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ZÜGE AUS DER POLITISCHEN ORGANISATION AFRIKANISCHER VÖLKER UND STAATEN

Züge aus der Politischen Organisation Afrikanischer Völker und Staaten, by Dr. Gunther Spannaus, 1929, Leipzig, Werkgemeinschaft, pp. 223. Maps, M. 7.

TORDAY, Emil

Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, 1931, Vol. 4, No. 3, Jul., pp. 369–370.

In this book Dr. Spannaus develops the idea that the formation of great states in Africa is not due to the extension of the clan or the tribe, but, in every case, is the consequence of conquest. Nobody acquainted with the history of Africa will contest this, but when he attributes to the pastoral people the principal role in this political upheaval, he is on more debatable ground. As far as North-Central and Eastern Africa are concerned he is fully justified.

This, however, is not the case in South, Central, and a great part of West Africa. The foundation of the Zande and Maqbetu empires by Sudanic peoples may, indirectly at any rate, owe something to Lybian influences, and even Bushongo and the empire of 'the Great Makoko' may derive their existence from movements started farther north by pastoral peoples (the word being used in the most elastic sense); but there is only the flimsiest evidence, which will scarcely bear scrutiny, as far as Monomotapa is concerned.

The empires of the South due to the upheaval caused by Chaka's exploits, the kingdoms of Congo, of Lunda, of Kazembe, of the Barotse, and so on, were all founded by pure Negro conquerors.

Besides the rise of the greater states, Dr. Spannaus deals with their gradual development, the important part assigned in their government to queen-mothers and queen-sisters, to hereditary aristocracies, advisory and con-trolling bodies, national assemblies, age-classes, and so forth.

The attribution on p. 142 of two rival kings to Dahomey, on the authority of Burton, is obviously due to a mistranslation. What Burton states (Dahomey, ii. 86) is, that the king is 'double, not only binomynous nor dual, but two in one,' i.e. uniting in his person a rural and an urban king, each with his separate establishment.

Perhaps he does not lay sufficient stress on the essentially democratic character which is the *sine qua non* of any African government which has perdured. He has drawn his examples from a considerable number of books; they would carry more weight if he had shown more careful discrimination. He quotes side by side with the best authorities globe-trotters whose names defile a scientific book.

Even in the use of serious works he appears to grope in the dark. On page 5 he attributes our extended knowledge of the Lacustrine peoples to 'Meyer, Roscoe, etc.'.

Professor Meyer would be the first to protest against being ranked before or with such a life-long field-worker as Canon Roscoe, or even to be named, when van der Burgt, to whom he and all writers on Urundi and Ruanda owe so much, is passed over. So would Dr. Passarge disclaim being the first to throw a new light on an ancient higher organization of the Bushmen, which was revealed by Stow (p. 33 et seq.) long before him.

Dr. Spannaus's bibliography is sadly marred by mistakes which cannot be always attributed to careless proof-reading, of which numerous examples might be given. For example, surely the author of the *Golden Bough* deserves that his initials, given as S. S., should be known. Throughout the book the names of such well-known observers as Petherick, Caillie, and Dennett are misspelt. There is one point connected with the bibliography which cannot pass without protest.

The late Cyr. van Overbergh is credited with the authorship of Vanden Plas's *Kuku*, of Gaud's *Les Mandja*, of Schmitz's *Les Baholoholo* and of Colle's *Les Baluba*. One cannot prevent high officials from putting their names as prominently as that of the author on books the publication of which is at their mercy; but a scientific man like Dr. Spannaus ought to discourage their efforts to acquire kudos at the expense of those who really deserve it.

Dr. Spannaus's book will be useful for readers who cannot spare the time for independent research; for the serious student it lacks maturity. This remark and the preceding criticism are made in the

most friendly spirit, because the author shows that he has the stuff in him to produce much better work than the book under consideration.

E. TORDAY.