



The God of the Witches

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inherent in all human undertakings' (p. 227). This sentence, alas, is typical of his style.

LUCY MAIR

BIANCHI, UGO. *La storia delle religioni*. vii, 171 pp., bibliogr. Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1970

This is an *Estratto dalla VI edizione della Storia delle Religioni* (Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese). It is an excellent survey of theories of comparative religion in both historical and anthropological literature. The author is well read in all the most important writings on comparative religion in Italian, English, French and German. As far as anthropology is concerned, he deals fairly with our classical writers—Tylor, Frazer, Marrett and others (especially Pater Schmidt) with mild criticism which displays a good deal of insight. Much of what he says has, it is true, been said before, but there is no harm in saying it again.

The same author has recently written (*Anthropos* (vol. 63–64, 1968–69)) an interesting article on that perennial problem of how to refer to the 'primitive' peoples anthropologists usually study ('Osservazioni storico-culturali sull'uso del termine "primitivo" in etnologia'). He has also recently published a paper which is concerned with his interest in comparative religion, its subject being dualism (*Liber Amicorum. Studies in honour of Professor Dr C. J. Bleeker*, Leiden, 1969).

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

MURRAY, MARGARET A. *The god of the witches* (Galaxy Bk 332). 212 pp., illus., bibliogr. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970. 16s.

The survival of M. Murray's theory of witchcraft is almost as intriguing a problem as witchcraft itself. Her anthropology is Frazerian, concerned with issues such as divine kingship, fertility cults etc. First published in 1931, no revisions have been made to this edition and it is pre-Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Kluckhohn, in its approach. Using principally confessions induced under torture, in answer to a set list of questions, she proved to her own satisfaction that there really were witches, who formed covens of thirteen, danced and sang, worshipped leaders dressed in animal skins and so on. That a reputable university press can re-issue such a work without a word of warning to innocent readers is disgraceful. Some of the many criticisms which can be made against her distortion of evidence are conveniently collected on pp. 515–17 of Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic* (1971), a book which not only finally demolishes her flimsy speculations, but provides a really scholarly account of the

topics she surveys. Yet her work remains interesting because she was one of the first to react against the over-rationalist dismissal by historians of witchcraft beliefs. She tried to treat the subject sympathetically, and although she mistook what people *thought* was happening for what *did* happen, even this was some advance.

ALAN MACFARLANE

GOODY, JACK. *Technology, tradition, and the state in Africa*. viii, 88 pp., illus., plates, bibliogr. London, Ibadan, Accra: Oxford Univ. Press for the International African Institute, 1971. £1 15s.

This little book is a collection of four papers, written over the past ten years (with two previously published) and all focusing upon the relationship between technology and the traditional African state.

The first two papers deal with the concept of feudalism, and Goody rightly draws attention to the various definitions given by historians and the degree to which any of these are applicable or useful in the African context. He argues that the differences between the states of medieval Europe and those of Africa are founded upon the respective levels of technology. African agriculture was extensive; and since land was not a scarce resource, chiefship tended to be over people and not land. Furthermore, though iron working was well established throughout most of Africa the levels of skill attained were comparatively low.

The second main determinant of the political structure is the weaponry available. Here Goody contrasts the type of state which depends upon the horse with that dependent upon the gun. Drawing his examples from west Africa he distinguishes between the savanna kingdoms where 'the ruling estates tended to be mass dynasties, within segments of which high office often circulated. In the forest, office tended to be more autocratic and to be retained within a narrower dynasty. In the former, power was more widely diffused and the rulers relied on the dynasty as fighting cavalry; in the latter, the important fighting arm was the regiments of gun-men stationed around the capital and often recruited from prisoners and slaves' (p. 55). Goody does well to emphasise the resources needed to adopt guns or develop a cavalry, the constraints which horses and guns place on military organisation and the degree of control which can be exercised over the acquisition of either resource. But he bases his correlations upon limited evidence and I feel, furthermore, that he misunderstands the nature of the Oyo kingdom which he contrasts with Benin. He omits to mention the powerful nineteenth century Yoruba forest