

MAGYAR AFRIKA TÁRSASÁG
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AHU MAGYAR AFRIKA–TUDÁS TÁR
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TORDAY, Emil

De Ziel van het Ngbandivolk / Lélekhit a Ngbandi nép körében (About three books / Három könyvről)

Eredeti közlés /Original publication:

Man, 1931, Vol. 31, Mar., 52–53. old.

elektronikus újraközlés/Electronic republication:

AHU MAGYAR AFRIKA–TUDÁS TÁR – 000.000.069

Dátum/Date: 2018. július / July

filename: torday_1931_recTanghe

Ezt az információt közlésre előkészítette

/This information prepared for publication by:

B. WALLNER, Erika és/and BERNACZKY, Szilárd

Hivatkozás erre a dokumentumra/Cite this document:

TORDAY, Emil: De Ziel van het Ngbandivolk / Lélekhit a Ngbandi nép körében (About three books / Három könyvről), **pp. 1–5. old.**, No. 000.000.069, <http://afrikatudastar.hu>

Eredeti forrás megtalálható/The original source is available:

Közkönyvtárakban / In public libraries

Kulcsszavak/Key words

magyar Afrika-kutatás, könyvismertetés (P. Basiel Tanghe: De ziel van het Ngbandivolk / De Ngbandi naar het leven geschetst / De Ngbandi. Geschiedkundige Bijtragen, 1929)

African studies in Hungary, book review (P. Basiel Tanghe: De ziel van het Ngbandivolk / De Ngbandi naar het leven geschetst / De Ngbandi. Geschiedkundige Bijtragen, 1929)

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DE ZIEL VAN HET NGBANDIVOLK

Africa, Central: Ethnography. Tanghe.

De ziel van het Ngbandivolk, Door P. Basiel (Tanghe) van Brugge, Congo Bibliotheek, Brussels, 1929, pp. 144.

De Ngbandi naar het leven geschetst, Door P. Basiel Tanghe. Congo Bibliotheek. Brussels, 1929, pp. 288. Illustrated.

De Ngbandi. Geschiedkundige Bijtragen, Door P. Basiel Tanghe. Congo Bibliotheek, Brussels, 1929, pp. xvii + 245.

TORDAY, Emil

Man, 1931, Vol. 31, Mar., 52–53. old.

Father Tanghe, whose "De Slang by de Ngbandi" is well known, has put Africanists under further obligation by producing in three volumes; a collection of proverbs, tales, and songs; an ethnological survey; and an historical account of the Ngbandi, a people commonly known under the name of Mongwandi. Either of these names is, however, very vague in its application, and the Europeans include under these designations tribes which are not recognised by the natives as belonging to this people.

We find here the confusion which is so characteristic of the peoples living between the Nile-Wellé watershed and the Ubangi river. According to the natives only such individuals are recognized as tribesmen who are Ngbandi by descent and speak the Sudanic Ngandi language; the tribes of their own blood who have adopted another Sudanic or a Bantu tongue, or people who speak Ngbandi but are of foreign origin, are considered aliens.

But just as among the Azande, we find that after a time these Ngbandi-speaking strangers make alterations in their genealogies so as to fit in with that of the real Ngbandi and become thus gradually absorbed in the tribe. The author declares that he knows of no village whose population can claim pure Ngbandi blood, while he believes

that tribes on the Ubangi who no longer know of their origin are really Bantuized Ngbandi.

In the first volume we find among the stories a number which concern *Tiya*, who appears to correspond to the *Tule* of the Azande, but, in the examples given, he is much more dignified and less given to those pranks which characterize the Zande hero; he is more of a sage than that good-for-nothing *Tule* and consequently less amusing. The folk-lore is given in Ngbandi with a translation and, when necessary, with an explanation. The ethnological volume deals with social life and religion.

Here the author omits many details which one would like to know; we are left to infer that there is such a thing as clan organization; we are not told what the enjoined and prohibited unions are, and even as to descent we are left in doubt, except that we are informed that though inheritance is patrilineal and that primogeniture prevails, ancestry on the mother's side is paramount in family matters and that matrilineal genealogies are carried much further back and do not lose their significance after a time as the patrilineal ones do.

Concerning religion, no distinction is made between animism and dynamism, and such a statement as that the Ngbandi "recognize a soul, i. e. an inherent force (*Kracht*)" in animate and inanimate objects, leaves us in doubt as to which of the two is correct. There are some principal spiritual beings, including Earth, Sky, and Atmosphere, with a creator, *Nzapa*, who, however, appears to be the original ancestor and who shares in the worship paid to the less remote forefathers. But all this is very vague. There are observations concerning the snake and the leopard (especially the connection of the former with twins) which point to totemism.

Further research will probably reveal that there is more than simple metempsychosis in the reported association of departed souls with wild animals. Men of noble blood may not eat of the leopard's flesh, and the souls of departed chiefs dwell in leopards. In one region the souls go after death into antelopes. Dead leopards are honoured and deposited in ancestral shrines.

The author believes that the snake is worshipped for its own sake and the leopard in honour of the departed spirits.

In the volume dealing with history, some misgivings will be aroused from the beginning by such a statement that the pale people before whom the Azande fled to their present abode in the fifteenth

century must have been "beyond the" slightest doubt (zonder den mindesten twijfel)" Jews, because one authority states that they were called Azudia = A-Zudia = people of Judea; and as another author calls them Abara, these Jews came through a town called Bara in Kordofan. However, there is quite enough sound material in this volume shedding light on the history of the region, and this is well worth studying. Father Tanghe has to be thanked for his indefatigable labours and can be trusted that in future communications he will clear up some of the doubts left in our mind after the study of these valuable volumes.

E. TORDAY,