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AZ ELSŐ MAGYAR, SZABAD FELHASZNÁLÁSÚ, ELEKTRONIKUS,
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THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA

TORDAY, Emil

The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, by P. Amaury Talbot, four vols, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. vii and 356, xx and 977, 234. pp. Maps and illustrations. 1926. Price £3 10s.

Man, 1927, Vol. 27, Jun., 118–119. old.

In this monumental work Mr. Talbot has classified scientifically the information we possess about the natives of the southern provinces of Nigeria (with the exception of physical anthropology) and has supplemented it with a great number of new facts collected by him during his long stay in that country. Excellent illustrations add to the value of the work and all students will be grateful to the author for his helpful diagrammatic maps and tables at the end of each chapter.

In his foreword to Vol. II. Mr. Talbot tells us that he has made few comparisons; such may have been his intention but he has been unable to repress the temptation of letting his readers benefit by his extensive knowledge of the literature of many peoples acquired with a remarkable catholicity of taste. Quotations from classics, philosophers, saints and spiritualists are strewn over every page, occasionally sufficiently irrelevant to become irritating; thus when he refers to the ability of "doctors" to control the rain, he adds "which was claimed by Empedocles..." Empedocles! *Que fait-il dans cette galère?* Nor are his parallel cases always fortunate, as when he calls the tabu of eating oxen

"...*a remnant* (my italics) perhaps of the ancient bull worship which prevailed in Mediterranean and Central American areas."

Does he connect Sudanese natives with Central Americans? By the way, how could the latter worship bulls without possessing cattle? The new spelling he adopts for certain well known words, like "*Awlawrun*" for Olorun, "*Awni*" for Oni, etc., and the constant use of the

vague and unsatisfactory word Juju are trifles on which' he might have made concessions to common usage.

The most controversial chapter is the XVth in Vol. II dealing with the supersoul, as he calls the *Chi*. Here he seems to have been carried away by spiritualistic sympathies and to have substituted speculation for research. According to N. W. Thomas, the Chi is the ancestor (or possibly a living man of an older generation) whose spirit is incarnate in a person and this view is confirmed by examples given by Mr. Talbot himself: all that he tells us about the Chi or its equivalent amongst the Yoruba, Ika, at Ebu, Alla and Assaba, points clearly to a belief in the incarnation of the ancestral spirit or a spiritual element like the Ashanti *ntoro* and nothing more.

Mr. Talbot assures us that the natives see in it

"...a spark of Divinity, or a monad, which exists in a very high spiritual state-with God, as it is put; an Ego, which sends down emanations through various planes and finally on to earth. This stream of "consciousness manifests itself in physical, ethereal, mental and spiritual bodies, etc."

One feels that the writer of these lines must have read his own conception into the native mind. It is, however, quite possible that Mr. Talbot's arguments in support of this thesis will carry weight with readers less sceptical than the reviewer. Even those who disagree with him on certain points will feel that Mr. Talbot has to be congratulated on his valuable contribution to African ethnology and that we all owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Government of Nigeria for the publication of this important work in such excellent form. E. T.