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THE
ANATOMY OF LANGO RELIGION
AND GROUPS

BY

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TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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To
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

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FOREWORD

While taking the Economics Tripos at Cambridge, I became interested in psychology and decided that it was a subject best approached through social anthropology, which I read for two years. For it was the social aspect of psychology that seemed to me to be important. The platitude that the physical progress of the modern world has outstripped its moral progress becomes much clearer when restated in terms of the obvious fact that the physical sciences have advanced by leaps and bounds, while the social sciences are still in their infancy. The peace of the world depends upon a reconciliation of this discrepancy.

During visits to Germany, totalling eight months in all, I had been struck by the symbolisms under which the emotional life of National Socialist Germany was organised. From the lightning flash embossed on the belt of the Hitler Youth to the swastika of the national flag could be seen the conscious efforts of the rulers of Germany to unify the peoples within their frontiers. 'Ein Volk zu sein ist heute unsere Religion', and the swastika became the focus of all the aspirations of the young German.

Professor F. C. Bartlett has emphasised one of the lessons of history that a group when threatened will strive to withstand disintegration. On what bases are groups organised? What forces hold them together? What elements are combined in nationalism? It was to questions such as these that modern Germany suggested answers.

I had intended to do a study of culture change in Lango, but my old interest in groups and symbolisms was reawakened by the discovery that in a relatively simple society, such as that of the Lango, it was quite possible to isolate the forces that train the individual in loyalty to his group. My main interests then became focused on dissecting the structure of Lango society into its constituent groups and analysing the physical and emotional forces which kept each group in existence. The value of each group in the economy of the Tribe had also to be determined. I have given the results of this investigation in Chapter II.

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I found that the religious ceremonies of the Lango provided the most important means of inculcating and maintaining group and inter-group loyalties. If the ceremonies were to be described in detail, then the religious premises that lay behind them had also to be stated. This I have done in Chapter 1. And so I have tried to show how the Lango groups were organised and how their religious beliefs permeated the whole of their social system.

Great confusion and inaccuracy arise from the use of approximate English equivalents of vernacular terms. To avoid this I have always used the Lango word, which I explain carefully in the Glossary. All items of material culture have also been described in the Glossary.

I reached Lango in September 1936 and left in May 1937. I had letters to the old chiefs from J. H. Driberg, who had been their District Commissioner in the early days of British administration. The Lango accepted me as his classificatory son. As soon as I could speak their language and when they saw me living with them, dancing, hunting, eating and drinking with them, they eagerly invited me to see all their ceremonies so that I might record them in a book. Their children, they complained, were forgetting the old Lango customs. This immediate acceptance compensated me for the brevity of my stay among them.

On correcting the proofs some five years after completing the book, I find it heavy reading. I would suggest it be regarded primarily as a book of reference and that full use be made of the Index-Glossary for extracting from the body of the book whatever facts are required. The 'Conclusions' appended to each chapter may also be of use. Occasionally I have added an unitalicised 's' to a Lango term in order to avoid the confusion which might have been caused by use of correct plural and genitive forms.

The delay in publishing my results has been due chiefly to the second World War, but also to the fact that I first wrote a much larger book, from which the present volume has been extracted, stating certain theories of human groups deduced from the working of Lango society.

I had wished to show that Man was social only by necessity; that he had no natural weapons such as great strength, speed,

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powers of scent and so on, which could enable him to predominate over other animals; that it was the excessively large cerebral cortex of his brain which had made it possible for his instinctive reactions to be subordinated to cultural needs by training, thus making group life possible, and establishing his predominance over the animal world; that his two main instincts of self-preservation and reproduction, motivating as they do his economic and sexual quests, had to be regulated by custom, morality and law, if quarrels arising from them were not to disrupt the group, on the integrity of which the existence of the individual depended. From all this I wished to argue that Man was separatist by nature and the progressive fusion of small groups up to the size of the modern Nation State had been occasioned, not by any wish for world-brotherhood, but by conquest or for self-protection as communications developed; that the machinery by which the Nation State ensures its integrity in the face of aggression—its administrative system and the sentiments to which its members are conditioned—is such as to make voluntary fusion into a stable world organisation impossible in fact though apparently feasible. International armed forces composed of units from Nation States would be as useless as an unarmed League of Nations for the purpose of preventing war. The maintenance of peace should be entrusted to a super-national body of men, specially trained from birth in loyalty to a non-national ideal.

These immature cerebrations were frowned upon by the anthropologists and it seemed advisable to separate fact and theory completely. The life of an administrator has left neither time nor means for the research necessary to substantiate these theoretical considerations. They must await another day.

T. T. S. HAYLEY

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It would be difficult to thank sufficiently all my Lango friends, who willingly did whatever they could to make me comfortable and to enable me to collect the information I desired. I can, however, single out *Rwot Ogwajungu*, without whose aid and friendship I could have achieved very little.

Financially I am indebted to Cambridge University for the following grants: A Bartle Frere Exhibition of £57, £50 from the Leaf Bequest of Peterhouse and £30 from the Worts Fund. The remainder was provided by my father and mother, to whom this book is dedicated. Finally I wish to thank the Government of Uganda and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press for their help towards the cost of producing this book.

T. T. S. H.