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THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURE

Essays to E E Evans-Pritchard

EDITED BY T O BEIDELMAN



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E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

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The Translation of Culture

Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard

Edited by T. O. Beidelman



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'I am not denying that the semantic difficulties in translation are great. They are considerable enough between, shall we say, French and English; but when some primitive language has to be rendered into our own tongue they are, and for obvious reasons, much more formidable. They are in fact the major problem we are confronted with in the subject we are discussing . . .'

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD
Theories of Primitive Religion

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Editor's Preface

In these collected essays the various contributors have sought to present a tribute to Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard in the year of his retirement from the Chair of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. Some of the contributors were his students; others studied elsewhere but were deeply influenced by his work, both in terms of the enormous theoretical and ethnographic contribution it has made to the discipline, and in terms of the unfailing example he has set for scholarship and dedication to professional achievement. It is hoped that the diversity of approach in these various essays in some way conveys the wide breadth of Evans-Pritchard's own interests.

The idea for this volume grew out of informal correspondence rather than out of any orderly canvassing of prospective contributors. I realize that there are many people who would have liked to present their respects to Evans-Pritchard; unfortunately, the number of contributions possible in a volume was limited.

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The Righthand and Lefthand Kingdoms of God

A Dilemma of Pietist Politics

JOHN BARNES

Many people would say that the basic difference between Christianity and most tribal religions is that Christianity is an ethical and universal religion based on broad moral principles binding on all men at all times and places. By contrast a tribal religion is typically particularist, calling for specific performances by certain persons in delimited contexts; it does not specify how strangers should behave nor what they should believe, nor does it indicate how its followers should act outside the strictly religious situation. But if this is the basic difference, then expressed in these terms we have only a caricature of Christianity and of tribal religions as revealed by modern research. For just as in most tribal religions there are some actions that invite religious censure or activate mystical retribution, so in Christendom the form of the good life is shaped not only by ethical statements like the ten commandments and the Sermon on the Mount but also by cosmological beliefs about heaven and hell, the Trinity and the Atonement, as well as beliefs about postulated historical events such as the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The same is true of other so-called ethical religions. Buddhism provides a theory of re-incarnation and of escape from re-incarnation as well as 227 rules of conduct, and Islam has a hierarchy of angels as well as its duties of the faithful. Nevertheless many would argue, particularly in the present anti-theological and pro-ecumenical climate, that cosmological or metaphysical beliefs influence the behaviour of a believer primarily in specifically religious or liturgical contexts, in prayer and ceremonial, and do not directly determine how he behaves as a citizen in the marketplace or the factory or in parliament. In these areas of activity the righteous citizen is guided by ethical principles rather than by his beliefs about the structure of heaven.

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Yet even in this modified form the disjunction between religious behaviour validated by metaphysics and secular behaviour determined by ethics has only limited taxonomic value. For within all the great world religions we see the historically persistent contrast between Faith and Works as roads to salvation. Max Weber has more than any other writer examined the sociological implications of the diverse forms taken by this contrast in the various religions, and in the light of his studies we should be alert to the probability that beliefs not only about the fate of the believer after death but about other aspects of the cosmological order as well may have a direct influence on behaviour that is ostensibly entirely mundane and secular.

In societies without writing, the past is encapsulated in the present in many ways – in legends, traditions, genealogies, the pattern of enduring social relations and the continual re-enactment of ostensibly unchanging rites. Continuity in the social life of literate peoples is maintained partly by the same devices, but in addition there are written records which endure unchanged even while they are forgotten, waiting to be rediscovered and put to new uses after centuries of oblivion. Although everywhere our perception of the past is continually being revised in the light of our changing present interests, in a literate society the past still remains accessible in the contemporary records that have been preserved unchanged through time. It is significant that in his phantasy of the new barbarism, *1984*, Orwell stresses both the perpetual revision of the history of the very recent past and the destruction of contemporary records; in *1984*, as in a non-literate society, the past is hidden and only the latest versions of the myth are in free circulation.

These considerations are particularly relevant to the study of social life in western Norway, where a long tradition of literacy, a well-developed system of public records, and a keen sense of historical continuity and development combine to make the recollected and documented past an essential element in the affairs of the present. In this context a fieldworker who necessarily spends only a limited period of time on his inquiries is at a permanent disadvantage. Under tribal conditions the ethnographer who sees the results of his investigations in comparative perspective and who can utilize evidence from archaeology, linguistics and other disciplines may well become better informed about the history and development of the people he studies than are the people themselves. In a literate and diversified society actively concerned with its own past and able to utilize the results of scientific inquiry the

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position is reversed. The ethnographer can never hope to read all the books all his informants have read and he cannot expect to absorb more than a fraction of the complex and diverse cultural background, partly myth and partly fact, that they have taken a lifetime to acquire. As Evans-Pritchard (1962: 64) puts it, 'Then history cannot be ignored.' The ethnographer has not only to observe and listen to his informants; he also has to use his abilities as a sleuth to pick his way through the jungle of archives and libraries to arrive at precisely those facts which impinge critically on the contemporary scene he is trying to understand. Yet this necessity is also a temptation. It is an attractive and peaceful jungle with many byways and it is easy to forget just what one has come to seek. Some ethnographers may never be seen again.

What follows is a description of one instance in which cosmological beliefs influence political behaviour. I shall discuss a contemporary situation in Bremnes, a district in western Norway where I have been making sporadic inquiries for a decade or so (Barnes 1954, 1957, 1960). By political behaviour I refer here to the way in which people vote in Parliament and on local councils and the support they give to national political parties. The cosmological belief is derived from the writings of Martin Luther who taught that there are two kingdoms or regimes or regiments ruled over by God, a lefthand kingdom and a righthand kingdom. I make no assumption about the primacy of this or any other religious belief but merely assume that whatever material, mental or genetic causes may promote or sustain any religious belief, the belief soon acquires an autonomy of its own.

In 1965, after twenty years of almost unbroken rule, the Labour government in Norway was defeated in a general election and was replaced by a governing coalition of four right and centre parties, one of them being the Christian People's Party. This is the strongest political party in Bremnes. Throughout Norway the party is mainly supported by Christians who follow that version of Lutheranism introduced into Norway at the very end of the eighteenth century by the Pietist evangelist Hans Nielsen Hauge. Pietism has been dominant in Bremnes for the last seventy or eighty years and enjoys even more local support than does the Christian People's Party. The postwar Labour government clashed with the Pietist movement soon after it came to power over the control of a teachers' training college, but in its later years one of the strongest conflicts concerned subsidies for schools for adolescent boys and girls run by Pietist organizations. The Labour government refused

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to provide funds for the schools. One of the first acts of the new incoming government was to provide this financial aid. During the Labour period, the Pietists argued that education, particularly the moral instruction and character-training provided for adolescents in these schools, was a function of the Christian community and not a matter that could be left to the state, which at that time they saw as being controlled by a government covertly if not openly anti-Christian in its sympathies. But it was only right, they claimed, that the state should encourage this good work for the community; work which was otherwise almost entirely dependent on the financial sacrifices made by individual Christians. Now that the Christian People's Party is part of the new coalition government, with the Minister for Church and Education a member of this party, many Pietists realize that the same arguments may be put forward by Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other smaller groups, each group demanding subsidies for its own schools. Pietists in Bremnes and elsewhere tend to regard with suspicion all non-Lutheran religious teaching and in particular recall Luther's identification of the Pope as an anti-Christ. Hence opinion in the party is divided. Some members argue that the secular state has no authority to discriminate in religious matters and that, to be fair, if it subsidizes the schools of one religious persuasion it must subsidize all; others argue that the state should aid only those citizens who preach the word of God and not those who preach false doctrines. Both opinions have their advocates in Bremnes but the majority of party members hold that accepting grants from the state for Pietist schools does not entail agreeing to financial grants to the schools of other denominations.

These are the facts I discuss. In this paper I am not concerned with the ethical problems they pose and my interest is limited to the evidence they provide about how the people of Bremnes participate in the national political system. To analyse the facts in terms of this system I have to range far afield over the historical development of church and state in Norway. In the context of this short paper I must necessarily treat this development very superficially, but my aim is to provide merely a brief analysis of contemporary events rather than an adequate historical and theological account of their antecedents.

To understand how this division of opinion within the party has come about, and why Bremnes party members incline to what we may call the particularist rather than the universalist alternative, we must look both

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at the local scene in Bremnes, and at some of the distinctive features of Pietism and Lutheranism in Norway. These relevant features are the relations of the Norwegian state church to the secular government, to the Lutheran tradition, and to the Pietist movement. I mention how the Pietist movement, which is anti-clerical in sentiment, has become responsible for training priests, and why it runs schools of its own. In Bremnes, I sketch the local pattern of industrialization and the varying amount of local support for Pietism.

The first question to ask is, why does the Christian People's Party enjoy solid support in Bremnes? The party was founded in western Norway in 1933 and arose out of a feeling that the existing parties had all become inadequately Christian. Bremnes is a district which, within this region, has a reputation for being markedly Christian and it is not surprising that the new party attracted strong local support. However this salient interest in religion is a phenomenon that has changed with the passage of time. It seems probable that while Bremnes now stands out among the neighbouring districts of western Norway for the support given to prayer houses, missions, and other voluntary church activities, this prominence is due more to a recent decline in these activities in other districts rather than to an increase in Bremnes. The trend in Bremnes is in the same direction as elsewhere, but it is less pronounced. It seems that fifty years ago there was a greater degree of consensus throughout the region than there is now about the authority of the text of the Bible and the importance of regular attendance at religious meetings, saying grace before and after meals, and abstinence from alcohol. These traits constitute some of the distinguishing external characteristics of the present dominant culture in Bremnes but are not universally followed even there. There are many who go to church and the prayer house only infrequently, who go hunting on Sundays, and do not say grace. Apart from these people who accept the moral superiority of the dominant culture without meeting all its behavioural demands, there is now a substantial minority which actively rejects the dominant culture. In this local context support for the Christian People's Party in Bremnes is an expression of support for the dominant culture in the face of increasing local attack and erosion. On the national level, however, support for the party cannot mean, as it still does in Bremnes, opposition to cinemas, theatres, dancing, sex education in schools, and the building of the secular youth clubs. On the national scene these battles have already been lost and a minority party, even as part of a ruling coalition,

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cannot hope to reopen the attack. The defenders of the old values can envisage Bremnes only as a remnant of Christian living in an un-Christian nation. If the coalition government is a success, and if the party increases its support, there may perhaps be talk of a national Christian counter-offensive; but this is merely a possibility for the future.

The programme of the Christian People's Party includes, as the second of its eight basic points, the improvement of primary schooling and the provision of state subsidies for independent schools for adolescents. The first of its points includes the preservation of Christian instruction as the core of primary school education and the denial of official support to all anti-Christian institutions (Bondevik 1965: 69-70). Other points deal with Christian social justice, temperance, support for agriculture and fisheries, disarmament, equitable taxation and prudent state spending, and impartial Christian democratic courts. Thus the party is distinguished from other coalition parties, as well as from the Labour opposition, in its advocacy of the application of Christian principles to the business of government. This is no new development in Norwegian Pietism, for Hauge, and Gisle Johnson after him, both stressed the importance of Christian witness in the secular world and were opposed to any withdrawal from it. The party gives a general and unspecific endorsement to economic free enterprise, coupled with a determination to improve the structure of the welfare state set up by the former Labour government; the main plank of the party is the protection of Christian values in private life. The public business of government and the private life of the individual meet most forcefully in the national schools. In Norway the great majority of primary and secondary school children, and in a country district like Bremnes all these children, attend schools that form part of the loose national system. The local district council is responsible for building schools, hiring and paying teachers, and choosing between alternative syllabuses offered by the central government. Education accounts for over half of the expenditure of the local district council, and parents take an active interest in what is taught to their children in the local schools. Furthermore the national school system, as we may call it, has always had a close link with the state church. In the mid-nineteenth century children were taught to read, and adults who were too old to go to school taught themselves to read, so that they could study the Bible. Apart from the three Rs, the only other subject of importance taught in school was Christian knowledge. The district parish rector was, and still is *ex officio*

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a member of the local school board, and instruction in school was linked with the instruction given by the rector to confirmation candidates. For many years compulsory schooling was limited to seven years, from age seven to age fourteen, and for many boys and girls confirmation during the last year of school marked the transition from childhood to the world of earning a living. The transition was often from the shelter of a Christian home and Christian school to the rough and tumble of life in the fishing fleet or in domestic service in the towns. During the twentieth century the school curriculum began to take in many new subjects. Even in Bremnes some children continued their schooling beyond age fourteen, sometimes going on to secondary school after a year with the fishing fleet to save a little money. A retired school teacher summed up the changes in the period 1900 to 1950 by saying: 'Christianity used to be the major subject and now it has become just a minor subject.' Thus the concern of the Christian People's Party with education is easy to understand, particularly at a time when post-Sputnik pressures, in Norway as elsewhere, have led to enlarged curricula, longer periods of schooling, overcrowded classrooms, and an acute shortage of school teachers.

This tradition of education based on the Bible goes back to the beginnings of Lutheranism, with the work of Francke at Halle University in Germany. In nineteenth-century Norway, at least in the countryside, literacy and piety went hand in hand. Many of those who were interested in religion became teachers, and the teachers who succeeded professionally were often lay preachers. As the syllabus came to include more subjects, the Christian component in teacher selection and training became less significant. In the last few years, the shortage of trained teachers has led to the employment in primary, and even in some secondary, schools of so-called 'students', young men and women who have recently passed the matriculation examination but who have not yet gone to teachers' training college or university. Thus the school can no longer be seen as primarily concerned with the transformation of Christian infants into Christian adults; it has become a school of skills rather than a school of values. In these circumstances we can understand why the Pietist movement seeks financial support for its own schools to supplement those provided by the state.

To understand the attitude of the party towards state aid we must also look at the relation between church and state. Here we are not specifically concerned with Bremnes, for the broad outline of the relation

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between local church and local organs of central government within the Bremnes arena is common to all districts in Norway, though there are some special features in Bremnes we shall look at presently. The Lutheran church in Norway is a state church in that there is a government department responsible for church affairs (it is significant that this is the Department of Church and Education); its clergy are civil servants and are paid from official funds; all citizens are members of the church unless they have formally registered themselves as non-members. These conditions have persisted more or less unchanged from the Reformation through the centuries of Danish and Swedish rule into the present era of independent nationhood. Not only is there a state church but all citizens, except registered non-members, are required under the constitution to bring up their children in the Lutheran faith. Hence at first sight it is surprising that the argument, familiar enough in other contexts, that the state should not concern itself with religion has any relevance for this particular state and this religion. Indeed, a simple identity of the interests of the Lutheran evangelical Christian church and the Norwegian state was implied in the article of the constitution, now amended, which used to read 'Jews and Jesuits must not be tolerated'. But in fact we are here dealing with a Lutheran church which has become in certain parts of the country strongly Pietist in sentiment, and not, say, with an Eastern Orthodox church constitutionally able to live in century-long harmony with a Byzantine Christian monarchy. Nor has there ever been in Norway a western medieval type of tension between church and state. The Reformation, and the new relationship between an Evangelical or Lutheran church and a Protestant prince, were hammered out in Germany and the results were imported ready-made via Denmark to Norway in 1537. During the three hundred years following the Reformation, the church in Norway became an Erastian state church, and was in fact the most pervasive instrumentality of the central government, with its clergy stationed farther out into the countryside than any other branch of the bureaucracy. In the eyes of country folk it became strongly identified with the Danish colonial establishment and urban elite and, eventually, with the dangerous doctrines of the Enlightenment and theological rationalism. It was with this church already in existence that the Pietist movement brought to the Norwegian countryside at the beginning of the nineteenth century not only its own version of the Lutheran tradition but also an interest in the basic tenets of Lutheranism which in

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Norway seems not to have accompanied the Reformation itself. Hence it comes about that during the last hundred and fifty years Pietist arguments based on a Lutheran interpretation of the Scriptures have been advanced in radical criticism of the status and teaching of the manifestly Lutheran church and of the ostensibly Lutheran state. This fact, together with Hauge's forthright disapproval of sectarianism, helps to explain why, to such a substantial extent, Pietist dissent has been contained within the institutional fold of the state church. The position is well stated in the proud slogan of the principal organ of the Pietist movement, the Inner Mission: 'In, but not under, the state church.'

How is this relation between church and state derived from Luther's teachings? The Dano-Norwegian institutional arrangement of a national church with total membership and assimilated to the state public service follows one of the several solutions outlined by Luther for settling the problems of church and state. It was the solution followed throughout Protestant Germany. Nevertheless Luther's views on this matter shifted substantially in the course of his lifetime. It is difficult for the outsider to summarize his intellectual position, for some commentators argue that his teaching must be understood in the light of his conviction that the end of the world was imminent (e.g. Forell 1954: 15), whereas others argue that he looked back to primitive Christianity rather than forward to the millennium (e.g. Wolin 1956: 34-5). In these circumstances it is apparent even to the non-theological anthropologist that Luther did not develop a clear theory of worldly society. His voluminous writings provide authoritative ammunition for those advocating various other conflicting solutions for the worldly status of the church, particularly when the state can no longer be conceptualized as the prince who happens to be a Christian. Here I am concerned only with the interpretation of his teaching accepted by Pietists in Bremnes.

Luther discusses at length the duties of the Christian, as a 'world-person' rather than as a Christian, to obey the civil authorities, but he also criticizes these same authorities bluntly. He writes:

'The offices of princes and officials are divine and right, but those who are in them and use them are usually of the devil. And if a prince is a rare dish in heaven, this is even more true of the officials and court personnel' (LW 13: 212; cf. WA LI, 254, 10-13; Mueller 1954: 55).

This attitude of critical obedience was found in western Norway during the nineteenth century, where it was extended to the church

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and translated into action by Pietists who would gather at the church an hour before the service was due to begin, to pray for the rector who was to preach and whose theology they mistrusted.

The policies of the Christian People's Party are directly influenced by Luther's doctrine of God's two governments or regiments (cf. Cargill Thomson, cited in Fortes 1962: 58, fn. 2). I speak with hesitation on matters outside my competence, but it seems, according to Cranz (1959: 159-73), that in his 'Commentary on the sermon on the mount' (WA XXXII, 299-544; LW 21: 1-294), Luther argues that every Christian exists simultaneously in two realms or governments, a spiritual realm where he is subject to God's spiritual government and a worldly realm where he is under God's worldly government. The offices, or in modern terminology statuses, of prince, judge, lord, servant, wife, child, all belong solely to the worldly realm, even though the individuals who fill these offices may be Christians. In the worldly realm God rules through reason, whereas in the spiritual realm God rules alone. The temporal organization of the church on earth, with its offices of bishop and priest, is part of the worldly realm and while it, along with the family and the state, is ordained by God as part of the worldly realm, the church does not occupy any special position within that realm. The relative status of the two realms emerges clearly in a passage from a sermon preached by Luther on 15 December 1532. Here he says

'Likewise also secular government may be called God's kingdom. For he wills that it continue and that we be obedient to it. But it is only the kingdom of the left hand. His rightful kingdom where he himself rules and where he appoints neither father nor mother, emperor nor king, henchman nor policeman but where He is himself the Lord is this: where the Gospel is being preached to the poor.' (WA XXXVI, 385, 6-11 and LII, 26, 21-7, cited in Mueller 1954: 43; cf. Cranz 1959: 172, f. n. 195.)

The ambiguity in the word 'rightful' is present in Luther's original German text. Hertz (1960) seems to have overlooked this nice example of the pre-eminence of the right hand, in the field of religion itself. It is important to note that Luther does not equate God's left hand with damnation, as in Matthew 25, v. 31-46, but with secular life here on earth.

With this relationship between church and state in mind, we can look again at the distinctive features of the Norwegian social scene, remembering that these Lutheran doctrines form part of the contemporary

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thinking of Pietists in Bremnes and other parts of Norway. Most of the books and periodicals on the shelves in Bremnes homes are religious works, and these usually include expositions of Lutheran and Pietist doctrine. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Pietist movement was introduced into Norway by Hans Nielsen Hauge, and gained much support in the west of the country, including Bremnes (Hamre 1964; Molland 1951; Straume 1960). The movement stressed the value of personal experience of Christian salvation and personal morality and minimized the distinction between clergy and laity. It became a movement of believers, the leaven within the larger body of members of the state church. It was opposed to the liberal interpretation of Christian doctrine then espoused by many clergy. In many parts of the country it was associated with the nationalist movement that followed the adoption of the 1814 constitution and the transfer of Norway from Danish rule to Swedish tutelage following the Treaty of Kiel. It was also associated with the movement to revive the indigenous dialects of the countryside in a composite country language in opposition to the Danish speech associated with former colonial rule. The history of Pietism and these related movements in Bremnes and elsewhere does not concern us here, except to note that by the beginning of this century this laymen's movement had gained sufficient support in the nation to challenge the liberal clergy on their own ground by setting up a theological college of its own in Oslo. During the twentieth century the supporters of liberal views have largely withdrawn from the church altogether, and at the present time the great majority of priests entering the Norwegian church receive their training in this college; yet Pietism remains essentially a laymen's movement and is referred to in these terms. It remains committed to the view that service as a priest is no higher a vocation than any other acceptable to God. The main body of the Pietist movement is no longer actively anti-clerical or against the state church, and a great deal of effort is made by influential Pietists to ensure that if possible priests appointed to churches where Pietists are numerous are themselves of Pietist persuasion or sympathy. Pietists often have an ambivalent attitude towards the church and its officials. This was well expressed in a speech given at a farewell feast in honour of the Bremnes-born man, a Pietist, who had become a priest and who, after completing a period of duty as curate in Bremnes, had been promoted to a rectorship in another parish. The chairman of the prayer house, where the feast was held, expressed the feelings of the neighbourhood by saying that all were

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very sorry that he was leaving, though they had to be pleased that he had secured promotion. The curate was admonished that however far his talents might take him in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he must always remember that he was really a layman in priest's clothing. This remark was not only the highest tribute the chairman could pay, for the believing laity are the salt of the earth, but also a warning that the outward signs of ecclesiastical rank belong only to God's worldly regiment and not to his spiritual kingdom.

As well as a theological college, the Pietist movement founded many other enterprises, such as missionary societies and temperance hotels and daily newspapers, which do not come into our story. Two kinds of activity do however bear directly on the plight of the Christian People's Party that we are trying to analyse. Throughout the Norwegian countryside followers of the Pietist movement set up prayer houses where meetings for prayer and Christian witness were held, organized by the local group of believers and addressed by their own members or by itinerant preachers sent out by regional Pietist organizations. Meetings were arranged so as not to clash with the official services held in the church, and the local clergy, if sufficiently Pietist in their views, were often invited to speak in the prayer houses of their parish. They then spoke as personal Christians, speaking to their equals in the sight of God, and not as civil servants appointed by the king to preach God's word. The prayer houses came to be the local headquarters of a territorially organized national movement, the institutional aspect of Pietism as it were, which paralleled the territorial organization of the state church. The church was official, included everyone, provided facilities for baptism, confirmation, and marriage, and was authoritarian in as much as clergy were appointed ultimately by the king on behalf of the central government. The prayer house was voluntary, was supported by those who had been born again in Christ, and was egalitarian, at least between men; women were inferior to men in both systems.

This combination of organizational strength and lack of commitment to the ideological institutions provided by the state led naturally to the decision to establish voluntary Christian schools for adolescents. Just as the prayer house supplements but does not replace the church, so the voluntary schools supplement but do not replace the schools provided by the state. Examples provided in Germany and Denmark, together with various practical considerations, dictate the choice of boarding-schools for adolescents, attended for six-month courses at the age of

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sixteen to eighteen or so. Whereas confirmation at the age of fourteen is a ceremony of the state church, embracing all children as a matter of course, the voluntary schools provide an opportunity for those beginning their lives as autonomous adults to demonstrate that they have decided, or are deciding, to be children of God rather than children of the world. In a sense it is the pervasiveness of Christian instruction and orientation in the state schools that necessitates the creation of voluntary Pietist Christian schools.

These general conditions have manifested themselves in specific form in Bremnes and have affected local attitudes to the recent dilemma. We have mentioned that until recently a high degree of conformity to Pietist principles was achieved in Bremnes, possibly to a greater extent than in neighbouring districts. In part this was probably because until the beginning of the century Bremnes remained an undifferentiated fishing and small-farming district, exporting to the towns of Norway and to the United States of America those who were ambitious or who would not conform. Casual labourers came to the district in connexion with fishing and mining and many of these were scarcely children of God, but no permanent settlements of migrants were established. After the turn of the century industrial enterprises began to be established by local entrepreneurs whose managerial drive was matched by their steadfast faith in the tenets of Pietism. Indeed, the teachings of Hauge on the importance of commercial and industrial initiative in the Pietist way of life provided an ethical model for industrialization in Bremnes. The outward forms of Pietism were enforced with sanctions just as its inward manifestations were encouraged through prayer meetings and religious concerts. For example, under Norwegian law hard liquor can be bought only at the retail branches of the official Wine Monopoly, the nearest branch to Bremnes being sixty or seventy kilometres away in Bergen. This arrangement has been in force since the 1920s. Liquor ordered by workers in the largest factory in Bremnes was sent by coastal steamer from Bergen to its port of call nearest Bremnes and was there transhipped for delivery to the hamlet where the factory is located. The founder of this factory was also skipper of the boat used for transshipping goods. Stories are told of how, when he discovered a case of liquor addressed to one of his employees, he sank it in deep water, refunded the cost to the employee, and dismissed him forthwith. More generally, the high degree of local control in financial matters, including the granting of subsidies to voluntary bodies, enabled the Pietist majority, through the

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local district council, to protect Bremnes from the secularizing tendencies of the second quarter of the twentieth century. In other parts of Norway, and even in another part of the ecclesiastical parish that includes Bremnes, there have been various breakaway movements from Pietism that have led to the establishment of independent Lutheran churches or to sects that are not even Lutheran. Until about five years ago, none of these had gained a foothold in Bremnes. The only public buildings in the district where meetings could be held were the church, the prayer houses and the schools, and a single lodge belonging to a Christian temperance organization. Since assemblies out of doors are usually not feasible in the Bremnes climate, it was almost impossible for organizations openly hostile to the dominant culture to hold public meetings. Unapproved activities such as dancing by adolescents took place only clandestinely in boat houses or at the chilly cross-roads. It was therefore easy for the dominant group to be intolerant in matters of faith and morals.

In the last five years or so, the local battle has entered a new phase. The introduction of television has brought a keener recognition of the possibilities of other styles of life. Better communications have brought the cinemas and dance halls on neighbouring islands within easy reach of young people, who now drive cars from ferry to ferry whereas their parents went all the way by row-boat. More significantly, the economic prosperity that Norway has enjoyed during the last ten years and the provision of abundant electric power to Bremnes from the mainland have led to a shortage of workers in the expanding industrial enterprises in the district. Factories and workshops can no longer be run patriarchally and the proportion of the population attending the prayer houses seems to be declining. There is however still no youth club and no public dancing, and Pentecostals are not allowed to use school buildings for their meetings. On the local front the supporters of the dominant Pietist culture are hard-pressed but have not yielded ground.

Diminution of local support has, as we have seen, been accompanied, somewhat unexpectedly, by national success. Bremnes supporters of the Christian People's Party, after long years in opposition, find themselves forced to discuss national political issues in a context that is unfamiliar and radically different from the one they face at home. There are some party members who do not accept that new tactics are necessary and who hold that the sole function of their representatives should be to

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preach the word of God in parliament to their colleagues in other parties. But the very existence of a Christian political party is based on the recognition that Luther's notion of secular government by a prince who happens to be a Christian no longer applies to Norway. The party must do more than preach; it exists to restore by legislation the distinction between God's spiritual government and his worldly government. In particular it endeavours to ensure that the worldly government does not intrude into what properly belongs to God's spiritual government. Its policy is that Christians shall render unto Caesar only those worldly external things that are his and shall render unto God those internal things that are his alone, particularly the minds of school children. The policy and tactics of the party while in opposition, resisting the efforts of an anti-Pietist government to further secularize the school system, were clear enough. Now that the party is in power, the correct course of action is not so easily determined. In opposition the party could hold uncompromisingly to its principles but in power it is faced with the common, political necessity of compromising if it is to translate any of its principles into practice. The difficulties are particularly great for the supporters of the party in rural areas like Bremnes who are faced with a sudden change of scale in the relationships they have to consider, and with an unfamiliar political arena where they cannot estimate in advance the likely profit and loss from compromise. One solution to these difficulties is to appeal to the second clause of the Norwegian constitution which establishes the evangelical Lutheran religion as the official religion of the state, and to argue that so long as this clause stands, Lutheran organizations, including those that are Pietist, have a special claim to state support. Yet to link the Pietist movement with the constitution in this way would seem to lead it into the trap that caught the church when it became an organ of the state. It would convert the laymen's movement into part of God's worldly government, the lefthand kingdom of God, and remove it from the righthand kingdom and the direct experience of salvation. But it is too much to expect Bremnes party members readily to abandon a claim for special treatment for Pietist organizations and to advocate state support for all schools, including those run by Catholics. This is a step that even the secular Labour government did not take. The dilemma remains.

The complex task of reconciling ideology and organization is met with in many contexts. Many situations can be found that parallel the one I have described. The similarities and differences between the

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Bremnes dilemma and those faced in one-party states based on anti-institutional ideologies are particularly striking. These comparisons lie beyond the scope of this paper. All I hope to have demonstrated is that in order to understand political action in a literate society, with its past encapsulated not in the malleable material of genealogies and myths familiar to us from tribal societies but in the more refractory stuff of books and printed articles of belief, it may be necessary to go back even to the text of a sermon preached four hundred and thirty-five years ago. More important, in large-scale societies, political decisions have to be referred to the various arenas in which they are arrived at and to which they apply, and these do not always coincide. The criteria used to decide between alternative actions may be broad ethical principles or may be derived from specific cosmological beliefs. The goals or pay-off may be here on earth or in the realm of the spirit or, as in the present case, both at the same time.

NOTE

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Heroism, Martyrdom, and Courage

An Essay on Tonga Ethics

ELIZABETH COLSON

INTRODUCTION

Evans-Pritchard's contribution to anthropology is formidable, covering as it does most of the fields of social anthropology. Through most of his career, however diverse his interests may have been, he has shown a consistent concern with expanding our understanding of the terms in which men conceptualize their physical and social environments. He has been adept at finding ways to examine an alien system of thought in its own terms and in making explicit the postulates with which a people operate. In *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937) he explored the rationale of Azande magical behaviour and showed the relationship between this portion of their mystical beliefs and their system of morality. The seemingly irrational became rational when he had succeeded in extracting from Azande beliefs a set of principles which governed their actions. Azande thought became the standard by which we came to understand the nature of magical thought in general.

In this paper I am attempting to follow Evans-Pritchard's lead by devoting attention to a body of thought intimately linked to social behaviour. For twenty years I have been trying to work my way to an understanding of the ideas of the Tonga of Zambia about the nature of social life. Here I propose to examine the nature and implications of their thought about appropriate human reactions to situations of threat and violence. In other words I shall be examining ideas that involve what for want of a better term may be called courage. For analytical reasons I shall need to distinguish between two forms of courage: valour and fortitude. I am using valour with an implication of positive force to cover a public assertion of a position. In Western thought it is epitomized in the figures of hero and martyr. Fortitude implies the

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acceptance of danger and hardship, but has no connotations of defiance against persons or society at large.

These preliminary definitions do not entirely meet the problem of finding a neutral medium for the examination of alien concepts. Courage is not a simple attribute which men can be expected to have or know simply because they are men. It is a complex idea with a long history. It provides a set for the interpretation of action and a standard against which actions are judged. Interpretation and moral judgement are closely interlinked and are assumed to be shared views held by all reasonable men. Yet Western ideas on the subject of appropriate action in times of danger, summed up in the term courage, provide no universal statement about an inevitable human evaluation of such situations. Other ideas may be equally but no more reasonable. As Evans-Pritchard long since pointed out, we cannot assume the principles by which men live. They are a matter of patient inquiry. Only when we know what they are can we understand the nature of social action in whatever society we are examining. I start the discussion with Western ideas of courage only because they are familiar to the reader. My primary concern is with concepts used by Tonga to explain and justify their behaviour. The confrontation of the two disparate systems should also provide a starting-point for further work on the comparison of ethical systems.

Tonga concepts of courage are not simple givens ready to be supplied to the observer. I have had to abstract them from the mass of behaviour in which they are implicit; for Tonga ideas on this subject are no more likely to take explicit form than were Azande concepts of witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard noted,

‘I hope I am not expected to point out that the Zande cannot analyse his doctrines as I have done for him. In fact I never obtained an explanatory text on witchcraft, though I was able to obtain in the form of texts clear statements on dozens of other subjects. It is no use saying to a Zande “Now tell me what you Azande think about witchcraft” because this subject is too general and indeterminate, both too vague and too immense, to be described concisely. But it is possible to extract the principles of their thought from dozens of situations in which failure is attributed to some other cause. Their philosophy is explicit, but is not formally stated as a doctrine’ (1937: 70).

The Tonga had little formal philosophy in the past, a fact no doubt related to the general austerity of their ritual and symbolism, and to the lack of elaboration of their social and political life. Until recently

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their concern has been with the here and now, and with action rather than intellectual pursuits. In this century they have increased rapidly both in numbers and wealth. Today they probably number some 300,000, the majority of whom live within the southern province of Zambia, though a minority of Gwembe Tonga are settled on the Rhodesian side of the Zambezi River. In recent years Tonga migrants have taken up land elsewhere in Zambia or have found work in the towns and cities of southern Africa. Until the 1920s they were subsistence farmers, depending on hoe cultivation, with herds of small stock and cattle where tsetse fly were absent. Since then they have shared in the economic development of their country. The majority still cultivate the land, but increasingly as cash-crop farmers using the plough and sometimes the tractor. Some have become industrial workers, teachers, pastors, government officials, professional men and women. Some 57,000 Gwembe Tonga, in Zambia and Rhodesia, underwent a major uprooting in 1957-8 when part of their homeland was flooded by Kariba hydro-electric dam. They are therefore well aware of the implications of economic and political development.

The Tonga language was first reduced to writing late in the nineteenth century shortly before schools were introduced and literacy become possible. Since 1950 an increasing number of Tonga writers have begun to produce a literature in ciTonga, though most literate Tonga prefer to read and write in English. Even those who remain in the remote rural areas now find their views affected by ideas stemming from the schools and from Western literature. Christians know and quote the Bible; school children for some sixty years have listened to its stories and memorized its verses. Both old and young also hear the spoken words of those who reflect the values of the greater world, as they listen to the wireless or to political leaders who seek to fire their imagination with the oratory of the political rally.

It would be foolish to maintain that a single view of life is common to all contemporary Tonga from university graduate and high government official or professional man to the illiterate man and woman who try to preserve old virtues in the face of rapid change. This paper reflects a philosophy which is probably rapidly disappearing. Much of what I have to say is probably now invalid even of those who live in remote villages. These too are becoming imbued with a larger patriotism as they become involved in the new nation whose leaders urge upon them the ideal of self-sacrifice in the interests of the general good or for the

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abstract idea of nationhood. In writing this paper I am not attempting to provide a guide to contemporary or future action. I am attempting to understand a point of view which seems to have pervaded much of Tonga life as I have known it, during periods of fieldwork among the Plateau Tonga of Mazabuka and Choma Districts, 1946-7 and 1948-50, and among the Gwembe or Valley Tonga of Gwembe District, 1956-7, January 1960, 1962-3, and July-August 1965.¹

In the attempt to construct a systematic analysis of Tonga ideas of courage I have looked for consistencies in many different aspects of their life. I have also used many kinds of evidence: casual comments upon behaviour, discussions which somehow involved the subject of behaviour under stress, observation, the themes of tales and proverbs, the usage of words, and general impressions culled over a period of years from a great many parts of Tonga country on many different occasions.² I am following a method common to anthropologists who seek to understand a complex range of behaviour. In the hands of such a craftsman as Evans-Pritchard it has given us at least one masterpiece in the study that still dominates current work on the significance of magical thought and the relationship between it and morality: *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937).

‘HEROISM’ AND ‘MARTYRDOM’

For two thousand years and more, Western writers have glorified valiant deeds and given recognition to the hero and the martyr. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1959) defines the one as requiring ‘exalted courage or boldness’, the other as involving the voluntary acceptance of death or great suffering ‘on behalf of any belief or cause, or through devotion to some object’. Western concepts of courage are permeated with ideas associated with these two figures and thereby given a heroic cast. Currently intellectuals may be bemused by the non-hero or anti-hero, as an earlier generation delighted in the picaresque hero. Both provide a measure of the world’s decay through their ability to survive by compromise and shabby dealing. Whatever their origins as existential characters in contemporary life, anti-hero and picaresque hero derive their significance as the polar opposites of the heroes and martyrs who dominate so much of Western literature and the tales still told to children. Political and social action, if it involves a challenge to authority or seems likely to lead to violent reprisals, is seen in terms whose emo-

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tional impact derives from the traditional glorification of unyielding resistance in a good cause: Leonidas and the Spartans in the pass of Thermopylae, the Maccabees in their revolt, Roland at Roncevaux, Daniel in the den of lions, Socrates drinking the hemlock, Peter who quailed and later chose the cross. Western ideals and Western idiom are imbued with this tradition. No one may know what actually happened at Thermopylae, but Greek imagination used an already formulated ideal to cast the event in an enduring form which still holds sway over Western imagination. Men are always being urged to resist to the end against aggression or to demonstrate the truth of their opinions by their sacrifice. Current happenings are interpreted in the form provided by the model.

Tonga imagination does not play upon valorous deeds. It provides other interpretations of events. Since neither heroes nor martyrs exist in their tradition, they examine what is happening by an appeal to standards which have little to do with any concept involving valour. Those of their actions which the Westerner would be likely to interpret as high points of valour, worthy of heroes and martyrs, are seen in a very different light by the Tonga themselves. They find no virtue in the last-ditch defence and no shame in cowardice. For them, as for the rest of humanity, life is not always good nor is it always preferable to death. But they do not expect others to choose death as a protest against the force of an opponent or as witness to the rightness of a cause, or to court death or serious injury for reputation's sake. This does not make them into anti-heroes; they have no feeling that they are reacting against an impossible ideal.

At first glance, their recent history seems to belie this characterization and to underline their willingness to die for a cause. They have frequently defied authority and opposed government programmes, particularly in the latter days of colonial rule. They have faced government officials with shouts of defiance and a shower of stones. In 1958 Gwembe Tonga of Chipopo Chieftaincy defied the government order that they move from their homes in the Zambezi valley which was soon to be flooded by the Kariba hydroelectric dam. Most villagers did not believe that the dam could create a vast lake. They thought they were being forced to move to clear the region for European settlement. Leaders of the newly formed political party, the African Nationalist Congress, encouraged them in their resistance. Eventually a large body of men gathered at Chisamu Village, charged the government forces, spears and

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knobkerries against rifles. Eight Tonga were killed; an unknown number were wounded. One might well argue that a people who can rise to heroic action must value heroes; that people who can die as martyrs must understand martyrdom.

The Tonga do not see events in this light. My appreciation of their perspective began to develop as I pondered a conversation overheard in 1963. A group of Chipepo men were angrily discussing a recent meeting with the European District Commissioner, who still administered their affairs in those days just before independence. He had urged them to dispose of many of their goats before these destroyed the vegetation of the resettlement areas. The Tonga regard their small stock as a valuable investment against lean years. They do not slaughter an animal lightly and part with one reluctantly. But the discussion was crystallized by the man who said, 'What can we do? It is just like the Kariba resettlement. The chiefs agree to what they are told and then they come and say we must do it. Well, I do not think we are going to stand up and be shot to keep our goats.' The others agreed. Who indeed, they said, would stand and be killed for his goats.

This led me to ponder their willingness to be shot for other causes and thus to their probable views on the heroic gesture or the martyr's stance. They had charged the police at Chisamu in defence of their right to remain in their homes. In 1963 the 'War of Chisamu' was still a favourite topic of conversation, much discussed in all its aspects. Now whatever the motives of those who died may have been, it was obvious that they had not become folk heroes. They received no honours, and they were not spoken of as having given their lives for their people or as having set an example of resistance. Instead the common complaint was that the government had been deceitful and men had died as a result. None of them, so it was argued, would have been so foolish as to take part in the charge if they had thought the government forces would open fire. They had called what they regarded as a monstrous bluff, trusting in the restraint of the Europeans. The Chisamu dead, five years after their death, were regarded as the unlucky victims of miscalculation rather than as men who had preferred death to compliance.

Survivors of the charge counted themselves as fortunate and were bitter against the government for encouraging them to risk their lives.

The Tonga view of the 'Chisamu War' thus described innocent victims caught in a violence they thought they had no reason to expect. Survivors expanded upon their fear when they discovered this was a

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real battle. They amused one another by arguing the honour of being the first to run and the first to reach home. Those who had not been present talked about fleeing at the sound of distant guns and how they had hidden in reeds or bushes until all danger seemed over. They admitted to two emotions, fear and anger. The latter was aimed perhaps equally at government and at their own leaders who had encouraged them into danger. Violent resistance to resettlement collapsed immediately after the Chisamu shooting. In succeeding years, until independence, a resentful morose people found considerable pleasure in needling European officials and their own chiefs by the display of their disaffection, but they did so with a keen eye for the limits to which they could press their attacks. People avoided protest that would again endanger their lives and property. Each government demand or order was examined for the likelihood that it would be backed by force.

The defeat of the African Nationalist Congress in the elections of 1964 produced a similar rapid retreat from fierce political opposition. Most Plateau and Gwembe Tonga were strong supporters of the ANC while they had little to fear from the violence of other parties. They were particularly fervent in their opposition to the United National Independence Party whose organizers and few local supporters they were not at all loath to attack. UNIP's victory brought a quick ending to this open hostility. Active ANC officials vanished into the obscurity of village life and tried to forget their former boasts, rather to the amusement of those whom they had once sought to inspire with fervour. Even before this happened most villagers had usually repudiated the idiom of heroic action in the cause of party and people which the leaders had acquired from European radical protest. An ANC leader who attempted to rally support in a speech wherein he called upon the people to die in defence of their party's cause got the ready retort, 'If you want to be killed, that is your affair. We want to live.' This was regarded as the appropriate attitude for the sensible man. Even village political leaders were likely to regard their heroic phrases as part of a political style and were either entertained or annoyed if I tried to discuss political intentions in terms of political speeches.

In the least politically active parts of the country, discussions of the relative merits of various political parties and policies usually revealed the determination to survive whosoever should be the winner. An elder expressed the common view when he told a politically active foreigner, 'All right, we agree to have independence. None of us is saying we refuse

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to have it. We agreed to let the Europeans look after us. Now we agree to have independence. We are not objecting. We agree. We always agree to what is wanted.'

Tonga proverb emphasizes the wisdom of compliance: '“Who surrenders is not speared in the hands”' (Fell, n.d.: 247). A folktale in which leopard battles lion for supremacy ends with the leopard saying: '“All right, I will fear you now, because I lack strength to fight with a great one like you.”' Then the lion said, “That is as it should be”' (Fell, n.d.: 47). The leopard surrenders, but appropriately he surrenders only to force and does not argue that the lion is otherwise superior to himself. Tonga acquiescence to force does not imply support or approval or any willingness to continue in agreement if power should wane.

Willingness to compromise is a common enough human trait and reflects the basic concern of mankind with the need to survive however difficult the conditions. Before overwhelming force or in the face of certain defeat, what purpose is there in protest? Who would be silly enough to start a battle which must be lost? Most people most of the time would agree with the Tonga, but those nourished on tales of splendid defiance may need to justify their surrender by idealizing the force to which they submit.

The Tonga feel no such need. The man who comes to terms with superior strength is behaving according to accepted standards. His neighbours expect no more from a reasonable man. Both he and they agree that it is as foolish to brave the strong as it is reasonable to enforce one's claims against the weak. In the absence of chiefly office or centralized government in pre-colonial days, Tonga expected men to back their claim with a resort to force when necessary. It was considered legitimate to attack either the offender or some other member of his matrikin who might be more easily available. Whatever the abstract justice of the claim, men were likely to use force only if they expected to be successful in attack or immune to retaliation. A man with a strong body of supporters could ignore most claims against him and his dependants and could exact what he would from lesser neighbours for minor wrongs. Weaker men fled or found a protector. They waited to press a claim until they had found a vantage point from which to strike, hiding their anger beneath a show of acquiescence. The unaccompanied stranger was fair game to all unless he found a local protector.

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‘MUKALI’ AND ‘MUKANDU’

The Tonga do not have a highly developed vocabulary to deal with the subject of courage. They have no terms which approximate the English ‘valour’.³ Torrend (1931) seeking a term for ‘hero’ had to settle for the phrase *u cita milimo mibotu a nguzu zinizini* (he who does a good work with all his strength). Several word lists cite *silubinda*, *mukozu*, or *sicamba* as translations for bravery or courage.⁴ I have not found them in common use. The common term which in some contexts has the connotation of courage is *bukali* but this is better translated as ‘fierceness’ or ‘anger’. Animals that attack, such as lion or leopard, and poisonous snakes have *bukali*. So does the man who ignores danger or is quick to anger. The fighter or the person who imposes his wishes on others is called *mukali*, ‘a fierce person’. A man and woman who defied morality by living together in an incestuous union were said to have *bukali*. The drum beat associated with raids and danger is called *lyabukali*. *Bukali* and *mukali* though frequently spoken in tones of admiration can be used as reproaches, as in rebuking a child who hits out at others. It is said to be regrettable for boys to be born without a sister since they are then more likely to have *bukali*.

Since *bukali* is associated with violence, Tonga are likely to fear it as they do violence, perhaps because they are so familiar with its dangers. Axes, clubs, hoes, and spears are close at hand. Angry men who lose control cause great injury. Beer drinks, when inhibitions are low, may be the occasion for grudge fights of considerable intensity. Some men are notoriously dangerous when drunk, but any person under stress may give way to *bukali*.

Those who are persistently *mukali* are to be avoided. Either they are fools who do not count the cost, and therefore dangerous because uncontrollable, or they must have acquired powerful medicines which allow them to set others at naught with impunity. Court messengers who had to journey into other neighbourhoods were exposed to the violence of angry men smarting from a recent verdict of the court or indignant at being summoned to a hearing. Since the Tonga have little respect for authority, the messengers were not protected by the fact that they summoned people in the name of a chief. Those who survived in their posts for any length of time were likely to be tough men reputed to have taken medicine for strength such as *mangoloma*, made from stones found in an elephant’s stomach, which gave both immunity to

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blows and the strength to beat down one's opponent. Some of these medicines are said to involve the possessor in procuring the life force of his kin, who are thus a sacrifice to his search for strength. In the long run, the possessor must also expect to pay for his power with his own strength; for his medicine will eventually turn against his body and destroy him. A man who has such medicines need not become a public danger to those of other kin groups unless he also has malice or envy (*munyono*). Then he is almost certainly a sorcerer (*mulozi*) who uses his power to kill.

Fierceness and hardihood may thus be admirable qualities in some contexts, but for a man to be outstanding in either implies that he has acquired strong medicines and has at least incipient powers for sorcery.

Perhaps the converse of *mukali* is *mukandu*, which has some of the same connotations as the English word 'coward'.⁵ The hyena which will not face the challenger but lurks in the bushes waiting his chance is *mukandu*; so is the man who shirks his duty in the face of danger or complains of pain. Children nearing puberty were once taunted into submitting to the removal of their upper incisors, the old mark of Tongahood and of maturity, by being accused of being *mukandu*. Women in childbirth are told to stifle their outcry lest they be known as *mukandu* to their shame. But in other circumstances no one feels that it is shameful to be *mukandu* or to have *bukandu*, which may be translated as the quality of physical fear which is regarded as common to both men and animals. Men say they avoid fights because of *bukandu*. They ascribe their preference for work above ground, even at lower pay, to their *bukandu* which leads them to avoid the mines. Those who ran at Chisamu thought their *bukandu* appropriate and amusing.

Mukali and *mukandu* therefore are not simple oppositions of good and bad as the English 'brave man' and 'coward' tend to be. *Bukali* is a quality which is always suspect but sometimes useful. *Bukandu* is a common reaction which becomes despicable only when it leads people to cringe from the inevitable demands of ordinary life.

I have never asked Tonga which is better, *bukali* or *bukandu*. I suspect that at heart they have some preference for the former though they do not glorify it in oral history or in folklore. On occasion they dramatize *bukali* in a public context. Gwembe Tonga still pride themselves on their neighbourhood Drum Teams (*Ingoma*) which compete against one another at funerals and occasionally at other times. Team display includes mimic warfare, replete with boasts, taunts, and fierce challenges. When

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opposing teams are traditional enemies or relations are tense from recent clashes, the mimic war is likely to erupt into a general mêlée in which men are sometimes badly injured since dancers are armed with spears and axes. Teams may depart for a funeral spoiling for a fight, boasting of how they will intimidate this or that opponent. Despite this, active participants do not thereby acquire a local reputation for valour. Drum songs as well as other dance songs which comment on events of enduring interest memorialize scandal or personal foibles rather than deeds of prowess. If a man wishes his deeds to be recorded favourably he must compose his own song which he sings perhaps more to himself than to an audience. I suspect, though here I am not sure, that most such songs would recount journeys and observations on life rather than displays of courage. Whatever their burden, narrative songs are personal to the singer and are not preserved as a form of communal history.

The Tonga may sometimes say that they had more *bukali* in the pre-colonial days than at the present time, but they do not think that they were ever great warriors. Plateau Tonga still told stories of the old days of raid and warfare in the 1940s when a few eyewitnesses were likely to be found in any village. They made no attempt to claim for themselves any heroism in battle or in defence. When they talked of Lozi raids, they sometimes awarded themselves the victory, but this was always due to sorcery or to the superior medicine (*bwanga*) of a local leader who was thereby able to send the raiding party away bemused. Of Ndebele raids they said only that they had been killed without being able to resist. Those who could, ran; those who could not, were killed or enslaved. It may be that Hopgood's informant was thinking of these raids when he gave the sentence, ' "Do not laugh at him. Don't you know that the cowardly hyena is the one who lives longest" ' (1953 : 103). One of the earliest accounts we have of the Tonga shows them as evading battle. This appears in the text dictated by a Tonga lad in the 1880s who was describing conditions on the Zambezi: ' "The Karange submit . . . , the Shukulumbwe fight, the Tonga neither submit nor fight, but they cross [the Zambezi] in canoes, and come to live on this side [the southern bank of the Middle Zambezi], returning [afterwards] to their homes, when they no longer fear the Lumbu" ' (Torrend 1891 : 286).

Interneighbourhood raids are said to have been fairly common at this period, but fifty years later few were interested in recalling any particular raid. None seems to have entered into folklore or become the