

nalismus ihre Ausprägung fand, den Widerstand auf breiter Ebene. Ihr Selbstverständnis ist negativ — im Gegensatz zum Kolonialismus — formuliert. Daß damit die eigentliche Aufgabe, die positive Definition des Selbstverständnisses, noch aussteht, ist die Folge davon (15).

Den Ausführungen liegt umfangreiches afrikanisches Schrifttum zugrunde; sie bieten ausgezeichnete Analysen der verschiedenen Krisen, die der Afrikaner in der Begegnung mit der Mission und der Kolonialverwaltung sowie der hochindustrialisierten Gesellschaft im Ausland durchlebte. Sie sprengen den Rahmen der sonst oft zu allgemein gehaltenen Aussagen über den kulturellen Wandel und vermitteln auch dem Missionar und dem Missionswissenschaftler aufschlußreiche Erkenntnisse über den vielschichtigen, auf religiöser, politischer, kultureller Ebene sich vollziehenden Emanzipationsprozeß.

Münster

Gertrud Berkenheide

Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie — International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion, hrsg. von Joachim Matthes u. a., Bd. 4. Westdeutscher Verlag/Köln und Opladen 1968; 298 S., DM 45,—

Vgl. die Besprechung zu Jg. 1—3 (1965—67): ZMR 1968, 237f. — Der 4. Jahresband weist keine einheitliche besondere Thematik auf, sondern kennzeichnet seinen Inhalt durch den allgemeinen Untertitel: *Beiträge zur Religionssoziologischen Forschung — Essays on Research in the Sociology of Religion*. Die Beiträge sind insgesamt für den Missionswissenschaftler, der ohne religionssoziologische Reflexion nicht mehr auskommt, sehr instruktiv. Auf die Studie von JOSEPHINE KLEIN (*Structural Aspects of Church Organization*, 101—122) und die Ausführungen von HEINZ BECHERT (Direktor des Indologischen Seminars der Universität Göttingen): *Einige Fragen der Religionssoziologie und Struktur des südasiatischen Buddhismus* (251—295), sei besonders verwiesen. Die Publikation zeichnet sich durch höchstes wissenschaftliches Niveau aus und kann in Fachkreisen nicht mehr übersehen werden.

Münster

Werner Promper

Tanner, Ralph E. S.: *Transition in African Beliefs*. Traditional Religion and Christian Change: A study in Sukumaland, Tanzania, East Africa. Maryknoll Publications/Maryknoll, New York 1967; 256 p., \$ 10,—

It is a well known fact that most of the early sociologists and, more or less consequently, most of the social anthropologists (in particular those of Anglo-Saxon tradition) wrote about primitive, and even modern religion, with the implicit assumption that religion was, or is, just another social phenomenon. Thus it moved along the evolution-scale of mankind, arising from primeval fear, wonder or awe when the human being emerged from his animal ancestry, taking on more and more complicated forms and rituals according to the mythical elaborations which, in the crude mind of primitive man, stood for scientific analysis and argument. Exactly as any other social institution, religion could be traced back to its origins. Its historical development, in accordance with the general evolutionary scheme, could be followed stage after stage up to its present state, with this difference however that for most of these evolutionists or functionalists, religion was due to disappear. It was a venerable institution on the wane. Studies on African religion, monographs or chapters in monographs, are still mostly written against the same sociological background, albeit without any intention of prophesying its future or questioning its ultimate concern.

Religion is just another social institution, a complex structure integrated in the whole system of organized interactions which constitutes (in its coherent continuity as well as in its slow evolutionary process) any human society. I wonder how much of our traditional attitude towards African cultures is still in the debt of this tradition. The author devotes the first part of his study to the traditional creed and cult of the Sukuma. As he sees it, their religious conceptions, their beliefs and their rituals are inextricably interwoven with social needs: fertility, crops, cattle, protection against illness and misfortune. As the author puts it: "almost nothing done by the Sukuma in their traditional religious practice can be ascribed to religion alone." Perhaps this is true, but not only of the Sukuma. Further the author states clearly that religious practice "is composed almost entirely of a direct ritual relationship with the spirits of their ancestors". They do believe in a Supreme Being but, apart from the well known attributes of power, omniscience etc., little can be said about this Being because "their conceptions have not become the subject of a cult or of speculative discussion". The Supreme Being "has not taken upon itself more than the faintest tinges of ritual", and consequently can be disposed of in the first chapter. The author feels more at ease with the ancestors. His information about the interferences of ancestor-spirits in the life of individual and community is outstanding. Sacred objects, kept in the household, numerous propitiation ceremonies, the often needed mediation of diviners and magic, all this materializes the ancestors presence, their vagaries as well as their goodwill. All this belongs to the traditional social setting in which the convert has to take the ultimate step towards a new, a christian life. It is obvious that both in the individual, and in the christian community, tensions cannot be avoided. The christian, from the very beginning of his conversion, must clash time and again with the traditional patterns of social behaviour. Time and again his heart will hesitate between the old values and a new promise. Worst of all, deep down in the core of his own identity, there is the risk of a dangerous split. Christianity, growing in the framework of European presence and modern nationalism, is of course a powerful factor of change. How far and how deep this change is reaching is a topic for much speculation and lengthy discussion. Nowadays the mission is under fire from two different sides. Nationalists accuse the missionary of deliberately alienating the African from his own culture and religion. Theologians question the meaning, and even the validity, of the missionary vocation. Not so much of this new situation can be felt through the pages of this book. All the same, one way or another, it is there. One wonders if the author himself is aware of this modern tinge lingering underneath the many questions he is continually asking. Very few practical questions indeed escape his attention. Nearly anything a missionary in the field can have to struggle with, is discussed, analysed, re-phrased. More than once new approaches and different solutions are proposed, after reinserting the problem in its real Sukuma context. All this provides most interesting reading. One of the main causes of failure seems to be the simple fact christian ritual, as imported and imposed by a far off, foreign authority, proved unfit to take over the multiple social function of the old religious institution. Christian values and christian ritual don't seem to fit together with Sukuma welfare. Perhaps this point can be questioned. Can earthly welfare be guaranteed by christian belief? Are economic development and christian morals interdependent? A universe ruled by demons and angels, by supernatural forces, by spirits and magicians, is not exactly what is meant by a christian view of life. Religion was not in the first place, and becomes less so than ever before, just

another social institution. It is before anything else an interpretation of human existence, a search for the ultimate meaning of man and his world. A different approach to the problem would lead to a deeper, a broader view of religion as such. One could study religious concepts, beliefs, myths and rituals as a set of symbols (sometimes vague and, on the face of it, incoherent) inserted in the broader context of comparative religion and strikingly familiar even to a Western scholar. Most of the localized, often fragmentary, symbolics of African religions show a deeper meaning. Carefully pieced together, they become expressions of a wide-spread, very old and all-embracing view of the world which continues in many cases to pattern unconsciously religious and social behaviour in African societies. That is what the social anthropologist easily ignores. Every detail of ritual should in the first place be analysed as a religious term. Viewed from this point, African religion takes its proper meaning. In the last part of his book, the author explains, more by examples than by theory, what he means by adaptation. The term is becoming obsolete in modern missiological thinking. Indeed, one does not easily see how one element can be taken from a cultural complex to be replaced by an element taken from another system. Of course, there was always borrowing from other cultures but not in any artificial way and not without remoulding the foreign element according to the cultural set in which it was to be integrated. In any case as far as I see, all such adaptation is doomed to remain patchwork. The really necessary adaptation is that of the missionary himself. This the author stresses very well in the second chapter of part IV. Of course there is nothing wrong with Sukuma music and song, with kisukuma or kiswahili, with paraliturgical adaptation etc. The only problem is why all this *was* a problem for such a long time. In the line of THILS' *Propos et problèmes de la théologie des religions non chrétiennes* (Tournai 1966) one should say: Sukuma beliefs, viewed against a wider historical and cultural background, constitute a valid religion in their own right. This does not compromise in any way the transcendence of the christian message. One thing however we have to learn: to meet people, any people, on level terms. In my opinion this has little to do with food or driving a car or that sort of thing. Above all it has to do with certain mental attitudes. The author puts it in a nutshell: "Perhaps the greatest difficulty which this missionary priest has got to overcome is the feeling that his parishioners are not people but Africans instead..." For a long time to come Tanner's book will be a precious handbook for missionaries in Sukumaland. I guess that is the author's first ambition. That is the reason perhaps, why the book has no map, no bibliography, no statistical data. As it is however it is a must for missionaries and a challenge to modern missiologists.

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