Sitting on the goat skin he suddenly stoops to the ground, for he hears things. The sounds at first are quite confused. Then they are clarified. He slowly raises himself, and thus addresses the people.

*Kuaro tin dok oloko.*

The Ancestor spoke today, once again.

*Wuweny nyok, gweno, wa kongo.*

Get ready goats, hens and beer.

The answer from the ancestors is given, and their wishes are made known publicly. After these preliminaries the elders go and fetch a goat (*nyok gibworo*) from the master of the *Abila* (*won abila*), that is, the one who built it. They bring it near the *Abila* and, tied thereto until after sunset, it is afterwards taken into a hut for the night, and the following morning it is again tied until sunset.

It is well to remark here that the elders (*lodito*) always perform the rites, regardless of whether they are or are not related to the owner of the *Abila*. This office is reserved to them, since they are very well acquainted with all the rituals.

The first offering of the goat, made without any ceremony at the time of the presentation, is like an answer to the request of the ancestors. Meantime the *Ajwaka* goes back to his village, and does not return any more until the following rites of the consecration of the *Abila*. The next morning, at break of day, the goat is taken close to the *Abila* and left there. Later on, about eight o'clock, the elders gather in front of the temple to initiate the ceremonies.

Then the master of the *Abila* (*won abila*) advances and loosens the goat, and taking hold of its rope leads it around the *Abila* three times. He goes around the *Kac* the same number of times. He suddenly stands still and while the others stand around, with their spears, the *Ajwaka* commences the opening prayer. This is a sort of general introduction to the function. Here are the words that are uttered:

*Wora yam ceng ikoko cam man.*  
My Father, you asked for this food long ago.

*Cam tin dong en: bin ie dong.*  
Here is the food to-day: then come.

*Ilwong omeggiwu duc, cam mewu en.*  
Call all your brothers, here is the food for you.

After such an invocation, he addresses the onlookers in order that they also may take part in the offering. He says:

*Wun lokakawa, an alwongo wun pi wora.*  
Relations of mine, I have called you for my father.

*Ma an atyeto: wubin ka mio cam igi.*  
For whom I have drawn lots: come to give him to eat.

*Ma an amio ki woragi.*  
The food I give to my father.

*Tin amako dyel en.*  
Behold here is the goat.

*Wamii ki wora dong en.*  
Let us give it then, to my father.

He having extended this invitation, one of the elders takes his place and acts as master of ceremonies; holding the goat by the rope he says the following:

*In wkaro tin dong an amio cam mewu.*  
Ancestors, behold to-day I give your food.

*Wukel latinni wan waribo wun ki latinni.*  
Bring here your son; we unite you to your son.

*Cam mewu dong en.*  
Here is your food.

*Wubin ducu ka keto cingwu.*  
Come ye all and place your hands upon it.

*Kom nyok man.*  
Upon this goat. (1).

This formula comprises two parts: the first is an invitation to the souls of the ancestors to come near the *Abila*; the second is an invitation for the placing of hands upon the victim as a sign of their good pleasure, or their displeasure, as the case may be. When the prayer is over the elders stroke the back of the goat either out of fear of those who are armed with spears or to cause the animal to defecate or to urinate. (The natives attribute it simply to the influence of the ancestors, and not to any of the above reasons given.)

(1) Such invocations lead us to believe that the **Abila** is dedicated primarily to the grand-father rather than to the father.

It is a good omen if the goat defecates, and they at once thank the ancestors for having accepted the offering for consecration of the *Abila*. All those present likewise express their good pleasure. On the other hand, if it urinates, it is taken as an ill-omen. It means not only that the ancestors are greatly displeased, but that there will be cases of death in the village, if they dare sacrifice that goat without mentioning it to the *Ajwaka*, in front of the *Abila*, before the service gets under way.

When the omen is good they proceed without delay to carry out all the ritualistic ceremonies; and when it is not good they are expected to go to the *Ajwaka*, with the goat. All do not go to the *Ajwaka*, but only the builder and a representative group selected from among the elders. Arrived at the *Ajwaka*, the builder (*Won abila*) explains the reason for his coming, and gives minute details of what happened in the village.

Having heard the full account, the *Ajwaka* then casts lots either with two pieces of skin, shaped like soles, or with round small stones. The dice are thrown up in the air, and then permitted to fall on the skin of a bull, on which he is standing. Then, having considered the mysterious manner in which the falling dice have arranged themselves, he raises his head.

He addresses those present, in a grave and solemn tone of voice: "The fact that the goat urinated, points to the fact that the ancestors do want the *Abila* to be built; but they reject the victim for the sacrifice. There is a reason for this. Some one among you is guilty of having incurred the displeasure of the ancestors. It is on this account that they refuse the food which they had at first requested, and which you wished to offer. It is thus that they express their displeasure. Who is guilty?"

The chief of the representative body then begins to recall past events, over a period of years, trying to recall what might have been the cause of this refusal on the part of the ancestors, and on such a very solemn occasion.

Then he commences to talk, while the people present listen very attentively, and in absolute silence. They confirm the *Ajwaka's* statement. Then the builder declares that really, in the past, this or that occurrence called down the displeasure of the ancestors. He will then tell how, in public or in private, he quarrelled without a good reason; or that he quarrelled with his brothers and other relations; or how his wife offended the wives of his brothers. Any similar case, which would be a reason for having displeased the ancestors, is admitted.

Then the *Ajwaka* pronounces sentence, having heard the testimony. He orders that a she-goat be sacrificed, so as to placate the ancestors. Then, in recompense, they offer the *Ajwaka* gifts which were brought along for this purpose: flour, hens, a bow with five arrows, or other articles of small value.

The elders and all the people taking part, again return to the village, and they gather in a circle to hear the answer of the *Ajwaka*. Afterwards they go to the *Abila*, and an elder having led around three times the victim to be offered and being reassured that all will be well, the rite is continued; as a mark of pleasure and as a blessing, they all spit on the victim.

And now, if the she-goat should urinate, the *Ajwaka* is once more consulted, and this time he advises them to kill another goat like the first one; but instead of being reddish, he suggests that it be blackish, with a white spot in front. This will indeed rejoice the spirits of the ancestors. Then the same elder, holding the goat by the rope, pronounces in an audible voice, and in the presence of all the people, the ritual prayer:

*Wuyee cam ma wamiowu tin.*  
Accept the food we present you to-day.

*Cam mewu dong en.*  
Then here is your food.

*Walworowu pingo wun loditowa.*  
We honour you because you are our ancestors.

Now in the event of the omen being good, the goat or the she-goat is handed over to another elder so that he may bring it to the house of its owner (the *won abila*) and it is kept for the sacrifice.

It must be noted that the goat is not placed in a hut, or together with the cattle; as it has been chosen for the sacrifice it has already become a sacred thing. For this reason it must not be contaminated by what is not sacred. It is kept in the same house as the owner of the *Abila* because, as the natives explained, that goat must be the scape-goat, for all the offences of the villagers, represented in the person of the *won abila*.

Thus staying in the house, the goat takes upon itself the sins of all. The ancestors will then be placated, and will willingly accept the food offered, and also will there be a general purification on the villagers. So ends the second day.

The following morning the *Ajwaka* comes to assist but on condition that he has received an invitation. The tethered victim is untied and is made to go around the temple three times again, one of the elders leading it. Afterwards it is offered by this elder, who says:

*Nyoki tin dong en.*  
Here is your goat, to-day.

*Tin dong wumat remo.*  
To-day, drink ye its blood.

*Gemo ma binoni owok ki cen.*  
If evils come, let them be far removed.

*Kom dano obed ma yot.*  
Let the body of the people be healthy.

All the natives armed with spears approach the victim and then they spit upon it for the second time, in the hope of drawing down a blessing. This done, the victim is slaughtered, and its head split open; it is then skinned and quartered. The bowels are attentively scrutinised and if they are not in an abnormal

condition, one of the elders says, *ber* (good) and the others all answer in unison *ber*. If in examining the bowels there is found an abnormality, it is removed, pierced with a thorn, and then thrown into the forest.

The significance of this act has reference to the formula pronounced in the offering of the victim. Nothing of an injurious nature must befall the parents of the ancestors. On account of the sacrifice offered to them, the ancestors must take care to prevent evils from descending upon the village, and troubling the inhabitants.

Anyone may do the cutting. The one who does begins with the forelegs, starting with the right foreleg first. Then the hind legs are cut. Some say that it is immaterial whether one starts with the front or the hind legs.

Slicing a piece of meat from the loin (*akic*), they roast it over a slow fire. There are some also who roast pieces of meat from the chest or the liver.

While these functions are transpiring, the wife of the *Won Abila* is helped by the other women of the relations, in preparing bread. The preparation is made in the hut of her husband. When the meat and the bread are ready, the same elder, the master of ceremonies, prepares the food in one pot (*atabo*) only. It makes no difference if it was previously used. In procession, they go and place it under the temple. Again they slice the loins or the chest of the goat, and they cook it in the house of the *Won Abila*. This second portion of meat which is not roasted, but simply parboiled, is called *amal*. The master of ceremonies cuts it, and it is then taken to the elder, who attends to the cooking of it.

When this second portion is also cooked, the same master of ceremonies enters the hut, removes it from the fire, and places it in two pots. These two equal shares of meat and of bread are carried by the elder and an assistant, and placed in front of the *Abila*. Upon these and upon the food previously offered, these words are pronounced by the elder:

*Cam mewu dong en.*  
Here is your food.

*Wek kom lotino obed ma yot.*  
Let the body of the children be healthy.

*Ki mon meggi ginong nyodo.*  
And may the women bear children.

*Wek nyingwu pe orweny.*  
That your name may not disappear.

Good health for the living, and very particularly for the young, is earnestly besought, and also that the women of the relations may bear children. They ardently wish also, that their Name may be perpetuated to future generations. This request is always made, for all natives are very anxious to have numerous children, and this invocation is made again at the end of the ceremony.

It is at this point that the *Ajwaka* comes, if he has received an invitation. He covers the *Atabo* with earthen pots called *agulu*. Then there is a respite, so as to enable the ancestors assembled in the room to taste the food spread out for them. The food is covered so that its odour also may comfort the ancestors.

After a short while, the pots which were carried to the *Abila* are returned to its owner, in whose house the elders and the *Ajwaka* gather in order to eat it. At the same time, out in the courtyard, the rest of the meat is cooked in the *agulu*, except one foreleg which is presented to the *Ajwaka*. Another piece of meat, with the bowels, is set aside for the elders who eat it the following day in the house of the *Won Abila*. They eat by themselves.

After the repast the elders come out, and go to stand in front of the *Abila*, where the master of ceremonies is found to be standing with a hen, held by him. Holding it by its feet, he makes movements upon the *Abila*. When he has finished this the neck of the hen is cut, and while the blood is flowing freely the elders say,

*Remo tin wamiowu en.*  
Here to-day, we offer blood.

*Komwa obed mayot.*  
That our bodies may be healthy.

Once it is cooked it is offered with bread, but not by being placed under the temple as was done before; this time each elder takes a morsel of bread and then a bit of meat and making of them a round pulp they throw it at the temple, while the chief says:

*Wamiowu cam dong en.*  
Here we give you food.

*Komwa obed ma yot.*  
That our bodies may be healthy.

*Wek too obedi*  
That death may not come.

*Ka yam wan wape*  
If we should not be here

*Cam mewu bene pe.*  
You should not have had food.

In this formula they express their belief that the souls of the ancestors have it within their power to stave off death; and, that they may exert this power, they say that if they were not living they would not be able to offer these sacrifices, nor would the *Abila* have been constructed.

Having finished this formula all throw on the ground small particles of meat. At this moment the beer is offered, not only by the elders but also by the elder women who present themselves at these ceremonies, even though they are not related to the ancestors. They sip a mouthful and they sprinkle it at the same time upon the temple while the elder says.

*Komwa obed ma yot.*  
That our bodies may be healthy

*Kongo wamiowu tin dong.*  
Here, this day, we offer you beer.

Then the rest of the hen and the beer are given to the people who took part. Even the boys of the relatives of *Won Abila* may eat and drink.

There are some *Abila* that are consecrated only with the offering of a hen; this may be either because the builder had nothing else to offer, or it may also be due to the express wishes of the ancestors. Later on, when the *Abila's* owner gets a goat, he will offer it, without any special ceremony other than the formula of presentation:

*Yam amii gweno.*  
Some time ago I offered you a hen.

*Tin amii dyel dong en.*  
To-day, I here offer you a goat.

*Komwa obed ma yot.*  
That our body may be healthy.

Among the people of Atyak, when they offer chicken with bread the elders sit down, and they place the small pellet of meat in the hand of him who is appointed to make the offering. Kneeling before the *Abila* he sets the ball of meat on the ground. He does not throw it. The above formula is then recited.

After these offerings the elder master of ceremonies takes the spear in hand, together with those of the participants, which were leaning against the sacred tree, and says in a clear audible tone of voice:

*Wuling eno ba:*  
Keep silence.

*Wan watimo ngadi.*  
We have offered to an ancestor.

*Tin wamio cam en.*  
To-day we have given food.

*Ento wuling!*  
But listen!

*Kom dano obed ma yot.*  
The body of the people may be healthy.  
And all the elders reply with one voice:

*Kom dano obed ma yot.*  
The body of the people may be healthy.  
And they continue:

*Elder: Ngu ci oto, lee ci otoo.*  
The wild beast may die; and the animals may die (by our spears)

*All: Otoo, otoo, otoo!*  
Let them die, die, die!

*Elder: Tong obed ma bit.*  
That the spear may be sharp.

*All: Ma bit, ma bit, ma bit.*  
Sharp, sharp, sharp!

*Elder: Nyodo i kom mon opot maber.*  
Childbirth of mothers may be happy.

*All: Maber, maber, maber.*  
Happy, happy, happy.

*Elder: Cam ci otwi, ci ocyek.*  
The crops may grow and may ripen.

*All: Ocyek, ocyek, ocyek.*  
Ripe, ripe, ripe,

*Elder: Lotino ci okok.*  
That the children may cry.

*All: Okok, okok, okok.*  
Cry, cry, cry.

This last phrase means that there may be children in the houses. Because when there is the cry of the children it is a sign that a new baby is born. This invocation is replete with meaning. They wish to be happy parents, in the true sense of the word. Thus keeping clear of immorality the people are stronger and more generous in all life's events.

Though the above dialogue is admittedly simple, it is, nevertheless, quite impressive. The pomp and show of it all impresses one not a little. Those uncivilised natives congregated about a very small temple for the purpose of honouring their ancestors in order that they may be propitious and kind to the living; the elders, clad in their goat-skins, armed with spears, and looking really savage, make an imposing picture.

Their ceremonies conclude with a dance. There is also a deal of singing in honour of the ancestors. Even love-songs have their place in this singing part of it. This dancing and merry-making occurs in the late evening.

At sunset the skull of the goat is placed upon the *Abila* and there it will remain for some days, when it is removed only to be placed on the sacred tree. All the men present eat the food that is left over, and which was not offered to the ancestors.

After they have been anointed on their breasts by the chief-elder, with the *wee* (what remains of the food in the bowels of the goat) the following words are pronounced:

*Komi obed ma yot: Cwinyi obed ma ngic.*

That your body be healthy, and that your heart may be in peace

It is well to note that the young men of the relations eat only portions of the forelegs of the goat, after having presented it at the *Abila*, to invoke a blessing.

The last ceremony of this long series of functions is the sprinkling with water of all present.

The master of ceremonies sprinkles the crowd with a green twig of a tree, having dipped it in the water with which he washed his hands before the meal. He expresses every good wish:

*Nyodo onywal nyodo.*

Let there be one childbirth after another.

*Komwu obed ma yot.*

That your body be healthy.

*Wunek lee, bel bene otwi botwu.*

Kill the beasts and let your crops grow.

*Lotino ducu komgi obed ma yot, gudong.*

That your children be healthy and may they grow.

At the same time he passes through the multitude, sprinkling them, with a deal of solemnity. Then, again standing in front of the *Abila*, with much enthusiasm he pronounces the final words, which partake of the nature of a farewell:

*Kwaro tin dong ogoyo laa i wiwu.*

To-day you were blessed by the ancestors.

Then the meeting is over, and so the day ends the initiation of the *Abila*. To have taken part in it is a sign of blessings galore.

It must be remarked that the dance is performed only by circling the *Abila*.

The following day the elders eat the piece of meat which had been taken from the fire to the *Abila*, the day previous; they also eat the meat which was kept in the bowels.

For the women of the relations a goat is unceremoniously slaughtered. If the *Won Abila* has plenty of cattle he will have a bull killed in order that this day may be one of great rejoicing for all. This is done for the relations, but all who wish may take part in the feast.

If the *Ajwaka* has been present, he receives, in addition to the presents enumerated, a foreleg of the victim; and also he is presented with a small goat and some flour.

# Kingfishers

By C. W. CHORLEY

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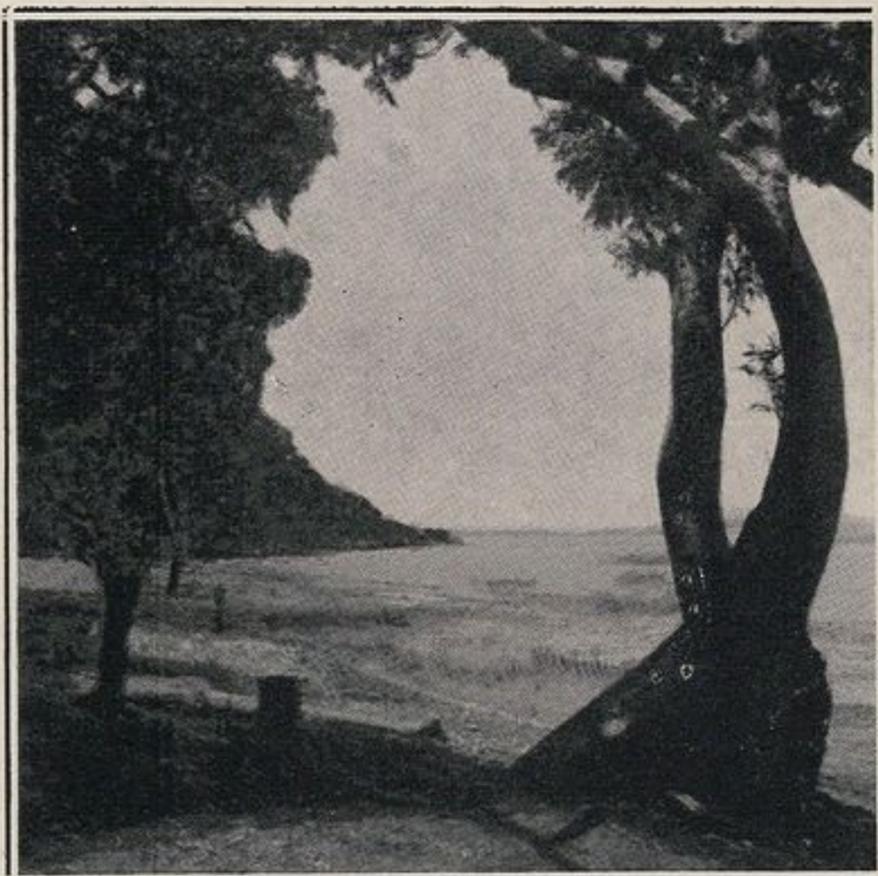
As may easily be imagined, such conspicuous birds as kingfishers were the subject of legends in the past as well as to-day. In the old Greek fables kingfishers were the symbol of Alcyone, who threw herself into the sea when her husband, Ceyx, lost his life in a shipwreck. The Greek gods admired this proof of affection so much that they gave the pair a new existence as kingfishers and masters of the sea.

Kingfishers were a mystery to the Greeks because they could not find any nests and consequently thought that the kingfisher made its nests on the sea and possessed magical powers, given to it by Zeus, of calming the wind and sea during the period of incubation. They noted that the young birds appeared each year during the calm days before the winter storms, so the kingfishers were thought to be responsible for the "halcyon days" of peace, and were greatly honoured and held in high favour in consequence. Ornithologists, however, have deprived the kingfisher of this halo of glory, for he is no longer an immortal or king of the waters, and other birds are just as efficient fishermen.

There is still in many parts of England a superstition that a kingfisher stuffed with wood-ash and rape-seed and suspended from the ceiling will forecast the coming weather by pointing its bill towards the direction from which rain will come.

The islanders and many of the natives of the mainland are very superstitious about various species of birds, especially the owls, doves and the little Pigmy Kingfisher (*Ispidina picta*), with its brilliantly coloured metallic blue plumage and coral-red bill and legs. The islanders are in great dread of this bird and it is hated by them. If it appears near their camp or dwellings it is thought to be an omen of death. There are several coincidences with regard to this which would be far too long to mention in this paper.

Eleven species of kingfishers are known to occur in Uganda, and all of them are known as *akasimagizi* except the Pied Kingfisher, which is called *mujolo*. They are a striking group of birds, all having long bills, a comparatively short body and tail, and round wings, and are not easily mistaken for any other group. Their colourings are very variable, from very sober and dull tints or plain black and white to the most brilliant plumage. As may be gathered from the name, many of them feed on fish, but others have different habits and do not eat fish; some are found in the forests far from water, others take to the bush, while the beautiful Senegal Kingfisher (*Halcyon senegalensis*), with sky-blue wings and large crimson beak, is in no way fastidious in choosing a locality as it may be found in the bush, on the edge of forests, or in the open plains. When at rest upon a branch it sits in rather a lumpy attitude, with its chin resting upon its breast, arousing itself at intervals to



A typical hunting ground of the Pied Kingfisher



A Pied Kingfisher hovering over the water like a kestrel. *Speed of the exposure, 1000th of a second at F. 8 on Selo Film.*

*Photos; C. W. Chorley.*

1852

utter its loud cry like the sound of a watchman's rattle. This bird's favourite diet is grasshoppers. March is the only month in which I have found the species breeding.

The Malachite or Crested Kingfisher (*Corythornis cristata*) is fairly common and inhabits a great part of Uganda. It can often be seen on low twigs or papyrus overhanging the water's edge, and when disturbed its rattling cries sound as if it were very vexed at the sudden disturbance. They have keen sight and with their electric-blue colouring they look like meteors in their flights over the water. They suddenly check their flight in mid-air to make a spiral plunge into the water after their prey, then they return to a suitable perch and knock the small fish, frogs or water-insects they have captured against the perch a few times before swallowing them. These birds usually nest in May, June and November, and lay three to four eggs.

The beautiful little Pigmy Kingfisher (*Ispidina picta*), that flashes and glitters with every movement, is of a lovely orange and most intense blue. It is commonest on Lake Victoria and other lakes of Uganda, especially on the edges of papyrus swamps. It flutters up and down, calling with a very feeble note, and dashes into the water with a splashing thud after small fish, frogs, shrimps and water-insects. It is very solitary in its habits and never assembles in numbers. These birds seem to choose areas which they consider their own and in which they resent intrusion by another of their kind; it is not an uncommon sight to see two of them engaged in conflict, like sparkling gems whirling through the air. They nest in January, March, May, August and September, and usually lay three eggs.

Another larger species of kingfisher is the Pied or Black and White Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), which is remarkable for the tinting from which it derives its name and which is in great contrast to the brilliant hues which decorate the majority of kingfishers. It is very common in many parts of Africa.

The habits of the Pied Kingfisher are totally different from those of the majority of kingfishers, as it is social instead of being solitary. Numbers are to be seen fishing together and using the same breeding-grounds. Their mode of fishing is also quite different from that of other kingfishers, because they are the only East African species that hovers over the water like a kestrel, with head and beak pointing down to the surface of the water. When hovering they change their position from time to time in search of finny prey and once they see a fish near the surface they plunge head foremost into the water like a stone. If the fish is a very small one it is swallowed at once, but the larger ones are carried to the bird's favourite perch, beaten several times against the bough, and then swallowed without any trouble.

The courting days are punctuated by much squawking and twittering, chasing and querulous abuse. The momentous decision and choice once made, there is a lot of work to be done and many feet of digging to make the necessary nesting sites. A suitable bank on the lake shore is found and several pairs make their nests in the same long bank.

To the onlooker the making of these homes appears a big task, but the kingfishers seem to accomplish it with no very great difficulty. Their powerful beaks cut their way easily, the loose matter being pushed out by the feet.

The hole goes back a great length, as much as seven feet if no obstacle is met with. Just in front of the nesting chamber an angle is made, at the end of the tunnel, and room is there provided for turning round. The chamber is usually large enough for the easy movement of the bird. The eggs, streaky white and usually two to five in number, are laid on the bottom of the chamber, on the earth; for the chamber is not lined with moss, down, leaves or twigs as in the nests of other birds. Fishbones are much in evidence in the chamber during the later stages of incubation, for the birds eject portions of bones from the stomach in castings, like owls and hawks, and soon there is an abundance of unpleasant odours. Sanitation has no place in the Pied Kingfisher's home and the chamber is a place of horror, best left alone for the stench is as patent as the darkness. When the brood leaves the nest they are taught how to fish for themselves and are fed during this tuition, which lasts about a month. The lesson over, a new generation of kingfishers has arrived.

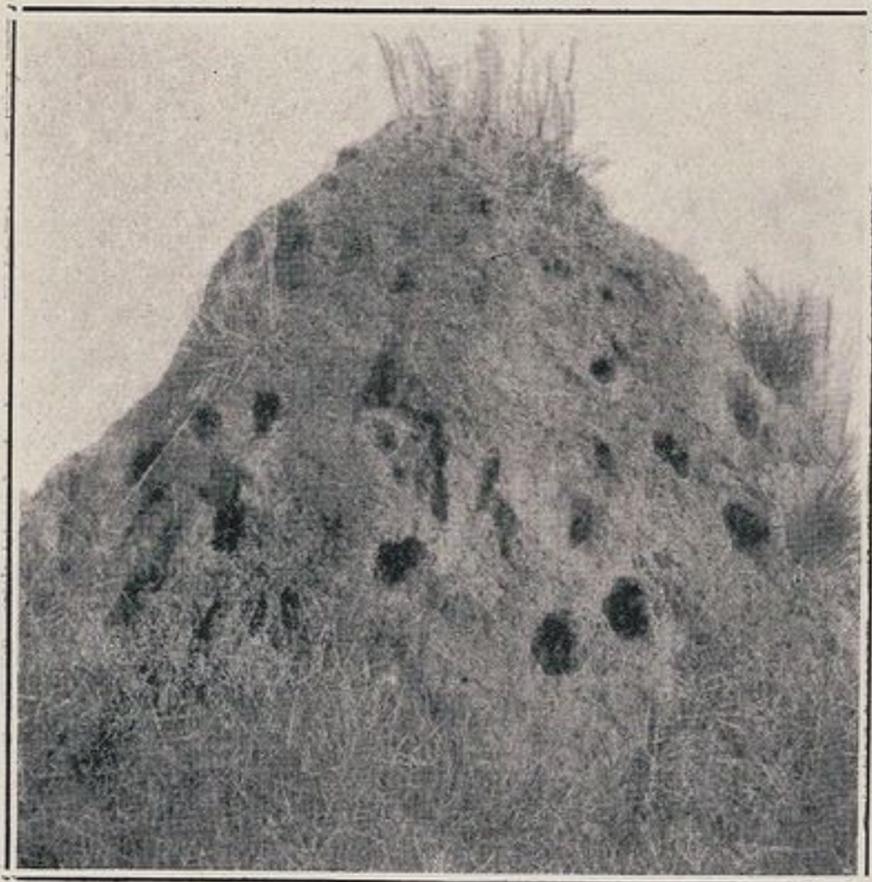
Breeding of the Pied Kingfisher is at maximum during the heavy rains and is much less during the short rains in August and October. Only a few breed in the driest months, late May and June. The types of breeding sites preferred by the Pied Kingfisher on some of the islands in Lake Victoria, and the number of nests found at different seasons are shown in the following table, which is from observations made over a period of one year:—

<i>Locality.</i>	<i>Type of breeding site.</i>	<i>March-April.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Aug. &amp; Sept.</i>
Kimmi	White Sand	70	0	22
Mpata	"	38	3	7
Zinga	"	21	0	3
Nsadzi	"	44	0	19
Bulago	"	104	8	48
Bugala (Sesse)	"	51	2	16
Damba	Coarse sand and stones	50	10	21
Ngamba	"	14	0	4
Lukalu	"	29	2	12
Wema	Brown sand and red earth	19	0	49
Kibibi	"	8	2	36
Nsadzi	"	17	1	23
Sindiro	"	5	2	15
Kerenge	"	3	0	17
Bugala (Sesse)	"	12	6	42
Tavu	Vegetable debris, brown earth	7	3	No record.
Kome	"	14	9	No record.
Kizima	"	7	2	0
Kome	Old termite-hills	9	0	0

From these observations it seems that the birds carefully choose nesting sites in a locality; white sand being their first choice, followed by coarse sand and pebbles, and so on to brown sand and red earth, banks of vegetable debris and termite-hills, these last only being used in the absence of any other suitable ground. Hard clay is entirely unsuitable; the birds sometimes make unavailing efforts to burrow in it but accept failure after penetrating a foot or so.



A seven foot long excavated nesting chamber with  
tunnel provided for turning round.



Kingfishers' nests in ant-hill.

*Photos: C. W. Chorley.*

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## NOTES

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**An Arab historian's reference to the sources of the Nile  
in 950 A. D.**

—•—

By G. HUMPHREY-SMITH.

The following extract from the Kitabu 'ttanbih wa'lishraf of Ali b. Husayn alMasudi may be of interest to readers acquainted with the better known dissertation of Herodotus on the sources of the Nile.

The translation is that of M. Carra de Vaux published by the Société Asiatique in Paris in 1896:

"Le Nil. Il tire son origine de sources situées dans le Mont de la Lune (Djebel el-Kamar) à 7 degrés et demi derrière la ligne de l'Equateur, ce qui équivaut à 141 parasanges et  $\frac{2}{3}$ , ou en milles à 425 milles. De ces sources sortent dix cours d'eau qui se déversent cinq par cinq dans deux lacs qui se trouvent du côté du sud derrière la ligne de l'Equateur.

"De chacun de ces deux lacs ressortent trois cours d'eau, et tous ces bras de fleuve vont se déverser dans un même lac situé dans le premier climat. C'est de là que descend le Nil d'Egypte. Le Nil traverse le pays des Nègres, passe par la ville d'Alwah, capitale du royaume de Nubie, puis par celle de Dongolah, appartenant à la même nation; il quitte le premier climat, et il atteint, dans le second climat, Oswan (Syène), ville de la Haute-Egypte et la première ville musulmane depuis les frontières de Nubie. Après avoir franchi la Haute-Egypte, il passe au Caire et il va se jeter par plusieurs bouches dans la mer de Roum, dans le troisième climat. Depuis la ligne de l'Equateur jusqu'à la ville d'Alexandrie, située sur le bord de la mer à l'endroit où aboutit un des bras du Nil, il y a une distance de 30 degrés équivalant en milles à 1,820 milles, et en parasanges à 606 parasanges et  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Et de l'origine du Nil dans les Monts de la Lune au point où il se jette dans la mer de Roum, la distance est de 748 parasanges et  $\frac{2}{3}$ , ce qui équivaut en milles à 2,245 milles. Il y a des gens qui évaluent cette distance de l'origine du Nil à son embouchure à 1,130 et quelques parasanges.

"Dans le voisinage du Mont de la Lune la Lune sont beaucoup de villages et de localités Zendj; après les avoir franchis on arrive au pays du Sofalah des Zendj et à l'île de Kanbalou dont les habitants sont musulmans, puis aux pays de Berbera et de Hafouni. Nous avons rapporté dans nos précédents ouvrages le

motif qui a fait donner à ces monts le nom de la Lune, les influences évidentes et remarquables qu'y exercent les phases lunaires, et les opinions émises sur ce point par les philosophes, par les dualistes manichéens, etc.,”

Masudi is often called the “Herodotus of the Arabs”, on account of the digressive nature of his writings and the wide range of his travels. The comparison between the two cannot with justice be carried much further than this. Some fifteen centuries separate them, and the Moslem scholar of tenth century Baghdad was a very sophisticated person compared with Herodotus and very much better informed. Masudi himself travelled as far as China and the learned men of his time studied the philosophy and science of Greece and India.

One would eagerly digress upon the sources of his information, but in the absence of a library and even of a copy of the *Muruju 'dhdhahab*,—a previous work, of which the *Kitabu 'ttanbih* is an abridgement,—let it suffice to say that Masudi in the course of his travels covered Egypt, Madagascar and Zanzibar. Arab geography is a study in itself and one hesitates to advance without the guiding lights of the many authorities ancient and modern.

One notes, however:—

A resemblance between this passage and Herodotus' description, and the obvious application of Masudi's description to the Uganda part of the Nile system,—the two lakes leading into a third other from which, (in the second *iqlim*, i.e. in the latitude of India) the Egyptian Nile flows.

ALSO: The confident exactitude with which he gives his distances and latitudes. Whitaker gives the Nile's length as 4000 miles, but as I do not know the length of the “*mil*” Masudi and the Arabs used it must be left to one better informed to comment on his accuracy. The name derives from the Roman mile of a thousand double paces.

In another passage Masudi shews himself fully aware that the Nile floods are caused by the rains in the Mountains of the Moon, a theory which Herodotus, as far as I can recollect, accepts with some hesitation.

The passage throws an interesting light on the scope of Arab knowledge at a time when Europe was in the dark ages,—the days of Athelstan and the reconquest of the Danelaw in England,—and many years before the source of the Nile became a matter of speculation in Europe again.

The last words quoted are tantalizing; it would be interesting to know why the mountains were called the Mountains of the Moon, and what the “influences évidentes et remarquables” are supposed to consist of, not to mention the opinions of the philosophers and Manichæan dualists on a point which can hardly have been much within the experience of the latter at any rate.

## A Legendary Hero of Buganda.

By SAM K.B. MUKASA

The Greeks have Heracles, the Hebrews Samson, the Romans Horatius, the English St. George; in fact every nation has got a legendary hero, who is supposed to have performed supernatural feats of bravery.

In this country of Buganda we have such a Patriarch known to fame as Wakiwugulu, who probably lived in the reign of Kabaka Mawanda. His memorable feat is supposed to have been performed during one of the innumerable conflicts which we had with our neighbours the Basoga.

The battle was long and fierce but as the sun neared the distant hills the Baganda with their king could be seen in a headlong flight, and lost no time in crossing the lake at Bugungu.

Wakiwugulu was wrath at this defeat, and telling the King that he would rather die fighting the enemy than share, with His Majesty, such a disgrace, paddled across the lake and faced the foes alone with his spear and shield.

The story goes that the first spear he threw passed through four people who fell down dead! The enemies were petrified at such a show of muscular strength and following the fashion of the Philistines when their Goliath was slain, they turned and fled.

Wakiwugulu, with the war cry of his grandsires on his lips, chased the fliers and killed the stragglers until he could kill no more. Then he collected all the spears of the dead, tied them in a bundle and summoned boats by blowing his horn. The old chronicles tell us that it required several boats to carry the spears of the victims across!

Wakiwugulu is still remembered by that act of bravery, and even to day the members of his Clan—*Fumbe*—still swear by his name.



## CORRESPONDENCE

**The Nature and Characteristics of the Supreme Being  
Worshipped among the Acholi of Uganda**

Kampala,  
5.5.39.

Honorary Editor,  
Uganda Journal.  
Kampala.

Sir,

The importance of Lubanga in Acholi mythology appears to be greatly exaggerated by Professor Boccassino's article in the last number of the Journal. When Christianity first began to be introduced to the Acholi the word 'Lubanga' was used for God in order, I believe, to introduce a new conception of the Almighty to the old Tribal Deity Jok.

The Jok manifests himself in many ways and whether he is really one Supreme being (comparable perhaps with the old testament idea of God) or whether there are numerous spirits each called Jok is a matter of doubt. What is certain, however, is that Jok is the supreme being or beings to the pagan Acholi and that Jok is not held as by any means an inferior or necessarily wicked spirit, this idea being due largely to the fact of Christian Missions using his name to represent Satan or the Devil of Christian Literature.

In his "Study of the Acholi Language", Father Crazzolaro says of LUBANGA "name of a spirit (of Bunioro origin) adopted for God by Missionaries". This sums up the whole question, and one must feel that Professor Boccassino has been confused between the descriptions given him of pagan and Christian Lore.

I am, Sir,  
Yours faithfully,

R.M. BERE.

**Sailing on the Victoria Nyanza In 1908.**

P.O. Box 352.,  
KAMPALA.  
LUZIRA, 25TH. MAY, 1939.

The Hon. Editor,  
Uganda Journal,  
KAMPALA.

Sir,

With reference to the notes of Sir Alison Russell, K.C., on *Sailing on Victoria Nyanza in 1908* in Vol. VI No. 4. of your Journal, he mentions the yacht "Egypt".

This yacht was bought from the Government Printer by a European Auctioneer in Jinja and used for a number of years for fishing in Napoleon Gulf. The yacht later passed to Yusofu Luzige, a Muganda.

The lead keel was stripped and sold in the Indian Bazaar. The "Egypt" bones went to rest on the Jinja side of the old Jinja Bugungu Ferry.

I am, Sir,  
Yours faithfully,  
C.W. CHORLEY.

## Soil Erosion and Agricultural Planning.

---

Veterinary Research Laboratory,  
Entebbe.

2nd June, 1939.

The Editor,  
The Uganda Journal,  
Kampala.

Sir,

When I speak of understocking in most parts of Uganda, I mean that the possible carrying capacity of the land is by no means satisfied. I certainly agree with Mr. Ap Griffith, that there is also space for further afforestation on a scientific basis.

If it is decided to use a certain area for afforestation, it will plainly be necessary to protect it from fire. This is, however, no argument against burning as a system of pasture control in places where there is no intention of systematic afforestation.

Control of pasture for stock presents similar problems to those of shifting cultivation. Where land is adequate they are both unattended by harm, and are probably the most economical forms of husbandry. As soon the land becomes inadequate under these methods for the production of food and economic crops and for feeding the stock, the changes of agricultural or pastoral methods are drastic and involve considerable expense; the present situation in parts of Teso is abundant proof of this. There appears unfortunately to be no adequate compromise between nomadic methods of husbandry and permanent settlement.

In the long run, the added benefits of permanent settlement are undoubted. But in a land of infrequent water supplies, the cost of developing these alone is prohibitive, except where the population is heavy. These problems are being faced by Government in Teso and are proving to be exceptionally costly. It is plainly out of the question to adopt them generally. What other form of pasture management can be advocated?

I am, Sir,  
Yours faithfully,  
R. N. FIENNES.

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