

## Recensions -- Book Reviews

*Bunyoro: An African Kingdom.* John BEATTIE. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1960. ix, 86 pages, 5 plates, map, \$1.00 (paper).

This is another in the series of case studies in anthropology edited by George and Louise Spindler. The book, or to be more precise, booklet, gives a summary of the past and present of Nyoro society introducing the reader, in a coherent and systematic manner, to the social organization and those aspects of religion and culture in general that serve to reflect the social organization. The Nyoro are one of the interlacustrine Bantu kingdoms northwest of Buganda, west of Lango, and to the south of Acholi. They have a hierarchical social order that results in a strong emphasis on superior-subordinate relationships. This emphasis permeates all social life from kinship to politics and, according to Beattie, is in conflict with many western principles of social organization. Thus chiefs traditionally express their status by giving large beer parties and distributing patronage. This often conflicts with European concepts of efficiency in tax collection and other bureaucratic ideals. Beattie contrasts the traditional chiefly role to that of the political bureaucracy of modern Uganda. The chief is a member of two systems, one old, the other new, with differing standards of performance in each, and an obligation to play an active role in both organizations at the same time.

Throughout the book, the author constantly contrasts the traditional with the modern so that in politics, and in local groups, the reader can see a real situation in contemporary Africa. In this sense, that is in terms of its vividness, coherence, and readability, the work is a success.

There is another dimension to the book which is less easily seen by reading it alone — this is its purpose. It is a quite simple matter to state categorically that an eighty-six page booklet about a complex African state is inadequate. Indeed the author himself tries to show its resemblance to European feudal society, which is a subject in and of itself that requires breadth and depth of reading background. If more evidence is needed for this point, the reader is directed to the lack of any adequate economic description, and more seriously to the lack of documentation that accompanies many of the generalizations — which are necessary, given the length of the book. Thus we are told that the most important characteristic of social life, that of hierarchical superior-subordinate relationships, is giving way today to 'individualism'. This latter concept is not defined carefully anywhere, nor are we shown behaviour from which such an inference can be made.

Such criticisms are unfair. We, the readers, are supposed to recognize that the author has such documentation and it is published or will be published elsewhere. This is, after all, a work for students and not professionals. Thus, technical terms are defined succinctly in footnotes and much traditional anthropological knowledge is introduced in a "by-the-way" manner. For example, a careful reading of the last paragraph on page fifty-four, and the first two on page fifty-five gives the professional reader a *déjà vu* of Radcliffe-Brown's "Mother's Brother in South Africa."

However this raises a pedagogical issue which for this reviewer is of paramount importance. Do we want our students to work with simplified materials tied together with skill and generalization that can be read and digested in a few hours? If this is to be done then there is a cost. The painstaking care and disciplined work that (I hope) underlies a short statement such as "...The husband's status especially in regard to his in-laws, is then much lower," is so well concealed as to ensure its invisibility.

And so the student gains a little knowledge about one African group, but the spirit of enquiry, the elegance or inelegance of method, the contrast of conclusions with those of others who have worked in the same field — all these are lost. If our Universities are to function as packaging houses for the various strata at the upper levels of society, then it is natural that University personnel should contribute to this process by packaging their wares for those who are being recruited into society via the University. On the other hand, if we still think of the University as a place in which students are introduced to knowledge and the processes by which it is, and has been, acquired, then such books as the one under review should be shunned.

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*The Cheyennes: Indians of the Great Plains.* E. Adamson HOEBEL. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960. 103 pp. \$2.00, (paper).

This is one of the publications in the series "Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology" under the general editorship of George and Louise Spindler. Like the other volumes in the series, this one is a summary account of the way of life of a particular group of people written by a recognized authority and drawn, for the most part, from his more extensive publications on the