Spirits of Protest

Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology

General Editor: Jack Goody

14

SPIRITS OF PROTEST
OTHER TITLES IN THE SERIES

1. The Political Organization of Unyamwezi
   R.G. Abrahams

2. Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand
   S.J. Tambiah

   Adam Kuper

4. The Rope of Moka: Big-men and Ceremonial Exchange in Mount Hagen, New Guinea
   Andrew Strathern

5. The Majangir: Ecology and Society of a Southwest Ethiopian People
   Jack Stauder

   Jane Bunnag

   Esther N. Goody

8. Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants
   Christine Oppong

9. Elite Politics in Rural India: Political Stratification and Political Alliances in Western Maharashtra
   Anthony T. Carter

10. Women and Property in Morocco: Their Changing Relation to the Process of Social Stratification in the Middle Atlas
    Vanessa Maher

11. Rethinking Symbolism
    Dan Sperber

    Alan MacFarlane

13. Mediterranean Family Structures
    J.G. Peristiany (ed.)
Contents

Acknowledgements vii
Conventions viii
Introduction 1
1 The secular background 5
2 Magico-religious beliefs – the moral significance of explanation 18
3 The sociology of spirit-mediumship 30
4 Zezuru flexibility and Korekore rigidity 54
5 Spirit-mediums in ritual action 68
6 Spirit-mediums and missionaries 107
Notes 124
Bibliography 133
Index 137
Acknowledgments

The research on which this book is based was financed by a Commonwealth Scholarship for which I thank the Federal Commonwealth Board.

During my research I was fortunate in being affiliated to the Department of Sociology at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now the University College of Rhodesia). There I was given much valuable encouragement and assistance through Professor Clyde Mitchell’s Research Seminar. Latterly Professor Jaap van Velsen has provided thoughtful criticism and advice and I have had persistent help and encouragement from the Department of Anthropology at University College London, in particular from the late Professor Daryll Forde and my research supervisor, Professor Mary Douglas.

To the Universidade Estadual de Campinas in Brazil I am grateful for a sabbatical three months, to Dr Rupert Sheldrake, Dr Keith, Jean and Alison Campbell and Mr Carlos da Silva for providing the conditions necessary for writing, to Mr David Trevitchik for genealogies and diagrams and to Mrs G. Halstead, Mrs P. Blair and Mrs A. Warwick for their typing. I thank Mr S.W. Averett for support in trying times.

The debt which cannot ever be settled is with the people of Chiota and all the many Africans who gave me the privilege of sharing their life over two and a half years. It would be invidious to mention names for my friends and helpers were many. To all of them I express my deepest thanks and gratitude.
Conventions

I shall adopt the convention of putting all spirit names in italic; one proper name followed by another in italic refers to a medium in trance. Thus David/Kafudzi means David possessed by Kafudzi. The people of Chiota did not always make it clear whether they were referring to a spirit *qua* spirit, to a spirit presented through a medium or to a spirit-medium who was not in trance. Thus in everyday speech, ‘Kafudzi’ could mean either *Kafudzi* acting independently of its present medium, *Kafudzi* as presented by David in trance, or David as a normal person. The convention that I have adopted makes it possible to make these distinctions while retaining the ‘confusions’.

After the research on which this book is based, Rhodesian currency was decimalised. I have, however, retained the old notation of pounds, shillings and pence.

Names of individuals and certain spirits have been altered, and at times I have merged two people into one and vice versa.