The God of Thunder's Temple in Ibadan
(from a water colour drawing by Carl Arriens.)

THE VOICE OF AFRICA

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRAVELS OF THE GERMAN INNER AFRICAN EXPLORATION EXPEDITION IN THE YEARS 1910—1912

BY

LEO FROBENIUS

IN TWO VOLS.

WITH
SEVENTY PLATES, INCLUDING
TWO COLOURED FRONTISPIECES
TWO HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS
FOUR MAPS AND TABLES

TRANSLATED BY RUDOLF BLIND

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AN EXPLANATORY NOTE

In passing the following pages for press, it has occurred to me that a few explanatory remarks might help the reader. The book itself is the final outcome of twenty years spent in studying its subject, and has, consequently, undergone a process of growth which may entitle it to a particular method of consideration. It is meant to be something more than a description of travels, treating in the main of roads and their absence, of personal experiences, dangers and adventures. I have endeavoured to give the reader an insight into the inner soul and civilized status of the peoples who inhabit the vast provinces of Northern and Western Africa; and to explain the extraordinary treasures, some of very great beauty, which are to be reft from the bosom of this Dark Continent. And for this reason the book, in conformity with its inner construction and nature, consists of the following parts grouped as below, viz.:

(*a*) Narration of voyages: Chapters II.—VII., XVII.—XX., and, lastly, XXX.

(*b*) Explanation of work, *i.e.*, sections in which an attempt is made to expound the Expedition's objects and aims, its method of research and to clarify the material: Introduction (Fiat Lux), Chapter I. ("The Riddle of a Continent") and Chapter XVI. ("The Spectacles of Islam").

(*c*) Results of the work undertaken: Chapter XV. ("Atlantis") and XXIX. ("Byzantium").

(*d*) Testing the material, *i.e.*, sections which contain excerpted descriptions of the manners and customs, traditions and monuments of civilization: Chapters VIII.—XV. and XXI.—XXVIII.

The final chapter forms the conclusion in every sense, and, like every other scientific summary, opens up a vista upon greater problems unsolved as yet, and, therefore, ends upon a query. If the reader is clear in his mind about this arrangement of the subject matter, his selection of what will interest him most will present no difficulty. Some will find their pleasure in reading the account of the journeys made; others, in pursuing the descriptions of the method adopted in this investigation and its results.

* * * * * * * *

In my own humble opinion the introduction to the great problems involved in the previous history of Africa, which are set up in the recital of our experiences among the "Savages of Africa," ought to interest all specialists in general, and in particular to be of unusual value to the colonial politician who would conduct the affairs of the countries through which we travelled either from his arm-chair at home in Europe or in the district itself. For the "German Inner African Exploration Expedition," which, God grant, may still have a prolonged existence under whatever flag, and whose archives will continue to be uninterruptedly increased, has for its ideal task not only the establishment and exposition of the recorded and the prehistoric conditions of Africa, but the creation of practical values and, above all, of a utilitarian standard.

That the working capacity of the so-called "negro" population of Tropical Africa represents the highest asset possessed by these lands is a fact which is fully recognized to-day, and which cannot well be emphasized too strongly. Now, an eminent English colonial politician of great practical experience recently expressed himself to me as follows: "As far as my experience goes, the European colonizing powers bring about the same conditions on all the tropical coast-lands of Western Africa as in America. But it is a thoroughly unsound state of affairs. If, now, the state of things has already assumed a horrible complexion in America, it may in the course of time even end in a racial conflict for us Europeans in Africa, where the struggle for existence amongst the aboriginal nations is on such a very extensive scale." I can subscribe to every syllable of this pronouncement. I shall look for and find an opportunity for going into the details of the problem on another occasion.

The fact remains that we have so far not succeeded in making the unusually valuable African race adopt our instinctive feeling for civilization on a sound basis, a race which amply justifies its own existence both by its inherent vitality and essential characteristics. This much, however, is perfectly certain, namely, that if an unhealthy and dangerous condition of things prevails in America and the West Coast of Africa, there can be only one way of studying its originating cause, overcoming this and replacing it by a new condition of things; only one way, which I must always insist upon pointing out to the Powers of Europe and particularly to the governing circles in America, and this is the most natural way in the world.

But curiously enough all the Commissions, confident of the possibility of curing this disease and entrusted with the powers of discovering the necessary remedies, always return to the same infected countries.

This proceeding seems to me to be altogether opposed to common sense. Let us consider for a moment: What if one were to allow a person who had chosen medicine for his vocation to begin studying the various diseases which he would be called in to cure later? And further: Where is it customary to start with the assumption of symptoms of disease when judging of physical and psychical conditions? I rather think that every medical student prepares himself for his future profession, whose principal aim to-day, after all, culminates, as before, in battling against disease, by studying the characteristics of the healthy, normal state of the human body seriously and thoroughly for years. My own opinion is that we ought to adopt precisely the same method in treating the problem of the negro race, and, first of all, get a lucid idea of the effective qualities at work in the sound constitutions of the so-called negro before tackling the diseases to which he may be morbidly subject.

And, therefore, I say that our experience in the Interior, which is still healthfully sound, is of great practical value and no less so the result of our studies in the historical record of its development. For if now we gradually learn what were the particular influences which had formerly obtained a hold over these nations in the same way in which we discovered them to have undergone all manner of immigrations and colonizations in recent, ancient and prehistoric

periods—when we are in a position to see how and in what forms these admixtures of civilizations occurred and died away—then at last we shall get a serviceable clue for the elucidation of all questions with respect to those types of development in which the so-called negro character in general is capable of making any progress at all.

I was induced to dwell at some length upon a conflict which lent quite a singular charm to our experiences by the strong opinion I hold as to the supreme importance of these problems. The occurrences recounted in Chapter VI. happily enabled me to observe the attitude which the dusky African takes up when he is privileged to be a spectator of a difference of opinion between white men of different nationalities. The recorded results of this particular business are not only instructive for us individually, but full of direct significance for the welfare of international science. They are calculated to arrest the attention of all those who are in a position to exercise authority and influence in matters of State policy and who may have to consider the question whether it would not be imperatively necessary in the event of an European international struggle to avoid the transference of this authority to those members of the nations at strife who were living in Africa.

* * * * * * * *

The memory of the general support accorded to our work, particularly of late years, fills me with deep gratitude. Above all my other well-wishers, I have the English Colony of Nigeria in my mind. The delightful manner in which all possible assistance was rendered to us, both officially and also privately by the leading people, and the charming fashion in which individual residents showed us hospitality and furthered our endeavours, the lively interest which His Excellency the Governor frequently evinced in us until the moment of our departure, cannot be adequately recognized in mere words. For I must put on record that one-half of the British officials whom I trusted to answer my list of questions regarding the African Continent, promptly and courteously acted as my co-operators, although it did happen that I came into conflict with an English official. I know that those Englishmen, in whom the feeling of national ambition was intensely developed, thoroughly grasped the fact that we would not allow our toes to be trodden

on by anyone, and I am grateful to give voice on my own part and on behalf of my colleagues to the sincerest gratitude for the many sympathetic expressions which came, more especially from the Englishmen's circles. I regarded the donation which was made for the purpose of enabling the work to be continued at the conclusion of our travels in the Soudan as a particularly estimable token of the kindly regard in which we were held.

Secondly, I have to offer my warmest thanks to the German Press for the vigorous and lucid way in which it showed its interest in us in evil times as well as good. If, as I do not doubt will be the case, the two great sister nations can be successfully brought into a closer union, this can, of course, only proceed on the basis of the mutual respect of the two parties, and I trust that the excellent understanding finally arrived at as the result of prolonged controversies may offer a not unimportant, though small, contribution to possible developments in the future.

His Excellency the Secretary of State for the German Imperial Colonies was pleased to place substantial sums at our disposal from the Imperial Treasury, which were expended in the scientific labours to be undertaken by us in the German colony of the Cameroons. I desire to express my thanks to him. The long-continued co-operation with the German Museums was further extended. Dr. Thilenius, the Director of the Hamburg Museum, and Professor Dr. Weule, the Director of the Leipzic Museum, again offered us the money needed for research. His Excellency the Director-in-Chief of the Royal Museums, Dr. Bode, joined this association of fellow-workers as its Prussian representative, and I also have to thank his colleague, Professor Dr. Ankermann, the Director of the Berlin Museum, for his efforts in this direction, which were crowned with success.

My father, First Lieutenant Frobenius, again conducted the expedition's business affairs in Europe, as he had done before, and was instrumental in the production of this publication. The bonds of natural affection which attach me to him were greatly strengthened by the hearty sympathy he displayed, but his work also deserves public notice.

And now as to my staff. I had the inordinate good fortune again to have two assistants for this period of my travels who did

their appointed work so thoroughly as to merit special recognition. These two gentlemen, the artist, Carl Arriens, and the engineer, Albrecht Martius, devoted themselves to my service with a fidelity which found its sequel in a friendship which will last as long as my life. Both these men performed the tasks respectively allotted to them in a way, as far as I know, unequalled by others in similar capacities in the whole range of African science. They fulfilled their appointed duties in the periods of ill-health and sore distress, of which, Heaven knows, there was no stint, no less ably and willingly than in those when our star was in the ascendant. I know full well that I neither am nor always can be a pleasant and lovable chief. And I cannot possibly place too high a value on the fact that they both always did full justice to the unusually high demands with which I taxed their abilities. I can only say that I fervently hope to be able to secure the services of these two gentlemen continuously.

The same forces placed themselves at our disposition for work upon our return home as in previous times had been the case. Dr. M. Groll undertook the supervision of the cartographic material to be elaborated. Miss Zimmermann again showed the same loving care in the treatment of our Goerz-negatives as before. My secretary, Miss Wiechmann, never failed me in those latter days, when her work began with the rising sun and often lasted until the night was no longer young. Our faithful and trusty engineer, B. Hoffmeister, once more greatly lengthened the hours we could devote to work by the arrangement of our records.

My very best thanks are also due to Professor Dr. Thilenius, who collected a considerable addition to our exchequer as the representative of the Hamburg Ethnological Museum, and this in the main made it possible to bring my works before the public.

Nor must I omit to mention my publisher, who supported this work by the serious interest he took in it with unflagging and unselfish energy.

And my black men! When I allow to pass before my memory in review all the swarthy bodies which have trotted before and behind me and at my side, a secret sentiment of sadness comes over me at the idea that this constant change of individuals, which is a necessity in all expeditionary life in Africa, so very rarely permits the existence of any lasting connections. But for all that, we still

have a few faithful ministrants who always renew their engagements with us, and above them all, I must remember my brave non-com., retired from the service, Bida, who, although his skin was dark, so often proved that he was a " white man."

* * * * * * * *

And I would also venture to direct the attention of all those who are at work to-day in Central Africa and on its coasts, making notes of their observations or taking pictures and who thus have collected valuable materials unwitting how to utilize them, to the circumstance that not only is our Institution prepared to receive all contributions to our archives gratefully, but is, if need be, in a position to make the acquisition of such material a matter of business. With respect to the taking of negatives, regarding which I have recently had so many inquiries from those who were struck by the excellence of the Expedition's pictures exhibited in the House of Deputies, I can only repeat that the greatest number of the photographic failures in the tropics can be traced to the use of apparatus unsuitable to those climates. My staff and I continue to use the quite simple Ango-instrument made by the firm of Goerz, but never the complicated lenses of modern make which are so difficult to handle on the other side, and, however good the results they may secure at home may be, generally fail to give satisfaction in that particular part of the world.

* * * * * * * *

With regard to our future endeavours, I am able to say that the prospects for their continuation and the firmer organization of all our varied activities have essentially improved. I need scarcely say that the mass of documentary material in our hands, which is being constantly augmented, now calls for a home of its own, and I beg to thank all those who have recently been so good as to offer me a site for its shelter. This matter, however, is not yet quite ripe for discussion. If care and forethought for the future are anywhere desirable, they are especially so here. But I hope that the projected work still to be accomplished will be established on a basis worthy of the united efforts which have up till now been made by those who have strenuously and generously worked together in common.

There may, perhaps, be some little truth in the reports recently current in the press to the effect that we returned to Europe sick unto death, with the whole of our working power for the future in peril; but speaking at present, I can assure all our good friends that we feel younger, more eager for work and able to do it than ever; that we more than ever trust that we may be able to extend the field of our labours further still; and to operate still more effectively in the direction of elucidating all questions which may affect the ethnological knowledge of Africa for some time to come.

FIAT LUX

LET there be light!

Light in Africa? In that portion of the globe to which the stalwart Anglo-Saxon, Stanley, gave the name of "dark" and "darkest"? Light upon the peoples of that Continent, whose children we are accustomed to regard as types of natural servility, with no recorded history; mere products of the moment? What light can be there, where, to the general eye, there is no rule but that of the "insensible fetish," and where all power is said to degenerate into the reign of brute-force alone, beneath a sun whose rays seem but to scorch and wither the world it shines upon? A great light of the Church assured us, once, that these "niggers" had no souls and were but the burnt-out husks of men.

And, in so far as Islam shed no light upon these folk, historical research has been content to stay its hand. Yet, "Let there be light!" shall be our own device.

Amidst all the flights of fancy, with which men's imagination is wont to beguile its leisure hour, there is, second to Paradise alone, a land which, in obedience to antique traditions, they sought to find beyond the Pillars of Hercules, beyond the confines of the Mediterranean, in the Atlantic Ocean, and which they called "Atlantis." Since Plato's description of the Atlantic race and the mighty island's disappearance, mankind has never relaxed its search for the Atlantis which is gone. Imagination pursues its tireless course across the waste of waters in its passionate wish to reanimate the happy, sunlit,

godlike past and mourns the manner of its loss. For it was the home of happiness, of kindly feeling, and of justice; the culminating flower of art.

Alas, that Atlantis was no more!

Darkness enshrouded the deeps which had swallowed humanity's lovely ideal. The children of the Gods had gone under, because they failed to remember the law their awe-worthy ancestry had bequeathed them. All that splendour of art, which had erstwhile glorified the island, slid into Ocean's bed.

But, reader, let there be light!

I have gone to the Atlantic again and again, where it reaches beyond the Pillars of Hercules. I have traversed the regions south of Sahara, that barrier to the outer world, those vast tracts of country, which the Englishman, Stanley, called "dark" and "darkest," again and again. And, in common with those who yearn for the light which knowledge brings, I have spent many an hour in gloom there. But I failed to find it governed by the "insensible fetish." I failed to find power expressed in degenerate bestiality alone. In spite of the exalted light of the Church, I discovered the souls of these peoples, and found that they were more than humanity's burnt-up husks.

Yet, neither was I slow to observe that they no longer obeyed the laws handed down to the sons of the Gods, their sires of bygone days. They remember them still. They still make part of their dreams. These people have only fallen away from the height of human achievement. A glorious ideal of mankind had been thrust into the depths. The darkness had engulfed it.

Fiat Lux! Let there be light! And there was light!

In silence we crept about. We watched and listened, in silence. Through the darkness of night we groped our way to where sad spirits whimpered. We laughed with such as were merry; with such as were sad, we wept; we dreamed with the dreamers of dreams. But, then, when once we had found our footing, we rose and we

stretched our arms aloft. We took up our spades, our picks and our crowbars and spent the light of day in seeking for the treasure there, where the moaning of the night had whispered in our ears the promise of success.

And the voice of Africa was heard, saying: "Let there be light!" To-day, the noble features of the children of the Gods, fashioned in terra-cotta and bronze, are presented to our gaze in all their pathetic loveliness. The spell has been broken. The buried treasures of antiquity again revisit the sun. Europe brings up to the surface what sank down with Atlantis. But the broken tablets of the Law will not be set up anew. The Gods will not return. They cannot come back again, for, far beneath the fathomless ooze of the African Coasts, their graves lie all too deep.

LEO FROBENIUS.

CONTENTS

VOL. I.

CHAP.		PAGE
	An Explanatory Note	v
	Fiat Lux	xiii
I.	The Riddle of a Continent	1
II.	From Bremen to the Temple of the Atlantic Jupiter Tonans	30
III.	On the Road to Knowledge viâ Ritual Murder	49
IV.	On the Road to the Holy City	68
V.	Into the Depths	84
VI.	The Collision	105
VII.	The Consequences	127
VIII.	Home Life of the Descendants of the Gods of Atlantis	144
IX.	The Political Life of the Descendants of Atlantis	167
X.	The Foundations of the Yorubans' Religious Life	186
XI.	The Kingly Thunder-God	204
XII.	The Idea of the World	228
XIII.	The Holy City	265
XIV.	The Archæological Finds	292
XV.	Atlantis	319
	Index of Illustrations and Size of Originals as far as this should be taken into account	xxiii

ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I.

PLATES

Facing page

The God of Thunder's Temple in Ibadan. Coloured Plate. (*From a water-colour drawing by Carl Arriens*) . . . *Frontispiece*

A Nupé friend of the Author, whom he met again at El-Obeid. (*From a photo by L. Frobenius*) 14

Forms of pottery among the cannibal Bassonge. (*Drawn by Hans Martin Lemme*, 1905) 16

Tombs in the Niger Districts. Plate I. 22

Tombs in the Niger Districts. Plate II. 24

Lad of Central Yoruba (*full face and profile*). This type most nearly resembles the terra-cotta busts from Ifé. (*From a water-colour by Carl Arriens*) 40

Girl of Southern Yoruba. (*From a water-colour drawing by Carl Arriens*) 48

The boy Akelle, who tried to steal the Expedition's cash-box. (*After pencil drawing by Carl Arriens*) 54

The leader of the Ogboni in Ibadan. (*After pencil drawing by Carl Arriens*) 54

Ceremonial of initiation into the Ogboni league. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 64

Albrecht Martius and his workers about six yards deep. (*From an oil sketch by Carl Arriens*) 86

A Funeral in Ifé. The body is carried to the grave on the relatives' heads 95

Facing page

Sketches by Carl Arriens during the proceedings of the principal typical Ilifians present at the inquiry 110

Court-orchestra of the chief of Ilorin. (*Photo by Albrecht Frobenius*) . 118

Winged building with tanks for water storage in Ifé. (*From a photo by Leo Frobenius*) 118

Street of wells in Ifé. (*From a photo by Leo Frobenius*) . . . 118

View of impluvial roof-funnel of an Ibadan dwelling from the interior. (*After an oil painting by Carl Arriens*) 126

Gates from the palace of the Prince of Ado. 2½ feet high. (*From the Expedition's collection*) 134

The decaying façade of the Oni's palace in Ifé. (*From a water-colour by Carl Arriens*) 142

Female and male pages of the chiefs of Offa. (*Photos by Albrecht Frobenius*) 157

Female potters in Ilorin. (*Photo by Albrecht Frobenius*) . . . 166

Bronze-casting in Ibadan. (*By Carl Arriens*) 173

Transverse rope-walks in the compound. (*Photo by Albrecht Martius*) . 180

Working the pedal loom by Ilorin man. (*Photo by Albrecht Martius*) . 180

Women weaving at loom in Ilorin. Plush manufacture. (*Photo by Albrecht Martius*) 188

Women selling foodstuffs in the market-place in Ilorin. (*Photo by Albrecht Martius*) 197

Densely wooded holy lake in Ifé, in whose slimy depths archæological treasures were buried in war time. (*Oil study by Carl Arriens*) . 212

Entrance to sacred grove. (*Photo by Leo Frobenius*) 220

Reverential salutation of the Oni at Ifé. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) . 272

Ram's head as Shango effigy, about ⅓ of life, and a decorative tray from the grave of a Shango priest, ¼ life-size. Both from Ojo . . 284

Objects found in the ruins of old Ojo. An Ifa tray and a fish-shaped wooden vessel, both about ½ life-size. 292

Antiques from Ifé. Quartz sculptures. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) . 304

Bronze head of Olokun, full face and profile. (*Photo by Leo Frobenius*) 308

Facing page

Drawings of Okolun head (below). (*By Carl Arriens.*) Sketches of ancient terra-cotta masks in Cagliari, Sardinia (above). (*By Herman Frobenius.*) Compare the head ornaments . . . 312

Portrait-heads in terra-cotta, excavated by the German Inner African Exploration Expedition, December, 1910, about $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{5}$ natural size 318

Head of "Mia," excavated in Ifé by the German Inner African Exploration Expedition, 1910. Natural size, 6½ in. 320

Stone heads from Northern Yoruba, excavated by German Inner African Exploration Expedition, January, 1912. Some of these are made life-size 322

Peep into a Yoruban rain-shed yard. (*Photo by Leo Frobenius*) . . 326

Sand oracle. Divination practised by the Berbers of the Northern Sahara. (*Photo by Leo Frobenius*) 335

IN THE TEXT

WITH INDICATIONS OF THE ACTUAL SIZE OF THE OBJECTS REPRESENTED IN CENTIMETRES

PAGE

Head in terra-cotta (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*), about two-thirds of actual size. 105

Allangidi, Yoruba girls' dolls. These are from 15 to 30 cm. high. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*). 144

Wooden vessel-lids from the domestic furniture of princely Yoruban families. Length or diameter from left to right, 51, 32, and 16 cm. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 167

Earthenware vessels from Yoruban altars. Height from left to right: 34, 30 and 38 cm. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 186

Egun masks of the Yorubans. Height.—No. 1: 30; No. 2: 14; No. 3: 10; No. 4: 30; No. 5: 41; No. 6: 57; No. 7: 35; No. 8: 14; No. 9: 25; No. 10: 12.5; No. 11: 34; No. 12: 86. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 201

PAGE

Images of Shango ritual. The god in the centre; Ojas to left and right —respectively 52, 72 and 52 cm. high. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) . 204

Furniture for Shango ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 31; No. 2: 30; No. 3: 34; No. 4: 54; No. 5: 36; ornaments of No. 6 and 7: 50 and 45. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 207

Furniture for Shango ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 61; No. 2: 62; No. 3: 36; No. 4: 31; No. 5: 60; No. 6: 54; No. 7: 51; No. 8: 52; No. 9: 56; No. 10: 57; No. 11: 52; No. 12: 45; No. 13: 65; No. 14: 65; No. 15: 53; No. 16: 51; No. 17: 59; No. 18: 47; No. 19: 36; No. 20: 47; No. 21: 32; No. 22: 36; No. 23: 52. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 211

Furniture for Shango ritual. No. 2: 36.5; circumference, 126 cm. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 215

Ifa service. Figures of the god Edshu. Height in cm.—No. 1: 21; No. 2: 17; No. 3 (ivory): 5; No. 4: 13; No. 5: 36; No. 6 (ivory): 14; No. 7: 57; No. 8: 41; No. 9: 39; No. 10: 38; No. 11: 46; No. 12: 25. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) . . . 231

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 24; No. 2: 23; No. 4: 22. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 233

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 23.5; No. 2: 27; No. 3: 16; No. 4: 24; in width, 28; No. 5 (to the head of the figure): 20. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 235

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 23; No. 2: 24; No. 3: 26; No. 4: 22. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) . . . 237

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 16; No. 2: 16.5; No. 3: 20; No. 4: 9; No. 5: 23; No. 6: 25; No. 7: 11; No. 8: 15. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 239

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Sizes in cm.—No. 1: breadth, 39; No. 2: length, 113; No. 3: length, 112; No. 4: height, 90; No. 5: height, 55. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 247

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Sizes in cm.—No. 1: height, 43; No. 2: breadth, 44; No. 3: 44; No. 4: 48; No. 5: breadth, 41; No. 6: breadth, 20. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 249

PAGE

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Height in cm.—No. 1: 28; No. 2 (ivory): 40; No. 3 (ivory): 22; No. 4: 28.5; No. 5 (ivory): 26; No. 6 (ivory): 34; No. 7: 30.5; No. 8: 34; No. 9 (ivory): 17; No. 10: 38; No. 11 (ivory): 22; No. 12 (ivory): 30; No. 13: 30; No. 14: 33. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 253

Furniture for Ifa ritual. Diameter in cm.—No. 1: 30; No. 2: 48; No. 3: 50; No. 4: 9.5; No. 5: 47; No. 4, breadth, 43. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 257

Archæological finds from Ifé. Height in cm.—No. 1: 9.5; No. 2: 8.5; No. 3: 17; No. 4: 9.5; No. 6: 9; No. 7: 11; No. 8: 10; No. 9: 18; No. 10: 4; No. 11: 11. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*). . . . 295

Archæological monuments in Ifé. Height in cm.—No. 1: 90; No. 2: 80. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 297

Monoliths in Ifé. Height in cm.—No. 1: 195; No. 3: 339; lower circumference, 108. (*Drawn by Carl Arriens*) 296

MAP

Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition 1904-1912 . . . . . *Facing page* 34

In the Burial Vaults of Prehistoric Africa.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

THE VOICE OF AFRICA

CHAPTER I

THE RIDDLE OF A CONTINENT

The main object of the Expedition—Opinion in 1891—First experience of practical study of the negro—Standards of civilization—Culture and cannibals—Records of culture—Tomb-investigation—The Great Tumuli—Recorded material for a history of African development.

MY endeavour, in this the first chapter, will be to introduce the reader to those problems which appeal most strongly to myself.

A very learned article which appeared in a Berlin newspaper in 1891 began thus: "With regard to its negro population, Africa, in contemporary opinion, offers no historical enigma which calls for solution, because, from all the information supplied by our explorers and ethnologists, the history of civilization proper in this Continent begins, as far as concerns its inhabitants, only with the Mahommedan invasion (Islamite would be more correct !).

"Before the introduction of a genuine faith and a higher standard of culture by the Arabs, the natives had neither political organization (!), nor, strictly spoken, any religion (!), nor any industrial development (!).

Therefore it is necessary, in examining the pre-Mahommedan conditions of the negro races, to confine ourselves to the description of their crude fetishism, their brutal and often cannibal customs, their vulgar and repulsive idols and their squalid homes.

"None but the most primitive instincts determine the lives and conduct of the negroes, who lack every kind of ethical inspiration. Every judicial observer and critic of alleged African culture must, once for all, make up his mind to renounce the charm of poetry, the wizardry of fairy lore, all those things which, in other parts of our globe, remind us of a past fertile in legend and song; that is to say, must bid farewell to the attractions offered by the Beyond of history, by the hope of eventually realizing the tangible and impalpable realm conjured up in the distance which time has veiled with its mists, and by the expectation of ultimately wresting some relics of antiquity every now and again from the lap of the earth.

"If the soil of Africa is turned up to-day by the colonist's ploughshare, no ancient weapon will lie in the furrow; if the virgin soil be cut by a canal, its excavation will reveal no ancient tomb, and if the axe effects a clearance in the primæval forests, it will nowhere ring upon the foundations of an old-world palace. Africa is poorer in recorded history than can be imagined. 'Black Africa' is a Continent which has nor mystery, nor history!"

Thus the Berlin journal! I cut this passage out that night with my scissors by the light of the midnight oil in my tiny study. My thoughts were profoundly stirred, and I put it away. I turned to my friendly bookshelves and allowed King Munsa's court as pictured by Schweinfurth, Wissmann's descriptions of the troubles in the Bassonge towns, Pogge on Muata Jamvo, and the English explorers' sketches of the ceremonials of the sovereigns of Uganda, to unroll themselves before my eyes. I forget the precise reason I had for cutting out and keeping the quotation at the time, but I certainly never for a moment thought that I should quote it at the head of this chapter. As the years rolled on, it now and again passed through my hands when sorting out old papers, but otherwise had no particular place in my memory. Yet twenty years afterwards when, excavating near Ilifé, an exquisitely-modelled brown hand passed up the first terra-cotta

head, still covered with damp soil, from the depths of the earth, this newspaper cutting leapt to my mind in the flashlight of associated ideas. In spite of the sublime repose of all its noble features this antique work of art seemed to smile, as I did, at the "superior wisdom" of the present day. I could not help recalling this "contemporary opinion," a few months afterwards, on entering the time-worn ramparts which had served these "heathens," with no history, as a bulwark against the inrush of Islam from the North. On this occasion I was sitting opposite some of these dusky fellows, who smiled so oddly as to make me conscious of my dazed expression at the moment. And I now admit the justification for their mirth. For I have since then seen the same intelligent play of feature in every educated Moslem when I related what had been told me, viz.: that in the period between 631—643 A.D. the symbol of the Christian faith had been set up in the inmost heart of Central West Africa.

And this is why the newspaper cutting, now yellowed by age, haunted my recollection during all my travels in 1910—12. From stones and bronzes, from flesh and blood, message after message welled up from ever greater depths, until they took us back to the wonders of an astoundingly far-off past. The Empire of those King-Gods, successively murdered by the priesthood when their short reign was over, with solemn rites and in obedience to the laws prescribed by custom, was present to me, raised from the grisly past, and as eloquent as Banquo's ghost. The stories heard with amazement by the classic authors of antiquity as the former voices of a time long gone, lived again as we turned the tropic pages of universal history; but I ceased to smile, although I was often obliged to remember that "black" Africa was deemed to have "nor mystery, nor history." The stones had tongues, the venerable bronzes beamed light from mouldering graves. We sought the realm of shades, and, like the sore-tried youth had erstwhile done when suffering Poseidon's wrath, we sought to pass its portals. Hard is the task of claiming what the Gods are not inclined to grant, and bitter is the fate of those who fain would find the sanctuaries of departed gods. The scorpion stings the hand stretched out to snatch the skull of one long dead from a grave in an African hollow; fever and imminent death stare him in the face, who, defying the

powers of Nature, swims boldly across the streams in flood in winter and climbs up precipitous mountains. But it is all nought. Odin, who of old was Our Father, paid an eye for the priceless possession of knowledge. "Nor mystery, nor history": rhythmical as the clatter of a factory at work, horrid as the rattling of skeleton bones, the words of that faded snippet hummed through my brain when sleep deserted me at night.

To conjure up the days of old in Africa is to forget both laughter and smiles. There will be plenty to say of what fate had in store for us on our wanderings in 1910—12, and what twenty years of toil brought in its train of good or of ill. I am, however, of opinion that what may be placed to our credit in the ledger to-day can only be adequately grasped when the events of the enterprise are considered in combination with its results. Therefore, the opinion uttered in 1891 as to the condition of things takes precedence. For the same reason I propose also to show what was the most trying part of the task, namely, the initial stages which must be mastered by all who desire to be initiated in the mysteries of the actual world of that Negro Africa which has ceased to exist. The foreground is filled with the shallowest of shallows, with the misery of miseries, with the most primitive of primitive things: the folly and banality of modern days.

The cutting, however, contained a modicum of truth: the so-called "negro" does at first, one may even say, almost always, show himself to the European as a creature well-nigh hopelessly unhistoried and barely capable of development in things that really matter. I say "at first." Just as it required an immense amount of Europe's best strength to force a way through the exterior of this tough continent, the peculiar conditions of which have moulded the negro into the pitiful figure he presents to-day, or, in other words, to unriddle the surface of the continent—just as all but the coast-line and the roads in the interior, which carried the traffic of Islam, were in reality closed to all European exploration until the middle of the last century and earlier—so, in precisely the same way, the coloured African native, in general, was only superficially accessible where Islam and the coasting trade had paved the way; but in all other respects he obstinately held aloof from all inquiry directed to his inner self, and with equal determination strenuously

opposed every attempt at the penetration of the country which the European thirst for investigating the unknown had set on foot. And although a similar type revealed a remarkable wealth of variety in olden times from which a past, most rich in history, could be deduced with some degree of certainty—however difficult its correct interpretation might prove—it was yet more difficult to recognize its deeper springs because of the commonplace attitude and a certain air of irresponsibility which the negro put on directly he came into closer contact with the European. This was also my own experience! Consequently, I will here append an account of my first intercourse with men of colour, and if just then, as also often later on, a spontaneous wave of gratitude and sentimentality found its expression in the negro lads that, too, may be regarded as typical of the race.

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Twelve months after I had cut out and laid aside the above-mentioned "contemporary opinion," I found my first opportunity of making a personal acquaintance with the dark-skinned subjects of my study. I had arranged with a young fellow engaged in a firm of Hamburg shippers, and usually busy in that free port, to send me word at once whenever a ship came into harbour with a black or two on board who might be able to give me information about the state of things in Congoland. For at that time I was hoping for particularly important disclosures about that country. Directly I got the news, I stole away from my desk and made all the haste I could to the quayside. It was my first experience. My friend met me at the station. He brought with him an individual of decidedly characteristic appearance. But as soon as I saw him I knew that he was no native of Congoland, but a boy from Abeokuta, because he had the distinctive three scars on either cheek. At first I was out of humour. I had looked forward eagerly to a Congoman, and, for choice, someone from the ancient city of San Salvador. And behold! this was only a fellow out of Lagos! My good-natured friend was distressed. But he begged me not to despair so early in the day, for he had a stock of six specimens in all, and this, so to speak, was merely a sample. So I nodded at it

graciously and ran to the harbour. John, who spoke English, followed on.

I have forgotten the kind of vessel it was which had spewed these six youths from the West of Africa on to the soil of Hamburg. I only know it cannot have been one of the Woermann Steamship Line, for on board it there was so much filth and stench that even my "fiery soul," athirst for knowledge, was choked. Our search on board for the remaining five was fruitless; not a soul could tell us of their present whereabouts, and it was only on finding John again that we learned that the others were probably eating their "chop" at a "dinner-house." So we left the malodorous steamer, took a few full-flavoured salt-water japes with the best grace we could, and followed the tracks of the five vanished specimens. In vain I tried with all my might to hide the grudge I bore that disappointing John and reconcile my notions of the English tongue with his, both of which things proved very hard to do, and convinced me, after much control of both myself and the dialect, that four out of the six were Lagos boys as well, but that the sixth was a native of Loango. The prospect of an opportunity of studying a Loango man once more filled me brimful of hope. According to John's statement, James, the Congo boy, spoke excellent English, "like a white man," and knew all about everything. Clearly, James was the ideal, and John so dilated on his virtues that by the time I reached the "chop"-house, and had got a firm grip of the mysteries of my guide's vocabulary, I was fully convinced of the truth.

We were soon seated among the six blacks in a public-house, whose atmosphere you could have cut with a knife. I explained the reason of my coming to them with all the solemnity I could muster, and while full-throated songs were being roared at the adjoining tables, I strove to gain serener altitudes on the wings of science. The boy James, who turned out to be a Roman Catholic, a married man, paterfamilias and a French linguist, answered every question I put to him on scientific matters with "very old—*très vieux*—very old—*très vieux*." And it made not the slightest difference whether I talked about the kingdom of Loango, Stanley the American, shooting with the bow, or Sambi (God the Almighty). Afterwards all six of them asked for "brandy," and very soon their

eyes got glazed. With this, my first day's study came to a sudden stop. I had told James to come to my hotel at ten o'clock next day. A cabin boy brought him along at noon, completely drunk—for had I not tipped him a florin only the day before! A couple more of his mates came begging in the afternoon. I went on board in the evening and found all six of them blissfully coiled up together in a corner between decks. That night I was despondent. I didn't think African studies would have been so hard.

My friend of the quayside refused "to go on co-operating." I, too, had really intended to give the thing up. But the other's refusal had the opposite effect. I determined to hold on. On the fourth day, however, my resolution broke down too, and I was on the point of giving in. And James was really much too much addicted to drink! Having made a final attempt, I was leaving the harbour troubled in spirit. Someone came running up behind me. I knew the sound of those shuffling feet unaccustomed to boots. "Ah," said I to myself, "begging again!" But at that moment I was very determined, and had come to the end of my patience. I did not even turn round. Closer and closer came the boy. He caught me up. John it was, not James. And in his own particular English John said this: "In my country is every old-time man big stone."

In my astonishment I did turn round. I asked him what he meant and what he was after. The lad again said that in his own country every man of old times was a big stone. I asked him afterwards why he talked such rubbish to me, and he explained that at last he understood what I actually wanted to know. I had tipped him considerably, and so he was really anxious to tell me something about his own native land. Then he repeated the names of one or two towns which I wrote down for politeness' sake. I also "dashed" him sixpence, and there was an end of the business.

I had not the least idea at the time of the importance of the evidence thus put into my hand. It was only twelve months afterwards, on the resumption of my studies in the harbour at Hamburg, that it began to dawn upon me that John had given me a preliminary peep into the working of the negro mind (which is quite capable of gratitude and the sense of obligation), as well as some first-hand information about sculpture in the district of early

Atlantic civilization. As often happens at a shoot: The novice got the best stand, but he often missed his bird. The great stone heads which I lately brought home came from the ruins of a city of which John had given me the name.

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I think that this is one of the most striking illustrations of theory and practice in ethnological study within my own personal experience. In theory, I rejected the view that Africans were without any history (*a priori*), and yet I overlooked the first appearance on my horizon of a monument of antique culture! Learning to see is, indeed, the most difficult of things in the laborious study of African mystery.

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"In my country is every old-time man big stone," said the negro boy jettisoned at Hamburg, and reeking of fusel oil as he said it. Here in terms of flesh and blood before me I was confronted with a great scientific problem, the problem of mixed civilizations, represented, first, in the prehistoric monumental sculpture of Inner Africa; secondly, in the English language as spoken by the boy, and, thirdly, by the reek of German alcohol. Thus the exhibit affords matter for at least three professional lucubrations, viz.: one on prehistoric treasure-trove in West Africa, one on the translation and metamorphosis of English speech in the mouth of the black man, and, lastly, one on the influence exercised on the negro brain through German local option. But while every layman in the cases mentioned could easily assign its proper place to each of these three motifs in the history of universal civilization, as far, at least, as regards both era and locality, in most other instances there would be difficulties.

The unpromising exterior presented by the negro being taken for granted, the second obstacle which confronts the investigator consists in the fact that baser and nobler instincts and phases of culture in Africa are so closely interwoven as to make it extraordinarily difficult to discriminate between the older and more primitive and the more recent and more advanced. One is inclined

to attribute all the inferior and more deeply-rooted manifestations of human history to an earlier, and the higher ones to a more recent plane of civilization. *A priori*, nude peoples are regarded as evidence of an older and more primitive era ; those with some kind of clothing as emblems of a higher and later stage of culture. The layman has always looked upon "fetish worshippers" as being primitives, and peoples whose political organization is feebly developed, whose family life is ill-regulated, and whose means of defence are inefficient, always appear to him in the same light. On the other hand, we are prone to regard political institutions on an ascending scale, nicer family distinctions and masterpieces of industrial art as titles to inclusion in a loftier and younger category of culture.

I propose to demonstrate the unreliability of such a criterion by an illustration highly significant of the contradiction involved in, and the difficulty presented by, this problem in its furthest extension. I quote the following from a work published in the 'sixties of the last century: "Cannibalism can surely only be practised by peoples on the most degraded level of human morality and without any general experience of spiritual refinement or progress"—and I will put my own experience as against this :

On my travels in 1904—1906 I considered some Bassonges, a people inhabiting the districts of the Upper Sankurru and Lomani, about 24° Long. E. and 5° Lat. S., as amongst the best men in the expedition. They were clever and intelligent fellows, but they can give the Batetela from the Upper Lomani and Tomma, in Liberia, points in the subtlest refinements of cannibalism, as far as my personal knowledge of them extends. As a result of my studies I find the following note on their man-eating customs in our records :

"The Baketé of the South and the Kauanda are also cannibals, but only occasionally eat the flesh of those who happen to be killed in war. The Bassonge, however, do not confine themselves to eating the chance booty of warfare, but institute man-hunts and fatten their captives for the sole purpose of eating them. In former days a handful of men from a Bassonge town would set out and keep as closely as possible on the tracks made by wild animals. They singled out a small village in which there was none of their own

kindred, and attacked it when the majority of its male inhabitants were busy in the fields: The well-known 'Häääääähhh! Häähh!' and the hiss of hurtling arrows burst upon the villagers' ears without any warning. Those of them who were at home then fled through the banana-groves and tried to hide themselves in the tall grasses or the corners of the huts as best they might. Such an attack was generally successful, for spies had been on the watch for days, had signalled all particulars, and knew the favourable moment. Such of the inhabitants as had luckily escaped the assault upon the village naturally took refuge with the workers in the fields, who at once dispatched messengers to summon assistance from friendly villages to beat up their relatives in all the countryside, and, if possible, to capture the murdering raiders, greedily lusting for human meat, before they had time to retreat.

"But the man-hunters were perfectly aware that the inhabitants of the district would, if they possibly could, try to surround and kill them. They knew to a certainty that a large force of warriors would turn up in the neighbourhood. Haste was imperative. The hunters had usually seized a few children, or, perhaps, a slave in hiding, or some old crone had been slain by the spears thrust through the walls of the dwellings. A huge fire was now very hurriedly fanned to a blaze, and while the sentries posted round the village kept the look-out, the slaughtered little ones were impaled like rats on long poles and roasted on these natural spits. If the retreat was not too seriously threatened, the adults were fettered and abducted. If, however, the hunting-party were apprehensive that its recalcitrant luggage would be troublesome, or cause it too much delay, the victim of these delicate palates was killed by a knife thrust into the heart. The trunk was then slit up from top to bottom, lashed round a longer stake, and the noble game was thus slung over the fire. A snack or two was tasted to see whether the roast was done to a turn; the carcase was then cut up and carried away piecemeal. The hunting-party broke up in hot haste; one man had an arm, another a head, and its leader put the heart in his wallet in preference to any other cut. If danger was in the wind, it made hot foot for home; but if, on the contrary, there was no need to hurry off, and some of the pouches were not yet full, there still was time to flush another covert; but after that

the cry must be: 'Retire—double!' When the villagers came home again, all they found was the charred remains of a mighty fire and stakes which had been scorched, while the air was heavy with the tainted smell of blood and singed hair. The men made no lament on their return; they leave this to their womenkind. They dug a grave-like trench and into this they threw the remnants of the feast. The villagers and their kith and kin then held a meeting within the next few days. The population often did not even know from whence their enemies had come, and thus reprisals were out of the question. But although the foe might be identified, retribution rarely followed; for the rules of the game were this: the stronger peoples overwhelmed the weaker, and the latter were not possessed of sufficient political education and state-building genius to form a powerful union of several minor hamlets. The curse that lay upon this part of the Sankurru and Lomani basin was the lack of all leadership.

"The great social distinction between the peoples of the Central Congo Basin and the South lies in this fact, viz.: that the headman, or 'mayor,' is never the actual ruler in these parts, let the superior authority be as sound and intelligent and well ordered as it may. Every monarchical or despotic nation thrown into the interior of this basin relapses into the ancient methods of forming townships, in which, indeed, art and intellectual activity may flourish for a time; but never the power of the state as such. We will now turn our attention to cannibalism in another form.

"If man-hunting was, as it seems, the usual custom among the Bena-Ki, the ordinary practice of the weaker border tribes of the Bassonge district was fattening for consumption. There was no actual difference in the fact of cannibalism. Slaves, captured or purchased in Balubaland, were breeding stock. If they were the property of the community, the 'headman' looked after them, and it rested with him to decide when a man should meet with his fate. Up to that time he was set to work for the community. Besides this, neither the male nor female slaves, destined for food, lived celibate lives. But there is one great distinction which is a highly valuable contribution for the proper comprehension of the patriarchal tribal system, and it is this: The child of a free Bassonge woman by a slave-father is a slave and destined for future culinary

treatment. The offspring of the union between a free Bassonge father and a slave-mother is a free member of the tribe, since from the patriarchal standpoint the father is the determining factor.

"The farmers in human flesh acted on sound principles of reason, as far as it goes, with respect to their victims. A Bassonge informed me that a man can only put on flesh if he is married and free from every kind of care. For this reason a slave for the table should always be given a wife, since otherwise there would be something wrong with his fat. And more than that. The man must not be allowed to live in constant dread of being eaten soon, because then he would be likely to lose, instead of gaining, weight. But he would most certainly be in prime condition if he should happen to become a father while he was being fattened, because then, as a rule, he felt very pleased with himself and increased his avoirdupois. This shows not only the astuteness of the measures adopted by this fraternity, but the great expenditure of thought with which these tribes have arrived at their conclusions. For anyone who has sojourned for any length of time among the Baluba and the Bassonge and exchanged views with them, there is nothing out of the common in all these matters. However, they characterize a mode of thought which we would look for in vain among the dusky dwellers in forest lands.

"An auspicious day is fixed upon when the carefully-tended piece is ready for the butcher. One of the town's holy men then settles the exact date, because the 'oracular soul' within him has pointed out a particular and appropriate hour. So, on the morning of the day decided upon, two stout fellows, armed with long clubs, set out for the Savannah with the slave to be slaughtered, on pretence of going to some market or other, or of looking for the spoor of some game, or some other errand. They arrange for the slave to go ahead at some convenient spot, that is to say, where the tall grass affords good cover. Then one of the two men behind him jumps forward and suddenly delivers a swashing blow with his club on the nape of the victim's neck. These gentry have a peculiar knack in making the stroke. And the man drops dead in the harsh, high herbage. The boys then quickly clear a patch, lay the body in the middle, and pile the grass high over it. It dries by mid-day, and then they set it on fire. The black epidermis

soon peels off in the intense heat of the blazing hay, and the pink flesh, the 'beautiful white meat,' is disclosed to their sight. This finishes that day's work. The man is not disjointed till the day afterwards. Then the whole company of diners, adults and adolescents, assemble for the feast. Women are not permitted to see the 'Kudia-Muntu,' nor are they to be told anything of the banquet, from which they are most rigorously excluded. The distribution is made by families. Everything is devoured, with the exception of one member, which is smoke-dried on the domestic hearth, and forms a magic ingredient in the more important 'Buanga' ('medicines'). Sometimes the flesh is boiled with bananas and manioc, which is said to give it a most pleasing flavour not unlike pork. If the company is unable to consume it all, what is left is roasted.

"It goes without saying that large draughts of palm-wine wash down the meal. But such high festivals are not known to degenerate into brawls. On the contrary, a quite peculiar sentiment seems to pervade this boon companionship in the tall grasses. Those who have eaten together seem to be united by some tie of a certain mystic and religious strength. But I heard of no actual ritual being performed. Even monthly holiday-roasts were still the order of the day among the Ki; but in spite of their being 'good old customs,' in their case constant repetition also led to their being regarded as 'ordinary' and quite 'every-day' occurrences.

"All my personal experiences and their confirmation when the tobacco was passing from hand to hand in the circle round the evening fire, strengthened my impression that all the cannibal tribes of Inner Africa associate a quite distinctive frame of mind with the consumption of human flesh and, as far as this refers to the territories I myself have travelled through, I am bound to regard it as a misrepresentation of the facts for any traveller to say that the Africans of the interior 'eat human meat with the same sensation which a beefsteak gives to us.' This is not the truth, because, even if a negro has a human joint upon his board several times a week, his enjoyment of it in these countries will always be connected with a definite emotion."

This is the report in my diary of 1905.

Here, then, there is a state of savagery as highly developed as

can well be conceived. To get back to our problem. I imagine that here there were customs so absolutely brutal as to force us to recall the words quoted above: "Cannibalism can surely only be practised by peoples on the most degraded level of human morality and without any general experience of spiritual refinement or progress."

All very fine in theory, no doubt! But—these cannibal Bassonge were, according to the types we met with, one of those rare nations of the African interior which can be classed with the most æsthetic and skilled, most discreet and intelligent of all those generally known to us as the so-called natural races. Before the Arabic and European invasion they did not dwell in "hamlets," but in towns with twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, in towns whose highways were shaded by avenues of splendid palms planted at regular intervals and laid out with the symmetry of colonnades. Their pottery would be fertile in suggestion to every art-craftsman in Europe. Their weapons of iron were so perfectly fashioned that no industrial art from abroad could improve upon their workmanship. The iron blades were cunningly ornamented with damascened copper, and the hilts artistically inlaid with the same metal. Moreover, they were most industrious and capable husbandmen, whose careful tillage of the suburbs made them able competitors of any gardener in Europe. Their sexual and parental relations evidenced an amount of tact and delicacy of feeling unsurpassed among ourselves, either in the simplicity of the country or the refinements of the town. Originally, their political and municipal system was organized on the lines of a representative republic. True, it is on record that these well-governed towns often waged an internecine warfare; but, in spite of this, it had been their invariable custom from time immemorial, even in times of strife, to keep the trade routes open and to allow their own and foreign merchants to go their ways unharmed. And the commerce of these nations ebbed and flowed along a road of unknown age, running from Itimbiri to Batubenge, about six hundred miles in length. This highway was only destroyed by the "missionaries of civilization" from Arabia towards the close of the eighteenth century. But, even in my own time, there were still smiths who knew the names of places along that wonderful trade-route driven through the heart of the

A Nupé Friend of the Author,
whom he met again at El-Obeid.

(From a photo by L. Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 14.

"impenetrable forests of the Congo." For every scrap of imported iron was carried over it.

What are the assertions of an author in the 'sixties of the nineteenth century worth in the face of such facts as these? Is it not perfectly plain that this one absurd custom of cannibalism can in no way be regarded as symptomatic of an irredeemable degradation of culture? And is it not equally obvious that such skill in the arts, such great commercial expansion, such town-planning and such municipal construction, must be the product of prolonged historical civilization? Are not the facts, taken as a whole, here altogether against the narrow-minded view which is inclined to reject the value of the whole and of everything connected with it upon the evidence of unessential, quaint excrescences, such as the civilization of every nation must of necessity disclose?

But I am compelled to admit that these subsidiary phenomena greatly obscure all the proofs of higher African culture, and cover them up as densely as the impenetrable jungle masks the brooks and water-courses with its virgin growth. It is superlatively difficult to leave them entirely out of account. The explorer often loses heart. And the treasure-seeker's legitimate hopes and expectations are not always realized, because the tangle of parasitic vegetation, by its tropical exuberance, only too frequently strangles and kills the essential things. It cannot be denied that the African lacks the faculty of preserving the treasures of civilization intact and of keeping his inheritance undefiled. All he does is to overlay the ancient records with such a mass of odd or humorous, artless or extravagant, but nearly always tasteless flourishes, that the eye needs a prolonged and most careful training before it can recognize the original text.

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Now, of what do these African historical records consist? Are they likely to be such as the historian principally asks for, namely, documents in writing? Or, is there any possibility of some day coming across monuments of antiquity such as those with which Central America has so plentifully supplied us? Or, even any such as those of Egypt and Western Asia to which a definite date might be assigned? In times past it was always painful to answer

questions of this sort in some terms like these : " All the manuscripts known to us concerning Negro Africa are written in Arabic, and breathe the spirit of Islam. No monument in stone, in baked clay, or in bronze has been discovered up till now which does not eventually betray the essential poverty of the negro without a history, or is more than a polished instrument deriving from an epoch equally devoid of all historical records." To have to admit the impotence and sterility of all our efforts without reservation was a hard and bitter thing. But what other answer could be made ? For from the historian's point of view nothing existed upon which to found a verdict substantially different from the one quoted on the first page of this volume. It required an unusual amount of fortitude and optimism to keep fast to the faith that time would supply material evidence of an intensive civilization, and thus afford an opportunity of linking up Africa with the history of the world at large. Time in its courses justified this steadfast faith. The story of the secret ride I took at night to visit an ancient temple of the great Mossi nation by stealth and to make sure of acquiring some of the treasures it concealed for the German museums, has been told in the book, " On the Road to Atlantis," on page 321. It was one of the jolliest and most delightful though most tiring things I ever managed to do. Long before reaching the metropolis of the Mossi Empire I had heard of this temple in the Volta district as a result of the unfailing wisdom of getting exhaustive information from the exiled and proscribed denizens of a country before setting foot in it, because these castaways, expatriated by the incidents of the foreign slave-trade, always divulge the secrets of their native country much more freely than its population settled in assured prosperity, and who, in consequence of living within the bonds of social unity, are always more given to that mystery-mongering in which their common interests compel them to participate.

Under the pressure of an irresistible public opinion these dark-skinned Africans well know how to keep their own secrets with a stubborn taciturnity which we Europeans, whose development is individual and whose training is in personality, are quite unable to understand. Not one of us at home can imagine the crushing weight brought to bear by the whole mass of society on a single member. This secretiveness was, for very sufficient reason, more

Forms of cannibal Bassonge pottery (*cf.* text, p. 13).
(Drawn by Hans Martin Lemme, 1905.)

[*Facing p.* 16.

firmly rooted in Wagadugu, the Mossi metropolis, than in most other parts of Africa. There were some fifty officials of high rank and nobles of the Imperial court at Wagadugu, every one of whom was avaricious, greedy of power, cunning in intrigue, and engaged in a ceaseless and silent contest with all the other nobles collectively, a struggle whose sole object was identical for them all—the acquisition, namely, of the greatest amount of influence over the Mogonaba, or Emperor.

Alas! for this poor Mogonaba! They danced and cooed and fluttered and gyrated round him for all the world as though he had been a petty European king and they his cunning Camarilla. The Emperor was very young and inexperienced, a person endowed by Nature with no great talents and still less energy. The dignitaries of his court crawled at his feet in the dust with imperturbable humility from day to day, and pushed or pulled him in whatever direction they pleased according to the personal influence which happened to be momentarily dominant in the Imperial council. I have seen this wretched Emperor weep. It was a pitiful sight and a unique experience.

Poor, poor Emperor of the Mossi!

The complex conditions due to the existence of this Camarilla greatly hindered the execution of my plans. There was no organized party to be found upon which I could rely for the furtherance of my object; but I did find fifty rapacious, short-sighted, ambitious princelings, not one of whom would have trusted his fellows across the street. Therefore, I had no choice but to take a hand in the general game of intrigue myself and endeavour to persuade the Mogonaba to give me what I needed for my work. As good luck would have it, His Majesty was no less in want of money than weak in resisting importunity. His Majesty needed cash all the time, plenty of cash. Slave-catching had been stopped since the advent of the French and the caravan traffic, at all events as far as the native princes were concerned, had also ceased to be a source of profit. And yet the necessities were greater than ever. The Emperor had to make sacrificial gifts of cloth, no longer woven by the slaves, but which modern fashions demanded should be purchased at the Frankish factories in the West. So that I arrived at the psychological moment for the royal exchequer with the funds of the

expedition in my pocket, *i.e.*, just before the great Festival of Sacrifice.

O! those evenings of higgling and haggling!

And the bargaining! And those interminable sittings! But, at last, the nobles grew envious of me and annoyed with the Emperor. They got suspicious. And the poisoned cup is not unknown even in the circles of this country's Imperial court! The ruler began to grow nervous. On the one hand, he was in terror of the four chief princes, and, on the other, frightened that the rest of them might want to share the tit-bits with him. So one fine day we quickly agreed to a figure of forty-eight pounds, payable when I had housed the goods, and it was decided to conclude the business that very night, because next day there was to be a great court festivity at which the Notables would have to assist.

I sent my people to bed betimes. My Mossi interpreter took away my saddle in a sack, and I lay down on my couch as a blind. Punctual to the appointed hour one of the royal pages tapped on the wooden partition at the back of my bed. The whole business was within an ace of proving abortive, as nearly always seems to happen in cases of this kind. For on that, of all other days, my groom, lazy enough as a rule, must needs be so tickled by a sense of duty as to insist upon cleaning the metal-work of my saddle. I saw him plunging about, shouting for the saddle, which by that time was on the back of an Imperial stallion beyond the city suburbs, while the page and I were going past the living quarters of the boys. Fortunately the rage for cleanliness soon died down. The lad grew calm. Like a true-born swarthy son of Africa, he made up his mind to put the weighty matter off till dawn.

It was a mad ride, and we took it at the smartest negro gallop in a serpentine line, mostly on stony ground. I was very glad not to have one of my own horses between my knees. We changed our mounts twice and arrived.

The house at which we pulled up was quickly illuminated by torches made from material which the thatch supplied. The only striking thing about it was the entrance, which I shall have to describe later on. The house itself was a large circular hut. The candles were lit and I went inside. It was a dark space, in the middle of which rose something vast and unfamiliar; the holy things I had

heard of were ranged on a simple staging against the walls, some masks about seven feet six inches high, wooden staves, robes, and so on, some well preserved, others crumbling into dust and eaten by moth; but, taking them all together, a precious ethnological find. Distinctive and admirable as it might be, in style and quality it was just as vapid in the character of its incised and meaningless flourishes as the other African rubbish which we regard as typical and which, in spite of constant recurrence, is so frequently poor in invention and historical value. However—as an ethnologist—I was delighted. I was on the point of returning, after having made a most hurried selection of the likeliest things, because, truth to tell, not only was I tired, but the putrid smell of the place, the dust of dry rot flying all about, and a certain sticky moisture made me feel sick. I wanted to get away with my booty, when the curiously large bulky object looming in the middle of the space again attracted my attention.

I went closer to it with the light. What I saw was a great conical, or dome-shaped structure of mud, on the top of which there was a vessel, which gave out a curiously hollow sound when I tapped on it. My companion pointed out a small aperture, not quite four feet high in the dome, which led into it on the western side. I held a candle into it, and saw that this conical dome had been built over a deep shaft, which exhaled a far from pleasant smell. I tried my weight upon the crossbars inserted in the circular shaft and climbed down. As I had to carry the candle in one of my hands all the time, this descent of the five greasy battens and then down a slanting, four-notched tree-trunk, was all the more difficult. I reached the bottom at about thirteen or fourteen feet down, and discovered that other galleries, some five and a half yards in length and broader and higher towards their ends, had been driven towards the four quarters of the compass. The entire site, imposing enough of its kind, had been hewn out of the hard, tenacious fire-clay. The floor was littered with bones and potsherds. The sticky stuff on the steps was the result of the bucketsful of sacrificial blood poured down them. It was the grave of a chief who had come into this land out of the West, but whose body I failed to find among the bones, rags and lumps of fire-clay which had fallen in. I am free to confess that, although I had tied up my nose, I soon had enough of

it, and fled from the place directly I could—that is, after I had taken all its more important measurements. I was unable to ascertain whether my guide's statement that this was also the burial place of other people who had been sacrificed since the death of the chief, as well as of the chief himself, was based on truth. But it is not improbable.

This much, however, is certain. Very many similar structures, designed for the same purpose, are still extant in these districts. The description of the burial of their emperors and kings, as given me by the Mossi, to some extent tallies with the disposition of the grave here discovered.

When, after my departure in 1912, my assistant Martius took over the conduct of the expedition and gathered information from the people of Borgu and Bussa, he sent me a description of some graves which correspond most closely with the arrangement of the so-called Gurma-princes in the Volta valley. Graves of quite similar construction were formerly common in Nupe-land. In earlier times there were in that country huge burial caves. These have decayed, but old people alive to-day saw them and entered them when they were young. There are said to be still a few in the region of Kaba-Bunu into which one can descend. I had heard of them in Ibadan, and often received reports on them afterwards. In Mokwa, too, they also know of several of these burial caves. There was one of them on the site of the former ruler's palace, where the school building now stands. The hallowed spot is a few hundred yards to its rear. Sixty or seventy years ago the vault itself caved in. It was a subterranean cave. A circular hole gave access to it, and from this entrance lateral galleries, of about a man's height, and which were described as from nine to twelve feet in breadth, branched off in two directions. The remains of the men were buried in the right, those of the women in the left-hand gallery. In order to preserve the corpses, they were swathed in many rolls of broad cotton so that they were as inflexible as a mummy. They were then propped against the wall. Only the most honoured male corpses were draped in the Nupé-tobé. To prevent the corpse falling sideways, a niche was cut in the wall in which the head could rest. Thus the corpses stood erect for months, and, according to some, even for years, until at last they

decayed altogether and collapsed into little heaps of bones, for all that they had been so tightly bound. The old people believe that perhaps as many as fifty dead were laid to rest in each gallery of these sepulchral caves. According to the evidence of those who have seen them, there was a great number of this kind of tomb. Only those of distinguished rank were entitled to a place there; ordinary mortals were buried in their own compounds. This custom of burial in artificial caves goes back to the era anterior to Egedi (see the chapter on the history of the Nupé !).

Moreover, the Bosso-Sorokoi used to erect quite similar buildings before that period. I called together a fair number of veterans of this nation at Mopti, on the Niger above Timbuktu, in 1908, and, *inter alia*, discussed with them their ancient burial customs. It was very difficult to learn anything about the curious archaic usage practised in that country to this very day, because Islam is intent on exterminating heathenism. But at last I did succeed in getting the old fellows' confidence, conquering their reticence and persuading them to tell me their secrets and make me a partaker of the mystery and tradition of their ancient, complex sacred societies (*cf.* "Types of West African Culture, 1912").

And then one day they showed me a grave whose entrance still showed traces of former sacrificial places, so that I could form a general idea of them. What follows was indicated by the construction :

When a ruler was defunct in the pagan district of this ancient realm, a passage sloping downwards for about thirty feet from the east and west is cut towards the hut in which the deceased is lying in state. These galleries are about six feet high, twelve yards long from their mouths to the point where they meet, and for a distance of four yards or so the walls and floor of their upper ends are lined with planks of Borassus wood to prevent their falling in. But, first and foremost, a vaulted chamber is dug out exactly beneath the hut in which the dead ruler is lying in state ; that is to say, at the coincidence of the eastern and western galleries, and its roof is built in the shape of a wicker basket, with horizontal rings and vertical ribs, and lined with straw and matting. Altogether about three hundred men are employed ; one hundred and fifty of whom fell

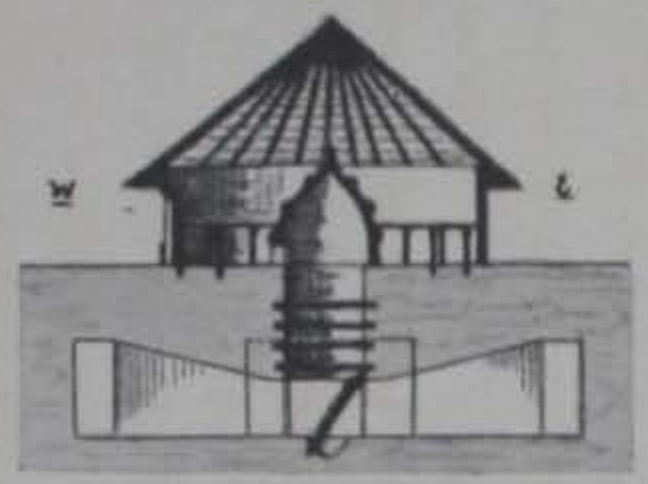
the timber, fifty plait and bind and fifty more do the digging until the entire construction is complete.

While all this is going on, the corpse is reduced to the smallest possible compass by drawing its knees upward and tying the arms to its sides, bound up in rolls of cloth and placed in a jar about seventy inches high by sixty inches broad. This is then lowered down the shaft, and so placed in the centre of the underground cave as to bring the face of the dead looking westwards. Four candlesticks, each of them pointing to a quarter of the compass, are set up round it, and, as soon as the departed ruler is laid to rest and all other necessary arrangements are made, the candles are lighted. Besides this, large and small vessels of Duo—that is, drink—and all kinds of food and grain are placed to hand in various receptacles. If it was a warrior chief who here found his last abode, his bows and arrows and fly-whisk were put into the grave. In the first place, the favourite wife of every ruler bore him company. She was led into the tomb alive and shut up there for ever. It was never necessary to force women to do this, for they all obeyed the law of their own free will, and were glad not to be parted from the man they loved.

An earthenware tube or pillar was placed in the funeral hut above the chamber in which the dead man had lain in state at first. It was erected on the exact spot beneath which his head had rested in the actual death-chamber. Trenches were also cut to the north and south of the mortuary hut. These, however, did not open into the vault itself, but only served for the storage of extra foodstuffs in jugs and cups and other articles in common use, such as tobacco pipes, ewers, and even firewood. Such things were meant to please the dead and to refresh him when the supplies in the grave itself had run out. The wood would enable him to kindle a fire to warm himself in the cold season. All these preparations made, the eastern and western galleries were sealed on the inside with stout lattices, and the earth piled over them. The north and south galleries were also filled in.

This was the constructional plan of all these ancient buildings; the natives of the Niger bend still build them thus for their dead monarchs. In reality, they are of considerable size, although they seem small and insignificant when compared with those noteworthy

Grave of Surma Prince in Volta Valley near Wagadugu.
Mapped by Leo Frobenius.



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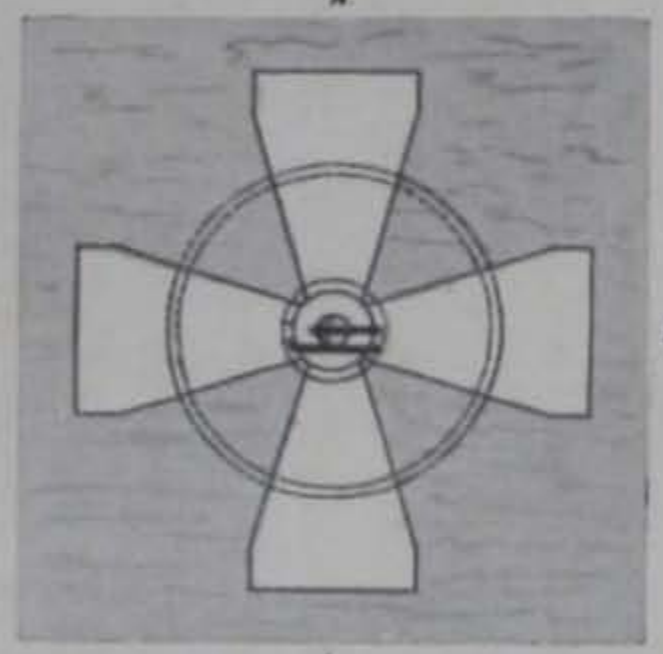
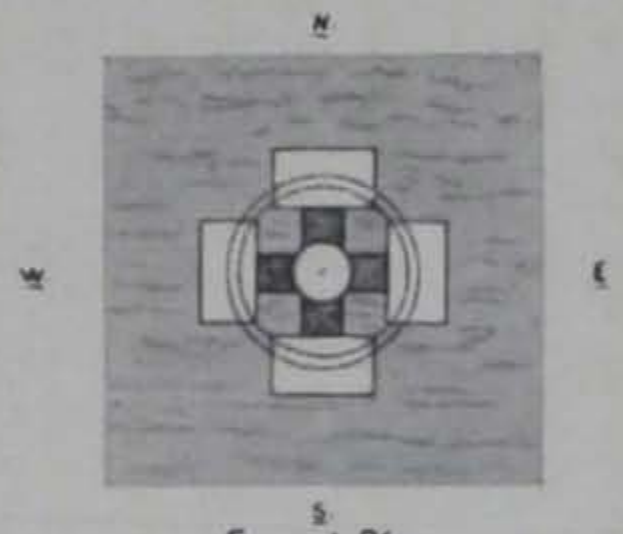


Ground Plan.

12 yards.

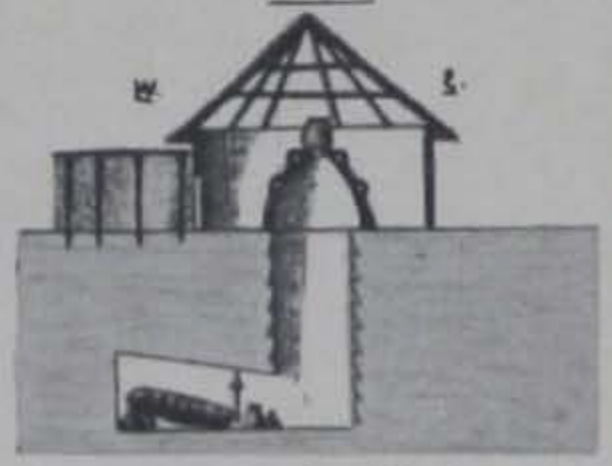
Tomb Construction of Four Royal Corpses.
Bussa.
Explored by Albrecht Marthus

Section W-E.



Ground Plan.

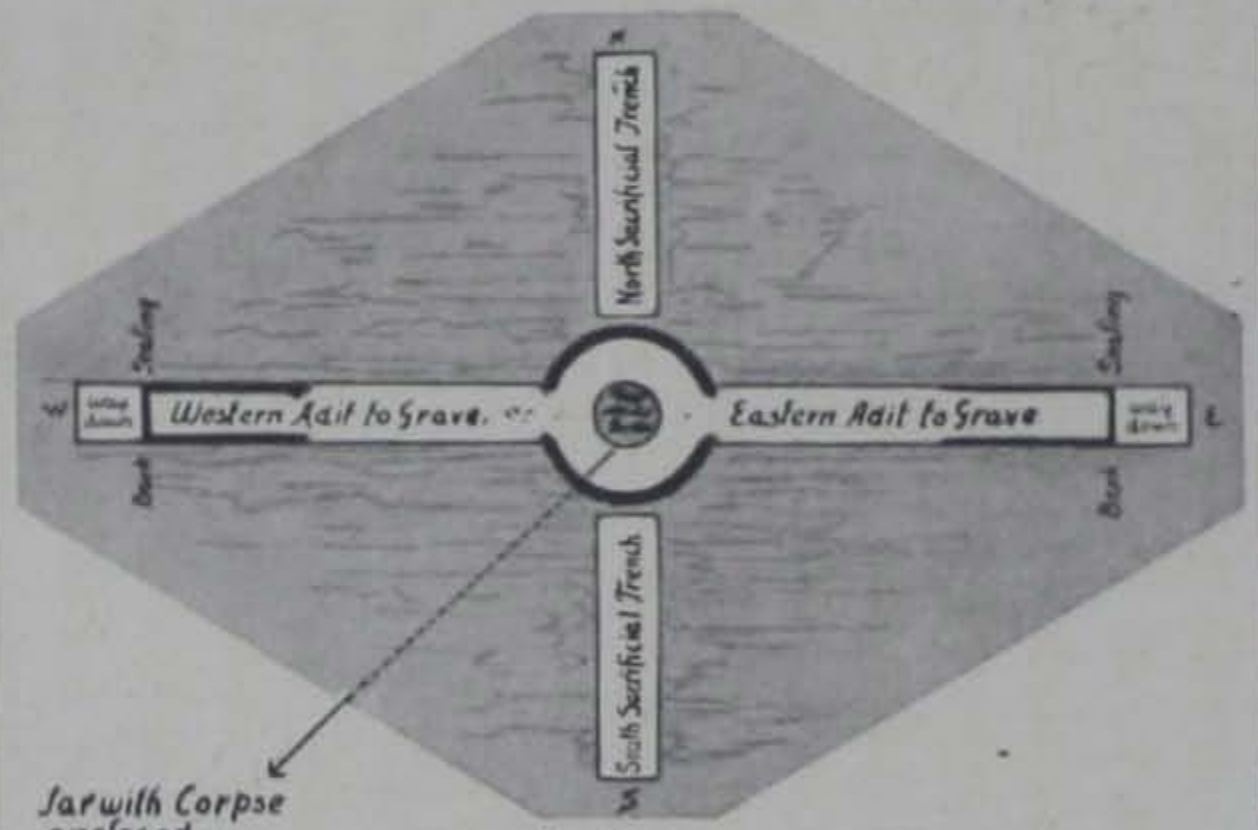
Grave of a Mossi-naba near Tako.
Mapped by Leo Frobenius



Section W-E.

Bini-Tomb near Mopti on the Niger.
Surveyed by Leo Frobenius

Section W-E.



Section.

12 yards

[Facing p. 22.

cemeteries whose reconstruction I shall attempt in the next paragraph, and whose adoption was general a thousand years ago.

* * * * * * * *

The traveller frequently sees red mounds rising on the pale yellow sandy soil in the region of the lower Senegal and Northern Houssa-land, between 13° and 18 N°., of which the oddity, artificiality and unnaturalness must, I fancy, strike all beholders. Their furthest outposts may be found near the villages of Pada-lali and Jinsa, between Matam and Bakel in the Toro country, close to the Senegal. They are densest in the riverain districts of the middle Niger. Those preserved in the Sinder country are, as far as is known, the specimens most deserving of examination towards the east. But I am convinced that typical examples of this constructive method will be found still further eastwards. The measurement of these "redheads" varies considerably. It rises from between sixteen and seventeen feet in height and sixty-six feet in basal diameter, to nearly seventy and two hundred and twenty-one and a half feet in height and width respectively; but their average height is thirty-six feet and their diameter one hundred and twenty feet.

Every grown-up native, when once induced to open his mouth, asserts that these peculiar "redheads" are ancient royal graves. And were the folks themselves not to tell us so, and were not this the impression first conveyed by the graves themselves, we should only have to turn to the pages of the old Arab voyager, El Bekri, who visited these parts in 1050 A.D., to be convinced of its truth. This admirable explorer states that the natives of these parts buried their kings in great domed buildings beneath a roof of clay, and hid them beneath an earthen mound, from whose interior a passage led into the open air in this way; sacrifices and, in fact, human sacrifices and intoxicating liquors were offered to the dead through this channel. These are the monuments it is now proposed to discuss. The eyes of the scientific world were at first really opened to the marvels of the pre-Mahommedan era by the French, whose interest had been excited by what their early excavations had brought to light; but they failed to carry out their investigations

sufficiently to bring the actual sites and particulars to our knowledge. Europeans have already broken open five of these tumuli on French and English territory, but no exhaustive information about them has so far been published. Apart from the opportunity afforded of examining the buildings where the breach was made, Nature had in one or two instances, in her own effective way, disintegrated the surface with storms and heat and frost, and loosened the subsoil; but torrential rains have so washed out the galleries as to render an attempt at reconstruction possible to-day. The student can rely upon the memory and statements of the natives, irrespective of the actual state of things in the locality itself, because their traditional chants embalm the recollection of the building of these tombs, and are rich in the storied circumstances of their erection. Thus everything goes to prove that once upon a time these tumuli were of different kinds:

Firstly, a small type; a clay covering built over an underground mortuary hut;

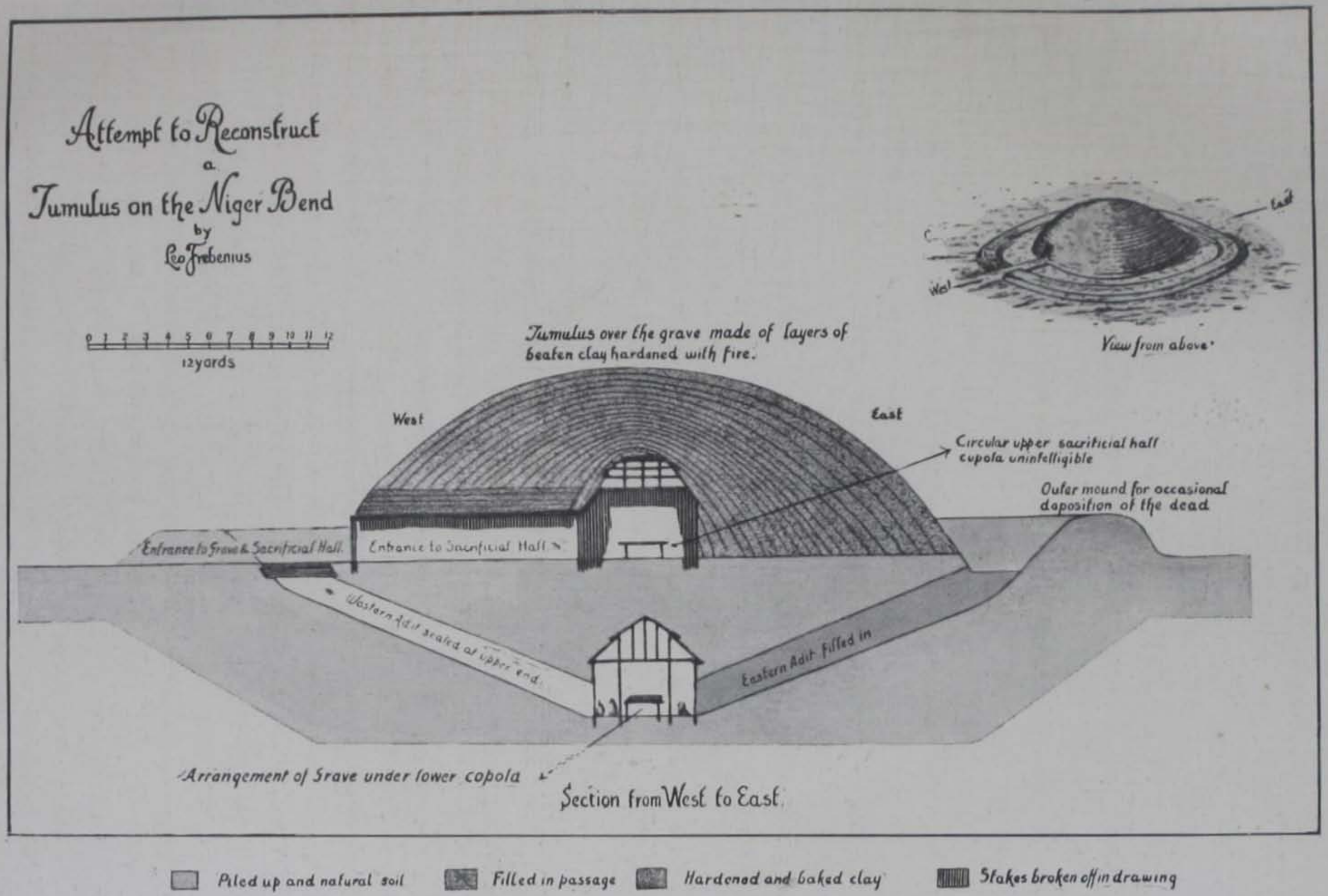
Secondly, an intermediate type; consisting of two spaces, the lower one being a grave under the solid earth above it, and the upper one a place of sacrifice under the earth, which was piled up above it for a roof; and

Thirdly, extraordinarily large constructions for the reception of a great number of notabilities, besides royal personages, in chambers of some size according to regulations in those cases provided.

In my opinion, the intermediate type is the most important, and the one which I have tried to reconstruct, assisted by the detailed measurements, given by Desplagnes, from the tomb opened at Maledji, from the water-worn remains of the tumulus at Gjiggi and the little mound at Tendirma intersected by a creek from the Niger, from the ruins at Gualla, and from the information supplied by the natives.

No pains were spared to settle the question as completely as possible, because it involves the reconstruction of one of the larger monumental edifices of pre-historic Black Africa for the first time. The only thing I was not quite clear about was the method of building the upper cupola of the place of sacrifice.

I shall try to describe the manner in which one of these edifices was built: First of all, passages were dug under the earth and, at


Attempt to Reconstruct
a
Tumulus on the Niger Bend
by
Leo Frobenius
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
12 yards
Tumulus over the grave made of layers of beaten clay hardened with fire.
West
East
Circular upper sacrificial hall cupola uninfelligible
Outer mound for occasional deposition of the dead
Entrance to Grave & Sacrificial Hall
Entrance to Sacrificial Hall
Western Adit sealed at upper end.
Eastern Adit filled in
Arrangement of Grave under lower copola
Section from West to East
West
East
View from above.
Piled up and natural soil
Filled in passage
Hardened and baked clay
Stakes broken off in drawing

[Facing, p. 24.

their coincidence, the gallery was enlarged, as the first sketch of a building with an oval-shaped dome. This dome was panelled and strengthened with wood from the Borassus palm. This domed underground vault contained the dead man and a good many things besides. As a rule, living victims accompanied the ruler to his grave and died there, of whom accounts agree that there may have been as many as four. The number is variously stated. The Eastern hole was filled in, but the Western one was sealed with boards and only opened yearly to receive fresh offerings. A second and very strong dome, to which a covered passage gave access from the West, was raised on the surface exactly over the roof of the grave-chamber proper. The vaulted roof and passage were made of stout stems of Borassus palm, plastered with puddled clay, and the mound was piled high over the whole.

The Songai-Fari Makas have an old chant which was sung at funeral festivals and describes the manner in which the dome of sacrifice was made into a hillock. The words run thus :

> "The king who is no more lies deep beneath the ground,
> The river mourns, it weeps. . . .
> . . . . . .
> This house we builded on the level earth,
> This house we covered with the earth,
> The earth we kneaded with our feet and with wood the women beat it ;
> Oxen have been slaughtered and their blood was poured upon the ground ;
> The blood-soaked ground the women beat with wood ;
> Straw and timber to this place we carried ;
> On the ground above we builded up a fire ;
> The ashes of it we have carried off.
> Earth we carried to this place,
> This earth we kneaded with our feet. . . ."

and so on and so on.

It is clear, then, that the work was done layer by layer. Each one was sprinkled with bullocks' blood, puddled and baked. As a matter of fact, the "red-heads" in some places can be seen to be

laminating, "scaling," as a block of granite peels off in the tropics. Then a circular trench was drawn round the entire construction and connected with a purifying drain, which apparently ran eastwards. The entrance to the grave itself, which was opened but once a year for the insertion of the autumnal offering, was covered with planks laid horizontally. But on all other occasions the priests held intercourse with the dead in the upper chamber, approach to which could be gained by the covered way on the level ground. The legends woven by tradition around these edifices are related with profound awe and with great reluctance by the natives.

* * * * * * * *

The question as to what kind of records and monuments in general of any description and in any sort of preservation might be looked for in Negro Africa, has already been put by me. I then answered it by describing the monumental pyramids of the Songai, and the reader will think that I am about to say: "Behold! these are the monumental edifices!" But this is far from being so! That they are monumental structures is beyond all doubt. But, incidentally, I gave an account of some material on which history could be based, and which would form a far mightier link between the Present and the Past than pyramids and bronzes and sculptures and manuscripts; I mean, the memory of human beings, who have not yet learned to write, or who have not had the treasury of remembrance ruined by the excessive use of the written word!

Here and there, on the coasts of Northern Europe, the traveller happens upon little mounds and inequalities on the surface of the landscape to which the simple countrymen will refer with the same reverence as the peasants of the Niger do to theirs. The yeomen of the North say that, in this place or that, a king in his chariot was carried underground. When townsmen heard this in the decades past and gone, they made merry over it; but the dwellers on the land, as is their wont, held fast to their beliefs. Now and again, one of these barrows was cut into, at first without design, as, for instance, when it had to be levelled for a railroad, but later on with deliberate intention. The dwellers in the towns had laughed at the belief in fairy-tales shown by the dwellers in the

country. But it had to be taken seriously after all. The peasants' faith had been no superstition. The grave of a lord of men in times gone by, of some great man, had been laid open, and by his side there lay a little chariot. This had not occurred once only. The memory of these things had been kept alive in rustic brains for nigh two thousand years. The storms of war and times of trouble had swept across it; in long periods of gentle peace the harrows had been drawn along its furrows year in year out, and wheat that was heavy in the ear had waved above it. Generation upon generation had trodden over it; the art of writing had come into being, and an infinite number of descriptive chronicles had been written and printed, had mouldered away and been forgotten in the adjacent towns. And, meanwhile, many a gravestone chiselled with lettering, erected in the churchyard of a later day, had been cleft by the insidious fingers of the ivy and destroyed. Yet memory had retained its seat within the human mind for close upon twice ten hundred years.

Such is the godlike strength of memory in those who live before the advent of the written word. Every archæologist can quote examples from the nations of the North. But who would imagine that the negro race of Africa possessed an equally retentive mind for its store of ancient monuments? For well-nigh ten centuries no brick-built pyramid was lifted skywards, yet gaffers still recall the song which was sung when hundreds upon hundreds of toilers wrought, when layer was spread upon layer, when the clay was beaten with batlets and baked in the heat of a fire. Turn, reader, once more to this first chapter's introductory pages, where the lines which met my eyes when I took my task in hand, two decades ago, are again set down. Nearly an entire century was spent in the accumulation of knowledge of this great Continent's configuration, of the ramification of its rivers, its mountains and its lakes. Small wonder, then, that the human element which a Goethe and a Karl Ritter declared to be all-important for the proper study of mankind, here remained mysterious for so long a time. This work is intended to show its readers the ways and means adopted in our efforts to solve the enigma of this Continent to-day. From time to time we threw ourselves upon the ground like Indians on the war-path, and pressed our ear upon the hard-bound earth,

to hear perchance the footfalls of the men long passed away. As treasure-seekers do, we tapped the firm and formless surface with our hammers, listening for the hollow sound of caves where fortunes might be hidden far below. We dug; we went into the depths; we let the light of day shine in upon the palaces of ancient days and disused mines and workshops in decay. We strove to get upon the track of every single human impulse, and, above all else besides, lay bare the ground plans of that mightiest monument of man's activities which rests upon the memory of so-called savage races as though built upon a rock.

Yet fortune did not always look upon us with a kindly eye. The Johns and Jimmies are important actors in the drama of discovery. These brutal and barbaric beings, no less at ease when hunting men for human food than when indulging their cannibal tastes without exertion, showed the greatest anxiety to hide the rarer material of bygone cultured times away from us. And the champions of the views expressed on pages 1 and 2 often made our work more arduous; many a well-aimed block of wood was hurled at us by clowns in Europe for us to stumble over in our path. We were frequently undeceived, but never at any time lost courage whilst pursuing our onward course to Atlantis and Ethiopia, and farther and farther still.

Rambling as this first chapter may appear, it has more, perhaps, in it than the hurrying reader may suppose. Be this as it will, I herewith register a vow not to offend him again by leaving my thought unbridled in its wayward course, but to take him along the familiar road of description by easy stages from now onwards, and to show him all the happenings and findings which in my own view seem of sufficient weight and in their proper place. I shall give him an unexaggerated and, to the best of my ability, an unbiassed version of the curiously romantic picturesqueness of our mode of life and of the things we found. But if I lay less stress upon ever-present death and men who died than on decayed and decaying civilizations, and greater stress on the poetry inherent in the glorious past of the old-time dwellers in the countries, through which we journeyed, than upon our many adventures and poetical descriptions of the countryside in the course of my narration, I shall do so because we are no longer accustomed to the romantic manner which

was in vogue what time Herodotus and others were writing of Hyperboreans and Amazons, and Plato of Atlantis. When Atlantis and the Amazons are our theme, we shall treat it in quite a different style, although the thought of a world that has perished will be ever present in our minds.

For this is the sober truth: I treat in this book of a world that has perished! I have shown that the Songai of to-day copy the tombs of the spacious days of yore in little. The ruins of the mighty past lie slumbering within the bosom of the earth, but are glorified in the memory of men who live beneath the sun. Let this be to us an example! As for our greatest finds—well——.

Praying at the altar of the God of Thunder.

CHAPTER II

FROM BREMEN TO THE TEMPLE OF THE ATLANTIC JUPITER TONANS.

Going on board—Early history of the third period of the travels—Lagos and the negro in trousers —Ibadan—The shrine of the Thundergod.

I WAS ready for my third long journey by the end of September, 1910. The heads of the Woermann Line had courteously placed berths on the *Alexandra Woermann* at the disposal of their friends and allies, the directorate of the Hamburg Museum, for our passage. This fine vessel met her fate in a fire in Hamburg harbour, which effectually cleared her of rats and other unwelcome visitors.

I started the third expedition of the German Society for Research in Inner Africa during this voyage, and am, perhaps, justified in saying something about the inception of this enterprise, the more so as this may facilitate the reader's comprehension of the pages to come. The expedition's initial task was aimed at the advancement of ethnological knowledge and the geography of civilization. Long before its first adventure to Africa, in 1904, it had been founded and equipped with this one intention, and had been so trained in preparation, that the third period of its travels, from 1910—1912, could not be otherwise than the climax of its efficiency and expansion. Since the success which attended our efforts crowned

their uniform development and logical construction from the moment the idea was born, and the goal we strove for was finally attained, we are justified in giving pride of place to the axioms and hypotheses which ascertained facts proved to have been correct.

A year after John and James had taught me the value of making friendship with Africans, I again visited the free harbour of Hamburg, went to Antwerp very shortly afterwards, and always got into closer touch with the scattered individuals of the African national cauldron. Clues of importance dating from that time, information indexed, compared and tested with respect to their practical and theoretical adaptability, led to increasing understanding of the whole subject. During this disciplinary method, which culminated in the conviction that detached fragments of a people more readily and easily yield information than stay-at-home citizens, I determined the course to be pursued in my studies in advance. I always examined the condition of things at the circumference before attacking the centre. My first intimations of Yoruban mythology, of the ancient royal and imperial tombs and of the sacred ritual with which a ruler is consigned to death at the expiration of a stated term of sovereignty, were obtained here, at the limits of the African world which embrace even the ports of Europe and America.

In as far as my studies in ethnology were directed to the knowledge of the people who dwell in Africa, and could be prosecuted at my writing-desk and in European harbours, I had brought them to such a point as to consider myself capable of forming an idea of the growth of at least some few rough features of the entire design. My worldly position at the time was of course not brilliant. I was an assistant in the Science Department of the Bremen Museum. But I was lucky in having the intelligent guidance of Heinrich Schurz and a kindly-disposed and appreciative chief in Professor Schauinsland. The net outcome of my preliminary studies was the conviction that the paramount necessity was the scientific exploration of Yoruba-land on the slave coast of Benin and Ifé. My black friends' statements, as well as the literary products ringing through the middle ages, were very seductive. I sketched a plan of such a journey and submitted it officially to Adolf Bastian, the broad-minded director of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, because it proved impossible to raise the necessary money in Bremen.

I drew attention to the meagreness of representative specimens which had been brought to Europe, to the old books on the subject, to some of the sources of Yoruban mythology which had just then been made public, and to the reports of the lavish use of bronze castings in the palaces. I specified one thousand pounds as the sum required. Bastian, dear fellow, gave his general support to the scheme but, both by word of mouth and in his letters, maintained the impossibility of raising such a sum. Others, with whom I discussed the matter, ridiculed the statement that any such treasures were to be "lifted" in Africa, and made merry at the expense of the ancient authors. Paul Staudinger told me many years afterwards that he himself had made similar proposals to the disposer of the ethnological fortunes of Berlin; but that neither then, nor later on, had he met with any sort of success on this basis. All my endeavours to set this undertaking going failed so entirely at that time as to force me to relinquish this short cut to shedding light upon the ethnologically prehistoric state of affairs.

But very little time elapsed before the occupation by the English of Benin. Stores of treasure beyond all estimable value were opened in their train: artistic salvers cast in metal, fragments of mighty serpents, great heads, and all kind of devotional furniture were unearthed. Berlin, which could not see its way to raise my single one thousand pounds, squandered hundreds of thousands to rescue material for museums from the English officers and traders on their way home. There was no laughing, then, at what I had said, but neither at that time was the money to carry on research and supply the necessary matter to elucidate the meaning of this treasure-trove forthcoming. And my contention that these finds from Benin were nothing but the products of degenerate times, mere imitations of an older, more genuine and sincerer art, was whistled down the wind.

In the meantime, I turned the fruits of my various studies to account in several works, of which I then published those which at least may, nay, must serve as the basis of future work. I worked out a system of cartographic delineation; I was successful in getting the co-operation of several foreign Governments; and in order at all events to lay the foundations of more thorough methods of research, I originated a comparative collection, which is probably

the most comprehensive and complete of its kind even to this day. Thanks to the collaboration of hundreds of officials and officers on duty in the colonies of West Africa, which was made most effective by the opening up of extremely productive sources of information, and thanks to the results obtained from the aforesaid comparative collection, a picture was created which I also afterwards published, (*cf.* the last portion of the map at the end of the small work, " Types of Civilization from Western Soudan." Gotha, 1910).

Busy as I was on the theoretical side of my work, I, nevertheless, kept its practical application in view and my eye on every possible opening with the keenest attention, and, in 1904, resolved to tackle its final execution in a practical manner with all the more energy, because Africa was becoming the step-daughter of serious ethnological inquiry to an ever-increasing degree, the butt of collectors very frequently deficient in brains, and because people capable of bearing living witness to the past were dying out with uncanny rapidity under the pressure of European civilization.

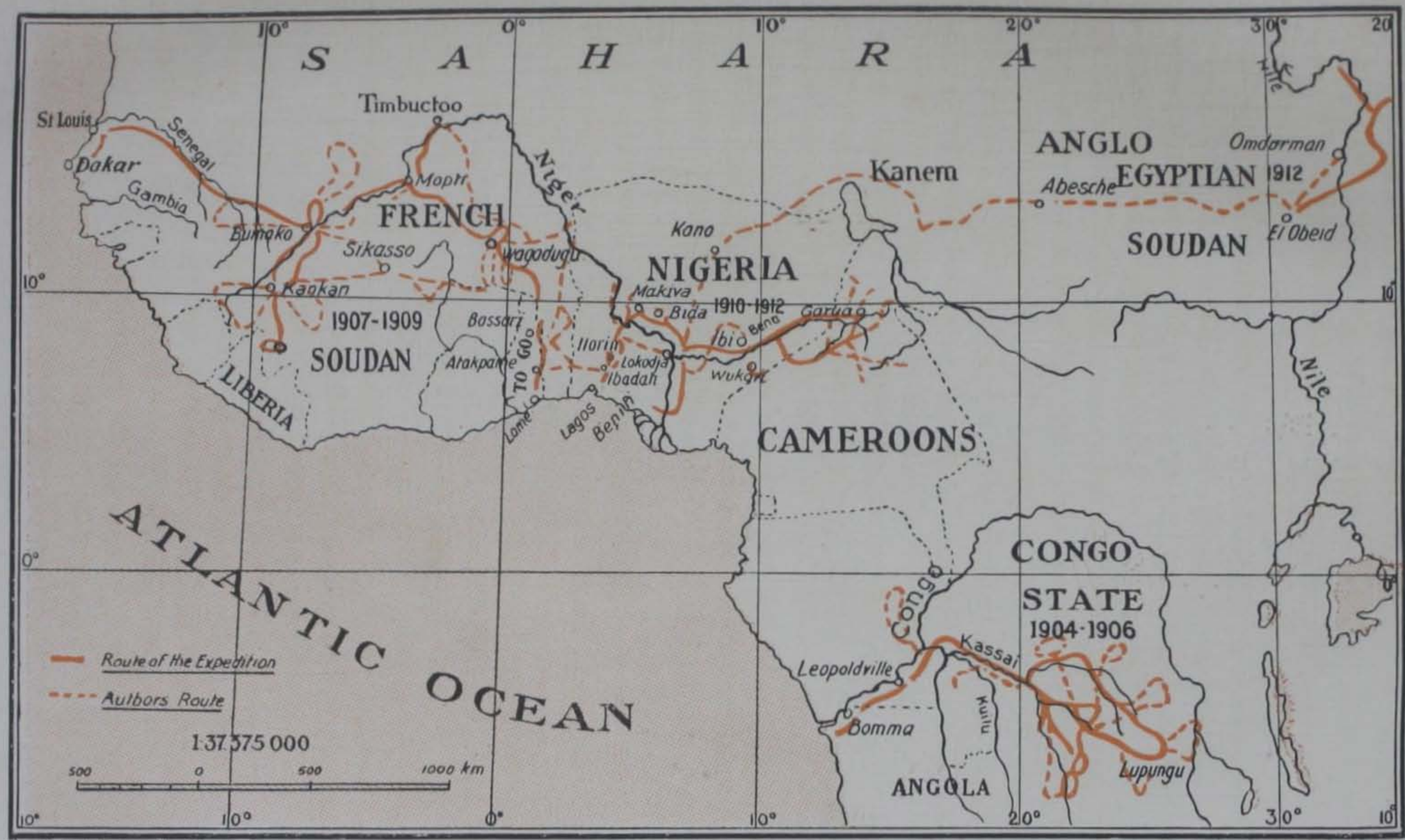
This consideration and the intuitive perception that the body has to be trained while it is young for this kind of exploration in the unwholesome districts of Western Africa, induced me to make a *coup de main.*

I started the Inner Africa Exploration Expedition in 1904 with the lowest possible sum of money, still further reduced by the exertions of my amiable colleagues, my sole reliance being an almost foolhardy contract to collect specimens for the Hamburg Museum. The funds at my disposal were so small as to preclude any idea of visiting such an expensive district as the Yoruba country. And, moreover, the contract to collect objects for the museum could only be ratified on my undertaking to gather together all I possibly could at the smallest possible cost. My colleague, Thilenius, of the Hamburg Museum, who, in this instance, showed great perspicacity, could scarcely act otherwise in his capacity as curator of the Museum. I at once started for the southernmost depository of Yoruban civilization, namely, the basin of the North Congo and the Kassai territory. I took with me Herr Lemme, an art-master, whose attractive drawings will largely contribute to the intelligent appreciation of those countries and their inhabitants. We came home in 1906: our absence had resulted in a collection of some eight thousand

specimens, the publication of the book, "In the Shadow of the Congo State" ("Im Schatten des Congostaates"), but, more particularly, in an unusually comprehensive mass of notes and other matter which was carefully written out, and so arranged as not to be diminished in value even in case I should unexpectedly die.

I made preparations for the next journey in the self-same year. The lines on which our work was to be continued were suggested by a glimpse I had previously obtained into the state of affairs in the town of Daccar and in Senegambia, and by a visit to the wonderful Colonial Exhibition held at Marseilles, with which I was greatly impressed. Using the excellent results of our first term of travel as a lever, I also succeeded in securing the support of the Leipzic and Hamburg Ethnological Museums, as well as that of the Rudolf Virchow Institute. Professor Von Richthofen, who had taken a fatherly interest in me, had died in the interim. However, Professor Weule, Aulic Councillor Lissauer and Karl von den Steinen, in Berlin, gave me their hearty support. Herr von Dernburg, Secretary of State, sanctioned a contribution from the funds of the Imperial Colonial Office, which greatly lightened my labours. However, the sum total of these resources unfortunately turned out to be so small, the separate amounts so meagre, as to make me feel handicapped. It so happened that another expedition was being equipped at the same time, and several subscriptions on which I had already reckoned, easily found their way in the other direction. The worst of it was, that the contract to collect for the museums bound me to supply them with a great number of specimens; but I was debarred by want of sufficient means from such expensive territories as Yoruba-land. But I never gave up the hope of reaching the districts of the Lower Niger referred to at the termination of the journey. Again I failed.

I started my journey in 1907 from the Senegal in the company of two energetic assistants, Dr. Hugershoff, a civil engineer, and Herr Nansen, of the Academy of Arts. We explored the Niger country between Timbuktu, Northern Liberia and Togo in the course of several expeditions, and entered the colony on its northern side. I went on gathering information about the ruins of extremely old towns in the Atlantic territory, in Timbuktu and the great city of Wagadugu. My prospects and hopes took an upward tendency,



MAP OF THE TRAVELS OF THE GERMAN INNER-AFRICAN EXPLORATION EXPEDITION IN THE YEARS 1904 TO 1912.

[Facing p. 34.

and I thought of travelling from Northern Togo as my point of departure to Borgu, Dahomey, and to the Yorubas. But, for one thing, some remittances which I had looked upon as a certainty, failed to come to hand, and, besides this, the amiability of the German Administration of the Togo district and the Imperial grant tied me down to certain work within this particular colony. I certainly got into closer touch with the towns of antiquity in Sokode, but the "handsome relics" of this travel-period's treasury were exhausted without leaving me a chance of making the return journey home by way of the Atlantic territories in question. We were back in Europe in the summer of 1909. But the preparations for the next journey had already been made by then; our letters and official documents were waiting in Nigeria; and an emporium of cases for the reception of our future collections was stacked in Lokodia. The outcome of this spell of travel was set forth in my book, "On the Road to Atlantis" ("Auf dem Wege nach Atlantis").

We had been working our way through all the depositories in the basin of the Congo and the adjoining North Western territory up to that time as far as the Sahara. At the beginning of 1910, I took up my wanderings again, and in order to gain a better idea of the influences operating in the Northern districts, I, with my wife and my artist-brother, Hermann Frobenius, visited the interior of ancient Africa Minor; and while my staff at home were busily engaged in raising funds for the third expedition, we were familiarizing ourselves with the life led by the inhabitants of Algeria and Tunis. Here in the north, in fact, at Biskra, I found a pretty Houssa-tobé in a *bric-à-brac* shop, and struck up an acquaintance with some wayfarers who had often crossed the Sahara. About the same time I made friends in Ulled-djellal with folk whom I met once more two years afterwards on the Niger, and who were able to give me some excellent information with regard to the state of civilization of kindred races in the Great Desert.

Relying upon the results of the former explorations, I managed to substitute the consideration of the scientific value of my collection, as a whole, for its numerical quantity, in that miserable clause of the contract entered into by the Expedition with Messrs. Weule and Thilenius, as directors of their respective museums, with

whom Professor Ankermann, as the representative of the Berlin Museum, was subsequently associated.

From now onwards I had to carry out the plans conceived in 1894. I got a sufficient sum for excavation work by way of a loan from the cashbox of a friend, and went on board the *Alexandra Woermann* with my assistants, Carl Arriens, the artist, and Albrecht Martius, the engineer, in September, 1910. The present book is devoted to an account of this journey and what we accomplished by it. The remainder of 1910 and the early part of 1911 were spent in Yoruba land. We passed the middle of 1911 in the ancient civilized kingdom situate round Porta Atlantica and the confluence of the Benue and Niger rivers, and the close of the same year looking for the traces of prehistoric forms of culture in the territory of Northern Cameroon. So, while Martius led the Expedition back again to the West, and a reconnoitring party spied out the warlike country between Kanem and the Nile, I myself sailed round Africa, met my wife and brother, and travelled from the Red Sea to Kordofan, in order to extend the scope of my work from there westwards and to become acquainted with the classic vouchers of the earliest chapters in the history of African culture during my return through Egypt. This is the review which may serve the reader as a guide.

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I experienced the keenest expressions of delight on rejoining my friends at Lome on 15th of October, 1910. I met the Deputy Governor, now Privy Councillor von Döhring, Judge Hermanns and Consul Dr. Asmis, good fellows all! All of them had been very busy helping us in a matter of great importance, viz.: the engagement of my "boys." I was particularly anxious to re-enlist my former column-leader, Bida, a veteran non-com., who was to bring an efficient staff of servants with him. And there, as had been settled on the quay at Togo, stood the gallant band. Among them the always cheery Bida, who had so many friends, Messa, the one-eyed kitchen-steward, Anate, the *chef* of untold resource, a few Bush boys, a few servant lads, all furnished with the necessary contracts and documents and burdened as well with a considerable amount of debt, part of which at least I had to pay off. But the

best of it all was that Bida brought me splendid news of the inquiries which my good Togo-folk had meanwhile made and the information they had gathered in the not too distant Yoruba country quite on the sly. All the necessary formalities were quickly complied with, thanks to the friendly help which Dr. Asmis gave us, and we had time to spare for a little conviviality. Farewells were said, and then, for the first time, Bida put his lips to the resonant bugle given us by friendly hands at home, whose blast still echoed in the English press after it had roused the wrath in Africa of people whose habits were less well-regulated than our own, when it called us from our slumbers and to meals.

We lay in Lagos roads at dawn on Sunday, the 16th of October, and were able to steam in on the same afternoon. The English Government had very obligingly exempted us from all formalities of Customhouse examination, and so very soon afterwards we were in the house of our charming hosts, Messrs. Witt and Buesch, of Hamburg. Unfortunately, its representative, the German Consul, Herr Gloye, was so seriously ill as to be only accessible for a few hours in the daytime.

We now had plenty of opportunities for studying the town and its circumstances for several days. The most varied excursions, visits, and all kinds of interviews gave me occasions, of which I made the greatest use, to enter thoroughly into the spirit dominating Southern Nigeria, and which was sure to find its expression chiefly in the colony's principal town. For it was of particular importance for me to ascertain whether the strange reports I had hitherto received from English, French and German sources, were based on truth or not. The work of an expedition in a recent settlement is beset with difficulties, because, owing to the prevailing competition for the acquisition of colonies to-day, all the relations in connection with this are so closely adapted to forms of life which it is superlatively difficult to bring into harmony with the requirements and *modus vivendi* of an exploring expedition, forming, so to say, an *imperium in imperio*. Anyone who, in the course of years, has sojourned in different colonies and countries, whether thoroughly known or still unexplored, well-administered or the reverse, on the Coast or up-country with sufficiently wide practical experience, will agree that any expedition can travel and do its work with the least

friction and the best results in countries where European administration has not yet been firmly established. In countries such as these an expedition has to come to terms with the natives only, which is an easy thing to do. But where European rule has already been set up, the expedition has to be subservient to demands which vary with every province; it is compelled to interfere with the natives whose co-operation it wishes to secure on the one hand, and, on the other, with the European direction of affairs which must always be anxious to avoid possible disturbance of its legitimate relations. Whenever a great expedition makes its entry into an African town, the common interests of the natives will always attract them to this novel and, in their eyes, splendid phenomenon and for a few short moments incline them to under-estimate their regular and actual rulers. In order to get all they possibly can out of the expedition, the natives will always play off the expedition against the authorities and vice versâ by turns, and this is very likely to lead to want of harmony.

It is never a difficult matter to establish a balance of power in an interior where the European directorship is itself still in a state of flux. It may, therefore, be stated as a maxim based on experience that all European administrators up-country are still full of sympathy for travellers whose mode of life so closely resembles their own. Where, however, an authority is firmly settled in a particular locality, and, still more so, where lines of communication have been determined by the construction of a railway, a body with the mobility of an expedition is an element of extraordinary disturbance whenever it departs from the beaten track. Therefore, it is important to learn the prevailing feeling of the colony and to find out beforehand what the possibilities are of creating an equilibrium of forces.

I was already in receipt both from blacks and from whites of the strangest reports on the sentiment prevailing in Southern Nigeria; but my worst fears were put in the shade by my own personal observation of the state of affairs in Lagos.

I saw one of the higher grade officials driving along in his gig close to the near side of the road according to regulations; a crowd of Yoruba "boys" in trousers plants itself right in his way to the left of him; when the gentleman comes up to them the crowd

does not budge an inch, and the official of rank is obliged to drive round them in a wide sweep to the off; not a single one of the "boys" so much as thinks of recognizing the familiar uniform and its wearer's personality by the slightest salute. Now for the companion picture:

A white man is walking on his right side of the road and meets a grotesquely bedizened company of negroes, some of whom are already in liquor. There is a policeman in the road. The black crowd is a christening party on its way home from the breakfast. The black policeman steps up to the white man and none too politely requests him to get out of the way of the blacks.

Or again:

A young white trader is in conversation with the officer on duty at the counter of the post-office. He has some difficulty in making himself understood and the explanation lasts for some seconds. This is too much for a great fat clerk standing behind him. He shoves the poor little white chap aside and, then, the black postman attends to the black clerk's business, chats to him affably, shakes hands, after which it is the little white fellow's turn.

If daily incidents of this kind are significant of much, one or two special cases may shed a particularly clear light on the depth of the mischief. One day a highly-respected German merchant was trying to settle a difference between some blacks. Several policemen appeared on the scene and dragged the white man to the station with unnecessary violence. The German merchant failed to get any satisfaction by seeing these black fellows being punished for their unwarranted and spiteful conduct. Even the Government is powerless against this mob. The other day it tried to impose a tax on water. This nearly caused an insurrection. The traders' windows and furniture were demolished by the stones thrown by the excited blacks. Yet no action was taken.

A walk through the streets on a Sunday evening is all that is wanted to give one a correct notion of what goes on. The people pour in and out of numerous buildings like music-halls, glaring with electric light. They come on bicycles, swagger canes in their hands, cigarettes between their lips and top-hats on their heads. They can be seen from the outside, sitting in tightly packed crowds, singing for hours together. They display all the outward signs of

advanced European civilization, from patent leather boots to the single eye-glass, and every other individual wears either spectacles or eye-glasses of gold. And then the ladies! Good gracious me! The picture hats! the stoles! the frocks of silk!—These temples of vanity, blazing with illuminations like Variety theatres, are—Christian churches!

I used to chat with the highest colonial officials on all sorts of subjects. In one of these conversations I once spoke in praise of the splendid commercial life of the town. The Englishman said, without any circumlocution: "Yes, that's all very well, as far as it goes, but otherwise Lagos is the plague-spot of the colony, the virus of which comes from London. There is a 'holy party' in London which breeds these apes out here and ties our hands." It was not I who set this topic going, but always the white men themselves. Every single one of them, the Colonial Secretary excepted, started talking about it as though they wanted to prepare me for what was to come and shift the onus for this state of things on to other shoulders than their own. This condition of things was, in fact, so obvious, that one could not avoid noticing it with, so to say, each of his five senses.

There is undoubtedly in this town of Lagos a remarkable economic force, an imposing commercial activity at work and, in this respect, there is everything to be learned from English administrative rule. But the white race is running the gravest risk of letting its authority pass out of its own hands and thus staking its own existence. For although the black power is capable of achieving some great things, and here as elsewhere a considerable representative element, this very fact calls for redoubled intellectual application on the part of the wielders of power; that is to say, of the transmitters of European culture. For all those qualities that have gone to make up the history of the world proclaim the incapacity of the negro race to accomplish a conquest which can endure.

All Europeans with whom I discussed these matters expressed their very decided opinion that so-called "humanitarianism" was working at high pressure in this place and bearing its most poisonous fruit. A Roman Catholic missionary, a clever man of large experience, with whom I had some talk about the colony of Lagos, said:

Lad of Central Yoruba (*full face and profile*).
This type most nearly resembles the terra-cotta busts from Ifé.
(*From water-colour by Carl Arriens.*)

[*Facing p.* 40.

"There would be the makings of a magnificent future for the country in this colony if we began by giving every nigger, from the top downwards, twenty on the seat of the trousers they wear every Sabbath day."

Harsh, too harsh, perhaps, as it seemed, this was the utterance of a bitter experience.

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I have gone into some detail on these things, not alone because they assumed great importance in the course of our journeys and experiences, but because they also involve ethnological, historical and racial problems of great significance. *Per se*, they are absolutely trivial. It is quite immaterial whether the black once in a way salutes his superior or not, and whether he occasionally refuses to show him proper respect. It is not these bagatelles which are now in question, but racial power and racial will. If the state of affairs continues to develop in the direction indicated (*e.g.*, the abandonment of a water-rate !), there will only be two ways of settling matters in the future, viz. : either the British Government will one of these fine days shut down on the policy of unlimited, effeminate patience because a conflict with the trousered black gentry is inevitable. Then there will be much loosing of triggers and unnecessary bloodshed ; economic interests will suffer very great temporary damage, and, above all, much time will be lost in reconstruction, or—and this would be far worse—the policy which governs the whole stagnates and becomes "niggerized," accommodates itself to circumstances, goes on worrying with an unnecessary expenditure of European brain-power, and, finally, collapses, permeated with the phlegmatic indifference of the negro mind—as witness the method in vogue in the colonies formerly held by the Portuguese. Now there can be absolutely not the slightest question but that, considering the character of the English temperament, the former alternative is the one that will be adopted unless the *modus vivendi* be radically changed before it is too late.

From the standpoint of the ethnologist, however, the serious consideration of the possibility of the second alternative interests me more, because it may have been the view more generally held of the conditions which prevailed in Africa in bygone days. And

in this book, dedicated as it is to the discovery of ancient civilizations, we find repeated opportunities of referring to the problems connected with settlements abroad. We are studying the question of ancient colonization and discussing the factors, favourable or unfavourable as the case may be, to their development. And, therefore, the question, why these old colonial civilizations were ruined, or in what other way they disappeared when they had been once established, must also interest us. It is a poor ethnologist who is unable to deduce from the evidence supplied in the present day those laws in obedience to which forms of civilization flourished and decayed like seeds scattered on the earth, also in epochs past and gone—leaving behind them a final distribution of living seed, which, in its turn, again germinated according to the soil in which it fell and blossomed into another species.

A student of the human race, wandering on Africa's Western coast, will come upon all kinds of such evidence. I am thinking, *e.g.*, of the vanished glory of San Salvador, the capital of the Congo Empire. Discovered as a genuine African city towards the end of the fifteenth, it had in the sixteenth century become the centre of a Christian realm under the influence of Portugal and the Church, whose pomp was proverbial in Europe for a time, and yet its dignitaries were only native negroes. Black bishops, robed in costly vestments, preached their sermons in a mighty cathedral. Dukes, princes and noblemen, habited in the fashion of that day, the short Spanish mantle on their shoulders and the sword upon their thigh, followed in the Emperor's train. Negroes, every man of them! It was as though a pageant of the world of Europe had been called into existence out of "brutal paganism" at a wizard's word—so the old chronicles tell us. We have studied these old books on many points, verified them and been convinced that much apposite truth is contained within their covers.

And then, when a century has run its course! The mighty Emperor of the Congo buffeted by a priest! A second century goes by: nought but miserable ruins—wretched negro huts—and tattered Bushmen! So swiftly vanished all the splendour of the velvets and the satins! And why? Because the productive capacity of those races had been put too high; because the difference between seed scattered from without and seed indigenous to the

soil had been forgotten; because the racial problem had been left unrecognized. The phlegmatic black had sucked up the strength and will-power of the white man's race—the white man's racial energy had deliquesced in "niggerdom."

Conditions such as these cannot, of course, grow with the same rapidity and ease under the expansion of modern Germanic and Latin rule, as they did in the Empire of the Congo; nay, to begin with, they are almost as good as impossible. And yet we observe with amazement that even so proud a people as the British, of all the nations on the globe the one in which the race-consciousness and the sense of nationality is most highly developéd, the most competent of them all in dealing with racial problems, whom we always expect to find exercising the soundest judgment on a general situation, can for a time be blinded by "humanitarian" spectacles to the danger gnawing at the root of all Colonial power, because, forsooth, the citizens of this colony are said to be Christian, whereas, as a matter of solid fact, by far the greatest number of them are nothing more than mere apers of Christianity.

The opportunity of being able to study the symptoms of our colonial mental discipline, or—putting it in another way—of our thus restricted will-power, interested me supremely. And as the train was bearing us up-country, I could not help thinking all day long how similar events might, and did, happen in the grey dawn of ancient days, when the threads of commerce uniting the colonies with the mother country were but slender and when the civilization of the colonizing nations was not so far removed from that of the aborigines; times in which varying creeds were thought to be equally sacred and different gods were honoured and believed to be as holy as one's own, and, therefore, also those times before mankind had been split up and classed according to its code of ethics—the days in which a City of Atlantis was rising from its foundations as a Citadel of the Gods.

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We gazed aloft alternately at the mighty summits of the primeval forest-giants of West Africa, across the steppes, hedged in by verdure to the beautiful crowns of the fan-palms and through the luxuriant growth of oil-bearing palm groves for twelve good hours, and then

again, when the train was pulled up at the stations, at the brilliant clothing of the trouser-wearing blacks, at the unloading of endless stacks of "square-face" gin, and the usual chaffering for nuts and bananas. We had already passed through Abeokuta somewhere about noon, a town of which I had indeed made a charming picture in my mind, but the distant glitter of whose galvanized iron roofs made me shudder. We were glad not to have to stop there. We arrived on the evening of the same day, the 20th of October, at Ibadan, our first destination, at about six o'clock, and were most cordially welcomed by the staff of the Hamburg firm of Witt and Buesch. We enjoyed the kind hospitality of these gentlemen and of the representatives of G. L. Geiser, also of Hamburg, until we were able to move into quarters of our own.

We had now reached the city where I intended to begin my studies, and whence we proposed to go on the march to Ifima. But we found great difficulty in getting an abode. The European quarter, the railway station and the British Residency are situated at a distance of several miles from the confines of the great city, in the heart of which we were anxious to find a domicile, because living on its outskirts would have made our examination of native life very irksome, if not altogether impossible. After a hunt, which took up several days, the Deputy D. C. (*i.e.*, District Commissioner) found us passably comfortable diggings in what is known as the Balé-school. So in the Balé-school the German Expedition for the Exploration of Inner Africa pitched its camp; there we sweated under the corrugated iron roofs of the back premises for weeks while the little marksmen at the A B C in the front shot their monotonous babble or their *do-re-mi-fa-sol* across at us, or filled the air with chatter in the so-called garden while busied with their so-called horticulture. Oh! how often did I look with longing across the space which kept me from the beautiful high roofs of the great Yoruba houses which were thatched with leaves!

We did not wait unduly long before approaching the objects of our study, or paving the way for direct communications. To be sure, we first of all got acquainted with a state of things such as I had never come across before. It is not altogether easy to convey a clear impression of the city of Ibadan to the reader's mind. Imagine a city, variously estimated at from one hundred and fifty

thousand to two hundred thousand inhabitants, still mostly built in the negro style, and, fortunately, still so preserved.

Imagine a city of such enormous size, not by any means developed to such an extent by intercourse with modern Europeans, but of primitive antiquity!

What can have been the spirit which created and directed the conformation of cities such as this? And how great is the difficulty of getting a clear idea of the essential difference which recent traffic with the Europe of to-day has brought about! The traveller meets with symptoms of the recent influence of European culture wherever he may go. From the railway station to the Residency, both of which, as already mentioned, lie at the extreme fringe, a badly kept highway runs right through the town, interspersed with market-places both great and small. There are booths everywhere. The nearer to the European quarter around the railway station, the more conspicuous the display of European wares the shops contain. But negroes in trousers can also be found in parts of the town a long way from this particular part, selling cotton goods, enamel ware, matches, glassware, lamp-shades, little paraffin lamps, beads, steel traps, caps and similar frippery, all of more or less inferior quality. One comes across little shops at which the gin that finds its way into this colony in absolutely astounding quantities is sold everywhere. The European veneer which here and there has not even stopped short at the introduction of horrible roofs of corrugated iron, gets thicker in the neighbourhood of the railway station, and makes it difficult to distinguish what really is original. But the admirable old thatches, made of mighty palm-leaves, and the active life of the native market-place, are much more noticeable towards the Oranja quarter in which we lived.

The sad part of it is that the essentials of the inner life correspond with the European exterior. The custom of wearing European clothing has not, generally speaking, become as widespread actually as the desire of the native to conceal his inherent "paganism," still the great driving force in the land. The negro, naturally gifted with a delicate sense of tact, is always shy of saying and discussing things his interlocutor neither likes to hear nor see. And since he is devoid of any broad perception, in the sense of championing his own ancient possessions and preserving them, one

can always be aware of a game of hide-and-seek being played wherever the wave of European civilization draws near, a game which, if not very judiciously counteracted by educating him in candour, must inevitably lead to lying.

Small wonder, then, that our earliest impressions in Ibadan were inconceivably unfavourable, and at first caused me to fear that I might have erred in the choice of my first camp of inquiry. Unfortunately, the interviews I had with the few Europeans I met confirmed these fears. They all told me that the Yorubans had nothing antique left in Ibadan. Some declared they never had had anything interesting to show; others, that what would have repaid its study, had long ago disappeared.

However, I had not made my plans with such a want of foresight as all that. When I entered Togo in 1909, and saw my hopes of being able to reach Yoruba dwindling fast, I had sent a few of my "boys" to the Niger and a few to Ibadan, with definite instructions to collect some material for me which could be tested from my own particular point of view. Exactly three days before I left Lomé, they had come back, and this enabled me to turn certain things that happened to good account, as well as to call upon certain burgesses and priests of ancient temples, whose addresses had been given me, and so forth.

The most important thing I heard was that there was a great Shango temple and a very influential priest of this deity in the city of Ibadan. Shango is the mighty God of Thunder, of whom I shall have a great deal more to say anon. According to tradition, the ruling family, or, let us say, the present Yoruban dynasty, is descended from this God. Hints, based upon what my emissaries had furnished in 1909, were enough for Bida to trace the priest and the temple of the God within a very few days. With all our hopes on edge we made our way there three days from then. The exterior of the courtyard was characterized by some wooden pillars, embellished with carving, which supported the overhanging roof; the doorway, some nine feet in height, was boldly sculptured with figures in relief of a mythological character; but the fact that the door no longer hung upon its hinges, but was propped against the lintel, was significant of decay. On entering, a spacious courtyard met our view in which the intermediate roofs, supported on carved

beams, jutted out over a veranda. Some women in pretty head-dresses and some men in handsome flowing garments were standing here and there and gazed in amazement at the first Europeans—as I afterwards heard to my own surprise—whose feet had trodden this holy place.

We slipped underneath a curtain-cloth, and I am bound to say that for a moment's space the originality of the building in front of me, whose straggling black façade was broken up with many colours, struck me dumb. A lofty, long and very deep recess made a gap in the row of fantastically carved and brightly painted columns. These were sculptured with horsemen, men climbing trees, monkeys, women, gods and all sorts of mythological carved work. The dark chamber behind revealed a gorgeous red ceiling, pedestals with stone axes on them, wooden figures, cowrie-shell hangings, and sad to say, also some empty spirit bottles, which already play a part in sacrificial rites. On one side of the dark wall a small niche, like a passage, had been cut, in which sat a wily-looking old fellow surrounded by a row of men and women squatting on skins and mats spread upon the floor and doing reverence to the aged man. This old chap was our future friend, the priest of the God of Thunder, Shango. The whole scene, the richly carved columns in front of the gaily-coloured altar, the ancient man in his circle of devotees and the upward-tending scaffolding towards the front, sustaining the mighty, soaring frame of thatch, was superbly impressive and I could not but call to mind with the greatest satisfaction how I had been assured an hour ago: "There is nothing worth seeing in Ibadan."

I did not, of course, miss this opportunity of leading off with an explanation of what we wanted to do, and I did so with all the ceremonial observances which the negro so greatly needs and loves. Chairs and boxes were brought out for us to sit on. The boys in their helmets took up position behind me, Bida at my side. How many such speeches have I not delivered! and how many more shall I not deliver! The principle of them remains the same, but they are varied as occasion may require. The leader of an Ethnological Expedition always points out that the inhabitants of these countries have their legitimate customs, which are truly splendid of their kind, and of which Europe is not sufficiently informed

- as yet. He dilates upon the peculiar beauties of ancient things, laying particular emphasis on what the people are flattered to hear. He dwells on his cordial relations with the ruling powers of the colony who sympathize with the objects of his studies; he indicates his desires anent ethnological illumination; he uses flattery by describing the immediate matter in hand as of exceptional interest, and winds up by inviting the other party to call upon him one of these days and to take away a present.—"Collected Speeches of the Leader of an Expedition. Introductory Speeches," Vol. I.—III., with 400 variations, v. pp. 1—900.

This kind of ceremonial never fails of its due effect with Africa's swarthy sons, if the interpreter of the letter and the spirit of such addresses knows how to translate them, and if the speaker himself delivers them in the prescribed self-restrained and dignified manner, *i.e.*, without paying any marked attention to the addressee or his *entourage* by looking around him, and always observes the rule of *nil admirari* while speaking, and if, after listening to speeches of no less flattering tenor, he rises from his seat with dignity and stalks from the house with measured tread. And the result of this should be the preparation for intercourse not on the European, but African terms—the establishment of an understanding based, not on European critical analysis, but on intimate knowledge of the African's nature.

So, after having accepted the most flattering vote of thanks for the honour conferred by our esteemed visit, and, moreover, learned to my surprise that we were the first Europeans to have entered this temple of the Thundergod, and after I had unloaded some knowledge of my own about the mythology of the Great Deity, which caused the old gentleman no little astonishment and ensured me his respect, shown my spiritual connection with those around us in this way, and especially accentuated the hope of further discussing the matters in question frequently, we rose from our seats with stateliness and left the precincts with a haughty air. I was vastly pleased, for my own part, with this renewed evidence that the "old hands" of the country did not always quite know their way about. For, of course, it was the "old hands" who told me there was nothing of any interest in Ibadan.

Girl of Southern Yoruba.

(From a water-colour drawing by Carl Arrieus.)

[*Facing p.* 48.

Market-life in Yoruba.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER III

ON THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE VIÂ RITUAL MURDER

The difficulties of scientific ethnological study and collecting—Peculiar national characteristics—Admission to the Ogboni League—Discovery of ritual murder—Breaking the spell.

WITHIN a little while we had got our work at Ibadan into a fairly good groove and could report progress. Arriens made a daily pilgrimage to the Shango shrine and did a few sketches in colour of the entire building, and then some pen-and-ink drawings of the details, while I myself wandered about a lot, prowling from temple to temple, trying to get some idea of the ground plan and system on which the general principles of their broad architectural construction were founded. Although all the wealthy princes of the Interior had come down in the world during the most recent disturbances and had seen a host of shrewd folk from the Coast quickly piling up riches, and although great portions of the city had been in part destroyed, rebuilt and systematically repaired in modern style, it was yet not very difficult to get into touch with the old-time world. And as soon as the quality of this fine type had been recognized, Martius set to work and surveyed one compound after the other, so that an excellent foundation was secured for the study of buildings which once had certainly been magnificent of their

kind. Arriens then turned out sixty-six careful studies in oil which were true to life and served to make everything clear and easier to understand.

While the work in this direction was eminently successful from the start, my own share of it in another department was from the first uncommonly difficult. I was principally concerned in getting together a good collection for my museums, which, in conformity with the main objects of these institutions, was by choice to be restricted to such things as bore a relation to religious cults; and, therefore, the question resolved itself into deciding upon the most essential features in the actual and spiritual life of the people and making an inventory of them. However, at first I completely failed to make any headway at all in either of these directions. I did, indeed, mark down a fine lot of ceremonial furniture in the temples, but not a soul had any idea of selling. Nor, bearing in mind that Ibadan is by no means an impoverished negro city, is it very difficult to understand this. The inhabitants of Ibadan can hardly be described otherwise than as being fairly well-to-do. The resources of Yoruba-land, so enormously wealthy in oil-yielding palms, produce a revenue so substantial that families of repute are able to make a good income with little effort, and the more so as a great part of the population is still living in a state of serfdom and by no means sensible of hardship, despite the efforts made by the British Government to do away with slavery. And thus the comfortable Ibadanese paterfamilias, reclining at ease on his mat beneath the broad veranda of his bungalow inside his fertile compound, makes sacrifices to his household-gods, sleeps, eats, and drinks gin, leaving his people on the farm to earn him plenty of money. Why should a man, whose money comes so easily, barter his sacred paternal inheritance for nothing, and yet again nothing, to an eccentric pale-face ?

So there was nothing to be got in exchange for the legendary bread and butter, empty bottles, trouser-buttons, or frayed epaulettes. Nothing whatever for a mere song. I knew it beforehand and had made the necessary arrangements. I had a little artfully developed plan of campaign *in petto*, and was quite clear as to what I meant to do. To begin with, Bida was told off to make friends with a few needy aristocrats. Bida had shown a grand talent for making

friends all his life long, and I had always seen him surrounded by a growing retinue of companions and respectable hangers-on—of the feminine gender! Bida was "a devil of a fellow!"

As soon as the bond of fellowship had been tightened, we began, after much consultation, to draw up a list of needy notabilities, widows in poor circumstances, ex-members of the Ogboni League and thus, *ipso facto*, patricians, and similar shady characters. I reckoned that what the cream of society denied us, its skim-milk would the more certainly offer us. We made a beginning by laying siege to a few elderly "poor devils," and the sound of tinkling silver began to be heard in the land. The things I wanted so badly, viz., the first specimens of a fine collection, were sent me by these shamefaced paupers when the dusk began to fall.

It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that these people expressed any great joy in feeling a few shillings in their palms. Not a single one of them thought of rushing greedily at our filthy lucre. We often haggled over some one article or other for days together, and I often missed a really fine piece because the wretched starvelings suddenly raised money elsewhere for their immediate needs. I observed something new to me in Africa in these early days which gave me food for thought. Whenever one of these poor fellows had arranged to part with a good antique at a price and his well-to-do relatives came to know of it, the richer ones among them, who, as a rule, were quite indifferent to the fate of their poor relation, now offered him substantial sums in order to retain the family possessions.

A typical case, followed by several more, occurred at the outset. One evening, a poor boy had sold me a choice, antique oracle-tray for fifteen shillings. Two days afterwards he came back, with a suite of ten or a dozen grizzle-pates, put the money down on the table and demanded back his tray. I did not, of course, agree off-hand, and at once declared that a bargain was a bargain. Accepting this decision, the company departed, but returned next day, and told me that the tray had been stolen from a kinsman and that, consequently, I had no legal title to it. At that time I was not sufficiently wide awake. I walked straight into the trap, delivered them a fine lecture on ethics. and gave them back the piece. A few days later it transpired that the whole business had been a fraud; the young man

had not stolen the tray at all, but had inherited it from his father and the matter had been put to me in the manner described in order to persuade me to return the tray. I also heard that the lad had been given twenty shillings in return for promising not to try to sell the goods again, so that they might be kept in the family. I met the old men shortly afterwards. I told them what I thought about it; they grinned with enjoyment and cheerfully agreed with me. The funny part of it all is that, as frequently happened on other occasions, the tray was offered for sale to me again four days later and, as a slump had been successfully engineered, finally came into our own hands for good at the reduced price of nine shillings.

Although I had succeeded in getting the first specimens of my collection by enlisting the services of the whining outcasts of society, yet I always had to reckon with the chances of its cream reclaiming the family property and its derelict owners so as to save what were their common possessions. As I have already stated, this trait made me think very hard. It is unquestionably symptomatic of a past civilization and evidence of a pre-existent level of culture far above the usual African standards. In many places it is, no doubt, true that such things as, for example, masks, although at first apparently private property, are, by virtue of their intrinsic significance and the official privileges or vested interests implied by their possession, declared to be the property of the "elders," that is, the holders of judicial authority. In Ibadan, however, this was not so. Here, in Yorubaland, all these treasures were absolute family property. The prohibition of the sale by an individual of his family *lares et penates* is purely Yoruban, and, in general, un-African. A man most decidedly runs the risk of being jeered at everywhere for selling what is sacred to others, but belongs to him alone; but for a family to pledge itself pecuniarily in order to prevent the alienation of an article of no intrinsic value for it to-day, and only precious in its eyes on account of its age, this, I say, must be unreservedly regarded as indicating an unusually firm and well-established organization and connection of religious and social institutions.

I will, however, continue and amplify my narrative, for it must surely be of value to all collectors and others curious to learn something of these strange peoples to follow an account of the methods we pursued, the successes we achieved and the other

isolated happenings, because it will reveal a condition of things to which the Africans are mostly unaccustomed.

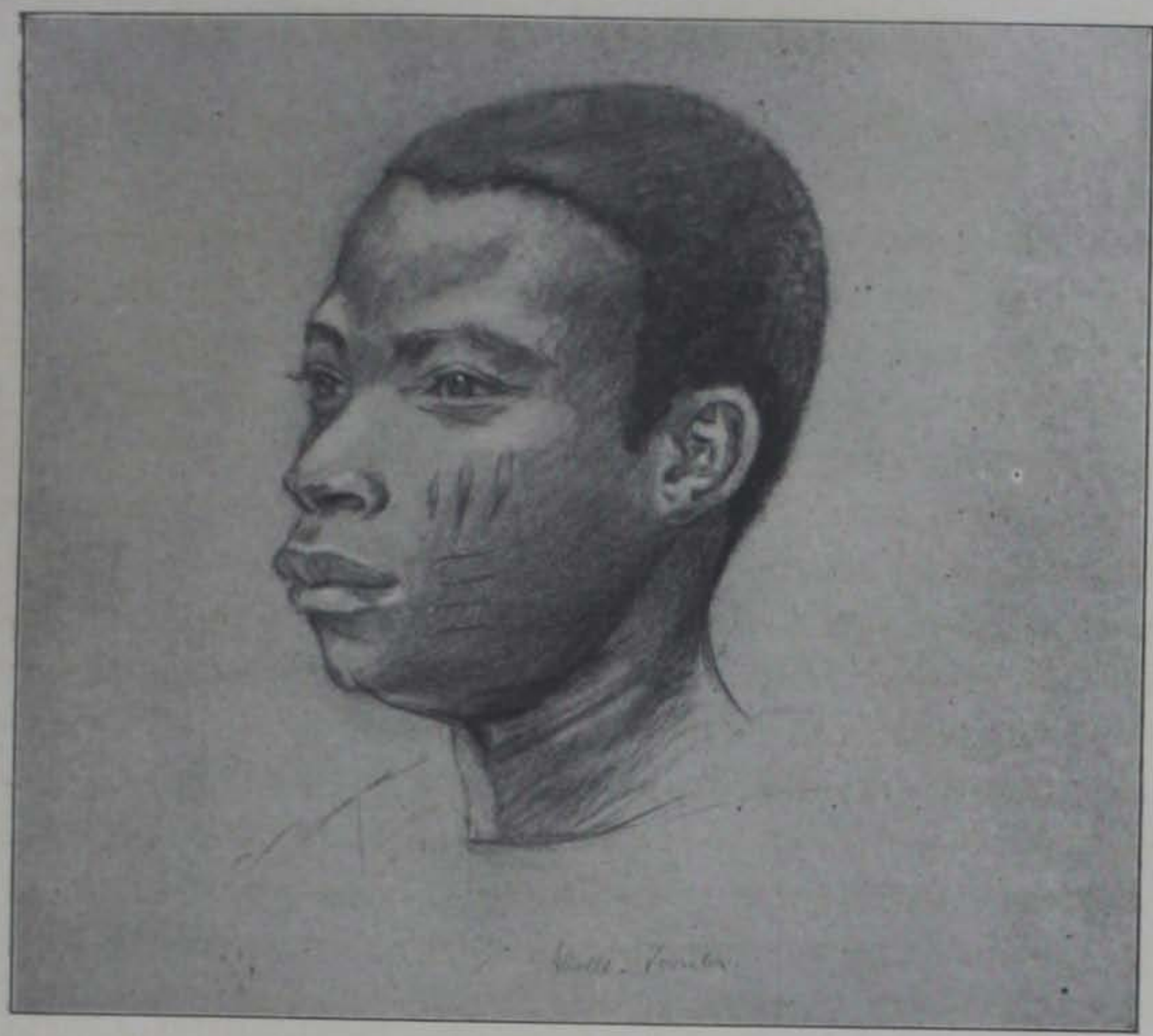
If the tiny stream of information just described started my mills, its power proved altogether inadequate as the motive power of a more extensive enterprise. The experience of other days had taught me that the sequence of events was always repeated in the collection of things in those places at which it had once been made. On pages 355 and 356 of "In the Shadow of Congoland," this has been duly set forth. At first, the natives could not understand what it meant that the rich civilized foreigner, all of whose possessions were so much more excellent and perfect, wanted to buy up those odds and ends which they themselves thought comparatively so shabby. The majority of them were too diffident to begin to huckster in the face of their friends. So the market has to be rigged with care until even persons of note think the upset price worth considering; a first sale is effected and considered satisfactory. Others grow envious and, at last, the crowd of willing sellers so suddenly increases as to make it seem impossible to cope with the supply of goods on offer. Then comes the delight of "bearing" the market down to fifty or even seventy-five per cent. of the first quotations, and the slump in prices will set in as rapidly as they rose in the boom only after the rage to sell has quite exhausted itself. Either everything worth buying has changed hands, or some inadvertence has excited popular discontent, or the expenditure made has satisfied the necessities of the sellers.

The chief difficulty always consists in engineering the first flow of offers, and, as before said, the gentle stream from the reservoir of the great unclassed was all the more insufficient, because it only ran under cover of the dark hours of the evening, and the machinery needed to set it in motion called for a far greater amount of fuel in a city of two hundred thousand inhabitants, more or less, like Ibadan, than in a little country town. Therefore, as soon as I saw what was the matter, I tried to create popular excitement by buying up the products of local industries and the tools of various crafts so as to stimulate a desire to sell. It was no good. Either the bait was unheeded in so huge a city or such a price was asked for the tools as to place them beyond the reach of acquisition for museums. For instance, a smith came along and wanted three

pounds sterling for a pair of bellows and twenty shillings for a hammer. They tried it on with an engaging simplicity and quite as a matter of course. Other West African gentry are not a whit behind these Yorubans; but when they see that the white man is not altogether a fool, they come down to a reasonable figure. Well, one evening I was going for a stroll through the town with Bida and the rest of my staff. We were just passing a booth where a woman was squatting; a little antique wooden figure, which was dressed, and bore marks of a recent offering of kola round its mouth, stood by the side of her wares. We stopped and discussed the little wooden image. It proved to be a so-called Ibedji, an idol in memory of deceased twin-sisters. Without any great hope that anything would come of it, I asked her at the end of the conversation whether it might possibly be for sale and, to my great surprise, she answered quite briskly: "Certainly; she would bring me the Ibedji next day, but only wanted to buy another one first and prepare the necessary offerings for it and, after that, I could have this one." We urged her not to forget and went our ways without believing that the promise would be kept.

I had as good as put it all out of my mind when she actually turned up two days afterwards with the Ibedji and sold it me for quite a moderate price. Imagine my delight! I had got the wished-for pull. All Bida's friends, male and female, at once sailed off to their families and to the market-places and announced: "The white man also buys Ibedjis!"

Sure enough, other women came along next day with Ibedjis as well as various Osé-Shango, or amulets of the God of Thunder and a sacred sacrificial spoon, sold them to me, saw both me and the coin, came again and—this brook was soon in spate, setting my mill-wheels going. What the men had failed to do the women did and, as happens all the world over, they were much more alive to a little additional income than the so-called sterner sex. Of course, at first they brought me nothing but a jumble of things mostly horrible enough to scare even the most omnivorous collector. They dragged all kinds of lumber, broken household belongings, from the lofts of the high thatched roofs. I had to say "No" to thousands of things, but still a few hundred splendid specimens remained in my hands. A human river poured into our camp and big groups of



The boy Akelle, who tried to steal the Expedition's cash-box.

The leader of the Ogboni in Ibadan.
(After pencil drawings by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 54.

would-be sellers took each other's places without interruption at our house. The place swarmed like an ant-heap. This was the way in which excellent specimens of ancient forms of culture were brought to harbour. I went on poking the fire with all my might and had my reward, although the drain upon the Expedition's cash-box was heavy.

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Day in, day out, the school-children in the courtyard bellowed, "Penny, penny, penny, penny"—a bit of an undescribably unmusical chant, which really ought to be "pay me." It looked as though my own indifference to the dwindling funds of the Expedition and, more especially, my very unpromising endeavours to obtain any clear elucidation, an iconography of the nature of this country's cult and hierarchical system and, consequently, from the scientific point of view, our very purposeless existence in this corner of the earth, was being laughed at. For I was now receiving sacred utensils in plenty, though trustworthy explanation of their uses was entirely wanting. But, first of all, I must say more about this business of collecting things, because it is most intimately connected with the activities we displayed in the second branch of our labours—I mean, our efforts to get some information of the temple-furniture we had acquired.

If the religious ideas of a nation have matured in the form of an elaborated cult and in a rich store of appurtenances for its expression, it is advisable to pursue the study of its religion by investigating the "how," "why," "for what end," and "whence," etc., and thus the essential quality of such religion with the guidance afforded by these religious articles themselves. It can be taken for granted that this is the easiest road to take when once a representative collection of the necessary material has been assembled. Therefore: Collect first, investigate afterwards.

It would, however, be a huge mistake to believe that these noble simpletons would have given me an explanation of their ritual at the same time that they gave me proofs of it. I am uncertain whether it is because they have an unusually developed instinct for mendacity or dread the betrayal of secrets, or are merely anxious

to part only with the material substance they sell without any explanatory statements as to its use, or, finally, whether in most cases they simply did not know; but the fact remains that these good people gave me, as overweight, so to say, to the articles I collected, such a mass of contradictions and variations, that their explanations only made confusion worse confounded. I got hundreds of names and hundreds of explanations. They were all mutually contradictory. And worst of all was the impossibility of beating up a single soul ready to guide me out of this nonsensical maze. Not only had I made absolutely no progress whatever after a fortnight's study, but had even lost the scanty landmarks previously gained.

What single thing did we leave untried to bring life into, to lighten and to change the dreary waste of our ethnological situation! I promised—certainly without any anticipation of success—handsome premiums for trustworthy information. I tried to stir up ambition in individuals and played upon the whole gamut of friendship and goodwill. It all came to absolutely nothing. At last, one day we paid a visit of ceremony to the "Balé," or "mayor," of Ibadan. We arrived in great state and were received with high honours. The town band's brass and drums welcomed us with blast and rub-a-dub, and sped the parting guest with still more vigour.

The reader must be told something of this country's style of government to understand all that follows.

The management of these distinguished Yoruban communities is in the hands of an association, the Ogboni League, of which much more will be heard later on. These Ogboni are the "Elders," the oldest members of the families held in the highest esteem and pledged to work together by the most solemn sacrificial ties from which there is no release. Those only are admitted to it who give evidence of an uncompromising *esprit de corps* and unquestioning obedience and whose trustworthiness has withstood the severest tests. This league may well be called the "Decapitation Company, Limited." It is a union of unscrupulous persons, who, without the least qualms of conscience, get rid of all inconvenient elements like a "Vehmgericht," with poison or the knife, exterminate respected *parvenus*, confiscate their possessions and, more particu-

larly, while keeping a jealous eye on the even balance of prestige among themselves, pull the strings which make the principal civic power, the Balé, dance like a marionette at their behest. They elect this Balé, give him their instructions, control him, keep him under the closest observation, and quietly remove him should he ever dream of undertaking anything on his own account without due regard to the interests and dignity of the Ogboni League. The Ogboni, however, expect everyone to treat this tool of theirs with every mark of respect and the greatest ceremony. They themselves, indeed, are the first to kow-tow to him and kiss the ground; but woe betide the instrument of these Ogboni should it forget its own limitations and attempt to set up an authority or will of its own! They immediately send him an ominous token, and if he does not forthwith commit suicide on its receipt, the poor Balé is very soon poisoned. It is not so very long ago that every Balé, who had served his statutory two years of office, was murdered in conformity with the laws of a very ancient ritual

So we first of all paid this Balé an official visit, and I made one of my very finest speeches, translated by Bida with great *aplomb*. It was ostensibly delivered to the world at large, for, although it was addressed to the Balé, it was meant for the Ogboni, a great number of whom were in attendance on the ruler. I crystallized my wishes on two points, viz.: firstly, the acquisition of certain pieces of carving, and, secondly, explanation of certain mythological questions which were beyond my comprehension. It would have been quite contrary to all negro fashion if this had not been agreed to without much ado, and, accordingly, I was promised all sorts of things; but had I attached the slightest value to these promises, I should have been a very unintelligent investigator, especially as they were all made very promptly and generously. Now, that was a very bad sign!

We were, as I have said, dismissed with a great deal of circumstance when we left. They gave us a very fine turkey cock. Two days later the Balé sent round to fetch my very handsome return presents, and, after that, the right honourable gentleman's private orchestra blew the bugle and beat the drum whenever a member of the G.I.A.E.E. went past the "palace"; but, as was to be expected, this was the whole upshot.

The road, however, to the Ogboni League had been smoothed. For generations past the leaders of this association had been selected from the same family. Provided that the member chosen is sufficiently grey and ancient, the dignity always passes from the elder to the younger brother. Failing this, it passes to another member of the same class, whose father has been a former leader. We soon found out the ancient compound of this Ogboni family, and one day I strolled in, with one or two people I could trust, as if by accident. I was received very cordially and ceremoniously. I did not, however, on that account take on a formal attitude; but, on the contrary, was unrestrainedly debonair. The little wizened mannikin, the then head of the Ogboni, was very pleased to see me. He referred me to his younger brother as his spokesman, and then enlarged upon his own dignity as the doyen of the League. I briefly expressed my appreciation of the fact, but did not pursue the subject just then. The "younger brother," who was remarkable by his glassy stare, persistent grinning, superficial amiability, and being really sodden with drink, then brought me some refreshment, which I declined, and gave him to understand that I first of all wished to be friends with them and to interchange gifts. I told them plainly that before this had been done, it was dangerous to accept anything from the Ogboni. The fact that my statement was not flatly contradicted, that the genial elders looked at each other with glances, made remarks which were full of meaning and finally burst into laughter at what I had said, proved that it was tacitly accepted as being true.

I did not push the matter any further that day, but tried to gain the goodwill of people said to be very influential in the League. On these occasions, which I took care to turn to the advantage of our increasing collection, I really got to know the truly classic beauty of the Yoruban soul.

The first person to be given a splendid gift, so that everyone in Yoruba should be greedy for things of the same kind, was the old Shango priest. He received a pair of magnificent stirrups moulded in the Arabian style, a richly ornamented silver dagger and several other things. The old boy wanted to show me his gratitude, and told my people that he intended to send me something equally fine. So, next morning, the Shango priest's son comes round to me with

one of the superb leather wallets, some of which are always hanging in this God's temple. I was just showing my delight at this goodly return gift, when the charming youth explained that his dad was prepared to sell me the purse for two pounds, or forty marks. I need scarcely say that the young gentleman, and his purse as well, vacated the premises of the expedition in remarkably quick time. On the same afternoon I made my way to our ancient friend in the Shango Temple, called his attention to his unseemly conduct and asked him what he meant by it. For it is contrary to all the rules and customs of African hospitality for A to offer to sell something to B at an outrageously high and impudent price, instead of sending a handsome gift in return for what B has given to A. The old man was quite dumbfounded, and at last told me that he really had sent me the purse as a present and had been taken quite aback at my refusal to accept it that morning. It is clear that his young hopeful, like an "honest broker," had intended to pouch the coin himself.

My efforts to get on friendly terms with the old Ogboni people of this city brought me into contact with this kind of rogue in practically every compound. We once visited an old gentleman of splendid presence, who could boast of possessing one of the finest dwellings in old Ibadan. He was as avaricious as the rest of the Yorubans, but by no means anxious to give good value for money received. In this respect there was not a pin to choose between them. I came upon a hoard of small antique and valuable yellow metal castings at his place, of the kind which it is now usual to call "bronzes" since the "discovery" of the treasures in Benin. In order to get out of earshot, the possibilities of sale and purchase were discussed in a—stable! We haggled and bargained for a long time, until at last we agreed to do a deal at ten guineas. The money was to be forwarded that evening; but before that was done we were to put a few specimens in our pockets and take them with us. When Bida took him the cash as arranged, he was handed a parcel which proved to be *minus* exactly seven pieces, one or two of which were subsequently offered us for sale by one of the noble owner's female relations. All possibility of there having been any mistake was excluded by the fact that, in one of the pieces so offered, there was a fracture which exactly fitted a breakage in one of the

figures already delivered; the veteran had kept a few things back with a view to re-selling them at a better price and so making a double profit.

On another occasion, at the house of a late Balé's successor, who had himself invited me to visit his domestic shrine, I found a beautifully bead-embroidered, antique chair, so worm-eaten as to be quite unfit for transportation, and a valuable Shango idol. It was settled that only a sketch should be made of the chair, but that I should buy the idol for four-and-twenty shillings. I took the chair away and left the money. The idol was to be sent on. Next day Arriens sketched the chair in colour, and I sent it back with a request for the idol. The budding Balé answered, "It is well!" It never turned up. Again I sent a messenger for the Shango statue, and then the impudent rascal sent me a perfectly frightful copy of it. As I had just then made the acquaintance of the respected District Police Superintendent, Mr. Lesley, who had supplied me with an excellent report on the knife-wielding, treacherous and intriguing character of the Yorubas, I sent a message to the Balé's offshoot as follows: "If the figure is not to hand within fifteen minutes, I shall put the matter into the hands of the police." The genuine Shango image was then given up with the well-known excuse that there had been some kind of "mistake." Oh! the "mistakes" I suffered from in Africa!

In the course of a fortnight I had established amicable relations with most of the people of influence and taught them the depth of my pocket by all sorts of visits of the kind just described and other business transactions. Now was the time to deliver my "swashing blow": I declared that I wanted to join the membership of the Ogboni League. I said so to the head of the League, and in his eagerness for the cash which baited the hook, he was actually prepared to negotiate. A final agreement was arrived at by which not we, the Europeans, were to partake of the bloody "consecrated wafer" at the altar, but that a black man should be our substitute, and that the ceremony should be performed in my own house in secret with closed doors. That very same evening the not particularly æsthetic rite was celebrated in our hall by the light of our lanterns. It was an uncanny and, in its own way, sinister business. Naturally it was not carried out in all its details, because in recent

times ducklings have taken the place of the hitherto customary human victims. But with this exception it corresponded in all other respects to the descriptions I had collected years ago, and which I now append for clearness' sake. The metal most in favour with the Ogboni, a prosperous association of wealthy men, had from all times been a yellow amalgam, or bronze, the materials for which were found in the country itself until the introduction of imported brass in recent years supplanted it. Every Ogboni man possesses a little Eda figure as a charm, made of this substance. In the High Priest's, or Oluvo's, house hung the Abbebede mask made of the same metal, and from time immemorial the holy votive draught of blood had been handed round in a great vessel made of this particular bronze. A pair of Eda idols, whose heads were connected by a chain and whose lower extremities are fitted with iron prongs, upon which individual Ogbonis and the High Priest place their sacrificial offerings, are also made of the same metal. The two figures were a man and woman, and "Eda-Malé" was their name. When the sacred apparatus was displayed at the initiation of a new member, those present stripped themselves to the waist. They then stepped up to the bronze effigy in the lurid light of a huge fire and greeted it in chorus with a shout of "Hecqua!" Then the first sacrifice was offered up. A human being was beheaded in such a position above the pair of "Eda-Malé," that the blood poured over them. Occasionally, when a more important ceremonial was deemed necessary, several human beings were sacrificed, and on the admission of a new member, a white and red kola nut was placed at the side of the effigy, and a second red one in the human blood on the "Eda-Malé" itself. This last rite represented the holy part of the blood which the novice had to assimilate from the rest of it. For this purpose the candidate was blindfolded. Bending forward on his knees in front of the images sprinkled with sacred gore until his forehead touched the ground, he had to jerk himself forward, thus blindfold, to the images lying on the ground. He was guided until he was prone upon the earth with the upper part of his own body lying in blood. He had to stretch his head forward until he could pick up the kola nut on the dripping "Eda-Malé" with his lips. Then he ate it. Then he stood up. The Massadogu, or celebrant, then took hold of each of the "Eda-Malé" in either

hand, so that the connecting chain hung down between them and the iron prongs were turned towards the novice. Holding the iron tips parallel, he first touched the corners of the candidate's mouth, poked them into his nostrils, and, finally, touched his forehead with them. It almost seems as if the Massadogu by this ritual meant to convey that the "sacring," absorbed by the novice in eating food steeped in human blood through his mouth in a hallowed spot, was being transmitted to other parts of the body from the point at which it was first received, viz.: the mouth. This ceremony being concluded, the shout of "Hecqua!" was once more raised. Then a kola nut was shelled, one of its sections laid upon the breast of the female "Eda-Malé," removed by the Massadogu, broken into pieces and distributed among the people to be consumed together. In former days, if the candidate was a wealthy man, *i.e.*, if he had many slaves, as many as ten people would be butchered on this occasion, and the novice paid about three pounds in cowrie-shell money, amounting to a huge quantity of these shells, because about two thousand of them used to go to the silver shilling. The rate of exchange to-day is considerably lower.

This is the ceremony referred to, and at which I assisted in the hut where I used to work. After our names had been pronounced over the blood of the ducklings vicariously sacrificed for human beings and sacred salutations given to our names, we were free to consider ourselves members, and, therefore, partakers of the mysteries of the League. And on this I based the furtherance of our other plans, and eventually succeeded in satisfying my desire for enlightenment as to the essence of Yoruban religion.

But it was by no means all plain sailing. The kindly High Priest of the Holy Ogboni had announced and performed the ceremony of our initiation only in the immediate circle of his family, and the other Ogbonis and, more especially, the Balé and his councillors were at first altogether in the dark about it. As I was perfectly certain of this and not over-anxious to make it known, I had to go to work very gently in bringing what pressure I could to bear. Days elapsed before I was able to give greater effect to my desires. Chance came to my aid, although the incident itself was particularly gruesome.

What happened was this. On the 13th of November the thorax, one arm and one leg of a murdered black boy were found in the main street of Ibadan near the market-place. These remains were very soon identified by a woman as those of her son, who had been sent to the market a week ago, and had neither returned nor been seen since. All the circumstances pointed beyond all doubt to the fact that the lad had been the victim of ritual murder. Directly I heard of it I ascertained that several members of the police force were in possession of the main facts. The woman had rushed off to the black Commissioner of Police, told him all the details, and made her depositions while the tears were running down her cheeks. But the trouser-wearing native of Lagos only shook his head, and declared he could only go into the matter if the woman herself found out who had been the actual murderer and could mention his name. This is a fact! The rest of the trousered gentry kept the matter to themselves.

And there were others who refused to take any notice of it. I and my staff paid the Acting Resident an official visit. Although it was altogether against my own interests as a diplomatic ethnologist to do so, I mentioned the ritual murder over a cup of tea, in the presence of the District Commissioner and the Medical Officer—that is to say, in the presence and hearing of the entire civil administration of the Ibadan Residency. I told them what was common knowledge to every black man in Ibadan, and what had been told me by my own colleagues. I did this because I considered it a duty I owed to the sentiment of European solidarity, and I, of course, left it to be dealt with by these gentlemen themselves. I had fulfilled my obligations to the British Government as a European, and there, as far as I was concerned, the matter ended. But it would be greatly to my own advantage as an ethnologist that neither the Resident nor the Commissioner nor the Doctor should ventilate the subject. The impression made upon me was that nobody wanted to stir up this wasps' nest, for yearly human sacrifices still take place in Ibadan, in spite of the existence of a Residency there! I had striking proof that the subject was left severely alone. The Police Superintendent called upon me on the 23rd of December of the same year. I told him, too, all about the murder of the 13th of November. He was greatly surprised. He had heard

nothing at all about it. It was evidently thought that the best thing would be to have nothing to do with it. Oh! anything rather than disturb and excite the dear natives! Good heavens! What more did one want? Did they not go to church? And ethical considerations cannot be said to include retribution for such a trifle as a ritual murder! But we shall see that subsequently quite another sort of moral standard was set up.

Yet, for all that, this ritual murder, tragic as it was, brought me into immediate contact with the religious life of Yoruba. I had satisfied my sense of duty and put the Government of the country on the track; the neglect of taking it up was their own business. For my own part I followed it until I had almost reached its source. During those days I sometimes felt as if I was not playing an ethnologist's, but a detective's part. At times my activities were far from being pleasant, and I had to keep my eyes firmly fixed on my objective so as not to get sick of all this secret inquiry and fishing in troubled waters. But I got to the very well-spring of ritual murder. Now I was in a position to insist upon my rights as an Ogboni Leaguer and my astonished and outwitted colleagues realized that not only was I a legitimized initiate, but entitled to further information. I pledged myself not to say a word about anything I might learn in Yorubaland itself, and then the Ogbonis delegated three Elders, authorized by their chief to answer all my inquiries on social and ethnological subjects, to wait upon me every morning and evening. These three old men, licensed to disclose things full of mystery, were not, perhaps, exactly the cleverest of their craft. But this again served our purpose, since, whenever they wanted to conceal something, the taking of a very little trouble soon managed to wring it out of them. In short, my descriptive ethnological work was now on foot, and I soon learned everything I wanted to know without much difficulty.

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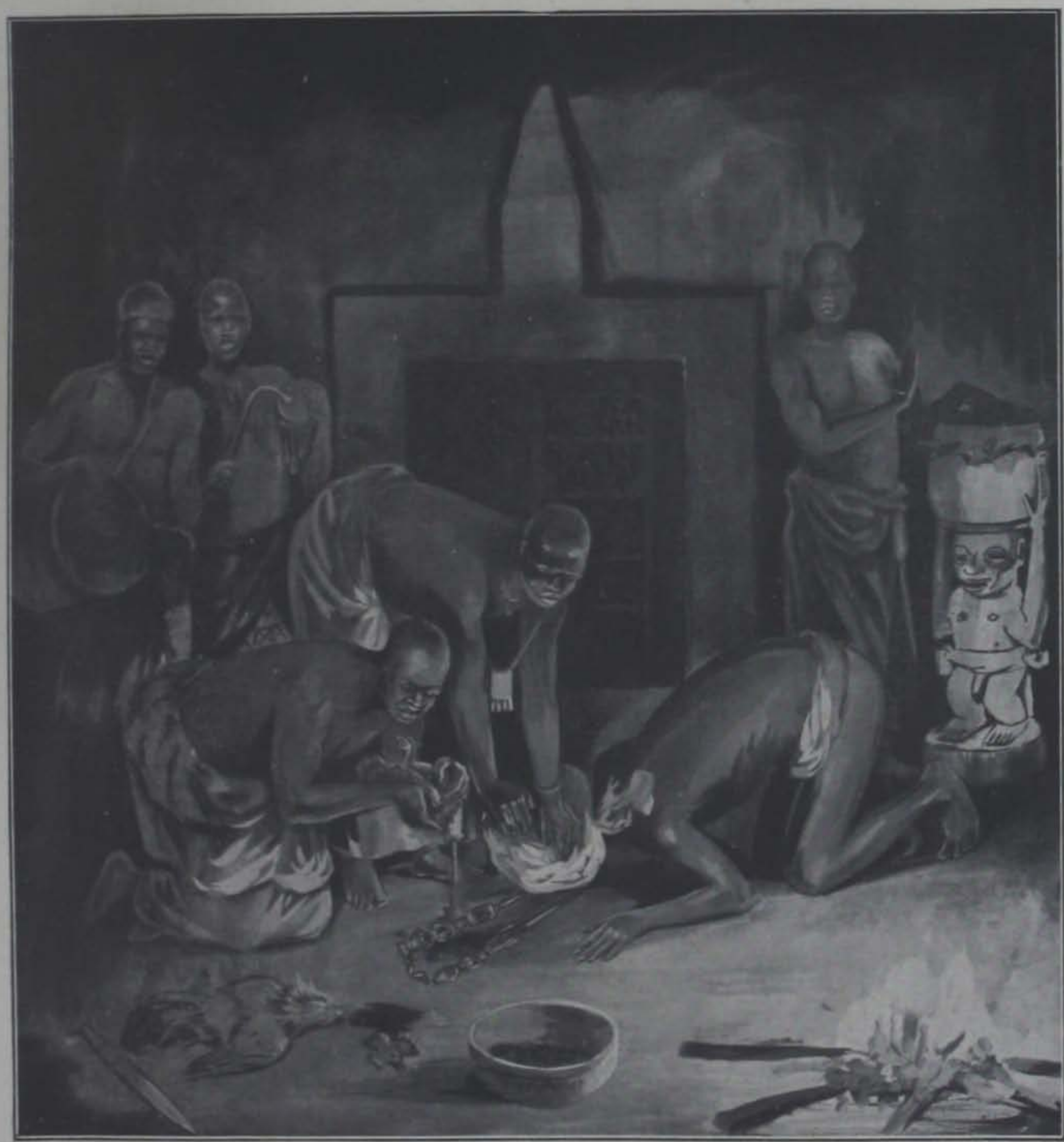
The spell was broken. Basket after basket of my collection was produced, unpacked and its contents discussed, item by item. Everything belonging to the same category was sorted out. Every wrong description was erased and corrected. Everything



Ceremonial of initiation into the Ogboni league.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p. 64.*

fell into its proper place. Occasionally I was even able to recognize and define some of the essential features of the cult, and, more particularly, I learned what pieces of evidence were lacking here and there in my collection. The three Elders and their friends were all the more ready to help me to complete it, because they had been authorized by the Ogboni to do so, and because, from time to time, they were able to make a little profit for themselves. As soon as any given section had been properly arranged, connected and completed, off it went to the draughtsman's department, where Arriens, although suffering considerably from the troubles incident to acclimatization, at once set it down in his sketch-books with unflagging energy. This sorting of the collection was, however, only a beginning. The Elders then launched out on a circumstantial history of the Yoruban mode of life from the time of birth to the hour of death, and many of its chapters, which I might otherwise have failed to grasp, were made clear by their now and again taking me to compounds and families when this, that, or the other ceremonial rite was in progress.

Their religious services and mythology were also subjects of discussion, and here the statements of my worthy triumvirate became so often contradictory that I had to requisition, and did get at, sources of complementary instruction. Now "experts in special subjects" in all departments entered upon the scene, got permission from the authorities to talk, and introduced me into their several areas of knowledge and special forms of civilization. Thus my runnel of information increased in volume. Every night I was able to go to sleep with a comfortable feeling of great progress made. Meanwhile, Martius slipped from compound to compound, from hill town to hill town, studied all the crafts in turn, and in this way laid the foundations for a fuller understanding of this remarkable people's daily life.

All that I experienced and learned in these days impressed me as vividly and strongly as the grand socio-religious system of the profoundly philosophical native African peoples was bound to do. No doubt many of the features of the petty latter-day deterioration, dilapidation and decay may have met our eyes. For the European wave has swept over these nations, too, and is determined to wash off everything foreign to itself, equalize all independence and crush

all opposition. The streams of Islam's influence had flowed downwards from the North as well. But, more especially, the question often forced itself upon me as to whether this hoary socio-religious edifice were not so very old as, apart from every outside influence, to be tottering to its fall from mere senile decay.

But I was constantly compelled to abandon the latter theory. I only had to survey the firm and stable conservation of the inwardness of this socio-mythological mode of life. I had but to review my own experience to put its stability and power of resilience beyond all doubt. I had only to call to mind the difficulties which this people had placed in my way with an amount of persistency almost incredible as a general thing in the negro, in order to appreciate the strength of its vitality and power of endurance.

Had I not been compelled to adopt all the wiles and stratagems and all the superior qualities of the Northerner's intellect to get at the heart of the mysteries laid bare to me? Although my diaries may contain many imperfect and erroneous descriptions of mythological details, which are therefore unconnected, yet that which I did actually discover is more clearly defined than anything my studies of African national life hitherto offered me. A vision of monumental majesty loomed out of the grey historic past into "Modern times." The Gods of old still dwell within these palaces with their roofs of golden straw, among these water tanks, behind these temple gates. All that I had once guessed at and prophesied was proved to be correct, and the very fact that I only attained what I had gathered in the teeth of the most strenuous opposition is only calculated to make the prizes all the more valuable. It is because this resistance is ethnologically so significant, and because it is an expression of all the determined instinct for self-preservation of a spirit rescued from the Past and kept alive until to-day, that I have so fully described my research work in the early days of my investigation of Yorubaland.

And yet it was all merely a kind of introduction. The crowning glory of the whole vision was soon to come to light, but brought with it another kind of obstacle which I was less able to anticipate than the expected and longed-for heritage from bygone times.

Helped by the workers I had gained over, and by dint of expending a corresponding amount of the energy required, the work went on at such a rate that I was not only able to close my first diaries, but to transcribe many of my notes as well. So now I turned from the spirit which was still manifest in life to its petrified original. I searched for it. I found it——

And the way of it was this :

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Crossing the River Oshun.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER IV

ON THE ROAD TO THE HOLY CITY

On the way to Ifé—Obstruction—Villages on the road—Bridge building—The Oni—The deeds of an English captain in Ifé—The first monuments.

MY reluctance to accept Bastian's written statement in 1894, that there was no money to be raised for travelling through Yoruba, induced me to call his attention once more to the temptations offered by the ancient town of Ifé, so thickly encrusted with myths and legends. But he only smiled like a philosopher, saying: "My dear young friend, you must not attach so much importance to these traditions, because the exuberance of the popular imagination envelops and clings round certain places like rats' tails, and portions of it are fastened to every locality where people, even within the range of our own wider horizon, have adopted them, opposed as their ideas may be to . . ." and so on and so forth. The sentence is neither ever brought to a close, nor is it quite correct, and not everything which our dear friend Bastian says can be "read, marked, learned and inwardly digested." The only thing clear to me was that he attached no great weight to my own views of the importance of Ifé and Benin, had no belief in mythology, and was, therefore, disinclined to raise any money.

When I came across some experienced explorers in 1908 in the great cities of the Niger on the southern borders of the Sahara, Timbuktu and Wagadugu, and often discussed the antiquity of the far south-eastern cities, Ilifé was mentioned as the first of five great places and it was only when in Atakpame in South Togoland, that I identified it with Ifé. What I was then told in the North was so strange, indeed, that my resolve to visit the place myself at any cost was greatly strengthened. I wish to lay some stress on the fact that, in the view of many past and present travellers in those regions, all the Southern countries contain evidences of an historic past, historic documents, an extreme antiquity, and that the stories told of such remains are so circumstantial as to show, not only great powers of reasoning and keen observation, but strict adherence to the truth as well. And the fact that I always heard the same story about this city's importance corroborated by different people has a twofold significance.

At all events, by the time I went ashore at Lagos, my plans had been fully made and when I was asked at Government House as to my destination in Southern Nigeria, I said Ibadan and then Ifé and Ojo. (I gave up Ojo for many reasons later on.) The Governor of Southern Nigeria promised to do all he could to further the realization of my wishes without the least hesitation, and send off immediate instructions to the administrative officials in Oshogbo (for Ifé) and in Ojo. Everything seemed to be most satisfactorily settled.

All sorts of tales got wind in Ibadan towards mid-November which gave me pause. I at once reported to Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig. One of them was that certain persons had been upset by my rapid and unexpected successes and that certain proposals for securing similar collections for England were in the air. These yarns were bandied about mainly by the black clerks of the Residency and business houses, and they came to our own ears last of all. Their source was certainly somewhat unreliable, but they must have had a grain of truth, as otherwise no black would have hit upon an idea so absolutely foreign to his nature. It was clear that one or two men of position had talked about some such suggestion, and the boys, listening to the conversation, understood and spread it abroad. I kept a closer watch on the gentlemen, who

every now and again paid us a visit, myself and came to the undoubted conclusion that certain comprehensive inspections of my treasures in the hall of the Balé Schools were not dictated by what might be called disinterested love.

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As soon as my plans had matured, and the information given me by people from Ifé, passing through Ibadan, was complete enough to confirm that already to hand and other necessary arrangements made, I sent an official letter to the Residency begging it to smooth my advance to Ifé to the best of its ability. According to the letter and the Government's request, it was somebody's duty to engage my porters, place at my disposal two policemen and recommend me to the native Prince, or Oni, the title of the Ifé rulers. I received a reply suggesting that it would be better to wait until the permanent Resident's return and then get his consent, as his *locum tenens* was unwilling to accept responsibility.

Now, the Resident was not expected back till the spring of 1911, and from what had passed, it was quite well known that we wanted to be in Northern Nigeria by then. But a nod, as they say, is as good as a wink to a blind horse. Personal interviews only resulted in suggestions that it would be advisable to postpone our plans. I could not, of course, agree to this, as I had already obtained the Government's consent.

However, it was at last decided to give effect to the Government instructions, to supply us with policemen and porters, to notify the Oni and the D.C. of Oshogbo to get a camp prepared at our destination, and so on. Willingness to do all that was necessary was expressed in a very nice and amiable letter. But there was apparently no intention of hurrying to carry out all these obligations.

Four days before the time fixed for our departure, we rode up to the Residency, and there received an oral confirmation of the letter. I could not, however, help being surprised at the reply, "I hope so," given by the *locum tenens* to my inquiry as to whether the carriers (thirty in all) would be forthcoming.

It struck me as not a little odd that there should be any difficulty whatever in getting together thirty men for such an undertaking as ours, in a city of about two hundred thousand souls, when hundreds and hundreds of excavators and carriers could be found to do railway work every week, and that all the answer vouchsafed me was "I hope so!"

My gloomiest forebodings were justified. We intended to start on November 26. The Superintendent had promptly sent the policemen. But of my carriers, no sign at all! But I heard that a police inspector had been told that thirty men should be enlisted "if possible." A word or two with the black fellow threw a light upon things. He quite frankly said that, had porters been wanted immediately he would have been told: "Send so many men along by such and such a time," without any "if possible," and, of course, as "if possible" had been said, there had evidently been no need to hurry. I was quite unconscious of having given offence to any one, but there seemed undoubtedly to be an intention to delay us by failing to ensure the presence of the necessary carriers. And it is curious that at the Residency the same evening I was told that this practically was so. Thus there seemed little doubt as to what was happening.

I went straight to the Houssa Settlement and by Saturday night had agreed with sixteen carriers without any bother. We sent to the police inspector to ask whether the bearers were ready, as a pure matter of form. He said they were not; they had not been engaged, but he dared say they would be, "if possible."

That decided me. I loaded my sixteen men, sent them off with one of the policemen, ordered Bida to stay behind with the other one, go to the Residency although it was Sunday, put the case to the people there and, if no porters could be got through their good offices, to engage the rest of them himself. This I did to prevent its being afterwards said that I had not exerted myself to obtain them from headquarters.

When I had started with my staff, Bida went to Government House and was referred back to the Inspector whose final answer was that men could not be raised. Obeying his instructions Bida enlisted the necessary Ilorin boys with the greatest ease on the Sunday and was quite able to follow on next day with

our baggage. By marching all night, he arrived at the same time that we did.

Apparently, then, the administration of a city with some two hundred thousand inhabitants was less able to drum up a few carriers than my own blacks. Of course, it was ridiculous. Afterwards, I heard orders given in quite a different manner in Ifé. Thirty porters were wanted at short notice, hundreds of road-menders required in a day or so and everything went without the least hitch because the "authorities" saw that things were done. I cannot sufficiently emphasize the fact that, as the natives told me and our own experience proved, no real effort was made to help our expedition in setting off for Ifé, notwithstanding all instructions from London and the Government at home.

This proof of my contention was very soon established.

A three days' march brought us to Ifé, where our opinion of official pledges was fully ratified. We had received both written and verbal assurances that the Oni would be notified to prepare quarters in advance for us at Ifé and information sent on to the D.C. at Oshogbo. Absolutely nothing had been done. Nobody knew anything, and if the explanation offered is that we travelled too fast for letters to get ahead of us, all that I say is that, when other interests than ours were in question, everything in our disfavour could, and did, find its way from Ibadan to Ifé within four-and-twenty hours, while it took us quite three days to cover the same distance!

And so even our start was made under a perfectly incomprehensible display of feeling, to which our subsequent experiences proved the sequel. We started and accomplished our task in spite of it. Although we were forced to abandon some of its results only because baseness of mind and brute force got the better of us, we still managed to retain most of them.

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My little column set out on November 27 after we had looked round for some time in vain for our bearers. Bida blew a flourish on his bugle to bid us "Godspeed," and we put our rather weedy horses to the trot. Near Residency Hill, we left the town and the

broad road, and at once entered a wonderfully smiling landscape, where one delightful, gaily brilliant picture after another unrolled itself before us. Range after range of gently undulating hills rose high above the groves of oil-bearing palm-trees, or lay hidden in the verdant foliage of virgin forests. Cheerful peasants gave us greetings, and we welcomed the relief of having at last, for a time at all events, escaped from domestic life in town which is so irksome if it lasts, Ibadan's somewhat uninviting society, Yoruban aristocracy and the incessant struggle against malevolence, passive obstruction and dissensions without number. Neither the feeling of well-being nor the charms of the landscape ever failed us. We plunged ever deeper into the woodlands and the basin of the Oshun river, whose waters are the abode of one of the most highly honoured Gods of this countryside. The stream itself, which, at the beginning of the dry season, was now some fifty yards or more from bank to bank, came tumbling over boulders, winding its way through a forest belt as beautiful and splendid as ever lined a river in the whole of Africa. We crossed it one by one in boats, and our horses tried to find a foothold somehow on the level spaces between the clumps of rock. After having spent about an hour and a half in crossing and useless waiting for the bearers who had fallen behind, we continued our way on paths shaded by primeval timber, and about half-past two reached our camp at Ikerri. Our boys came in late in the evening, but Bida's command did not arrive until next day.

The little villages we passed through were altogether different from the towns. Although the plan of the compounds, the domestic architecture, the racial type and the language remained, in fact, the same, rustic simplicity had set its seal upon these townships and produced that difference between an urban and rural population to be met with all the world over, Europe included. If, in their worldly wisdom, the wealthy worthies in the large cities lounge idly on their verandas, under the grateful influence of alcohol, in the comfortable knowledge that others are at work in the fields and earning money for them on the plantations and the mart, so that they may themselves enjoy the pleasanter job of raking in and squandering their profit on conspicuous occasions of state in order to satisfy their vanity or greed for honours; if it

is precisely the magnate of Yoruban towns who represents the least desirable forms of capitalistic expression, then, on the other hand, the landed gentry of this country display qualities which always strike us pleasantly in our own agricultural classes at home.

Generous hospitality and spacious circumstance are met with everywhere and always. The entire household has an air of largeness and breathes that atmosphere of elbow-room necessary in the pursuit of husbandry. Implements for tillage of the soil, the fruits of the field and signs of native industry intrude themselves on every hand. Gone is the reek of gin, and when good old Arriens put his nose to a tankard of the beer brewed by the Ikerri and smelling like fresh-baked bread, singing a hymn of thanksgiving since become proverbial, we hailed it as the symbol of an economic system which created and offered us means of getting more sustenance and greater pleasure from only one of its products than all the thriving commercial traffic of the towns could give.

Every morning the sturdy sire takes up his tools and sets a good example to his children and dependents instead of lounging idly round about. Even the aged find some use for their failing powers until they breathe their last. When, every now and again, I had been told Yorubans were a lazy lot, the term was true enough about the nawabs of the city, but to see them go about their business in farmstead or small country town was to give the lie direct to such a general statement.

And now the hour had also struck when we should sleep no longer under roofs of corrugated iron, but in airy verandas beneath a lofty palm-leaf thatch. The change was grateful, and as our route was by no means difficult, the whole of our journey was like a holiday trip.

We continued marching for the greater part of the second day through densely wooded country, and, wherever there was an opening on the rising ground, we saw the waving fans of palm-trees standing in the plain below. The road got rather worse as the day wore on and towards midday I was glad enough to see our horses stabled in good condition at Gbaga. Three-quarters of an hour after breaking camp on Tuesday, the 29th, we crossed the Sassa river, a tributary of the Oshun, and then the splendours of the so-called "high road" petered out. Any doubts about the general method

of mending roads I may have had till now took on an aggravated form.

It may be at once admitted that the problems presented by road-building in Africa, and more especially in the West, are unusually great. The first advance of a gentle flood is generally enough to wash everything away or cause it to slip off into the depths, when all that has been done is to lay down a few tree-trunks, cover them with a layer of leaves and loam on the clayey slopes which form the river's bed in the dry season. The earth caves in. The water undermines it. The tree-trunks weigh it down. The yellow waters, almost always at the level of the road, rise in their narrow berth and the mischief is complete.

My own experience tells me that on an average the destruction of half the bridges can be relied upon during one rainy season, and preparation for the ruin of the other half in the next. Even should a bridge not be completely wrecked, carried away or submerged, the stratum of leaves and loam of the roadway glides off it and then the pedestrians, mostly very heavily laden native traders, are very hardly put to it to keep a footing on the rounded, greasy surface of the tree-trunks. It is not surprising that natives never use a bridge if it is at all possible to ford the stream and prefer not to expose their valuable loads to the perils of these misnamed bridges.

The usual difficulty which faces those whose business it is to keep the highway really fit for traffic, is the necessity for the renewal of about half these primitive structures year by year. Should the Colonial Government undertake the task itself, a very considerable strain is put upon its energies, since in the riverain districts where the fall is only moderate, there are, without counting the minor ones, two bridges to every six miles. Where the traffic is light and the population scanty, it is advisable to keep the construction of bridges within the narrowest possible limits of strategic requirements, but where these demand it the Government ought to show sufficient determination and sense of discipline to devise a properly considered system of highway-construction and insist upon the maintenance of the bridges connecting place with place by the inhabitants themselves—provided always there are enough of them.

The roads to Ifé, originally probably Ilifé, mainly forced this conclusion upon me. We found ourselves on one of the busiest thoroughfares in the thickly-populated province of Yoruba and met with, not hundreds of wayfarers only, but caravans by the hundred and we all had to suffer equally from these defective bridges on our approach to Ifé. All to be said under the circumstances is: "Better no bridge at all than these." For where there are none, the natives always looked for and found a good fording-place, wore a pathway through the shelving banks and made the passage fairly safe for both horse and footman. When, however, a bridge is built, the fords are ruined and their usefulness lessened, because, if the bridge collapses, its beams and stakes get embedded in the stream, soft mud fills up the space between them and man and beast may try in vain to get firm foothold. I met people whose legs had been broken on the road at places like these between Ibadan and Ifé, and it was particularly lucky that both we and our animals escaped scot free.

Oh, the number of times we had to get down from our ponies and anxiously watch our guides as we followed them round these wretched contraptions, and how often the legs of our poor tired horses plunged about among the tree-trunks and the branches, and how heartily I wished the responsible members of the Government a similar journey. The nearer we got to the Holy City, the worse it grew, until we set foot on the causeway which crosses the marsh lands round Ifé.

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The miserable remnants of an old city wall had been breached to make room for a creaking wooden gateway. These were the outer precincts of the city. Then we rode on, with swamps on either side of us, from which groups of splendid palms soared skywards. We met a man with a calabash filled with gloriously refreshing palm wine. The juice of the forest primeval replaced the beer of the plains.

The ground rose slightly, and now, above a wilderness in which both wild and cultivated vegetation had their shares, some tawny-coloured, fallen masonry appeared. We were among the

ruins of a suburb of Ilifé, destroyed not ten years since; we stood upon the ground where once Modeké stood.

For a quarter of an hour we rode through untended melon patches, crumbling walls, amidst old orchards and recent thickets and then we came upon the outlying houses of Ilifé proper. We waited a while to let the baggage catch us up and the joy we felt in thinking that our dream of eighteen years ago was at last being realized was tempered by displeasure that on this day of days our boys were loitering on the road.

When we were all assembled, we marched in serried ranks along the main street of Ifé with its swarming crowds. Bida blew his merriest march-tunes on his bugle and the mob bowed low in salutation. Alas! how different a sight to this our departure in December was to be! A minute or two after twelve midday the monumental ruins of the Oni's "palace" met our gaze. We stood before the portal of the castle in the middle of an enormous square. I sent Bida in to announce us, waited for some time, made my horse climb the high flight of steps and rode through the delicately-carved door of the entrance, across the courtyard and through the dilapidated colonnades with my companions. It was like an enchanted castle. It was so large and noble in design, so superbly pure despite its broken lines, its mouldering to decay and the sordid exterior it now presents. We did not meet a single soul. At last we came to where there were some people, and there, clad in a gorgeous robe of bright green silk, a magnificent tiara on his brow, and shaded by a huge silken canopy, the Oni, the head of the Holy City of Ifé's hierarchy, advanced to meet us with a great crowd.

Friendly salutations over, we found in course of conversation that no official communication had been made of our coming or preparations for our stay within some compound. The Oni had no knowledge either of our existence as an Expedition or of our relations with the powers that be. The position was rapidly explained. The prince besought us to possess ourselves for a little while in patience. We took a cordial leave, returned to our people in the great square and had not very long to wait before some Illari, or messengers of the Oni, conducted us to a spacious bungalow in fair repair. Its occupants shared the quarters, which, however, were comfortable enough. We had hardly settled down before

the picture was marred by some of those bright lads, gifted with the native Lagos "trouser-nigger's" cleverness, who began to weave the strings of plots and big and little lies to make a halter wherewith the authorities might, if necessary, hang us afterwards.

Subject to the British rule, the Oni, as *de jure* regent of Southern Nigeria, had at his disposal two clerks, whose names I quite forgot to note, in charge of his official correspondence. We will call them Sprig No. 1 and Sprig No. 2. Sprig No. 1 was the subtler of the pair. I was unlucky enough to offend him in some way on the first day and this made him dislike me. Sprig No. 2 was better tempered, not too bright of intellect but well-disposed towards me on the whole. Too feeble himself to escape the network of intrigue, he only followed in the wake of No. 1, because he was in the pay of this land's Spiritual Chief and doubly bound because the latter had given him one of his sisters to wife. Anyhow, the two of them together were sharp enough to shape the policy of the ungifted Head of the Ilifian Fathers of the Church, and able to influence him in whatever direction they pleased.

In the evening, No. 1 came and handed me a paper, which stated that the Oni's clerk was notifying the D.C. of Oshogbo of the arrival of a party of French (!)-men with alleged leave to travel from the Resident at Ibadan, and he, the clerk to wit, wanted to know whether this party really had permission to come to Ilifé. I did not altogether like the tone of the document at first and, thinking its bearer might be an emissary of the British Government, I asked him what this had to do with me. He said he was going to send it on to Oshogbo, and all he wished to know was whether it was all right. I told him we were not Frenchmen, but Germans, and that he must know best what report to send.

I need scarcely say—for could I expect anything else?—that the inhabitants of the Holy City did not rush to ask me to inspect their treasures. Precisely what happened in Ibadan occurred here. Every bit of information, every single specimen had to be acquired in the service of science independently of all assistance. But other vexatious and unforeseeable factors came into action, which

increased the difficulty of our task. His Holiness, the Father of the Church, himself told me at the first audience that the city formerly contained many marvellous antiquities, legacies of the Gods; but they had, in the first place, been deprived of many of these, in consequence of the wars against the people of Modeké and Ojo, and, in the second, because a certain English captain had carried off the finest image of the Moon-God and a good many other things without remembering to pay for them. I cannot say what amount of truth, if any, there may have been in this last story. At all events, I now heard it stated and repeated afterwards that an English Governor had discovered some sculptured idols in this place, removed them and had himself been removed from office in punishment. Later on, the people told me that they themselves had not set much store on these things, and would, in any case, willingly have made presents of them, but that, since these occurrences, they had learned to appreciate their value and were particularly anxious to keep them. The Ifé-folk would gladly have let me have them before that, but after the behaviour of the Captain and the Governor they were disinclined to part with any more. The whole account seemed highly probable and in absolute harmony with the negro character, of which there have been so many recent illustrations, to give away articles ungrudgingly until some foreigner creates a previously non-existent value by the interest he displays or by being guilty of violating the rights of property. And, completely ignorant of antecedent circumstances, I, in this way, at the outset became involved in a very complex state of affairs—with the result that the opposition I met with, quite apart from any intention to acquire such objects, was much more strenuous and caused me more delay than I could have anticipated. Thus, the discrepancy between my own views and those of the inhabitants of Ifé became the *damnosa hereditas* of the blunders of the past.

At first—which is most significant of the negro mind and customs—all things were most pleasantly rose-coloured, and the situation bore this complexion during the time we stayed at Ilifé until the advent of an hostile influence caused our departure. It began to make itself felt when Sprig No. 2, or the less harmful of the Oni's clerks, took us to see the tall Oranja monument. A special chapter will deal with this and the rest of the finds. It had

often been erroneously stated that no old Oni temples were now extant. I was unaware at that time of the site and method of concealment of these sanctuaries, or we would quickly have crawled into the tangled bushes at the back of us and most certainly have found the effigy of the God in its little temple the same day. On entering the thicket some little time after the bad feeling against us had been energetically fanned, we found the holy place denuded. The bird had flown, the image of the God been hidden away.

We then called upon the Oni, who, at our request, conducted us in person to his "park of monuments," where, lying side by side, we saw the celebrated forge hammer (*i.e.*, a mighty mass of iron, like a falling drop in shape), a block of quartz fashioned like a drum, the fragment of a large fish or alligator with a fair representation of its head, and some less important objects. A superficial impression, quickly arrived at, convinced me that these were relics dating from an age and epoch of culture, when, on the one hand, the manipulation of quartz and granite was thoroughly understood, and, on the other, iron played an important part, because a column of granite was decorated with iron ornaments, and the hammer of the "very—very old" smithy was evidence of a skill not to be met with at the present day. Quite apart from the fact that I almost took them for excellent hollow castings, things like these cannot possibly be manufactured now.

By dint of that diplomacy which alone secures success in Africa, we then discovered all the other monuments of any value. The Oni and his Elders sat at home in polite denial and calmly shook their heads, saying: "There is nothing else." They repeatedly assured me: "Yes, there used to be a good deal, but it has been taken away, partly by Ojo and Modeké folk, and partly by the English captain." To this they stuck and, on these lines, nothing more was to be got from them. But I was content with the impression so far made. I forbore to urge the holy man more strongly just then, but took counsel with myself as to how I could best get a glimpse of the things of which my notes made careful mention. I firmly resolved not to be in too great a hurry, but to get on with my collection of ethnological material first of all and leave the antiquities to look after themselves until further notice and, in coming

to this decision, I relied upon the latter part of the business being settled automatically, while I busied myself with the former.

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The Oni made not the least objection to my gathering ethnological specimens. He let his good people know that they were at liberty to sell their own household gods. So we were free to start dealing in our own veranda and my staff dispersed about the city in the capacity of tug-boats. I myself took my walks abroad to call upon and ingratiate myself with influential natives. Bida turned out a most brilliant collector—of all sorts of male and female adherents who also took a hand in the game. This man of great resource had no less than four love-affairs in full blast within three days and at once managed to enthuse his flames on our behalf. The ardent collector's hopes which made me come to Ilifé were more than justified and not infrequently exceeded. We found the amplest proof that, before the Modeké war, Ilifé must have been a unique example of the old-world style of timber architecture in the hundreds of sculptured beams which we hauled out of lofts and barns and that, while developing my original idea, I had not had Ilifé in its present state of dilapidation in my mind, but Ilifé, the ancient, well-preserved and ornamental city it once had been. At that time, viz., 1894, the greater portion of the temples and the houses must still have been decorated in an unusually striking and beautiful manner. Aged people now confirmed this, declaring that nearly everything had been destroyed in that most wretched war and these statements were again supported by the fact that almost every other fragment of architectural construction we acquired in Ifé had been scarred by fire.

I very soon had reason to notice something which severely shook my early faith in the "backwoods" honesty of the Ilifians, while "to-day" and everything pertaining to it, was paraded in procession at our courtyard. It had been my custom in Ibadan to exhibit all the acquisitions of a single day from dewy morn till eve of the one next following, my object being partly to let the people know the kind of article I wanted and, partly, to give anyone from whom something had been stolen a chance to recognize it as having been

offered to me as a buyer, for it was by no means rare for one worthy Ilifian to rob another so as to profit by the sale of the goods "conveyed."

This was not difficult in Ibadan where the space I lived in was enclosed. But here, in Ilifé, where crowds went in and out of our veranda from dawn to dark, I got to learn and fear the risks of "popular exhibition" in Yorubaland. I missed things every evening and the natives stole as unblushingly as magpies. I adhered to my exhibition policy because I thought the potential value of things coming to me in this way, the extent of choice thus afforded and the incitement of the desire to sell, of far more importance than the loss of one or two specimens. But some of the Yorubans in Ilifé were such magnificent experts at filching that my goods would not have been safe had I tied them up in sacks and stowed them away in the side-rooms. I entered all my purchases in a day-book and, on once more checking them at our departure, one hundred and forty of them were missing. Yet it is a curious fact that the things so abstracted were all native products of Yoruba. Not a single knife, fork, or spoon, not the least bit of all our own equally accessible equipment, was taken from us. It almost looked as if these honest folks considered themselves legally entitled to take back what they themselves had sold me. At the same time the struggle for possession was not, as it had been in Ibadan, confined in Ilifé to sacred domestic relics. On the contrary, the entire population's sole anxiety was concentrated on the retention of real antiquities, on their inheritance of their so-called culture-era, their interest in which had been consolidated by the English captain's conduct.

The same degree of conservative instinct for these ancient objects animated every one of them. It may also be that instructions had reached them from Ibadan not to sell us a single thing. They said that this actually was so. Possibly it may have had a grain of truth. But this gentry lie so gorgeously that even what they swear to deserves no credence. Be this as it may, they distinctly said the English Government had forbidden them and before long the community in general seemed to resent my seeing anything they possessed long before anything had happened, or I had renewed my attempt to penetrate further into this country's mysteries. For

all that, we lived in perfect amity, until one fine day the whole condition of things was changed by interference from Ibadan.

This, then, was the general situation. I will now proceed to give an account of my successive discoveries, the gossip of Ibadan and about the English captain notwithstanding.

Sacrifice in a sacred grove at Ifé.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER V

INTO THE DEPTHS

The sacred groves and their monuments—Digging at Modeké—Finding the terra-cottas—Ebolokun—Discovery of an ancient glass-foundry—The Olokun—Negotiations about the Olokun.

ALL the reports to hand, even in my early Hamburg days, made it clear that the good Ilifians had raised a good many of the treasures of antiquity to the dignity of the Gods they still revered, still obeyed, and to whom they largely offered sacrifice. These effigies were already in part known to the English and described to me in conversations at our meeting in the afternoon of November 23 as being "ready made." As a matter of fact they were really rather clumsy, or, at all events, much inferior in form and style and so far genuine examples of pure Ilifian art had not been among them. I had, however, good reason to assume the existence of such art, and subsequent events proved that its products lay buried in the earth and that the native of the present day took but very little interest in its most precious examples.

According to "information received," I was not entitled to anticipate a great deal of luck. On the other hand, a few Yoruban slaves in Timbuktu had told me that all their forbears who had

descended into the ground had been turned into stone and still had their own heads, each of which bore its own stamp; but that, in this respect, the images differed no more from each other in likeness than did living men. The reports I had gathered in the Desert City proved to be well founded and corroborated my contention that correct information of actually existing facts is always more easily obtainable at some distance from the given locality.

Now in Ifé it was urgently necessary first of all to settle where and how these antiquities, though possibly merely copies or imitations based on ancient originals, had been discovered and preserved till now. Somehow or other I still cherished hopes of finally getting at deposits of ruined antiquities by studying the modern forms of worship, and in this way to turn to account the information I was able to collect in Wagadugu, Timbuktu, Hamburg, and the outskirts of the sphere of old Atlantic culture. I began by taking pains to find out one or more spots in which ancient images were set up, because what the Oni had shown us was insufficient for my purpose. My first successes came about as follows:

One day, a few foresters and other Ilifé folk having some sort of connection with the Government, came to see us in Ibadan. I gave them a tip, and they, in return, were most communicative and went back to Ilifé where they were employed. One of my people saw them here again on the first evening. But when I cross-examined them on the spot, asking them for details of what they had told us in Ibadan and to keep the promises made there to show me things, they wanted to go back on them. Naturally enough, I was not going to be put off like that and the less so because I had already lent them a certain amount of ready money in Ibadan on the strength of these earlier pledges. So I gave them a serious talking-to and pointed out how hateful it was not to keep faith. But all the answer I got was that all they had told me in Ibadan was nothing but lies and to this they stuck. Then I asked them to repay the loan, when lo and behold! they began to fidget, said they wanted to think it over and at last came back prepared to carry out their former undertakings. Consequently, we set out next morning along the road to the North-east and actually came to a region of magnificent palm groves, old places of

sacrifice and small temples. Now, the English had previously known of these places, but had not come across anything interesting because everything that was so had been concealed beneath heaps of straw and matting. Of course, we at once set to work with all the "German thoroughness" at our command, unearthed all sorts of extremely noteworthy objects, such as stone vessels, sculptured stone stools, stone crocodiles, and, finally, also the monument called the Idena, all of which had here lain concealed. This is the Idena of which I shall have a good deal to say further on. That day Arriens nearly filled one of his sketch-books.

Immediately on our return from this trip, we paid the Oni a visit. Clad in one of his most magnificent robes of state, he had again taken his seat on the steps of his temple throne; his pages were ranged behind him; on either side of him and at his feet, the venerable, aged priesthood had assembled. The air was full of ceremonial majesty. We had to be equal to the occasion. Martius and I took our chairs. The boys fell in to the rear. The policemen stepped aside and then there were speeches and speeches and speeches! I often think of the bargains driven on this very spot. To-day I tried to make the Oni understand that he had promised to show me everything; given me leave to see everything, but would not allow anything to be shown me; and that, therefore, all that I could do was to trust to my own devices and look around myself for the objects of my research. How much pleasanter, I urged, and how much simpler it would be for both parties, if he issued his commands to have the antiquities, dating from the times of the Gods of old, exhibited to me! How much more to their credit and what a source of pride for them, to produce such splendid things themselves, and how much more grateful he would make me by lightening my labours instead of compelling me to hunt for them unaided. I need scarcely say that the Oni pleaded guilty to the soft impeachment. In the good old African fashion he again promised me everything, every mortal thing, but also, of course, without the remotest idea of doing anything of the kind. Yet when I pressed him harder in a private and friendly talk *à deux*, he at length declared that he would show me two kinds of things, both of which were in this his palace.

He issued his commands. All agog, we waited for what was going

Albrecht Martius and his workers about six yards deep.

(From an oil-sketch by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 86.

to happen and when his people came back with a large veiled object, they put it in front of their lord and master with a great to do, threw themselves upon the ground, kissed the dust and generally carried on as if the greatest wonder in the world were about to be revealed. Then his Mightiness explained that these were the old—oh, very, very old—and most splendid things from Modeké. Our tensest gaze was riveted upon them. And what was it that met our eyes ? Nothing but a very recent wooden idol, as clumsily carved as well could be, whereat we laughed so loud and long, that at last the Oni and all his court laughed with us.

So now the second thing was to be produced for our benefit. We were invited to follow the Illaris who headed the procession. They led us to a court, situated on the South-west side of the palace precincts behind the Prince's private dwelling and showed us a hole. The explanations given of it were very quaint. They said there was a long passage which went a very great distance. We went up to it. There, right in front of us, was the boring of a well-shaft which, in the days of old, had been driven into the fire-clay. The fact in itself was quite interesting and not less so, because of some more filled-in wells not far off ; but it could not, in any case, be expected to pass muster for " showing us everything." Of course, it was the old familiar trick of trying to get out of it. I said so, naturally, not in so many words, but nicely wrapped up in courtly African phrases and when we returned to the Oni and had taken our seats to continue the palaver, I began all over again. We showed no intention of retiring, but openly gave them to understand that we should patiently wait until somebody was told off who could really show us something else, when the aged priests put their old heads together in prolonged conference, and, at long last, gave the Oni their opinion. Then, and then only, a guide was given us who was to let us see " something really grand and well worth seeing."

We were bowed out and our conductor led us across the great square and from there to the North-west. Exactly as happened on our way to the Idena, we reached the bush and forest country after some time, and, branching off the main road, which trended South-westwards, our leader took us, now dryshod and now in the bed of an old tributary stream, beneath a wonderful avenue of

overhanging palms. A venerable old man, the owner of the sacred relics, came out to meet us, no less a person, indeed, than the Shâmân of the place, with whom I was afterwards on terms of cordial friendship. He was the only one who did not subsequently leave us in the lurch and took no part at all against us. This is saying a great deal. These Shâmâns, in a certain sense, stand outside and above the common herd. They are usually held in fear and are independent; their friendship is courted, because they are the actual wielders of the omnipotent magic on which every manifestation of Divine Power in general and the power of each God in particular depends. No single God can make himself known, no dead man express his desires, no sick person recover health, without the strength and central magic might which Ossenj grants.

The ancient man approached and pointed everything out; he explained the avenue of palms and related the story of the great Shango's journey, which the God made through an old tree (whose giant trunk had been seared by lightning); he showed us the modern cheap (and nasty) soapstone figures and, last of all, the thing he set most store by, namely, an extremely commonplace lump of stone, in which the strength of Ossenj was said to show itself from time to time. I gave him a little of our just purchased palm-wine, carried by one of our boys, for a libation, as well as a gift in coin and this afforded him, as his particular priest, an opportunity of appealing to the power of the God and of general prayer. This being over, the Shâmân stroked the forehead of all who panted for this blessing with a mixture of wine and mould which had been poured over the stone, which proceeding assured good health and length of life to all.

While all this was going on, Martius and myself happened upon something much more essential, viz., one or two bits of reddish-brown terra-cotta embedded in the earth close to the head. They were pieces of a broken human face, and when I saw these fragments, I grasped the full meaning of what I had been told in Timbuktu. Here were the remains of a very ancient and fine type of art, infinitely nobler than the comparatively coarse stone-images not even well preserved. These meagre relics were eloquent of a symmetry, a vitality, a delicacy of form directly reminiscent of ancient Greece and a proof that, once upon a time, a race, far superior in strain to

the negro, had been settled here. Thus the value of the find was placed beyond all doubt. Here was an indication of something unquestionably exotic and the existence of an extremely ancient civilization. From the moment of this discovery onward I knew that my task in Ilifé was turned in a direction I had hardly dared to expect. I was on the road to finding some genuine art. I sat in council with Bida the whole afternoon, puzzling my brains to hit upon a feasible plan for getting on the track of more such images and, if possible, choice specimens of the same kind in a good state of preservation. And now I had conquered adverse Fortune! Two days afterwards a terra-cotta head arrived intact. I bought it.

The second head which came to light was certainly far less beautiful than the fragments owned by the Shâmân. But I was delighted with it, too, and, sticking it on a pole, I exposed it in the middle of the courtyard. Bida and my other captains then drew the attention of every vendor of ethnological trumpery to the fact that the white man would give much money for similar things. Hundreds and thousands of people came and looked at this head. They all examined it. They declared that there were many finer ones than that, but not a soul of them ever said that it was a "serious business," or that there was any "risk" about it. The Oni's Illaris also saw it and smiled a derisive smile. Not a soul told me that what I had got hold of was explosive material, namely, the Edja, afterwards so famous in Ilifé.

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Deeds and discoveries now trod upon each other's heels. Our immediate object was to gather news of where these relics of old-time culture could be found and to get this point cleared up seemed to be the most important thing to hand. It was perfectly evident that the natives only attributed a definite religious meaning to the fewest of the articles they found, carelessly tossing aside many others to which they could attach no such significance. On the other hand, it was also quite clear that they perfectly well knew where similar heads were buried. That fundamental power of memory, referred to in Chapter I., here came into active operation. They themselves

had never seen the things lying buried in the depths, but the tradition that in very ancient days some God had gone down into the ground in this or that particular spot, had been handed on from sire to son for generations past until the present day.

From various interviews I got to know that most remains of this kind were found concealed beneath old trees in the North and I consequently invited the natives to go and dig on their own account in spots where legend said that an ancestral God had gone below. They were to bring me all they found, because I would also buy even those things which might seem quite valueless to them, such as broken pottery of every kind and would pay a good price for whatever I might want to keep. The invitation bore good fruit. At first, of course, they had to "think it over" and they took their time about it. The negro brain, even when sharpened with a drop of inherited Atlantic blood, does not react too quickly to any such proposal.

Meanwhile, a boy came into our compound one morning, handed a paper parcel to the interpreter on guard, one François, and said he wanted to sell it. The covering was removed, and, to our profound astonishment, we looked upon "Idena"—the granite head. Imagine our delight! So, after all, they were prepared to sell this, too! It was, of course, paid for. We were still looking at it with enraptured eyes when Bida, with a few of the Oni's Illaris, came up and reported that a boy, the son of a priest, had found the head of the "Idena" early that morning, had probably brought it to me, and, if so, would I return it.

Sad as it was, there was naturally nothing else to do. I agreed to give it back immediately. Then we decided to make use of the presence of the Idena in our compound to copy it in clay. I sent word to the Oni to ask his permission, and, should he grant this, begged him to let us have a good quantity of potter's clay. The Oni had no objection, sent it along and, to the great delight of the bystanders in general, Arriens tried his hand at sculpture. He really seemed to make quite a good thing of it. After we had come to the conclusion that it was, in all respects, sufficiently like, we sent the original "Idena" back. I even dispatched some of our own fellows along with it so as to be able to place it on record that we had voluntarily returned it. And after that, we had

nothing whatever to do with this granite figure until one day we saw it elsewhere. But within the next few days it struck me that the worthy aforesaid François frequently asked me whether I would be likely to give a good round sum, should he be able to find me a similar specimen in Ibadan, and told me that he knew where one very much like it, indeed, was to be seen in that great city.

But the copy made by Arriens suffered sad transformations. Two days after it had been finished, the soft clay head was squeezed askew by careless hands and when we tried to dry it in the heat of the sun it cracked all over and was thrown over the wall into a rubbish hole. The reader will in due course hear how this was the cause of some tragi-comic disputes.

For the time being the honest Ilifians were delighted to learn how much we admired their holy Gods, and when we visited the Oni, he gave me two Illaris who were to point us out a few ancient places of worship of the Modekans. Passing through wreckage, jungle, swamp, and much broken pottery on our way to the ruins of the town, we came to a peaceful place close to some old trees. There, sure enough, we saw some monoliths and one or two images on the ground which had obviously never been finished. One had fallen over into the tanglewood and had to be set up again for Arriens to sketch it more easily. While this was going on, Martius struck some stony soil. We at once decided to dig. A few labourers and their tools were fetched from the fields. The policemen and the Oni's Illaris themselves lent a hand in trenching and shaft-digging, and lo! out from the interlaced tree-roots a fine crocodile, carved in quartz, about eighteen inches in length, came to light. The cheers with which we hailed this first result of our spade-work and took it home were both long and loud.

I made notes that nobody had objected to our excavating among the ruins of Modeké, that the Oni's people had been present and helped us and that there had not then been the least sign of opposition or even displeasure. After that, we went on grubbing about Modeké; made inquiries; searched around; and found several more specimens, the remains, namely, of beautiful, peculiar, stumpy pedestals. Nobody protested against our little trips. Needless to add that the Oni must have heard; needless to say that I talked to him and gave him descriptions of the things we had found. He

told his people to inspect them, but in no way hinted at any desire to have them back or at their being left *in situ*. We made him a present whenever we found something and every such present was accepted with thanks.

Thus all was as smooth and pleasant as heart could wish. Not only so, but our own delight and the confidence of the natives in our work increased from day to day, from incident to incident, so that we were soon in a position to attack things on a bigger scale again. I had heard, in the cities of the Niger-bend in 1908, and in Ibadan in 1910, of a strange place, near which the real wealth of the Ilifians was said to be hidden, some way from the Sacred City, and rumoured to be a veritable arsenal of treasure. As was to be expected, the finest tracery of legend had been woven around and wrapped over its real kernel so closely as to put its serious investigation from any distance entirely out of the question.

Yet this much was certain: the place existed, and then those remarkable glass beads were found which I had first seen in Timbuktu, afterwards in Atacpamé (or German Togoland), Ibadan, and of late quite often as cherished ornaments on the necks of the Ilifians. As our friendship had by this time become much more cordial, I now asked the Oni, the recipient of my numerous handsome presents, to tell me something about the place formerly known as Ebolokun. Greatly surprised at my knowing the name, the details, the whereabouts and the treasures of Ebolokun, he promised me some guides. He sent me one early next morning. We started on the road to Ellisije, and then, passing the entrance to the Shâmân's shrine through a trellised gate that marked the city boundary, went Northwards. Our route, at first, was through wheat-fields, then through banana groves, and, after that, the Oni's Illari very soon lost his bearings. It seemed that nobody in the neighbourhood attached any importance to the place now, because no more beads had been found there lately and attempted excavations by the natives proved fruitless. So I sent the Illari to the farms to beat up a peasant and, having found him, he trotted off home. This farm labourer took us further on into the banana-lands, where, after walking a few hundred yards downhill, we came to a magnificent virgin forest. We had set out on horseback, but the beasts could get no further and had to be left behind because one giant trunk

after another blocked the tortuous path and in their fall had torn up undergrowth and roots and huge balls of earth, while parasitic creepers made so thick a network near the ground that every ounce of strength was needed to force one's way beneath them.

After going through the forest for some time, we came to a group of palms, denoting a place of worship, then to a second one, and, further on, to a third where a great surprise awaited us. We sat down and, while our guide explained something of no intrinsic importance, poked about beneath the mass of débris scattered all around us. Martius picked up a couple of bits of this, wiped the dust off one of them—by Jove! Glaze! We examined the other one—Glaze again! We picked up some more. The body of them all was a substance like porcelain clay, similar to cement, but they were all coated with a glaze of many colours. Afterwards, we found entire jars, with the lids belonging to them, glazed both inside and out, but portions of the glaze on one side had been damaged by the ferruginous soil.

So the dear old legends had not lied—what a Bastian would never have believed, was true! My faith in the reality and honesty of tradition and the retentiveness of the natives' memory was justified.

We now continued our pilgrimage—a feeble word—through the forest. We crept and crawled through the entanglements. Stumbling this way and that, whether on our feet or knees, we were hindered by inquisitive branches clutching at our belts, our gaiters, our coat-sleeves and our collars. Now and again a tree shook down battalions of ants over us, or our feet slipped away from under us. We soon learned we were not in a city where antiquity was worshipped, but on a city of ruins, where trenches, from five to fifteen feet deep, bore witness that seekers for treasure had been busy for many a century. A little further on I shall be able to affirm that we were standing where Poseidon's sacred home once stood.

* * * * * * * *

During one of my talks with the Oni, he had given me permission to dig in the Olokun grove. By dint of his wonderful energy

in conducting the operations, Martius succeeded in getting some very important results, in spite of our inadequate tools, merely simple implements of tillage in native use, and the fewness of our workmen notwithstanding. He led his little troop of five or six to Poseidon's grove every morning and put them to digging and scratching and shovelling, clearing away the soil himself while burrowing deeper and deeper still.

Limited as our resources were in tools and time and labour, mere surface results were all we could expect and, from the very first, we had to hold our vaster ambitions in check for a time at all events. My own desire was centred in obtaining a general notion of the *terrain* and the circumstances in which the treasure-seekers had won their prizes, and, to this end, I had a shaft driven between the roots of an old giant tree at a spot where, as far as could be seen, there had been no previous digging. We also dug out an already existing shaft until both of them were about fifteen feet in depth, connected them by a transverse gallery, and then, from the level of the shafts, drove two more galleries in the direction of the tree, which met at some seventeen feet below the surface. Then Martius went still further down.

Here, again, fortune smiled upon our labours. At a depth of some ten feet or so we found a thoroughly homogeneous bottom and struck the first lot of broken glazed pottery, reddish brown in colour, beneath some blocks of weather-beaten stone. About sixteen or seventeen feet down, we reached the level of the ashes and the beads, thus confirming the statements of those who still remembered the last attempts at excavating the heaps of rubble.

The engagement of the necessary labour was our greatest difficulty. The only permanent hands I had were one Houssa boy, who looked after the grooms, and one porter, who stayed behind when the others had gone back to Ibadan. The latter was the only one of any use at all; the former was indolence epitomized. Besides these, two or three natives had to be persuaded every day to accompany Martius. The wages we paid were very high, but it seemed impossible to find three or four willing journeymen in a city population certainly exceeding one hundred and twenty-five thousand souls. Once I managed to engage two Houssa for several days

A funeral in Ifé. The body is carried to the grave on the relatives' heads.

[*Facing p.* 95.

together. One fell ill with alleged dysentery and the other suddenly heard of a relative *in articulo mortis* in Ibadan, to whom he must perforce say good-bye. No—work was not a joy to the dear Ilifians at all!

Although our troubles in this one direction were almost insuperable, yet the natives were more than anxious, and, indeed, spared themselves no exertions to relieve us of our money in others. They had been told that I would gladly pay handsomely for each terra-cotta foot, trunk, head, or ornament, provided it was antique. All they would have to do was to dig and they would soon find things. And so they went on digging. I do not say that they always went fifteen feet down, but neither did I want them to. But wherever they knew of an old wall—and I fancy the Ilifians are quite able to tell old masonry from new—wherever a tradition hung round a particular bit of ground, they raked about and soon fetched out some extraordinary pot, shaped like a human, some torso, some head of a beast and several things wanting explanation, so that, although I failed at first to get a general idea of the nature of the remote civilization here waiting to be exhumed, I none the less succeeded in obtaining some extremely valuable data towards the elucidation of its genesis and growth. The different layers of deposits were quite easily recognizable and the most beautiful specimens of craftsmanship must undoubtedly have been the oldest.

Here, we found exquisitely life-like terra-cotta heads, with clear-cut features and purity of style, differentiated, however, by old-fashioned tattooing marks and the way of dressing the hair. They must be reckoned among the most precious of the things we had so far uncovered, because they all went to prove the pre-existence of a race possessing nothing in common with the one usually ticketed "negro," one specimen alone excepted, which was distinctly negroid in character. Now this is a very remarkable fact! And it was the soil of Ebolokun which yielded this single negro head.

After that the energy which Martius put forth in delving among the massive, rough-hewn foundations of the Oni's palace unearthed that particular brick, decorated with conventionalized animal forms, which, judged by the site it occupied and its shape, was clearly a hearth-tile.

Slowly but surely the sublime grandeur of the city of an erstwhile civilization was rearing its front above the dusk of negro life which envelops Ilifé as it stands to-day.

Yea—even the holy Lord of the sacred grove of Ebolokun, of Atlantic Africa's great Poseidon himself, rose from a world which had forsaken him and now again revealed him, wrathful maybe with us, the strangers who had dared to call him forth from the dawn of his existence before the gloom of negrodom had overshadowed it, wrath with us who had dragged him to the daylight. And this is the reason why he soon returned in dudgeon and amid great commotions to his swamp.

The miracle occurred like this :

I had already heard of the existence of an ancient " statue " of the Olokun. All who had told us of it had consistently declared that it was made of stone, but my informants at Wagadugu were emphatic that it was fashioned in a manner of its own. In spite of all my efforts, I could gather nothing more definite ; but when the stolen stone " Idena " head had been returned into the Oni's hands, he felt obliged to show his gratitude and promised to arrange that I should see this Olokun itself. So one day I asked for an Illari to take me to it. He sent him. Martius was away, excavating. Consequently, I had to start with Arriens only.

The Illari took us round the Oké (hill) Ogbomiré-gung, to a compound facing Northwards, and then told us that this was where an old priest of the Olokun lived. He asked us to take our seats on the veranda, saying he wanted to speak to him first. This somewhat surprised me and I told Bida to listen to what they were saying inside. I also pricked up my own ears, because I heard a very strange noise going on behind me, like digging and scratching in earth, hurried running to and fro, excited chattering and so on. In a word, I soon discovered that far from urging the aged priest to show us the Olokun, the Illari was persuading him to hide the image to prevent our getting even so much as a glimpse of it.

So I jumped to the conclusion that they were stowing the Olokun away underground inside. But here I was greatly in error, because, on the contrary, the Olokun is always hidden in the earth again on the spot where it was first found, and the image of the God only changed its abode for the swamp in which it was sunk after the

squabble in Ilifé had blown over. My first thought, then, was that they wanted to bury the Olokun, and I did not even suspect that the prince's Illari was ignorant of the God's abiding-place. I did not know that the people had attached no particular value to it until this instant, or that most of them had not even seen it. But directly I fancied I had hit upon the reason for its concealment I sprang to my feet and went inside. I saw the old man digging away in a corner and one or two youngsters helping to carry away the earth. Everybody was assembled. I now fetched the Ancient, obviously in senile decay and a tool in others' hands, out of his corner and spoke to him gently. He was quite muddle-headed, but one of the younger men seemed to exercise great influence over him. I asked who this was. His son, said they. He seemed clear-brained enough himself and I explained how simple the whole thing was. He quickly understood. The Illari, however, for his own part, scented the probability of an understanding being come to from afar and tried to get ahead by pointing to the hole which the old man and his son had been making, declaring that the Olokun was there. "Let them show it me, then!" said I. They fetched out a specimen of glazed earthenware, but I at once saw it was a very bad piece of work any quantity of which we had come across in Ibadan. I now realized that neither the Illari nor his coadjutors knew much about the Olokun. At last I made very merry at the clumsiness of this unsuccessful fraud, and then they all joined in the joke.

I led the embarrassed youth on one side, promised him a satisfactory *douceur*, and made it perfectly clear that the Olokun could be found and submitted to us quite easily, unless the Oni had forbidden it; the "Ancient" would have to come along as well, since he would have to officiate at this first dragging forth of the Olokun, "after the last great festival had been held." The old priest and Bida then again brought pressure to bear on the dotard. We gave him encouraging little pats on the back. He only shook his old head and crawled back into the corner with his boy. Other members of the family took part in the entertainment and then we all suddenly broke up. The lad and another man took a side-path of their own while we went along the main road to the Ebolokun Grove with the "Ancient," at a pace suited to his great age.

On arrival under the palm-trees, we found that the young fellow had made a short cut. He was carrying a fairly heavy sack slung across his shoulders. It contained the effigy of the God. After Martius had been summoned from the scene of his labours close by, we waited intently for the sack to be opened. The grey-head placed two stones one above the other and he and his son bared the upper parts of their bodies—the invariable custom at all religious ceremonial—dragged something out of the bag, placed it on the stones, and then—well, then—I did two things: I rubbed my eyes and pinched my leg to make sure I was not dreaming and to avert attention from my exceeding joy.

Before us stood a head of marvellous beauty, wonderfully cast in antique bronze, true to the life, incrusted with a patina of glorious dark green. This was, in very deed, the Olokun, Atlantic Africa's Poseidon!

Profoundly stirred, I stood for many minutes before this remnant of the erstwhile Lord and Ruler of the Empire of Atlantis.

My companions were no less astounded. As though we had agreed to do so, we held our peace. Then I looked around and saw the blacks, the circle of the sons of the "venerable priest," his Holiness the Oni's friends, and his intelligent officials. I was moved to silent melancholy at the thought that this assembly of degenerate and feeble-minded posterity should be the legitimate guardians of so much classic loveliness. For that this head of Olokun was almost equal in beauty, and, at least, no less noble in form and as ancient as the terra-cotta heads, had now been demonstrated beyond all doubt.

The Illari's rage and Sprig No. 2's annoyance had not escaped my eyes. I knew by experience when I was confronted by hostility which, happen what might, would need conciliation. So, while Arriens was making a few rough sketches, we took the others to our excavations and let them see what Martius had been doing. Then I took the Illari aside and strolled up and down with him and Bida in the bush. I asked him to whom the image of the God belonged, where it came from, and so forth. He said that, for all he knew, the Olokun head had been dug up in Ebolokun somewhere in his father's time and was the aged priest's own property. He told me that this head was usually kept underground at the place of its

discovery; that it was only brought out and sacrifices made to it at certain festivals, but that he himself had only just heard this and that no one in the town now showed any special veneration for the Olokun. On hearing this, I played my trumps. How would he like a handsome gift? Avarice gleamed from his eyes. I asked him if the old priest was entitled to sell me the head. "Yes!" said he. I told him that if he wished me to give him a large present in cash after I had actually got it, he would have to help me to get it. This completely bowled him over. It was agreed that Bida should accompany him to the priestly dotard's son that very same evening.

No sooner said than done. When I retired to my large new study as night began to fall, Bida sallied forth to the household of the priest, there met the Oni's messenger, and began to bargain. I had told him to offer three pounds to start with, well knowing that the more one offers a black man, the greedier he grows, so that he finally sells at a fair price, being firmly convinced in his own mind that on some future occasion he will get a very much higher one.

Bida soon came back and reported that the old man had been persuaded to agree to a sale "in the abstract"; that the other fellow had told him that a fresh copy could be made at the tin-smith's and that they would not be likely to finger such a lot of money again for a long time, but that the price would have to be one hundred and twenty shillings, besides a bottle of spirits and a tumbler. I at once agreed, gave Bida six pounds, a bottle of whisky and a few other trifles. He returned the same night to report satisfactory progress. The purchase-money had been accepted, and, therefore, the head, according to the good custom obtaining in Yorubaland, had become our property; all that they wanted was to make a sacrifice to it next day, and "unsanctify it," so to say, and then they would send it on. Against this arrangement there was nothing to say.

For a long time we sat rejoicing at our great success for, although I had many reasons for setting a higher value on the terra-cotta heads, I, nevertheless, had to say to myself that it was of the utmost importance to obtain the type and material of a more ancient epoch for comparison with the bronzes from Benin and similar discoveries in the countries adjoining, so that the connection between them

might be established on this basis. Although the great Olokun might be snatched from our sight again, we could content ourselves with knowing that the fact of its positive discovery proved that bronzes had been known in that epoch of antiquity; that these bronzes had the same features as the terra-cottas, and that, come what should, the opportunity of exhuming such bronzes would still be left to us, although this particular head itself might once more disappear.

Next day, we had a charming little adventure, which plainly showed us how these weak-minded creatures would always make promises, and when asked to carry them out, always try to get out of them by some piece of clumsy trickery. The Oni had let me know that the owner of the real Oranja image was prepared to show it. I had not even asked to see it and this offer was entirely voluntary. Sure enough, an Illari arrived at ten o'clock and took us to a compound on the North-west precincts of the palace quarter. We had to wait a very long time, indeed, because the "owner" had "already" been summoned. When, at last, a few old people turned up, we were taken to a half-ruined tank-yard, smelling unpleasantly of old and recent sacrifices. An old door was thrown open in the background with a great ceremonial to-do and bowings and kissing of the ground. Then one image after another was brought out from among the old pots in the chamber adjacent and set up before me.

The impression I received was the antithesis of the day before. The figures were coarse to a degree, carved in soapstone, of recent manufacture and bedaubed with all sorts of colours. They were all female in character, while the sex of the principal statue was quite unmistakable. But, as I explained to the boys and the "possessors," Oranja is a God, and, therefore, they were obviously having a game with me. Then they admitted that this was not Oranja the God, but Amirini the Goddess. Yet they could not understand why I would not let it go at that and would have it that whether I was looking at the God Oranja or the Goddess Amirini amounted to precisely the same thing. And, besides, wasn't Amirini much more lovely than Oranja? Oranja was quite old. This business proved that the natives set a far greater value on soapstone figures than on the antique terra-cottas to which they attached none whatever.

And it was eminently characteristic of this degenerate "negro" community to think more of their miserable modern spurious imitations than of the genuine products of artistic antiquity. When the latter-day method of looking at Art had been exhaustively and exhaustingly descanted upon, they took us to another house, where the real and actual and bonâ-fide owner of the Oranja was alleged to dwell. It looked absolutely deserted. The owner had fled into the bush. However, the ethnologist on the hunt must expect to be "led by the nose, as asses are."

Yet it almost seemed as though this was not to be the only instance of being so led on that day. Bida had been to the old Olokun priest several times in the morning to fetch away the head. I went with him there myself in the afternoon. The place was empty. Once more Bida went there with a companion in the evening, and again failed to find a member of the Olokun family proper in residence. Then I lost all patience and after we had "conquered" supper—a phrase intended to let down our then second cook lightly—I went along with old Adekulé, one of Bida's friends and of the blood-royal, to the Olokun compound. I stepped into the old man's house, Bida into the son's. Both were equally taken by surprise. I put my arm into the old fellow's elbow, smiled at him sweetly and gently led him forth. The entire priestly household were gathered outside. I read them a sermon on the baseness of their conduct, that is to say, on the exceeding shabbiness of their behaviour in giving me the slip and again asked them whether they wanted to sell me the head of the Olokun or not. I told them distinctly that they would not be compelled to do so in any way whatever; but that, naturally, if they did not mean to part with it, they would have to give me back my money and that white men expected everybody to keep his word. I asked them whether my own part of the contract had not been kept, and if they had not had the cash. "Yes," said they. Very well, then—did they wish to sell me the head or not? The answer was in the affirmative, but what was frightening them was the idea of getting into the bad books of the "authorities" at Ibadan. I replied there was no need to worry about that, and that the "bigwigs" there were some of my best friends. (I plead guilty to the only lie I told in the whole of this business, but at the moment I little knew its full extent.) They

then fell in with what I wished, but said I should have to fetch the Olokun from the forest in person, because they themselves would not dare to bring it me for fear of getting into trouble with the " great Residency " in Ibadan.

Ah ! if it had only ended there !

It was a glorious moonlit night. We called the three sons of the ancient priest and struck down a side-path. Martius and Adekulé stayed behind with the " Ancient," who had seated himself upon a tree-trunk. Mother Nature had been lavish of her charms for this strange trip of mine at night. Overhead, that marvellously bright moon—peculiar to the tropics only—and, beneath it, boles of lofty trees and the fantastic shapes of stacked banana leaves ; glow-worms and flying foxes, the flower-scented air, all asleep above a pall of mist like velvet, a coverlet of earth from which the Gods stretched forth their everlasting hands in leaves of weird contour towards the dome of night. It would have been as beautiful as Paradise, but for the little incidental troubles of this pilgrimage. For its greater part we walked in the bed of a river, sometimes only ankle-deep, but sometimes splashing into holes. And then the flies !

We reached the actual swamp at last. We were in Ebolokun itself. Only another hundred yards or two beneath the crowns of the palms in almost pitchy gloom, and I realized that we had reached the very place. One of the men began to open the ground at the foot of a banana tree with his mattock. At last the sound of metal struck upon my ears. A careless blow chipped off a piece of Olokun, the only precious part of the image of the God I was afterwards able to take away from Ibadan. I picked up the slightly damaged head from the sand and bore it back rejoicing. Sweet was the burden of it in my arms.

The sons of the priest, who so far had been quite friendly and agreeable, now began to scratch their polls on the way back and take it in turn to express the opinion that it had been a very serious business, because they really had no right at all to sell the head. The head belonged to the Oni. I said I did not believe it, because the Oni himself had told me its owner was the old priest and that he (the Oni) had never even himself seen it. But, for all that, they begged me to give them something in writing on account of the Oni and the big Residency in Ibadan, to prove that I had

purchased the head and, more than that, I was to go with them to the Oni and bring the affair to his knowledge. I said it would be too late that evening, but I would pay his Holiness a visit early next day. However, in order to satisfy them, I sent Bida to the palace with them and the Oni sent me back word that he was looking forward to my wishing him "good morning."

We went very early next day to the Primate, who stuck his fat face outside his innermost dwelling and bade us "Good morrow."

Then a long palaver was started, in the course of which I learned that the head of the "Idena" had been recovered. Further, that an image known as the Edja could not be found, and that the "authorities" in Ibadan would be angry, because they had declared that old things were not to go out of the country. All I could do was to tell him that I knew nothing about the "Idena" and the Edja, but that a great number of things had been stolen from me as well. I mentioned several and the Oni confessed that his people were excellent thieves and liars. The upshot of it all was that I expressed my readiness to show his ambassadors all my antiquities in order that they might satisfy themselves that the Edja was not among them and promised that whenever the head of the Idena should come into my hands, or be offered me for sale, to send it back immediately. The Oni, on his part, agreed that I was to retain the head of the Olokun, but also, in exchange, that he was to have an exact copy of it, to be forwarded through the D.C. of Oshogbo. I explained that a replica undistinguishable from the original could be made and I had a galvanic process of reproduction in my mind. I specially insisted on the need of a formal agreement to be drawn up in the presence of us all to the effect that the original was to be our own and its counterpart the property of the Oni. Bida confessed later on that, to save himself a little trouble and to smooth the road of negotiation, he had translated things the other way round in the real "negro" fashion. But this gave rise to much more trouble in the future.

The Oni's commissioners came and inspected my prehistoric and antique trophies. The head, subsequently claimed as that of the Edja, was among them. None of the Oni's people recognized it as such at the time and yet it was this very head which was stolen that very night.

I had not, however, as yet the least suspicion that anything was in the wind.

Inquiry after inquiry produced no results. I could get neither the "Idena" nor the "Edja." In due course, I stowed away my ethnological valuables, the fragments of columns and crocodiles, which fine things the Oni and his people had up till then considered of no account, because they had been exhumed and to which, in their own eyes, they had no title. The Olokun affair was settled in a special way, after another very quaint and lively interview with the Oni, during which he had asked for a written agreement concerning the replica. I only found out months afterwards why they insisted on having it all in writing, but had no inkling of it then. After this last demand had been complied with, all was plain sailing, or rather I had to assume that everything was in order, since the Oni had his two "sprigs" at his elbow able to read and translate the letters which, as was only natural for this particular purpose, were written in English. There was no trace whatever of the "Idena" and the "Edja." I and my companions thought they had been stolen for no other reason than to be again offered for sale when occasion should arise. Alas! I had no glimmering at all of the subtle ingenuity of my friends when playing the game of intrigue.

So we packed up. The Houssas took the collection on to Edé, where I expected to arrive in a few days. As good luck would have it, I had kept the finest terra-cottas in my private work-chest and they were thus preserved, so to say, by accident from the thunderstorm about to break. I was quite ready to leave and only waiting for my carriers, firmly convinced that we had achieved all that was possible in view of the slenderness of our resources and the shortness of the time at our disposal.

I did not know that Poseidon of Atlantic Africa was incensed and about to send me his envoys.

Head in terra-cotta whose restoration to the Ilifians was demanded.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens, about ½ actual size.)

CHAPTER VI

THE COLLISION

Opposition to the Expedition—Native mendacity—Torturing my servants—Meaning of "most friendly adjustment" under given circumstances.

THE preceding and following chapters contain some material for meditation unique in its way. Our experiences on the road from Lagos to Yebba are unlikely to affect the course of universal history; intrinsically they are but trivial and simple. Yet never were the thoughts and feelings of these dark-skinned races revealed to me so clearly as between October, 1910, and February, 1911, during, that is, the conflict in which the Genius of the North tried to wrest from the Spirit of the Tropics the secrets of the latter's philosophy of life and its mighty past. The object of this contest was to wring from the sliest and most subtle people of West Africa documentary evidence of its growth, and, had they been left to their own devices, they would have been ready enough to grant the Northerner his desire in return for the monies offered. But their greed, allied to love of intrigue and untruthfulness, so gained the upper hand while bargaining for the greatest possible profit, that

the weirdest depths of the "negro soul," of which I had no personal knowledge, were laid bare to me. The incidents taking place in this period would be ludicrous in themselves because they were so repulsively mean; yet the events which occurred in the course of the negotiations were so striking as to fill one with amazement. And so the essence of the struggle is not the miserable monotony of the accidents set forth in Chapters II.—VII., but the sum total of the experiences on which we base our estimate of the true inwardness of the native soul. And these experiences of ours have a standard value for all those dealing directly with Western Africa's swarthy sons, be they either missionaries, officials, traders, or arm-chair, stay-at-home legislators. Lying, robbery, perjury, with the lurking assassin in the background, play their parts in them as bravely as in any backstairs novel. They brought us face to face with an appallingly hideous lack of all moral principle and an astonishing dearth of the ethical instinct.

Now, grave as the consequences most certainly are in view of these facts, it is satisfactory to know that an expert's eye was once enabled to observe the vices above set forth. But I cannot entirely overlook the fact that the negro only unveiled the "beauty of his soul" in all its nakedness after white men had more or less so prompted him.

I need not, I trust, again refer to all we had to put up with in the market-place of Ifé or at the Balé school in Ibadan.

At one fell swoop I gained a view of the dreary moral waste of the black man's soul. I never believed it possible that human beings could exist who lied so vilely and so much as a matter of course. The little West African trick of laying a knife in the road while hiding in the bush and laying an information of theft from one's house against the passer-by, is known to most of us and has often been made the subject of a tale. But the skill of these Yorubans in weaving plots, setting traps and committing perjury has not yet found its literary exponent in African fiction. I might perhaps have given credit to a determined Tuareg or a Malayan head-hunter for the assassination of my poor Kailani, but never to an African, so often described as "a child," who shot him down so cold-bloodedly.

Poor Kailani! May your name be blazoned high in warning

before the gaze of European colonizing peoples. And now for the second lesson taught me by experience.

Woe betide the Europeans who forget their unity of race and culture in the bush of Africa! Woe! For the beast still slumbers in the heart of all of us and should the blacks no longer feel constraint and white men goad them on, unthinking, against their fellow-whites, then in the day to come, when, conscious of their masters' failings, they feel their savage nature surge voluptuously within them, then—brutes as they really are—they will learn at last to tear them down, rend them in pieces and lap their blood. The names of Kailani and Akelle may serve to make us cautious. Our lordship of the dwellers in this ethical Sahara is but superficial. Once loose but a single knot and brutality runs riot. Taught by their rulers that the white man's plane is placed on a level with their own when he endeavours to depose and put to shame his brother white, then, drunk with victory, the beasts will turn the knowledge of their own lord's mere humanity against these lords themselves. Oh, Europeans, labouring on the tawny soil of dusky Africa, let me adjure you to hold together in friendship's bond and not to lose the memory of your race and kin!

These are the fruits of our observations, to which our own personal experiences may haply add a wreath to grace their insignificance.

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The Oni, his court, and myself remained good friends to the end of my stay in Ilifé and neither we nor our subordinates were ever aware of any discord. We had said our say on the thefts we had suffered; the loss of some things in the city itself (the Idena and the Edja); on our sojourn in a country infested with thieves of distinction; and on its being the birthplace of fraud sure of a welcome in every home. All these charges were made in the presence of the Oni, who agreed to them cheerfully at the last of our interviews, which was most uncommonly merry. We arrived at the united conclusion that an Orisha (or God) of lying and theft should be set up to whom all the successful liars and thieves would make sacrifice. The Oni and the whole of his clergy laughingly voted that the Orisha's entire

dignity would not suffice to let him grapple effectively with the enormous quantity of food thus offered him, and, when the motion was carried *nem. con.*, we offered him another present, which he graciously deigned to accept, and the greatest good feeling and concord reigned over all the proceedings.

That is to say, as far as we ourselves were concerned!

Meanwhile, however, a potion was brewing in Ibadan and Ilifé, brought to the boil and spiced with some bitter herbs at Lagos, which we were to sup. Naturally I never could quite understand what truth there was in the statement that we had been kept under close observation and the natives forbidden to assist us, or how much of this was fact and how much imagination. Bit by bit, however, the coarse threads of the Lagos-Ibadan net were unravelled. I shall try to describe the course of events in their only possible sequence, and, in so doing, give evidence simultaneously of the esoteric native policy then prevailing at the Residency in Southern Nigeria.

I have already mentioned I did not altogether like the tone of our reported arrival to the D.C. of Oshogbo and when Sprig No. 1 stepped up to me the day after and said that the two men, told off and willing to accompany me, I had engaged as guides, were not at liberty to show me anything, I told him plumply to mind his own business and leave mine alone. This annoyed him. When I complained to the Oni he said that, since he was employed by the Government, he had to make the best of it.

Some kind of a cattle-show was being held at Lagos just then. Sprig No. 1 wanted to go to it, and got into touch with all the folk from Lagos who happened to be in Ilifé. I knew all about them. All West Africans are merchants and middlemen, but the Yorubas of the coast are the limit of "downiness." The moment these Coast people in Ilifé got to know what I wanted and what I was prepared to give for good antique specimens for a collection, they hustled around among the natives, hauled along all kinds of rubbish and offered it me for sale. It was easy enough to see that they were not Ilifians. I declined to deal and asked them to tell the owners of the things to come themselves, because this was the only way to overcome the shyness of the Ilifians and to secure them the money I myself might pay for the

goods; the only way to get them to work together with me, and, as far as possible, to obviate being the purchaser of stolen goods. But the Lagos fellows saw themselves being deprived of a handsome profit and did not love me for it. They were told to keep a look out that I got nothing antique, because the great Adjelle (at the Residency in Ibadan) had forbidden the export of antiquities.

I do not know the exact sequence of what followed. Anyhow, the injuries alleged to have been done by my people to the Olokun's owner were reported, viâ Oshogbo, to Lagos. The Lagos fellows stirred up the Elders at Ilifé. The Oni had often assured me he had no interest personally in the Olokun. Yet this did not hinder the pack, now in full cry, from arranging for the dispatch of a complaint to Lagos charging us with having got possession of the Olokun by violent means.

And now three fresh factors come upon the scene. First, the actual Government, in the person of the Colonial Secretary, who wrote to the German Consul officially to the effect that, in consequence of complaints lodged by the Ilifians, definite instructions had been given to arrange the affair in a perfectly amicable manner. Secondly, that unless appearances were grossly deceptive, a very great personage indeed tacitly consented to the necessary steps being taken to prevent the valuable results of our labours going to Germany. But the third factor was the delegate appointed to "arrange the affair in a perfectly amicable manner."

And now for the tragedy itself!

There were no Ilifians to be got as carriers at our departure. On instructions from Ibadan they had apparently been forbidden to transport our packages to Edé. The Houssas, who had taken the first portion of it to Edé, had not returned, but gone their own roads. However, we were anxious to get off and, as the Ilifians refused to act as porters, went out beyond the town one day and invited everyone coming from Edé into the market to give us a call, when we talked them into staying overnight and agreeing to convey our baggage next day in return for generous board and handsome wages. We lodged them in our inner rain-tank court and fed them well.

We were in the thick of packing up our personal belongings in the evening when an orderly from the Residency in Ibadan

turned up with a polite enough letter. It stated that the natives had complained of things being taken from them against their will and that, should this have been so, they ought to be given back. There was no mention in the letter that somebody, as really was the fact, was already on the road to see that this was done.

It was, however, a thoroughly characteristic proceeding. We had experienced a succession of similar checks. First, we were advised not to go to Ifé, but to wait till the following spring, when, as was known, we intended to be in the Interior. Then we were promised that the necessary arrangements would be made and thirty porters engaged in four days, but they could not be found in a city of some one hundred and fifty thousand or two hundred thousand souls. Then we were to have been looked after on our arrival in Ilifé, and we were allowed to depart without any official announcement of this being sent on. And, lastly, we were politely asked in a letter to adjust "independently" a difficulty which had arisen, but which made no mention of the fact that steps were in progress to nullify the consequences of our alleged "misdemeanours."

There was only one opinion among the Englishmen in Northern Nigeria who had heard of these things from our countrymen and ourselves, namely, that this in particular and other things in general, were altogether ungentlemanly, and "infernally wanting in tact." But there was a great deal more yet to come.

The messenger from the Residency received a reply expressing my ignorance of having, to the best of my knowledge, done anything at all contrary to the Oni's own wishes. But Sprigs numbers 1 and 2 came to me the same evening and asked me "in the name of the Oni" to dismiss "the porters" we were keeping "in durance." In answer to this impertinence, I assembled them all and, in the hearing of both the Sprigs, asked them whether they were here entirely of their own accord and ready to carry our baggage in the morning, or detained against their will. They lifted up their cheerful voices *unisono*, "of our own accord," and I bade the precious couple to tell the Oni so. I heard no single syllable at the time that the Oni had been informed of the arrival of any officer from the Residency, or that it was not the Oni,

Pl. The "Meeting."

Sketches by Carl Arriens during the proceedings of the principal typical Ilifians present at the inquiry.

[*Facing p.* 110.

but the Lagos clique, who tried to keep us back by depriving us of our porters.

At six to the minute, we took our way next day across the ruins of Modeké through Ilifé, through bush and forest, over defective bridges and roads which were wretched enough, but, by comparison with those on the highway to Ibadan, splendid. Cheerfully and gaily we strode along, until, at eight o'clock, our way was barred by police, bicycles, interpreters, and a whole posse of minions of the law. We got off our horses and saluted. Our reception was cold and unfriendly. We had to listen to a harangue in which the disposition to "arrange the affair in a perfectly amicable manner" was shown by an ill-tempered reproach for our having spoiled the Christmas holidays and we were told to get back to Ifé then and there.

So—To the Right-about. . . Turn. . . . Quick. . . . March!

We took up our old quarters in the same compound, all the more disagreeable because our "amiable" hosts had rubbed down the walls and floors with dung and horse puddle while we were away. This custom seems to do the walls no harm, but is most decidedly repugnant to a European's sense of smell and cleanliness. An hour afterwards the Government representative arrived in the great square of Ilifé. His delay was explained by his having changed into full fig on his way through the bush. He advanced in great state on a chair, borne on the heads of four officials. His police and his messengers in uniform walked in procession before and behind him. To give the world a chance of admiring this noble train, it went up and down the square before our house and the Oni's palace more than once in slow time. Then its precious load was set down under the sparse trees in front of our compound.

The tent arrived and was pitched in our vicinity. Some orders were given and we immediately felt that the atmosphere was hostile to us, that two camps were in process of creation. The negro is not, at first, disturbed by a display of antagonism. He does not appreciate the dignity which avoids intercourse with an adversary. On the contrary, we were soon called upon by the police and the Residency folk and my own people returned the compliment by visits to the Residency camp. Thus I came to hear

the same day that our possessions were to be taken away from us. I thereupon ordered Bida to ride in to Edé, weed out the best of the stone sculptures from the ruined city of Modeké, pack them in separate parcels, separate these from the rest and hide them.

Then I stowed away my much more precious terra-cottas where they were not very likely to be got at by anyone but myself. But next day my worst fears were more than realized.

The surrender of the head of the Olokun was demanded. I returned it. I was given the six pounds I had paid for it, which was the only money restored to me. The following morning, when a public court was to sit, my temperature was so high that I had to ask for its adjournment. When I called to request this, my hand was politely taken hold of, to see, I suppose, whether it was above par. Excited by fever, it was as much I could to control myself sufficiently not to give a "striking proof" of my—then—state of health. The same day the D.C. from Oshogbo, a veteran barrister grown grey in the Government's service, arrived. He held a watching brief during the inquiry, but took no active part in it. Things, they said in the evening, were looking blacker than ever for us, as, in reply to leading questions, the natives of course deposed that the Olokun had been taken by force. The court made a great show of being surprised, and declared that next morning witnesses would be called in support. This dictum was expressed with so little reticence that it was obvious to all that it must be most prejudicial. So I made up my mind to face the music, and, thinking that not much sleep would be in store for us in the immediate future, I undid my book trunk and we spent the next few days, whenever our presence was not demanded in Court, in reading Goethe's novels and romances aloud to each other. Ah —dear and god-like Goethe! What a mine of refreshment thou wert to us in those sad hours!

The inquiry was opened on the third day counting from our return to Ilifé. The proceedings began at nine a.m. and lasted till close upon five p.m. without a break. We three—Martius, Arriens and myself—took our seats next to the Government officials on one side of a wide circle, the two representatives of the Residency took the other, and between both sides sat the Oni and his Court. My first proposal, namely, to pave the way for a friendly

compromise with the Oni and to get the matter arranged on an amicable basis, was flatly declined. I was soon to learn that this suggestion of mine showed extraordinary innocence. For now it appeared that yesterday had been occupied in mustering a mighty array of witnesses and making the people understand by the questions put to them, exactly what they were expected to say—beyond what had already been put into their mouths by the fellows from Lagos. The Colonial Secretary had stated that the thing would be at an end if we had actually come to an agreement with the natives. The Olokun business had been satisfactorily settled. Now, however, the whole story connected with the discovery of the Olokun was gone into in an inquiry lasting from early morn till dewy eve, conducted as if counsel for the prosecution and the President of the Court had been rolled into one. Questions so palpably partial were put to the plaintiffs that the eyes of myself and my staff fairly bulged with amazement. And now the lying began, fit to split the timbers. The humorous part of the whole business was that everybody had to be sworn. The heathen had to press the Court's pocketknife to his lips, forehead and bosom, and swear something like this: "If I say a good (*i.e.* true) thing, may the God, so-and-so, do good to me. If I say a bad (*i.e.* untrue) thing, may the God, so-and-so, do me harm." The Mahommedans had to kiss the Koran and the Christians a page of the Gospels. It interested me supremely to observe the people at a ceremonial such as this and I cannot recall any occasion which gave me such an insight into the "negro soul" or so appalled me with their evil qualities. Whenever a fresh witness took the stand, the Court looked him over, the policemen grinned, the inspectors and interpreters smiled broadly behind the presidential chair. Whenever an individual took the oath, they punched, and pinched, and jostled up against each other in their joy, and for the best of reasons.

I noticed many differences in the way they took the oath. Only the fewest did so with dignity. The majority, with true negro slyness, dodged potential perjury, and I made very careful and detailed notes, because I fancied the matter might eventuate in a really grave situation in Ibadan and Lagos. As my people told me, to begin with the majority put some palm-oil on their tongues

and donned their bracelets and amulets to ward off consequences. This precaution was taken to prevent the special deity invoked by the individual perjuring himself from hearing what he said at all. But there were enough Yorubans in my employ to teach me all about the far greater subtleties used as lightning conductors. The simplest invocation, and the one most in favour with the Yorubas professing Orishaism, is this: "If I say the thing which is, may the Orisha be good to me; if I say the thing which is not, may he do me no harm." This is the oath nearly all the Ilifians took, and my own boys as well, after telling me what they were going to do; and the Residency interpreters, who, of course, heard it as plainly as anybody else, never said a word, but grinned and pinched themselves delightedly and generally looked upon it all as a huge joke. The formula was galloped through at such a pace that only with the most thorough knowledge of the language and the keenest ear for its perversion could one detect the difference.

But there were still subtler refinements than these in use, of course by the Lagos folk and youths—on a higher plane of culture. For example, on being asked what their religion was, the Moslems said they were Christians. Then they kissed a page of the New Testament and swore by that. *Per contra*, the Christians declared themselves followers of the Prophet and, accordingly, kissed the Koran. I need scarcely insist that this kind of swearing to the truth then meant nothing whatever to anybody. Seeing that the negro does not mind lying the least little bit and that the whole of his morality consists in getting all the good he possibly can out of life in general and its accidents in particular, the lying that took place might have been for prizes offered for the greatest proficiency in Mercury's secondary profession.

Altogether, they had been excellently drilled and, as somebody very properly said, had had plenty of time. Yet although this had been spent to the greatest advantage things did not always fit, and any judge, possessed of brains and a sense of humour, would have seen the comedy of the situation in the twinkling of an eye. The evidence given of the removal of the Olokun was full of discrepancies. Some of it was so confused that the Oni, sitting in state in the centre and dripping with greasy

sweat, got impatient; some of it went to prove that all three white men had overpowered the poor blacks; some of it, that only two of them had been present when the deed of violence was done; and yet another, that there had been only one—meaning, of course, poor little me—the "head German," to wit, as the interpreters mockingly called me. A sensational incident interrupted this pandemonium of mendacity. One man, who probably had insufficiently palm-oiled his tongue and lost confidence in the alteration of the formula, took his perjury so dreadfully to heart as to faint. This gave rise to an awful and general hubbub. The inspectors and constables went on grinning with delight. The Oni's suite were aghast and the august potentate was himself so stricken with horror as to rush from under his sheltering canopy, entirely forgetful of his own dignity, towards the man in a swoon. This fit of unconsciousness affected them all very painfully, because when it comes on after taking an oath, it is always considered a sign that the particular deity appealed to brands him who has taken his name in vain in this particular manner.

There was only one person who was absolutely unmoved.

After the President of the Court had heard every one else's testimony, there were three people who were not even called—ourselves—three whites. I was very seldom questioned personally at any time during this inquiry, and my staff never at all. The Oni gave lots of "evidence" without having been sworn. Rather a strange proceeding in a court of law, was it not? Not at all—I was told later that this had not been a court of law, but only a "meeting." I conclude, therefore, that the English conduct their "meetings" on oath!

When the Olokun bother was settled for the day, it was determined to search our baggage. I did not, unfortunately, then know that this action was illegal, the Court not having granted a warrant. We were called upon to undo all the packages containing the collection still in hand. The rest of it had been brought back from Edé, all but the cases of Modekan sculptures, one or two small boxes, and, best of all, the terra-cottas.

Now there seems to be no doubt about the real intention. Every time a case was opened, the Oni was asked whether he claimed any of its contents. He was asked to mention anything

he wanted to have restored. Then precisely what one would expect to happen, did happen. When a particularly fine connoisseur's specimen was disclosed, the Oni was always asked if that wasn't something he would like. Luckily, the Oni, having more decency than his interlocutors, declined most of the offers. But the intention was so apparent that the boys behind me said: "They like to take all from our master." It was only when a specimen of sculpture turned up that the Oni and his staff, when incited, recognized and claimed it. This instigation was done so unblushingly as to make me ask plump out whether the exportation of antiquities had been forbidden by law. The answer was that there was such a law in existence, but not yet actually promulgated, though it would be soon. At least, it was "hoped" so. We all heard this quite plainly and knew, therefore, that we had been misled. That misrepresentations were made was proved by the fact that a very handsome collection I had made was carried off by others.

I protested that my exhumations had not been found in Ifé, but in Modeké and that the Oni and his *entourage* had given me leave to dig and remove my spoils at the time. Thereupon, the Oni was simply asked: did he put in a claim for what had been uncovered in the ruins of Modeké. The Oni answered "Yea," as he was meant to do, and that settled the question. Not a single penny piece did I get back of all the gifts and expenses I had incurred in persuading the natives to bring to light those things of which they had had no previous knowledge! That was robbery with violence, if you like, and that was why all the natives grinned with so much glee. Under other circumstances it might really have been amusing to watch the staff from Lagos. The longer the business lasted, the more grimaces they made behind their leader's back, imitating his gestures, rolling their eyes, winking, and waving their hands at us and testifying to their hearty enjoyment of the spectacle afforded them.

If further proof of the loyalty—save the mark!—of whites to each other be necessary, I have it in black and white in a recent book by Dennett, which states that the British Museum possesses a little stone pillar corresponding in detail with one taken from me. It was carried off from Ifé by the notorious English captain

and transported to England. Dennett says that the Oni was afterwards asked whether he wanted it sent back, but he replied in the negative on the ground that he had its fellow. But what the Oni said to me was that he had been constrained by *force majeure* to part with it, adding that this particular specimen had been an heirloom in his family, and not a thing of no special interest like those I came upon in Modeké. Is not this a curious example of the perversion of the truth so common in this country ?

Yet affairs grew more critical still. There were three small boxes stored for safety in Bida's hut. But the Lagos crew, sniffing around in every hole and corner, found them out. A triumphal procession went and hauled them forth. The first trunk opened was full of modern figures carved in stone, every single one of which I had purchased from the natives direct. Bida said he could put his finger on every individual seller. But nobody cared. It was all one. In this instance, where everything ought to have been considered, and actually was, in our favour, no evidence was taken, nor even the facts examined ; the goods were simply detained. Specimens of glazed pottery found in Ebolokun were in the second box. No one but myself could possibly have a fair claim to them, because the Oni himself and the Governor before him had given us leave to dig about Ebolokun, and, therefore, none but ourselves could substantiate a title to the least particle of them. It all made absolutely not a jot of difference. All my protestations were brushed on one side. The Lagos rabble continued to grin and my property was seized, although the Oni stated that he attached no value whatever to it personally. So confiscation was the order of the day, and it was rumoured in Ibadan that the dear Oni had thought better of it afterwards and changed his mind.

To put it plainly. The Government simply picked my pocket of the fruits of my arduous toil and never even offered to refund me the smallest fraction of the expenditure involved in their acquisition. The subsequent presence of my treasures in Ibadan can be established.

This, however, was by no means the end of it. The accusation that he lacks the power of inventing a bit of knavery does not lie against the negro, especially if he be caught young, educated and

trained in Lagos and the Dahomey Coast. The fragments of the copy of the "Idena" head made by Arriens in all innocence, and which, as every one knew, had come to a bad end, were dragged out and François, my interpreter, and Adekulé, the Yoruban, were accused of having exchanged the copy for the original and carried off the latter. They were arrested, and this day's proceedings closed.

The curtain, however, had not yet rung down on the charming incidents of the play. Not half an hour had passed before the end of this last act and we were still at supper, when a whole mob came into our compound and lanterns were flashed through our open door. The minions of the Government, with an escort of police and inspectors. had come to take Bida in charge on suspicion of having stolen sacred relics from the natives. Bida was called and I, of course, told him to go quietly and that if, as I was quite sure, he were innocent, I would make it my business to see that he was promptly set at liberty and compensation given him. I handed him over, and then my poor Bida was so roughly hustled through the door by the brutal constabulary that Arriens at once entered a protest. And, besides that, as François' wife came and told me that her husband had been manhandled, I requested the proper authority to ensure the protection of my subordinates and to take proper steps for their decent treatment. What good this did, we were to learn a couple of days later. All three of us were of one opinion as to the conduct of the police. Our observations of it agreed. When the circle of spectators to be counted by the thousand during this business, surged dangerously inwards, the black servants of the law freely used the clubs with which they are armed. And they always struck at the breasts of men and women alike. Twice I saw blood drawn. Every night the two policemen placed on guard over my collection in the open were drunk. But the one who was posted over myself one night as an extra special sentry was so full as to be speechless. Of course, it was my duty as the leader of the expedition to go the rounds and I invariably discovered these rascals lumbering about and slumbering on the benches. When my collection was afterwards restored to me in Ibadan, a whole series of my finest specimens was missing and the packages had been so loosely re-tied by those who had them in their charge after

Court-orchestra of the chief of Ilorin.
(Photo by Albrecht Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 118.

Winged building with tanks for water storage in Ifé.

Street of wells in Ifé.

(Both from photos by Leo Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 118.

searching them, that, using the apt words of one of my folk, they were lying about "half-naked." All I can say is that the responsibility for the thefts must be put upon the shoulders of these gallant police. Anyway, it is a solid fact that I re-purchased one of these missing specimens from a policeman's wife.

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The last two days of the inquiry were very exciting and full of all kinds of surprises. I was told that François, on being arrested, at once declared that I had ordered Bida to store a few cases in Edé in order to keep them securely. That was true. Thereupon, Bida was detained in charge, and messengers were sent to Edé, where a Lagos inspector immediately put his hand on the two boxes. They were both opened at the "meeting," and the very first thing that caught the eye and strapped on the top of them was—the "Idena" head! We were tongue-tied with astonishment. Who could have done it? Clearly some particularly subtle schemer had taken a hand in the game. I was always somewhat uncertain as to the part played in this business by François, that insinuating and flexible friend of the Lagos lot. The reader will remember that this noble son of Dahomey had once or twice asked me whether I would be inclined to pay handsomely for a similar head, which he could show me, if ever I should be in Ibadan again. To my mind, this question needed more consideration than the more definite charges made by the boys of my expedition. All the allegations and counter-allegations of those days were muddled and unreliable and it was symptomatic of the general state of things that every member of my household was sure to know something or other mysterious concerning disappearances and thefts. They all assumed airs of importance and fibbed. The marvellous procedure of the Court of Inquiry, not to say "meeting," had planted the spirit of lying in the receptive soil of my own followers' minds, where it now so blossomed and fruited as to be a pure joy.

Naturally enough, the discovery of the "Idena" so pointedly strapped on the top of our loads, told heavily against our own people, but this implied the assumption that it had been juggled into that position by the same black rascal who had exchanged it at night for the copy made by Arriens and afterwards destroyed.

It is more than probable that the guilty party had many good friends in Lagos. François' manner towards me had completely changed when he came to see me after his release. He was saucy, displayed all the symptoms of an obviously bad conscience and took his leave. I heard afterwards that he had been concerned in the loss of some very valuable things and, in consequence, had to give his home in Dahomey a very wide berth one night.

The discovery outside our front door of an antique and very interesting terra-cotta head I had purchased a few weeks previously, and afterwards had stolen from me, like many other things, inaugurated the last day of the sittings. We were called, acknowledged it as ours, and fancied that it might possibly be the famous Edja. The amusing part of it was that we knew both the compound and its tenant, who had sold it to us as the product of his own work with the spade while he was digging. Amongst ourselves, nobody doubted that this must be the Edja. At first I was mean enough to suspect one of my own people of having played us this trick. We went straight away to the constituted authority and laid the circumstances and the article found at our door before them. A wish was expressed that we should give the "meeting" a chance of seeing it. We agreed, and it turned out not to be the head known as the Edja. Then the fellow who sold it us was summoned. He deposed that he had actually exhumed it himself and sold it to us entirely of his own free will. Now, as before mentioned, this was a specimen of great interest. The grotesque face showed the same results of a horrible disease which had eaten away the tip of the nose and the lips, which may be seen in Peruvian images. The "meeting" saw that it was a fine piece.

Well, then—the fellow swore that he had willingly, nay, gladly sold it. Twice he was asked, was this the truth and twice he said it was. Then the Oni was asked whether he wanted it back. "No," said the Oni. For all that, the Court decided that its finder was to take it back and return the money he had received for it. But that beat me altogether. I protested strenuously. The result was that the intention to deprive us of everything had been made all too patent. The Court rescinded its decision with regard to the restoration of the purchase money, but—in the name of the English Crown, laid an embargo on the head. Wonderful, past

all belief! We got it back afterwards in Ibadan. They had not found it possible to keep it from us. And so, thank goodness, it was saved with the other terra-cottas.

In the end, the Court accepted my invitation to search my baggage. For the Edja was still missing. The Oni and his satellites, accompanied by the Balé officials in Ibadan, whom, by the way, the business in hand in no way concerned, accompanied the conductor of this inquisition. But, of course, they wanted to take all the treasures I had gathered in Ibadan as well and thoroughly to prepare the ground in this manner. In the presence of all these blacks, a white man, and an official of rank, rummaged through my things. Every cigar-box was opened, and, I am ashamed to say, even my dirty linen was not spared.

And now came the cream of the jokes perpetrated by the natives during the run of this farcical tragedy. Its full appreciation depends on understanding that the natives were tired to death of it all. But the persistence of the authorities was perfectly weird. The eternal exposure to the heat of the sun, the protracted cross-examinations, the swearings-in, the accumulation of innumerable perjuries, the incidence of certain illnesses resulting from this combination of things, and last, but not least, the fear lest I might possibly expose some of the tricks of the Lagos lads, now so familiar to us, led to the affair being cut short.

The Lagos lads had been snuffling about, both in and around our compound, while our trunks and laundry were being overhauled, when, lo and behold! in a hutch, outside the borders of our camp and beyond our own kitchen, in the ashes of a Houssa's private cooking-place, they were so tremendously clever as to find the very same head, which I had legitimately bought and paid for; had stuck on a pole and exhibited for days; shown to the Oni and his people as the genuine and celebrated "Edja" and as such rejected by them—and now, if you please, they declared that this was, indeed, the Edja itself. Every native grinned his widest. Every native knew it was nothing of the kind, but one and all of them gaily shouted, "Yes, yes!" this was the only true and veritable Edja. The identical fellows with whom I had so often discussed the Edja and who had declared that the head now in question was absolutely worthless! But this quaint finish of the Edja-palaver is all the

more comic, because these practical jokers the same day told me: "No, that head not the Edja for sure, quite sure, but we all so, so tired of white head-man's talkee-talkee!"

Fate engineered another scene that morning which shed a flood of light on the subject. When Bida was brought before the Court, I asked whether I might question him here in public. It could not very well refuse, and acceded rather ungraciously, as it probably suspected what was going to happen. So in a loud voice I told him to speak up fearlessly and openly, and to let the whole world know how he had been treated under arrest; I said there was no need to mince matters, for, whatever happened, I should protect him. Then he unfolded his tale. He had been violently dragged out of the compound—as we had witnessed; the police took him to the lock-up; round his neck they put a chain, hauling it taut over a beam in the roof so as to make him stand a-tiptoe, like one about to be hanged. When he was on the point of being strangled, the police sergeant cuffed his head five times and warned him not to give evidence in our favour. He suffered this torture for full five minutes. As Bida carries a watch and can measure time fairly well, his estimate is probably not far out and the truthfulness of his statement in the main was perfectly obvious. The policemen accused at once got excited, showed great alarm and tried to interrupt. His witnesses were François and old Adekulé, who had stood close to him in handcuffs. The news had been all over the place in Ilifé; I heard of it the night before; the police themselves had bragged about it. The Oni's people knew it.

When Bida described how he had been hauled up by the chain round his neck, the dramatic situation was tense. Picking up a piece of rope which had been round one of our boxes, he put a noose round his neck and tried to toss the other end over the branch of a tree above his head. Twice he missed, but succeeded the third time. The overhanging end, however, was all too short for little Bida to reach. So lanky Martius got to his feet, jumped at it, caught it at his second try and pulled it down so that the Court had a demonstration *ad oculos* of the "adjustment of a difficulty in an amicable manner." I accuse nobody directly of having ordered this outrage to be committed, but evidently the police had had every licence granted them to get the facts they themselves desired

about Bida's alleged misdemeanours. And it shows pretty plainly how little anybody cared to get at "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." No proceedings were instituted against the police; all that was said was that the incident was very regrettable and would be seen into "at a later date." Bida was afterwards examined by the Bench at Ibadan and his own evidence, as well as his witnesses', ought to be on record in Ibadan if still preserved. Poor Bida received not a farthing nor any other sort of compensation and this blot still rests on the administration.

A scene which meant a great deal furnished this drama's epilogue. When everything had been settled, I asked the President of the Court (?), who had come to mediate, to bring about a final reconciliation between the Oni and myself. This seemed to me, and subsequent events proved that I was right, of the greatest diplomatic importance for the future of our Expedition, in order that the somewhat eccentric Residents of these colonial districts should be unable to say that we had parted in anger. And what happened? My request was refused. I was told I could not expect the Oni to renew his friendship, seeing the disturbance my people had created. I insisted, maintaining that the unpleasantness had been caused by the people from Lagos and their leaders. Then only were the interpreters reluctantly ordered to question the Oni as to what he thought of it. The Oni replied, now that everything had been cleared up, he bore me no grudge.

Since, however, the English are not the real rulers of this province, but have only established a Protectorate, the settlement of this dispute could scarcely hinder my further advance and this was a source of annoyance to them. The re-establishment of my good footing with the Oni was not the result they had looked for. Disappointment, however, still found its vent in an injunction against my having any future communication with him. I had it put to him whether this was also his own wish and as he did not fall in with the suggestion of the Protectorate's officials, I still had many a pleasant interchange of views with him which I discreetly kept to myself.

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Epilogue :

Although it had been impossible to find me thirty carriers in the mighty city of Ibadan in the space of four days, all the people necessary for my departure from Ilifé were now got together in an hour or two. We tore along, viâ Edé, to Ibadan, and were met there by—the Superintendent of Police, who informed us that the police had been ordered to close all our premises. He told us that complaints had been lodged against us in Ibadan as well. So the same charm had been here set to work. But it was not so powerful as in Ilifé. It seems that the Elders and the Balé had been incited to bring pressure to bear on some people who had sold me a pair of antique doors to demand their return, "so that they might be preserved to the city." We willingly gave them back at the Balé's request, but for our own part we wanted to learn the substance of the complaints of our alleged misdemeanours. Then these honest folk declared that we had compelled them to give us the doors. But here in Ibadan, the thing was simplicity itself, because there were far too many witnesses of the negotiations, who saw the sellers themselves hauling the doors to us, to give the serious prosecution of so flimsy a claim any chance of success.

But I was very shabbily treated.

Bida, as I unluckily learnt too late to make use of it, had given information of the precise amounts paid for these doors. These amounts tallied to a "t" with the notes I had made of them. When I asked for the return of the sum total, I was faced with the assertion that less had been paid; yet although witnesses were heard in corroboration of my claim, the plaintiffs were allowed to pay me back less than they had actually received. I had to put up with it, because in Bida and Adekulé's absence, I could bring no evidence. Yet it would only have needed a nod from the Residency to summon them from the house close by where they were under provisional arrest during the hearing. Even as it was, the inquiry at Ibadan was the reverse of satisfactory to my persecutors. It is true that the whole of my collection was turned upside-down again for inspection by the Balé's deputies, who received pretty broad hints not to be shy about asking for the restoration of this or that particular thing, but they did not seem very concerned to have them. All they wanted were the two doors and the restoration of

a few other quite unimportant trifles to a man whose conscience was beginning to bite him. His wife had fallen sick after the sale he had made and the goodman attributed it to the Orisha whom the transaction had vexed.

The affair was now disposed of. The Superintendent of Police, a white man, had been present all the time and his own attitude was both courteous and dignified. I happen to know that he was thoroughly acquainted with all the ins and outs of the matter and had a poor opinion of the way in which it had been conducted.

Some of my readers may find this chapter both long and too personal. I cannot altogether agree with regard to the second point. What I mean is, that the whole of the story is extremely characteristic of the circumstances under which native justice is administered. It is evident that these people, when brought into subjection by a powerful will, reach a depth of mendacity inconceivable to Europeans. They tell lies and take oaths just as it suits their convenience. They see no harm at all in the most unscrupulous misrepresentation of actual facts in order to get out of a mess in the easiest and most comfortable way to themselves, as witness their behaviour in the Edja affair. The next chapter will show how rapidly demoralization sets in when provoked by such an illustration of perverted national sentiment as I have just given.

Not only (even from the English Government's point of view) has the respect for the white man been badly pilloried in Ilifé (for thousands of blacks saw this Government's representative derided by his own dependents, and who allowed us other whites to witness their ribaldry); not only were the natives given an entirely false idea of the European methods of dealing out justice by the implied condonation of wrong-doing on account of its motive, but the delicate meshes of a finely-woven net of scientific research have been so rudely torn and entangled that its further extension in the immediate future is unthinkable. For some time to come, research in Ilifé can only hope for success when backed by the power of an absolute Governor. Some day, perhaps, such a Governor will have to permit an English explorer to exercise a privilege, the abuse of which was looked for in vain when the conduct of a German expedition was under investigation. The speeches made to the natives after our departure were no doubt a preparation for some such

scheme in the future. The people of Ifé and Edé were warned to expect the arrival of an English expedition and invited to show and lay bare and surrender whatever this might ask for. At all events, so ran the rumours which reached me during the next few weeks.

And this is the story of how Atlantic Poseidon returned, after having been roused from the slumber which had lasted for some ten hundred years, to the soil which was sacred to him.

View of impluvial roof-funnel of an Ibadan dwelling from the interior.

(After an oil painting by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 126.

Public chastisement of a thief by order of the Mahommedan Alkali (judge) in the market-place.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSEQUENCES

Our Christmas—Behaviour of the negro officials and of our own staff—Akelle's attempt to steal our cashbox—Murder of Kailani—A record of calumny—An appeal to European self-respect.

IT was just as well that I made notes of all I happened to observe at the time of its actual occurrence. Even now I can hardly believe that it can have been anything but a hideous dream. At present, the whole business seems doubly mysterious in the light of knowledge I now possess of my English well-wishers' indignation at the treatment I received.

The conduct of the proceedings against us between the week before Christmas, 1910, and mid-January, 1911, who had so cheerfully given up our homes, our dear ones, and the comforts of decent life in the pursuit of ideal conditions for our labours for a long time, was so inconceivably harsh, so intrinsically unintelligible, that the recollection of it is as dim as something seen in sleep, and I, who am not usually a victim to uncertainty, find myself compelled to refresh my memory as to all the actual experiences we went through.

And it all happened at Christmastide!

It happened when seals had been put upon our doors by the police, in order that the Protectorate might lay its hand upon that part of the collection whose possession we German explorers were unable to retain. It happened during the wrestling with the esoteric Spirit of the Tropics. But I was determined to have my Yule. The feast of Noël should be kept. And were we not doubly entitled to keep it in these hard times? Very well, then: Put the trunks and cases in order! A row of baskets in this place and the boxes there! Out with the green canvas in which my collections had been packed, out with the tent clothes! Do they not shine brightly amidst the beautiful dark green of Africa? Does this not call to mind the colour of our own dear pine woods of the North? Fetch me some branches and on them place the lighted waxen candles; bring forth the pleasant books which shall beguile our leisure; stand thou, O venerable Goethe, in yonder corner, and thou, my Wilhelm Raabe, take thy place beside him!

On Christmas Eve, when lights began to twinkle on green-covered tables; when everything had been arranged decently and in order; when from our green deck-chairs we looked upon our assembled household each taking his gift from where it stood; when the record, "O, Eve of Peace, O, holy Eve" (Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht), rang out into the air from my dear, good, trusty Edison; when the well-cooked Christmas bird had been removed and toasts went round to our beloved ones at home, to the continual advancement of our science, in German sparkling wine, and a bumper "but no heel taps" to our German loyalty and truth—by Heavens! it was a splendid Christmas feeling! Of course, it was a great extravagance in lights and sweets and gifts, but on that one evening our German soul held revel and we washed away the strange and unclean highway dust as well.

We were very, very happy. We read aloud passages from books both new and old to one another until the night was almost spent, fruits from the little oasis of culture at the bottom of our trunks. Ah! we were filled with bliss that Christmas Eve and said "good-night" with hearts braced up and merry. We dismissed all thought of what assault might yet be made upon the body of our science and our art in this part of the world in days to come, and on this

night we washed the grime of the high-road to Atlantis from our minds.

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The celebration of the birth of Christ was like a peaceful haven. At other times there was an endless confusion, a constant din of chattering and squabbling all about us. The servants of the Government prowled about us like vultures and jackals. They came at morn, at noon, at night; they came just when it suited them, whether we were at meals or dressing. We were, you know, living on foreign soil and enjoying the hospitality of a British colony. I was powerless to resent the intrusion of the heroes of a negro state. These fine customers gave us no salute; they only eyed us insolently, jeered at us coarsely, made remarks upon our people and what we were doing; they grinned and raised their voices, boasting in the vilest English and broadest Yoruban in turns. These servants of the State were having their Christmas holidays; they looked upon the courtyard and the gardens of the Balé school as their promenade, their place of amusement, in which their leisure time could be particularly well filled. This cut me to the quick. This was how the scientific guests of the mightiest colonizing power of the world were made sport of. I turned to the nearest black policeman at hand and requested him to abate the nuisance. He refused—and my patience had come to the end of its tether.

So when, one fine morning while both my colleagues were busy from home, eight fine gentlemen from Lagos and two of the police sauntered about my place, calmly walked into my store-room without any sort of greeting and cracked their unseemly jokes, I told them politely, but firmly, in English, that I should prefer their room to their company, and, "my house being my castle," would punish any impertinence regardless of the consequences. But the eight of them only burst into impudent laughter and told me that what a German said mattered nothing at all on English territory!

That was enough! I told them that, as a European myself, I would soon teach them to respect all other Europeans, snatched up a finely-carved wooden stake and let fly at the lot with

all the rage put into my heart by God Almighty at the moment. All eight of them got their fair share, for they fell over one another in their flight from the narrow space, over the brave policeman who stumbled over a box in front—then two more over the policemen's clubs—so that the resulting scrum gave me a glorious opportunity of paying a little delicate attention to the tops and bottom ends of these valiant, black-skinned rascals. Oh! but it made me feel good! This was a noble, heaven-sent Christmas present, and, by Jove! I made the most of it! And the rogues saw well enough that discretion would be the better part of valour—the clearance I made was short, sharp and effectual. I knew, of course, that it was a risky thing to have done, and that I might easily be charged with having committed some bodily injury, but, on the other hand, I said to myself that, sink or swim, the respect which our expedition had lost must be restored, because we could not expect to be given the least assistance. But in order that my comrades should not be made parties in any possible judicial proceedings, I at first kept this enjoyable and happily-ended little skirmish dark.

My action put a stopper on this annoyance from outside. The vultures and jackals kept their distance. Not a single one of the fellows I had thrashed brought his action, and it was clear that the carrion crows had reconsidered their views of the situation. The Residency was said to have heard of it, but they, too, thought it better not to go into it. The black inspector of police came to me afterwards and apologized. Marvellous, is it not? Flog these fine fellows a bit and they soon come to see things in proper perspective. How truly magnificent are the innate conceptions of manners and morals possessed by this cattle! Oh, Europeans, my dear Europeans, do all the good you can to these black "children," bring them everything you possibly can, give them work and gladness, fortune and freedom, but never, never forget to bring the whip!

Nothing whatever was heard about this little affair and, outwardly, we were no more molested.

But, inwardly, the state of Denmark, or, let me say, the Expedition, was rotten, very rotten indeed. How cheerful and how willing had been its service before the "meetings" had been held

at Ifé and the waves of derision broke over it! The primary conditions needed for the composition of a respectful, well-organized body of labourers in Africa are confidence in the ability of the masters to maintain discipline, and the honour which other superiors show them. But efforts had been tried to make us ridiculous in everybody's eyes. It had been done with the utmost publicity in the sight of crowds summoned from every corner to see the spectacle. An attempt was made by the way the proceedings were conducted to give folk the impression that we had acted in contravention of the orders of the Government of Great Britain and so carried on an illegitimate business. This bred a feeling of insecurity right from the commencement of things, followed by Bida's imprisonment, his torturing, and the fact that the English authorities had failed to punish the policemen who mishandled him. But everybody well knew that Bida was my right-hand man. Everybody knew that he was the very last person to do anything wrong. Everybody saw that he might be ill-treated with impunity. Was it not obvious that they would say the same sort of treatment might happen any day to any one of them? The white leaders of the German Expedition were outlaws and powerless in the eyes of its own retainers; nay, more, they were looked upon with disfavour by the wielders of authority in the land! Willing service to leaders thus despised would severely strain the spirit of loyalty even in a Northerner and this was the hardest test of character to which my staff were ever submitted. And not one, not a solitary one of them rose to it. Bida was not with me. The others wavered in their allegiance. The only "real man" among them was away—and a captive. And so things looked foul and rotten within the state itself.

The lowering looks and sullen tempers of them all were symptoms of this internal decay. The Christmas celebrations had put off the acute eruption of the disease, but the sentiment created by the giving of gifts and ceremonial could be but evanescent in the negroid temperament. In any other character but this, some reflective expectation, some analysis of the state of affairs might perhaps have developed; people of profounder insight, even when forced out of their habitual groove of clear perception by violent shocks of fear and great perturbations, may soon regain their undimmed

vision by the inward impulses born of such emotions as those evoked at Yuletime. But the hearts of my poor and weak-kneed blacks lacked strength to stand against the earthquake shock of Ifé. They needed months to be themselves again.

At first they went on strike with ostentation. The crockery was badly cleaned; the food ill cooked; the beds not properly made; they dragged their feet and made the most lamentable faces! The negro's lips are not exactly lovely, but when he sulks and lets the lower one protrude and droop, the sight is none too pleasing. And they all let it hang as low as it would stretch.

Then Steve Kuami declared he was too good for a "boy." He wanted to be a clerk. So he stopped working altogether and lounged about outside the door.

Then a couple of young Houssas simply stayed away without asking for their wages, but took a few knives with them of greater value than their pay.

Then Max shammed sick and went to bed. There was nothing for it but to "hide" him. So I put him across my knee and behaved like a kind father to him.

Then the under-cook came along and gave immediate notice; the place no longer suited him. He was a Togo, with a long engagement, and none too good at his job. I could not let him go, on principle, because if I had, all the other Togos would have done the same. He moved elsewhere. But as I knew that he owed Bida money and he had something to come to him from myself, it was clear he would soon be back again and within my jurisdiction.

Then a deputation of Togos turned up and said: the journey had begun on German territory, with Bida as the leader, accompanied by me, who was greatly respected in the German colony. But I had not been held in honour in the English colony, Bida had been taken into captivity, and, therefore, I ought to pay and dismiss them! To them, I said, I would think it over, but, to myself, that I should have to settle the matter when Bida came back.

Consequently, I had to forego a good deal in the economic discipline department, because it was no use giving commands which would not be attended to. In order to tide over until Bida returned,

I did all sorts of little things not usually left to a white man to do in Africa. Once I cleaned the knives. Once I poached the eggs and often I emptied my own slops. There was no doubt but that the tangle of Ifé caused a fine state of things in my camp. And besides this, every now and again I heard it said both openly and under the rose, that my boys were spending all their spare time with the Lagos crew, which had concocted that fine broth for me at Ilifé and were being constantly persuaded to make a bolt for it and take service with the English. It boots not to go on describing all that was done during this period to break the ninth commandment. Nothing but the scum, the veriest rabble, would have been at our disposal.

There was a lad in my service then, who played a curious part in this Comedy of Errors, a Yoruban, whose alleged name was Akelle. He had seen a good deal of the world, been in the German service at Lake Chad as well as in that of the French, and had brought good testimonials. This Akelle evinced considerable pluck in Ifé. He had been of very great help to me in finding a place of safety for the terra-cotta heads and I had not forgotten it. He was the only one who did not seem to have caught the prevailing epidemic and stuck to us outwardly. He was my only trustworthy support at that time.

How singular! The others were all rogues. The exception turned out to be a criminal! The rogues failed me, the criminal showed force of character; he was honest—but only for the sake of afterwards stealing by the bushelful.

Oh, the patience I must have exercised in those days; how badly our condition reflected on the authorities in the country where we pursued our scientific studies with all our might and by spending our good German money!

I entered my protest in Lagos. The German Consul transmitted it to the Colonial Secretary, who satisfied us that no official instructions had been given to conduct the proceedings against us as they had been conducted, but to smooth out the matters in dispute in the friendliest possible way. Then orders were issued that my people should be allowed to go free.

So Bida came back. With him came Adekulé and François, and all three of them reported that all kinds of specimens from my

collection had been given away, as well as some archæological matter of which we had been deprived; that the Oni had been blamed for having allowed such good things to pass into German, instead of English hands; and that the ill-treatment of Bida had been proved on more than one occasion, without, however, any compensation being granted him, and more to the same effect. Two little incidents will show the meanness of the treatment meted out to us: Two doors had been snatched from me in Ibadan and the original owners induced to give me back the purchase money. But it was in evidence that ten shillings more had been paid for one of these doors than alleged by the seller. Adekulé and Bida had been previously questioned on this point. They said the price I had paid was the same which I wanted refunded. Bida and Adekulé had been brought to the "meeting," and confined in an adjacent hut. Then the seller of the door swore that my assertions as to the agreed price were false, and refused to repay the outstanding half-sovereign. But Bida and Adekulé's private examination had proved that my statement was true. If, therefore, any "gentlemanly" feeling was intended towards me, it would be the simplest thing in the world to call these two witnesses and say to the door-monger: "Friend, you lie; here are two witnesses who swear that you received ten shillings more than you allege. So if you want your door back again, bring out the money." It was simple enough, but the Court was inimical to me. It was unwilling to let me get back the amount in full.

It was very fortunate that our people were again talking over this particular transaction when Bida came back. Amongst themselves they all said that this was not the way in which Englishmen did things. The English were not like the Syrians; the English, as a rule, were decent enough; the way I had been treated must be an exception. They arrived spontaneously at the conclusion that the business had not been handled according to the usage and custom of the country and that we should be unlikely to experience the same kind of treatment at the hands of the British elsewhere. And our people's depression began to disappear on thinking things over and discussing them openly.

Besides which, thank Heaven, Bida had not come back a broken man. He was too much of a negro for that. He was glad the

Gates from the palace of the Prince of Ado. 2½ feet high.

(From the Expedition's collection.)

[*Facing p.* 134.

silly business was over; glad to be at liberty and among his associates again. He laughed at it all and his cheerfulness bred laughter among them. And, at once, the strange want of balance I have noticed in this most remarkable nation, which makes them superior to all the other black African races I have ever known, came into play. And, moreover, he brought me back to my own good humour in these tiresome days, so that we laughed together at the asses who wanted to go back to Togo because of this one unpleasant affair.

And so, with Bida's help and his merriment, I forced the weaklings into their old habits again and everything returned to its accustomed groove.

The collections were packed; we carted them all with a good deal of labour to the railway station, strapped up our own personal traps and travelled to Yebba. The collections I had struggled for with so much wearing anxiety and exertion, started on the journey to far-off Europe.

Unluckily there were some sequelæ, which I must needs describe, because they throw such a charmingly bright light on the negro temperament.

The road from Yebba on the Niger took us to Mokwa in Nupéland, and there I pitched a new main-camp. We took up our own quarters in an old enclosed compound. I had padlocked the strong small chest containing the treasury. But everyone knew that I carried a lot of money along with me. As the Government of the Colony of Northern Nigeria, in which we now were, was very amiably disposed and friendly towards us, two policemen had been given us as escort. But, contrary to my usual habit, I did not hand over the cash-box to the police for safe custody, but took it with me into my small private bedroom. Now, one night, shortly after we had settled down in Mokwa, I heard a peculiar noise. And on my shouting "Who's there?" somebody with a box under his arm leapt out into the open under the rustling matting. I jumped out of bed. I looked around me. The cash-box was there, but the medicine-chest was gone. It was clear: What the thief wanted was to steal the cash-box, to shove the medicine-chest aside; he was startled by my calling out just at the moment when he was going to put it down; had no time to do so without making a noise

and, having it in his hand, slipped off with it. But its removal soon put me on the track of the delinquent. I was able to look out through the lattice-work to the rear, towards my dwelling-place. In the little court to the left and the rear, the two policemen and Akelle had their lodgings. The thief who had collared the medicine-chest could only get out of the compound by making a hole through the matting-covered fence, but not by the court at the rear where Akelle and the two constables lived, nor by running towards the market-place. I could see what went on at the back, but not at the fence. But Martius, if he jumped out of bed in the front, could. " 'Ware thieves ! " yelled I. Martius was up in a twink, rushed to the fence, and there, sure enough, was a hole. I kept on looking behind me, while listening to Martius in front of me.

And now we had got him !

He had not escaped to the market, because our sentries were sitting round the camp-fire there ; and if he wanted to pass them, he would at any price have to get rid of the chest under his arm, if he wanted to give us leg-bail. At first, Martius found out nothing except that my sentries were warming themselves at the blaze and that, therefore, the thief had not come from the village ; but I, watching to my left rear, saw the police coming out of their hut, but out of the hole in the fence to the right, who, but—Akelle. It was as plain as plain could be. He wanted to run and replace the medicine-chest which would give him away. So back he came, but from the right. And there, as I supposed, between the hole and my little back-yard, that is on the road to the police hut, where Akelle should have been, there lay the chest, and Akelle had not come from the left, but from the right of the hole in the fence. Obviously, he must be guilty. And he behaved like it. When Bida said to the assembly that all the boys would be examined, Akelle got into a furious rage and shouted : " I suppose you think I am the thief ! "

Captain Hopkinson, the District Resident, called upon us shortly afterwards. I told him what had happened. He made the necessary inquiry and gave his decision. He asked me whether I would hand the prisoner over to him or wanted him punished in some other way.

I remembered that Akelle had assisted me to save my terra-cottas. So I asked the Captain to order him five. He got his little allowance and I told him to make himself scarce.

But when the punishment was over, I heard the whole story of his misdeeds in a few words. The Togo boy, Mesa, was talking to a Yoruba behind the matting enclosure. They had to speak English to understand each other. Mesa said to the Yoruba boy: "Look! Adjelle he take away fine tings my massa dig up from ground and take 'em to Ibadan. But if black boy do same ting like that, my massa, he angry, and Englishman help him big heap; he angry too. No pleased. Akelle tink he steal what he like from German big massa, because Adjelle from Ibadan do same. But that—no go!"

I wrote the words down because they so clearly show the negro mind and the way it works. They especially prove the extent of the demoralization set up by the way in which the difference with the Oni was "arranged."

I blame Akelle less for his wickedness than those who set him the example.

This was the first odious consequence of the days at Ifé. For the time being, the African embroilments ceased. I once more infused my own spirit into my troops at Mokwa. The old state of affairs was restored and there the old spirit of discipline resumed its sway.

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However, this was not yet the finish of it. A twelvemonth after the Ifé occurrences and our arrival in Northern Nigeria, we were in Northern Cameroon on very high ground. My boys from the Coast stood the climate very badly, and, as I shall have to relate subsequently, were attacked by pneumonia. So I was compelled to send them to the milder climate on the Coast with all possible speed, and, because I anyhow had several things to settle down there, I sent them to that part of Yorubaland which was under English rule. I strictly forbade them to go to Southern Nigeria, and on no account whatever to Ilifé. I furnished them with the necessary papers and commissioned them to buy up textiles,

yellow-metal casts and old beads. Bida was the leader of this little company of convalescents. A few of my best and most reliable folk went off with him, and, among them, a certain Kailani. Travelling through Northern Nigeria, they attracted the attention of the English posts stationed there, who kept an eye on them. The report now lying before me shows that the English Residents had them narrowly watched, but discovered nothing peculiar or wrong in their attitude or behaviour or traffic with the natives. In confirmation I can refer to a letter which, curiously enough, was handed me by a native of Lagos, dated Idofin, 22nd October, 1911, in which a Mr. C. A. Barnenn writes to a Mr. Droyer, under cover to a Mr. Price, in the same strain. And I have also a certificate of 26th October, 1911, signed by Mr. G. J. Latham, of Bida and his party's good conduct.

But I also heard as early as this that the observation kept on my people had excited the natives' attention and greatly astonished them. It stirred them up and, unfortunately, reminded them of the incidents at Ilifé, as Bida informed me when I saw him again in December, 1911, at Lokoja.

Now, when I went to Kordofan at the end of the year, and entrusted the conduct of the Expedition's final labours to Herr Martius, he proceeded to the territory, viâ Yebba, with which Bida and Kailani and others had previously got into touch, and where they had gathered material for preliminary research. Martius satisfied himself that the curiosity shown by the Residency as to Bida and his movements, which by no means surprised me, had once more directed the thoughts of the natives to the late happenings at Ifé.

And it came to pass that one day the people sent by Martius to another village were fallen upon. The bearers were furnished with articles for barter and money, and the natives of the district wanted to relieve the foreign Expedition of these. In the fray, which was very one-sided owing to my people being, of course, unarmed, my poor Kailani was killed by a bullet.

So far, this is the last item in my account against the Government.

This was the extent of the corruption it wrought when it desired to give an example of the mutual respect in which Europeans

hold each other, and how justice is administered by Europeans in the land of the Oni.

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As bad luck would have it, this sad affair had its epilogue in the shape of a press campaign in Europe fomented by the gross imprudence of a third party, for which neither I nor my relatives are in any way responsible.

I had given an epitome of our experience in my correspondence with my friends. My book "On the Road to Atlantis" being then on the point of appearing, I gave permission for the publication of the news of our discoveries in support of my theories about Atlantis, but especially requested that no kind of allusion might be made for the present to the collision with authority.

Now, owing to some third person's carelessness, through whose hands the letters passed and who disobeyed my instructions, my recital of the *contretemps* to my regret found its way into the Press and as an almost natural result the English newspapers fell foul of our methods of work. From the very first, the English journals were ill-informed and the *Times*, for example, of 1st of May, 1911, published a statement to the effect that we had come into conflict with the Alafin in Ojo, with whom we had never had anything whatever to do and never even came across.

Very well, then. While the German Press was busily going into the facts with pleasing vigour and Teutonic exactitude and disclosing the way in which we had been treated, getting to the real root of the matter by energetic inquiries without any assistance from us whose departure meanwhile for the interior made swift communication with us extremely unlikely, the *Times* had no thought of furthering the precious interests of that international friendship, by which the solution of an existing difference can be brought about through examination of the general situation and what has actually taken place.

I propose to bring documentary evidence in support of what the *Times* managed to achieve by publication of statements entirely devoid of any foundation in facts.

In the meantime, we had pushed on to the little town of Mokwa, by way of Yebba, living there on the snuggest and jolliest terms with every one, and, in our own way, solemnizing our Emperor's birthday on the 27th January by hoisting the flags of the two nations co-operating in our scientific task over our camp. They were days of such charming concord, such unruffled serenity, and such peaceful intercourse, that the natives begged the Resident, Captain Hopkinson, when travelling through the district after we had left it, to convey to us their respects and renewed thanks for the splendid presents we had made them. Contrasted with this, the *Times* of 2nd February contained the following:

"The Mission (meaning our Expedition) then proceeded to Mukwa in the Illorin Province of Northern Nigeria, a small town near the railway line, where it still was when I reached that place on January 27th. But here history has repeated itself. The Chief of Mukwa has lodged a complaint with the Resident that the Mission has been trying to force the people to sell certain masks which they do not wish to part with, and that he himself has been turned out of his compound. The German Mission has been officially notified that it must refrain from action calculated to cause disturbance, and the Chief of Mukwa and his people have been told that no one can force them to sell their property against their will. These official warnings seem to have been but moderately successful, for on January 27th, after they were conveyed, the Chief of Mukwa had not been permitted to return to his compound, over which the British and German flags were flying."

I received this wonderful and, in our view, highly sensational *Times* report on May 25th, stating that we had set people by the ears in Mokwa, collected specimens by force, violently escorted the ruler out of his own compound, and consequently been warned by the Government to refrain from action calculated to arouse anger. And we were said to have been officially called to order by the ruling authorities. I couldn't at first get it into my head that it might all be nothing but mere vulgar calumny and assumed, on the contrary, that the natives had been incited to lodge a complaint against us after we had gone and that, therefore, its official notification had not yet come to hand. I then enclosed the *Times* to the Governor under cover of a request for

further information. A few months afterwards I received the following:

"The Secretariat, Northern Nigeria.

"No. 3838/1907.

"Zungeru, 10th June, 1911.

"Sir,

"1. I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter addressed to the Cantonment Magistrate, Lokoja, dated the 26th of May, 1911, together with the enclosure therein, and to inform you that it has been laid before the Acting Governor.

"2. I am directed to state in reply that His Excellency has given the matter his very careful attention and to inform you that in respect to the statements contained in the letter to the *Times* dated 2nd of February, a copy of which forms the enclosure to your letter and which I return herewith as requested in the closing paragraph of your letter under acknowledgment, he is not empowered to consider printed publications, other than Official Publications, unless specially directed to do so by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"3. His Excellency is glad to observe that Captain Hopkinson conveyed to you the thanks of the Chief of Mokwa in a private letter dated March 15th, 1911; in this connexion I am to say that no official complaint with regard to the Deutsche Inner-Africanische Forschungs-Expedition has been brought to the Acting Governor's notice.

"4. Orders have been issued to the Protectorate authorities to welcome and to render all assistance in their power to the members of the expedition, in whose work His Excellency takes a great interest; in this connexion I am to say that the Acting Governor trusts that you, for your part, have had no reason to complain of the treatment which you have received in this Protectorate. In the event of the contrary being the case, I am to ask that you will be so good as to bring the matter to His Excellency's notice.

"5. In conclusion, I am to repeat His Excellency's invitation given verbally when you did him the honour to meet his train at Mokwa—and telegraphically on April 13th to yourself and the members of the expedition to be his guests at Government House,

on whatever occasion may be convenient to you; should this, however, be impossible, I am directed to take this opportunity to convey the expression of His Excellency's hearty good wishes for the success of the valuable and interesting work which you have undertaken, and of his desire to assist the expedition by every means within his power.

"I have the honour to be,
"Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"M. N.,
"Acting Chief Secretary to the Government."

Therefore, it is plain that the Governor knew absolutely nothing of the Mokwa chief's alleged complaint, nor of the official rebukes we received, but was, on the contrary, well-disposed towards us and ready to protect us from any possible future annoyance by unfriendly officials; he repeated his twice-given invitations and thus confirmed the permanently cordial relations afterwards entered into with all the higher administrative officials in Southern Nigeria. For I here declare that, after I had taken the necessary steps in self-defence against a possible repetition of the occurrences at Ibadan and Ilifé, we were able to remain on the most cordial footing of friendship with all those in authority we happened to meet. These truly "English" gentlemen took every available opportunity of showing their appreciation of the way in which we shared their own scientific labours. Not a single national holiday was observed in Lokoja or elsewhere to which we were not only invited, but where the health of the German Emperor was always drunk with three times three. I shall never forget the happy days of Lokoja; the delightful dinners at the officers' mess in Porta Atlantica; the hours spent in Miss Ruxton's house at Ibi; Dr. Pollard's tender solicitude when we were seriously ill; the triumphal arches on the borders of Nigeria which greeted our descent from the highlands of German Cameroon. This was, indeed, the heartfelt understanding, the unaffected sympathy which should bring together and unite all whites whose task it is to civilize these countries.

We need to work together as we need our daily bread. Hard is the fight to get the better of the tough resistance with which the

The decaying façade of the Oni's palace in Ifé.

(From a water-colour by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 142.

spirit of Black Africa opposes us. Bitter and insistent is the call to sacrifice in toiling to disseminate the seeds of European culture on this foreign soil! Difficult, beyond all doubt, and, without some friction, impossible to bring about a balance of power in the economic life of European nations. It is not an easy thing to create such spheres of influence as shall mete out equal justice to all the overflow of cultured peoples seeking outlets for their pulsating energies. Let European stay-at-homes cuff, thump, jostle and brawl against each other to their hearts' content. In Europe we are young and lusty, and a row within our own house behind closed doors may do less harm than one imagines.

But away from home, on the highways of the world, upon the Forum of strange peoples and an alien culture, it must ever be remembered that we are one in blood and fewer in numbers than the teeming millions opposed to us. These will only get to know the high level of civilization we occupy and the depth of the culture we have attained, learning to respect us all in equal measure, if we respect ourselves and prove to be the worthy carriers of a system far above their own. If differences there needs must be, then let them be amongst the family itself. But quarrelling in the open street will cost us the esteem of all those races in the world we fain would rule, because we must so rule them.

Naturally, the native Press of Africa took good care to put a mark against the recorded internecine squabbles of the whites, invented by a black of no account. For the Mokwa correspondent of the *Times* had been a black. No single white remained in Mokwa later than January 27, 1911.

Allangiddi, the dolls of Yoruban baby girls, kept till old age. About 6-12 inches high.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER VIII

HOME LIFE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE GODS OF ATLANTIS

Outward characteristics and inner nature of the Yorubans—Their settlement—Division of clans and deities—Education—Boy and girl associations—Betrothal and marriage ceremonies of the progeny of the gods.

NOW that so much has been said of the less pleasing qualities of the Yorubans in the foregoing pages, it is time to regard them somewhat more closely from the personal point of view, so that we may clearly visualize them. The impression has, perhaps, already been conveyed that this people lives and has its being surrounded by a multitude of religious appliances and symbols of their faith which, at the present time, and under the pressure of certain socio-religious organizations, have lost their original, intrinsic meaning in other parts of the world. Leaving altogether out of account, then, those peoples of Europe, the Mediterranean and Western Asia, whose socio-religious systems were, as far as we know, developed to the highest possible degree, we yet cannot point out any nation which so manifestly exists beneath the spell of such ancient forms of life, excepting always the eternally ancient and ever recent nations of India. No excuse, therefore, need be offered for the prominence I now propose to give to a description of the religious observances and educational methods of the Yorubans.

The name of Yorubans is the one usually given to those people living to-day in the plain to the West of the Niger delta, between

Togoland and the Western valleys of the Niger. In ancient times they dwelt in the interior as far as Nikki in Borguland, Boussa on the Niger, beyond Nupéland right up to the borders of the Gwarri tribes. Their present territorial jurisdiction has been more and more circumscribed towards the Coast by the advance of the Borgus, the Nupés and the Fulbes, without depriving them of their individuality. Their external characteristics are by no means homogeneous. A medley of some strikingly tall and many medium-sized figures, some slender and some clumsy in build, some dark brown, some reddish, or yellow in complexion, crowd together, not only in the market-places, but the larger compounds as well. I failed to note any great difference in the inhabitants of Mandeland, where the Sahel Markas, the Fulbes of Futafallon, the Mandis of the Mali Kingdom, many races from the North, and, finally, all sorts of so-called "aborigines" intermingle. No one in Yorubaland, as compared with the North-West, could tell me anything of a caste exclusiveness which could be interpreted as the predominance of any particular anthropological type. And at a first glance, from the social or anthropological point of view, no ruling race, as opposed to a race of either servants or artisans, was revealed.

However, although one may not at first be able to hear any thing of a ruling class in the nation, the more practised observer will not find any insuperable difficulty in detecting a line of demarcation. The ordinary statement is that the people may be divided into rich, poor, and very poor. Yet, on walking through the town or going into the larger and smaller compounds, it is easy to see that the well-built, old and commodious compounds, the Ille Alagba, are tenanted by men of finer stature, extraordinary slenderness and delicacy of limb, narrow heads and fairer skins. These features are specially apparent in the ruling families which control the inhabitants of such compounds in general, whereas the numerous domestics are smaller, more heavily built and more like negroes in appearance, and, in this respect, more akin to the inhabitants of the districts round the more ancient towns. Men like the Balé, the head of the Ogboni, the Magba of the Shango, and so forth, and their brothers, range from six to six feet and a half in height. If the variety of race-admixture, in spite of the observation just

recorded, is a constant source of surprise, it must not be forgotten that the cities of this nation lie in the up-country regions of the great slave-markets of the world, and that these hinterlanders were middlemen and contractors and exporters. Where, however, so many chattels of human flesh are in transit, many a varied strain of blood is left behind, and an effective factor in the breeding of many noble houses was the custom by which their ruler, failing issue by his wife, would take a child of his own by one of his concubine slaves, or other humbler member of his household, and adopt it as the rightful heir to his privileges and possessions. Furthermore, I was struck by the discovery, especially among the priesthood, in many country places of a type of small, ruddy complexioned, more sturdily built men of somewhat bloated appearance, whose slightly protuberant under-lips and slanting Mongolian eyes reminded me of the terra-cottas exhumed in Ifé. The after-effects of trafficking in slaves while these were upon their passage were also clearly traceable in the families of these men.

And the character of this nation corresponds with this method of development, this habit of intermixing their blood and the influence exercised upon it by the vilest commerce known on earth from which they suffered. Yorubans are anything but lovable, and those of the great cities particularly unsympathetic. From the Black Nations of the Plains they inherited their want of dignity and their servility, with certain reservations such peculiarly "negro" qualities, and from the race of loftier stature, fairer skin and more graceful mould of limb, their not inconsiderable amount of intellect, but an extraordinary cunning and capacity for fraud as well. They are most certainly to be reckoned among the most objectionable tribes I met with in Africa. I cannot say of the Yorubans what I can say of genuine "black people," and, more especially, when they were members of respectable and well-to-do families, namely, that although of feeble character, I, *a priori*, learned to esteem them as sincere and honest folks.

The Yoruban disposition is absolutely different from that of the so-called "negro" nations. The "superior" Yorubans, especially, are so prompt in not keeping faith, in "besting" others, as to run a dead-heat with the Berber half-breeds. While I was in Ibadan scarcely a day passed but what one or another of these

lanky fellows tried to go behind and cozen me, not as the "negro" would, for his own convenience, or from politeness, or not to have to say "No," or not to let me see that he was an ignoramus, etc., nor only out of the desire to please and a lack of ethical training; but purely and simply for the pleasure of lying and the deliberate intention to cheat me, and to stick me with a thing of less value than the good one I had been promised.

I was, moreover, struck with some other vices, which I had not hitherto observed in dark-skinned people—at least, not in Africa. I have frequently explained that servility is not the greatest fault possessed by the negro. Now this incorrigible trait is so strongly pronounced in the Yoruban as to remind one of its effects in Nachtigall's graphic description of the Teddas. Directly a "noble" has had a drop—and they dearly love wetting their throats—he develops a truly appalling capacity for begging. Everything has to be hidden from him. He begs for what can be of no earthly use to him and tries his hand at begging for one thing after another. The horrible peculiarity may have its source in the evil habits engendered by the slave-trade and the commerce with Europeans, which it brought in its train. In addition to this the Yorubans are charged, doubtless with very good reason, with being consummately clever thieves and burglars, who readily undertake the construction of regular tunnels beneath a compound, so as to get at the underground treasure vaults of its owner from inside. The skill and the daring they display fall not far short of the marvellous. I myself inspected one of these larcenous gangways, some four yards in length, which the rascals had dug out in about eight nights. Although, then, the development of this faculty may be attributable to a former commerce in slaves and the immoral profits thrown off by these exported goods, and although it is certain that the then existing form of government had been, as many Englishmen assured me, quite ineffectual, it is still, on the other hand, a noteworthy fact that no other West African people, not even the most infamous Sierra Leonians or Senegambians, can show even an approximate amount of craftiness, devilry and aptitude in this business department. And especially from the point of view adopted in judging these folks and the use made of their intellectual power, it is most deplorable that the ruling powers in Southern

Nigeria should fail to make up their minds to lay the educational rod on the native population's back as vigorously as this is done in the North. The black population of Southern Nigeria does not to-day pay the proper amount of respect due to the white authorities, and the resulting corruption of morality is all the more serious because, owing to European domination, the native holders of power (the Alafins, the Balés, the priests, etc.) have lost a great deal of influence and no substitute is at hand for the former permanent imposition of the strong hand. These natives have been accustomed and trained to a government of bloody repression, and attained to both power and honour by its exercise. Now that this stern mode of ruling them is in abeyance, the injurious elements of their temperament are all the ranker because the mildness of the modern *régime* has not been evolved during an interregnum of legislation, and because the old-world "fear of the Lord" has so far not been replaced by "the performance of duty from a feeling of self-respect."

We must not, however, in spite of their painful proclivities, lose sight of the fact that the Yorubans are, perhaps, the cleverest and most talented nation to be found in the whole of West Africa. It is impossible to describe otherwise than as "brainy" a people which, inheriting such a magnificent clan-organization, has for centuries and tens of centuries (!) preserved it in the full consciousness of its significance, of which proof is to be found in the totem-theistic constitution of the Yoruban state. Although the inland tribes may have forgotten the greater part of their mythology, the reason of it is, partly, that unhappy slave traffic to which they were subject, which absorbed all their activities to such an extent and so lowered their estimation in which life should be held, that human offerings occupied an unusually large space in the ritual observance of West Africans, whose cruel disposition is innate. Exactly as happened in Benin, the wealth and piety of a Yoruban was reckoned by the number of human sacrificial victims he could afford. And this, too, I consider a result of the trade in human flesh, fostered in its time by Europeans, although doubtless the germs of such abuses already existed.

We will not, however, put the finishing touches to this repulsive picture without the high light of this people's cleverness. The

mental endowment of the Yorubans is a fund of invaluable information for the scientist. They are so immeasurably above the apathy peculiar to the denizens of Western Africa in general, so vivacious and alert, so skilful in the management of life that they may very well be called the nation of practical philosophers of the Western half of dusky Africa, people who are as ready with an apt illustration of whatever may be under discussion as the thoughtful peasant of Europe. The Yoruban knows the full import of his children's education, can explain the reason of his every action and shed the light of its actual consequences on every step taken in life. It is the same sagacity which illuminates his theology on a basis of socialistic totemism ; and this is a fact upon which it is impossible to lay sufficient stress. The opportunity these Yorubans afford us of gaining a deep insight into the evolution of some kind of remote and mysterious past is too great to be lightly passed over. A flame is burning in Yorubaland whose rays are pouring the light of many centuries and tens of centuries upon the recorded growth of culture over a whole Continent, of which it is only a part.

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These peculiarities are at once noticeable in the dwellings where the Yorubans spend their lives.

Nature has smiled upon Yorubaland. Vast plains, broken up by occasional hills and masses of rock, are covered with prairie grass and groves of palms. The ancient primeval forest only rears its roof of shade down in the valleys where the rivers run. The soil is fertile. The clustering houses form the cities, which are built amidst Nature's fairest pictures. These are the commercial centres of the land. But, conformably to the people's natural method of earning a living, which consists of intensive hoeing and in field labour, farmsteads and farm compounds are common in every district. These were inhabited in former days by slaves who worked for the benefit of their absentee owners in towns. Merchants from Europe often said Yorubans were a lazy crowd. The verdict was sound as far as it applied to the dwellers in cities. The plantations, of great extent even when quite remote from townships, cultivated with care,

give the lie to this assertion, which those only can make who rarely go beyond the city walls and often without a proper standard by which to measure the great value of the negro labour, which fluctuates according to the seasons. It is, however, absolutely certain that the riches of the country depend on agriculture, pursued with assiduity, to nourish and enrich the city population, which is counted in hundreds of thousands and millions of heads, and, surely, to do this is no little thing.

Yet, although the real centre of economic gravity in Yorubaland lies unquestionably in tillage, and only secondarily in urban trade (with oil-yielding products, etc.) and urban industry, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the social and economic balance is preserved and conditioned by the constitution of the townships. For it is a very noteworthy fact that Yorubaland not only contains a greater superficial area of great cities, but also a denser civic population on that area, than the rest of dark-skinned Africa put together ; cities which, in the sense we, too, give to the term, deserve to be called " metropolitan."

Yorubaland is one of the three great municipal territories of West Africa. I myself got to know enough of the second of them, stretching between Timbuktu and Nyamina. In this, town certainly stands close to town. But, firstly, the greater part of them are in ruins and, secondly, are so sparsely populated as not to stand any comparison with the centres of Yoruba. Those North Western towns have from five to fifteen thousand souls, but the Yoruban one hundred and fifty thousand and more. Those of the third district, the Houssas, are perhaps in themselves more important than those on the Niger's left flank, but there are few which equal the Yoruban communities in size. And they are much wider apart. Yet the consideration of the geographical position of these three urban West African provinces will show that all three of them more or less closely trend towards the Niger and, in this way, it is easy to understand their origin and mutual relation. It is no mere accident that precisely the province nearest the Coast, or Yoruba, should have the greatest number of towns, the most developed architectural styles and the oldest institutions, because what towns there were in the hinterland of the Upper Niger and the Houssa Lowlands were exposed to the stream of civilization from the plains

and the floods of immigration from the Sahara. And thus hinterland life adapted itself more easily to the influence of more modern times, while the West Coast, with its forests, its diseases and its natural conditions, so utterly different from those of the interior, preserved its homogeneity better by adhesion to its ancient life and municipal institutions.

The Yoruban cities are not differentiated from the Soudanese in type by their numerical population only, but by the singularity of their internal social arrangements. The cities of the Soudan retain the character of the Sahara, on the fringe of which they arose and, in this region, they formed the crystallized nuclei of larger monarchic states like the Ganata, the Mali, and the Songai, the founders of the Northern Houssa Kingdom. These Soudanese towns, until their recent decay, survived as more or less independent units of a great combination of States and their own destinies fluctuated with the fate of the Emperor or King who happened to be supreme at the moment. And thus it came to pass that, at the very zenith of Soudanese power, their internal administration and independent power were at a very low ebb and the intellectual forces at work in them were subject to the waning strength of the Soudanese dynasties. It will be necessary to examine the foundations of the development of these Soudanese cities in the second portion of this work. It is by no means certain, without further inquiry, that these city sites were the continuation of dilapidated manorial strongholds, but the one thing absolutely certain is that at the time of, and previous to, the birth of Islam independence, the magnates of Soudanese towns had been crushed and that an opulence of commercial relations replaced the former driving power of these Imperial or petty kingdoms.

The cities of Yorubaland never suffered from this process of devolution of social (*i.e.*, monarchic or imperial) and commercial connection to the same great extent. They remained comparatively autonomous organizations right down to modern times, and their relative preponderance was transferred from one of them to the other without ever producing a Rome—a Rome which could for any length of time have brought the sister towns into subordination to a monarchic or imperialist idea and consolidated the bond of such union. The Yoruban cities with which Europeans first

became acquainted may be said to have been independent and the suzerainty of Ojo, as the highest expression of autonomy, merely nominal. And so here, in Yoruba, an older type of municipality is preserved in a stage of development more closely allied with a "negro" origin, a stage long left behind in the Soudan. This type of town was, however, and to-day still is, characterized by a singular symbol of its outward power. Each of them has its separate deity, its own municipal God. He is not the founder of the race which dwells in them, but a Lord Protector who shifts from place to place. And here we find maintained a state of things strangely akin to that of ancient Egypt and many West African districts.

For all that, the towns of Yoruba have no monopoly of isolation. I found precisely the same relation in the disposition of the forest cities in Togo and Dahomey; exactly the same in Timmland. In early days, their settlements were also intramural; they were ruled and combined in a system whose main feature was an instinctive impulse towards communal reciprocity, but not subordination to a monarchy. Similar conditions seem to prevail, moreover, in the grasslands of North Cameroon, where Bano, Banjo, Bamoum, etc., are the central seats of influential chiefs, but where territorial sovereignty was also never permitted to overstep the limits of the separate central township, including its surrounding agricultural villages and hamlets.

Here then we have a large group of cognate phenomena spreading between Central Togo (and a point lying still more West) and North Cameroon, far around the Lower Niger, signalized by a different stage of development, a stage which had been long left behind in the regions at the Northern edge of the Desert, and there recognizable at most in "throw-backs," or in its atavistic form.

Old Benin, of whose mighty "potentates" so many stories have been told, is of the same type. We shall hear more, later on, of the "might" of these rulers, but it has been made clear that these civic communities, whose power was scarcely ever lastingly consolidated, afford no evidence of any great internal strength, because their hinterland is only of small extent. It is easy, therefore, to believe the statement found in early chronicles, namely, that Benin had at one time been compelled to cede its power and possessions temporarily to a smaller and insignificant neighbouring state.

If now the consideration of these facts be any explanation of the great difference between the constitutions of the West Coast communities and those in the Interior, and if it be clear that the towns on the littoral represent a more conservative and older type, then examination of individual parts of a city will make the facts still plainer. Leaving out of account for the moment a few particular compounds, altogether exceptional in their character, held by princelings in Nupé, it may, I think, be said that no province in the western half of Africa can show finer lines in its general architecture than Yoruba. Every one of these towns resolves itself into a definite number of astonishingly large compounds, all of which are severally built on a clearly organized system and in themselves again give expression to an extended, powerful, systematic and social ideal. Each city has its own special divinity, and every compound within it has its own particular God. Now, just as every larger compound has its special divinity, which is only occasionally identical with the city's tutelary deity, and as all the inhabitants of either sex dwelling within it have separate gods of their own, so, in precisely the same way, all the ascendants, and, consequently, descendants, of the head of the household in line male, worship this particular God of the family compound. And in this way the socio-religious instinct is decisively, illuminatingly, significantly and promisingly proved to exist beneath these mighty pent-house roofs, within the shrines enclosed in these verandas and in the singular plan on which these constructions rest. I will reserve the details of their architecture until the problem of a similar style of domestic building in the world of antique culture comes to be discussed, namely, in Chapter XVI. I now propose to deal, at first, with the question of the extent to which the young and budding human beings in such a city are made acquainted with its social and religious life.

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The activities within these compounds must necessarily excite our keenest interest, because they prove the practical effect of a consistently philosophic conception of the universe and life itself, which brings the world of home into the completest harmony with

its spiritual foundations. If we follow the growth of this communal existence from the moment of its birth, we shall get a clue which, once held fast, will rivet our attention till we find its termination. An Orisha, or family-god, presides over each Yoruban clan. According to the belief of the Yorubans, the Orisha is the founder of the family. His commandments regulate the course of life. The entire business, especially of male, but also of female life, is centred in his worship, and they return to this Orisha-god at death.

On the day a man is married and his bride declared worthy of being one of the mothers of the clan, he takes her to the Banga, the shrine of his own Orisha, and, therefore, his kindred's God. He offers up the sacrifice which is most acceptable in this Orisha's sight, and after sprinkling the blood upon the altar, as the ancient ritual requires, he says the following prayer: "O Father Orisha! My own Father Orisha! Look upon the woman I have married. She is a woman who has suited me. I have taken this woman to wife—make Thou her fruitful. And I will offer up to Thee the animal" (here the suppliant mentions the deity's favourite animal). The man may now rely upon soon seeing his woman with child after having taken this precaution and if no other sin has been committed against the clan-god, or unless some other adverse Orisha has stopped the blessing at its source. As soon as the master of the house observes her pregnancy he is moved with gratitude towards the Deity of his own kith and kin.

The reception of the tiny cosmopolitan follows very quickly upon his birth and, be it a boy or a girl, is inaugurated by the shaving of its head. This ceremony takes place upon the seventh or eighth day after its appearance on the earthly scene and is performed by its father. The latter has already sent word of the happy event to the members of the family both near and far and invited them to the feast to be held shortly after the head-shaving, when the child will be given a name. He has seen to the preparation of a quantity of good fare and laid in a stock of palm-wine, or maize- or barley-beer, so that the assembled guests may be hospitably welcomed and regaled. The well-to-do will not begrudge a bullock on such occasions, because the honour of the house, as well as the celebration of the happy event, calls for some material sacrifice. The object of the feast is to introduce the baby and to name it. Like

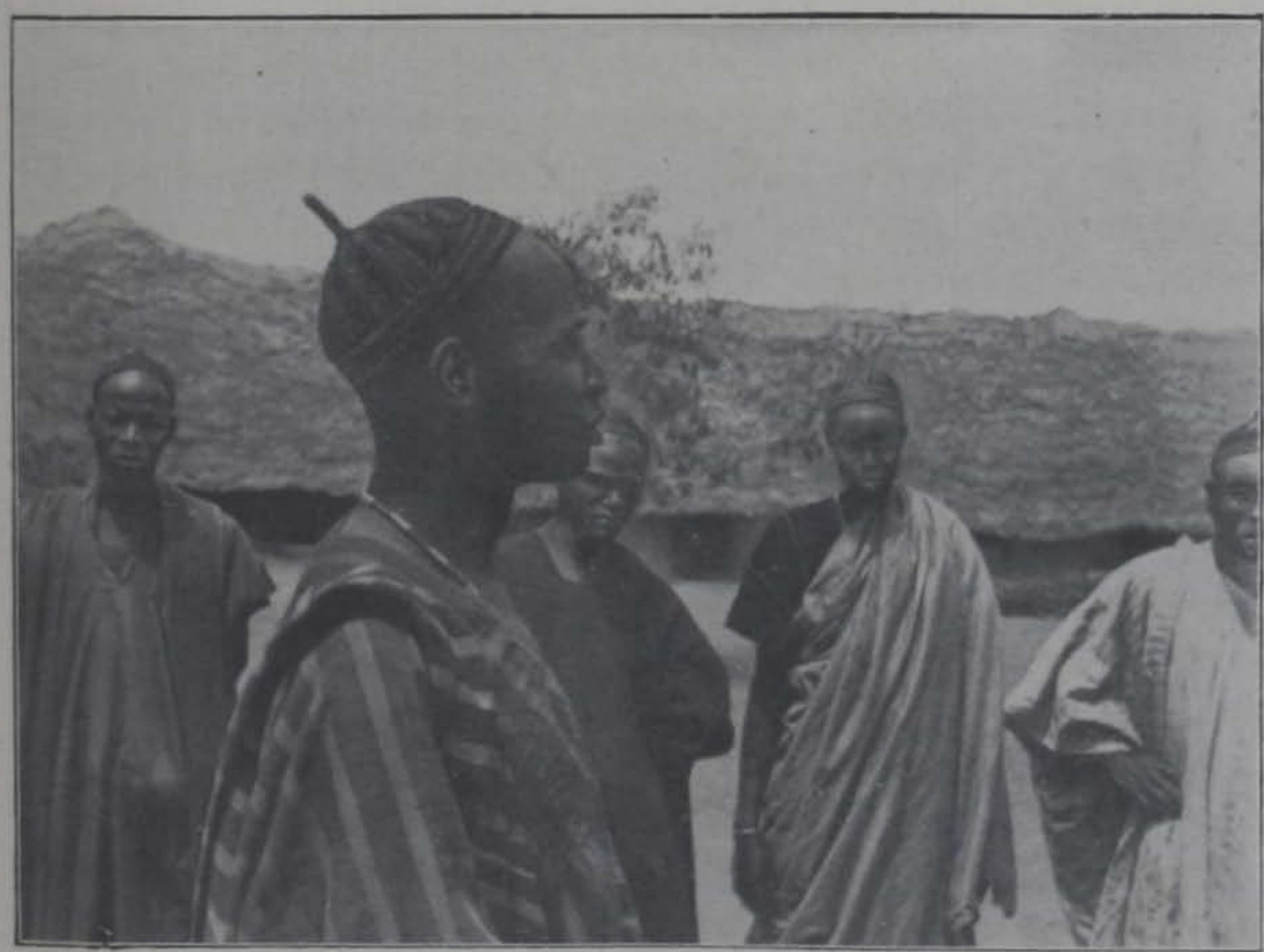
all real West Africans, the Yorubans are very fond of little children, and the ugly and, in ordinary estimation, insignificant little horror is handed round from one to another, cuddled and dandled. The oldest of the family, thus probably its grandfather, the Babanla, gives the child a name. Apparently there is some distinction between the two widely divergent methods of naming, by which a child is at times differently designated. At first, any name seems to be good enough, for which another may be substituted later on. Because, during his lifetime, a Yoruban may easily have many varying names at various ages, and with every such change an older denomination is combined. This depends on subsequent ritual proceedings and the inheritance of legacies due to the divine origin of the family. The child does not always bear only this first provisional name, but it is probable that on this, its seventh or eighth day of existence, it is already contracted in an important relation to the family, the world and tradition. And the reason is this :

The elders inspect the baby with the greatest care. They examine it minutely for traces of a family likeness. What we ourselves regard as a charming amusement or a flattery of parental pride, they look upon as a very serious business. And they do not search for any resemblance to the living, but for characteristic features which the tiny mite may have in common with bygone members of the different generations, such, for example, as the grandfather or great-aunt, and so on, of the eldest member of the family, who is bestowing its present name upon it. The similarity of feature looked for must be one which characterizes the paternal side. Should there be such a likeness, the child is given the name of this particular ancestor. And there is no hesitation in saying that it must be this deceased forebear who is born again in this child. If no such resemblance can be detected on the day when it receives a provisional name, its proper name is given to it later on, when it has developed features so pronounced as to enable the soul which is born again in its little body to be recognized. The fact that the child takes over all the personal taboos of its deceased namesake and is pledged most strictly to observe them until its days are ended with this name, is enough to prove that this name-giving is not a mere meaningless formality.

To hear the older fellows talking of the education of the child

is a real delight. I never heard pedagogy discussed so conscientiously, so deliberately and with so much knowledge of its aim, either by the upper circles of the Mande or the Songai, not to mention other native races. In this particular Yoruban system of education, a set of perfectly lucid and easily controlled principles has been unconsciously evolved from the methods of other West Africans. And now let us observe the successive steps taken to guide both boys and girls along life's road.

Directly a little chap begins to run, his father takes him every morning to the farm. He carries him a little when he tires, but always takes care to make him put forth all his strength and thus increase it. When they get to the farm, he spreads a mat beside the plot of ground on which he is at work and puts the infant on it. It must at first look on and watch its father working. At breakfast time the sire sits down beside the scion, eats his meal, and also gives his offspring some. When the day's toil is over they go home together. On the way, papa makes up a little bundle of yams, or something else, which the child has to put upon his head and carry home. This is the way it is early taught to accustom itself to balance loads and to take it entirely as a matter of course that walking and carrying things go hand in hand. The tiny fellow has to walk home again and is carried over the beds of running streams as seldom as possible, so that he may learn to know the best places for getting across the water and to strengthen his little legs. Next year, his father gets a miniature hoe, made by the smith and furnished with a little handle, which the tiny son must take with him and while the father turns over the soil, draws furrows or piles up heaps with his heavy "oko," or working hoe, his sonny does the like in imitation. When the senior has made ten heaps, the junior must have made at least one, which daddy will improve to show the proper way. The little chap may rest when tired, but not long enough to let him go to sleep. When they are both hungry, they share the food brought with them, but the youngster must never eat enough to make him lazy. He can take it easy in the evening. When they get home again the boy is not allowed to run away and play with his young friends; but has to wait, sometimes for quite a while, until his father gives him leave. This will teach him to be obedient.



Female and male pages of the chiefs of Offa.
(Photos by Albrecht Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 157.

When he has grown bigger, learned things, knows the meaning of discipline and takes a pleasure in his work, his parent will stimulate his self-respect by allotting him a piece of ground for his own, give him some corn and seed so as to interest him in his own possessions, besides the filial labours imposed by duty. This property goes on being increased and, with it, his independence. His father also grants him a private place in the compound, where he at first lives in one or more rooms, but later on can build a whole house of his own with the help of the companions of his own age. A sort of kindly communal pressure to do this is brought to bear, because his mates laugh at a lad who does not start making a home for himself betimes. But his activities are still devoted to his family's general good. When he has brought his harvest home, he hands his mother its first-fruits as a present, and another portion of it to his father. Should he have been a successful trader away from home, he buys some particularly handsome piece of cloth or other rare goods as a gift to his father, but gives his mother some cowrie-money out of his profits. In proportion as his own share in the family property augments and his father's diminishes, becoming more and more restricted to an old man's portion, he takes ever greater care for the comfort of his parents, now getting on in years. If he be the firstborn and blessed with younger brothers, he will train them, even as he himself was trained by their father, and the consequence of this then is, that he is well prepared to bring up his own children in the way they should go.

The education of the girls, as is natural, is in the mother's charge, and is conducted on similar lines. The method is the same. When the child runs off to play, the mother calls it back. It must learn to do as it is told. The little thing must watch when "mummy" makes the fire and cooks, and squat by her when she is washing. It trots along by her side when water is being fetched from the well; and here its direct practical education already begins by at first carrying on its little head an empty calabash, into which a little water is poured by and by, then a little more later on, and thus the initial difficulties of balancing are mastered. Then, when mother goes to market, the little maid goes with her, sits next to her at the stall and learns the value of cowrie-money and the quantitative and qualitative worth of goods from listening to what her mother

and the passers-by say and what the latter want to buy. The child gets a toy very early in life, a wooden dolly, sold for a few shells at the wood carver's. These girls' dollies are called "Allangiddi." The girl ties the doll on its back and walks about with it, just as it sees its mother do with its younger brothers and sisters. It plays with it just like European children with theirs, and when it is put to sleep of nights, it lays down its "allangiddi" by its side. The Yoruba women are touchingly attached to these lifeless companions of their infancy, and I have had the greatest difficulty in persuading old women to let me have these reminders of their girlish days for a few shillings. The little Yoruba lassie approaches maturity at about twelve years of age.

The method of organizing the bigger children is an almost more interesting study. The boys and girls of a township elect a leader to conduct their games and their manner of life.

The leader of the girls is called "Yegbe."

The election of the Yegbe and its confirmation is as follows: It may happen that the girls have a quarrel requiring settlement among themselves one day, or that there is a serious split with the boys, or that they are at a loose end of some sort, and then the little creatures come to the conclusion that they cannot get on without a "clucking hen." So they go to some old woman or other whom they can thoroughly trust, and tell her "We want a Yegbe." Then the crone says, "Whom have you thought of?" The girls say, "So-and-So." The Yegbe usually chosen is one of the younger women who has a child and, therefore, still able to appreciate childish games and likely to have a pleasant manner. If the young woman thus qualified is worthy of confidence, of good reputation and known to be familiar with the usual customs and habits, the aged counsellor will in all probability agree with the little one's selection, because these are supposed to make an entirely independent choice and nobody thinks of forcing anybody upon them. The small association builders, strengthened by such advice and the ratification of their nominee, disperse; each one goes home to tell its father of the general voice and refers to the judgment of the old lady first consulted. It is fair to surmise that daddy, having consulted with his first wife, will agree. The matter is then settled by the majority of paternal voices in favour of the chosen instructress. Information

of the result of the proceedings is then given to the Yegbe voted for and she picks out the brightest and most reliable of the little wenches who are invested with titles and form her staff. The distinctions are as under :

1. Nja N'Yegbe (*i.e.*, Mummy Yegbe).
2. Balé (her deputy).
3. Otun Balé (Balé's right hand).
4. Osi Balé (Balé's left hand).
5. Ekeri Balé (fourth Balé).
6. Ekarun Balé (fifth Balé).
7. Ekefa Balé (sixth Balé).
8. Balogun.
9. Otun Balogun.
10. Osi Balogun.
11. Ekeri Balogun.
12. Ekarun Balogun, and
13. Ekefa Balogun.

The third of these has always to obey the second, the fourth the third, and so on, so that each of these small dignitaries is in a definitely subordinate position to the one above her. Should the Yegbe be absent from a place where any of the children committed to her care are naughty, those of her underlings present are bound to report it. Her other duties are to give a lead in the little girls' games, teach them their dances, to see that they employ themselves usefully, do not quarrel or tease each other, and, when playtime is over, to deliver her little charges at their respective homes. She also has to give reports about her pupils to their parents, and to take care that the weaklings among them get particularly good nourishment. It need scarcely be said that the Yegbe knows how to appreciate the material expression of the parents' thanks, and that, if she understands her business, her nurslings remain attached to her to the end of her days.

The boys enjoy a precisely similar, but a much more essential association. One day, when their time is come, the lads meet somewhere or other, talk the matter over, and one of them proposes a Baba Egbe (pronounce Babegbe)—that is, a boy-leader. Then one of them has to say, "That is a bad man!" This may mean either that he is in bad odour, or likely to treat them

very harshly. So somebody else proposes another. Speeches for and against are bandied to and fro, until agreement is come to. Although the Egbe of the girls is a young matron, custom decrees that the Babegbe shall be some elderly man, who is getting grey on the top.

After having arrived at their decision, the boys disperse and tell their fathers of the general wish of the incipient community. Each of the old boys puts on his thinking-cap, and, if of opinion that his son's choice is a good one, goes out and brings his assent to the headman's knowledge. If the chief hears from the various fathers that an overwhelming majority can be reckoned on in support of the favourite, he has him summoned and informs him of his election. He then at once reminds him of his duties, which are to inculcate the youths with respect for their seniors, to see that they neither molest the women, nor steal, and so forth.

And now the duly elected Babegbe, confirmed in his office, enters upon his labours. He takes the youngsters out, watches over them, and widens the range of their games and their dances by urging them on. But his chief care is the composition of their differences. He makes up exactly the same staff from among the elder boys as that of the girls. The names and the obligations are in no ways different, it is just a facsimile of the political constitution of the adults. This Babegbe is said to be somewhat severe and if there should be any want of proper respect for old age, or any loutishness, or, above all, any successful flirtation with a coquettish beauty among those in his charge, the sinner is publicly chastened by whipping.

Such an association of young people, started in childhood and lasting through adolescence, had a name of its own in earlier times. But this has gone out of fashion. I only learnt of two such names, namely, "Egbe Lasogba," meaning "a society comprised within a fence"; and "Egbe Majengu," that is, "an association pledged to obedience." If anyone in his later years said, "I am a member of the "Egbe Lasogba," or "I belong to the "Egbe Majengu," everybody knew what union or time of life was meant. At present, no less than in the past, such membership was equal to a brotherhood for life, at all events much more so than the bond between the girls. I was interested in hearing that the people themselves

thought the women's union and its constitution more or less child's play, and that on a Yegbe daughter's marriage its significance and importance for the woman were, in some measure, lost, whereas the men recognize a very precious lifelong comradeship in their own unity. And, thus, here again, we find another illustration of the fact that men are much more strongly predisposed towards communion with their own sex, that is to say, the formation of the state, than women.

When a lad goes courting later on, he calls his Egbe mates together to come to his assistance in tilling the holding of his father-in-law to be. When he has taken a wife, they all lend a hand together in the erection of the new home. When he plights his troth, the festival is brightened by their united presence in the compound. Every untoward happening, as life goes on, finds the old boys of an individual Egbe true to the bond of their youth. The social structure founded in boyhood's days stands firm till death and when the ancients squat beside each other to give the simple social instinct rein in silence or in talk, one may be sure that the basis of their friendship was once laid down within the Egbe's circle. The influence of this sentiment of fellowship is said to have been so powerful in days gone by, that the different Egbes were always mutually exclusive and even maintained an attitude of mutual opposition, until its members were grey with years. The only thing which kept the separate Egbe fraternities together was the more or less tyrannical institution of the Ogboni, which welded these small though firmly knitted societies together for outward action by the enormous pressure it could bring to bear.

When, then, towards the close of this education of classified ages, a man falls in love with a maid, he behaves exactly like most of us Europeans; he looks for the girl of his choice in some secluded spot, in order to have a quiet chat with her. The word "love," it seems, is missing in the vocabulary of these talks, and "friendship" takes its place. This term, however, is not meant to cover that natural, naïvely simple mating so much favoured by the Kabre and other tribes, but implies genuine affection and sincere troth-plighting with a view to marriage in its highest sense. If, now, the girl be not already pledged to another—and "boy and girl" engagements were just as common formerly as in the countries adjoining—

and if the lad is a proper lad and likely to make a good husband, and if, more especially, he happens to be a chip of a prosperous block, we may safely suppose that, should she be given a chance, the girl will probably say "Yes." Then each of the contracting parties will look for a confidant and mediator of their wishes. The Babegbe is the right person for the youth, the Yegbe for the maid. And the latter is said to work very hard in the interests of her pupil. She has an interview with the Egbe to inquire whether the character and conduct of his charge are sufficient guarantee for the future happiness of the maiden entrusted to her care. If what she hears satisfies her sense of responsibility, she hies her to the fair one's father, while the boy Egbe's leader goes to the suitor's. In this way both the young folks' fathers are talked to persuasively by constitutional advisers and the preliminaries of a successful issue of the negotiations are consequently settled.

Now, whereas before the latest development of disruptive economic conditions had made itself intensively felt these preliminaries of wedlock grew more and more prevalent in later days, the more general usage in earlier times was for two neighbouring fathers of equal means to promise their children in marriage, so that any other voluntary and independent attachment had to be resolutely nipped in the bud. The Yorubans, however, declared that observation had taught them that the women were never really happy in the marriages so arranged, and that this practice of infant engagement, these loveless espousals, had resulted in such sins against youth, as to lead to their gradual abandonment and the substitution of marriages of affection as above described.

After both parents have given their consent, the bridegroom prospective first of all presents his parents-in-law with a generous load of sweet potatoes of his own cultivation, renewing the gift when spring comes round. Besides this, and before everything else, he places himself at his father-in-law's disposal every year when field labour begins and his Egbe companions always come with him to give him a helping hand until the brotherhood, working in conjunction with the prospective father-in-law's *personnel*, have finished the sowing of seed. This is the procedure by which the young man earns a growing right to lead home his bride in the future, and an average of from five to six years of such villenage

is the time usually considered right before the couple are sufficiently ripe for marriage. Then one day, after repeated petitions, the family agree, and at last the father-in-law gives his consent. The groom still has to bring in ten sacks of cowrie-shells worth about fifty shillings, and then all his own obligations are fulfilled. But at the very last moment the anxious father once more visits the Balalawo, the "Father of the Secret," the oracle priest, and beseeches him to forecast his daughter's future. The priest questions the oracle of the Ifa, and if it be favourable, there is no further obstacle. The girl's father definitely accepts the bride-money, called "Idana," and the marriage rite is performed.

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Full comprehension of what follows necessitates some additional matter relating to the restrictions imposed upon possible betrothments and marriages.

The fact that it is the Orisha, the God of the paternal clan, who grants the blessing of children to the family, was mentioned in the account given of the ceremonial following the birth of a child. The worship of the Orisha, however, includes definite food-taboos, the so-called Ewo or, more correctly, Ewuo. All the worshippers, or, that is to say, all the descendants of the same Orisha, profess the same Ewo, regardless of any personal taboos which all Yorubans may swear to obey. And, the High Priest of the God Shango alone excepted, no man is permitted to marry, or even to cohabit with, a woman whose food-taboo is the same as his own, and thus sacrifices to the same Orisha to whom he himself makes offerings, and from whom, then, he traces his own descent. The scientific name for this is "totemistic exogamy on a patriarchal basis." In accordance with this definition, the nation, then, is divided into clans, or descendants of particular Orishas, in the old vernacular called "Omo-orisha," or, for short, "Omoishe" (Omo—children), and who, as already stated, dwell together in exogamy. The Omoishe regard their Orisha as their sire, their ancestor and divine progenitor, and, therefore, be he a male deity, they call him "Baba," or father, and, if female, "Ja," or mother. Consequently, they regard themselves as logically related in blood and as much debarred from

intermarriage as are brothers and sisters with us. And it necessarily follows that a youth has to repress the first stirrings of an inclination towards a girl of his own clan, when he is on the look out for a possible bride, at their birth.

Now, notwithstanding that a marriage has been made between a young man of one clan and a girl of another, a differentiation of ritual exists in the worship of their respective ancestral gods, which, in spite of the intimate tie which unites them, continues to the end of their lives. When a young wife crosses the threshold of her new home, she still keeps her own inherited food-taboos, but frequently takes her husband's upon herself as well, for many a man refuses to have any food prepared or eaten which is not acceptable to the chief God in the compound, and thus the husband's ancestral deity, under his own roof or even within his own enclosure. On the other hand, the husband very rarely submits to his wife's Ewuo, but is not on that account entitled to ask his wife to prepare any food which is taboo to her although not taboo to him, and more than that, he may not even bring such food into their dwelling. The children of the marriage follow the paternal Ewuo.

Now, in every compound there is a principal altar in a temple space called "Banga," in which the chief god, the Orisha of the compound's owner, is adored. Considering the strict preservation of the totemistic method of worship, it is, however, but natural that the wife should have a little shrine of her own in the new house, because the majority of the entire compound's inmates pray to a different deity than hers. She, so to speak, receives a "layer" or "slip" of the great domestic altar under her paternal roof. The appropriate ceremonial takes place on the day after the consummation of wedlock. The bride then returns once more to her own parents' house. Her father gets ready to transport the Orisha. He and his wife, preceded by their daughter to the new abode, carry the sacred symbol into the "boudoir" set apart by the young husband for his wife. The holy object is then set up against a wall or in a niche. The newly-married woman's father offers up the prescribed sacrifices, which may be called "induction offerings." These consist of a chicken or a hare, a ewe or a ram, a he or a she goat, snails, kola, rum, mashed sweet potatoes, oil and so forth, whatever may be agreeable to the Orisha in question and not taboo

to his descendants. After that, all the young woman's family eat and drink and dance beneath the veranda in front of the entrance of her apartment. This consecration and inauguration of a new place for worshipping the Orisha is a regular festival of profound significance in the women's eyes. For, since her mate has another God than hers, it must always be a consolation to be able to turn from the alien divinity, and, on occasion, retire within the sanctuary transported from her father's house. When the chief annual holy day of the compound's presiding God is held, but in which, because she is the dependent and descendant of another God, can but play an humble part, she is still at liberty to make her own little private arrangements. This is her right, which her own husband cannot deny her; this is her duty, imposed upon her by the worship of her own Orisha, and they culminate in the silent preparation of a little festival in honour of her special deity within its sacred niche before the yearly celebration of that high festival at which her husband's Great Orisha, the mighty ruler of all the compound, is adored. The man will never fail to give the woman the appropriate sacrificial beast which will have met its fate what time the guests arrive to solemnize the feast of the household's master's God with all befitting pomp and decent merriment.

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The circle is complete. The first experienced glance will here detect the fact that this nation originally possessed a clear and definite organization so duly ordered and so logical that we but seldom meet with its like among all the peoples of the earth. And the basic idea of every clan's progeniture in a powerful God; the legitimate order in which the descendants of a particular clan unite in marriage to found new families; the essential origin of every new-born babe's descent in the founder of its race and its consideration as a part of the God-in-Chief; the security with which the newly-wedded wife not only may, but should, minister to her own God in an unfamiliar home; all this affords a clue to lead us from the scrutiny of this people's general conduct of life towards a judgment of their political constitution and the more mysterious foundation of their system of religion. The intention of this chapter

was to show how closely forged are the links of their philosophy and the greatness of this nation, not alone in its practical existence, but in the intellectual quality permeating their religious thought. And thus the descriptive road which I have trodden leads to a well-built house, furnished with spacious halls, in which the ancient Gods held sway. Before we, however, pay all our attention to the edifice of the religious cult, we will devote a little time to the political life of the Yorubans.

Female potters in Ilorin.
(Photo by Albrecht Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 166.

Wooden-lidded vessels from princely Yoruban household. Reading from the left they measure 20½, 14, and 16½ inches in diameter or length.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER IX

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF ATLANTIS

The Oro and the share of men and women in the affairs of the State—The Ogboni as the Senate of Elders—The Balés, the rulers of the city, and its presidents and their officers—The roya dignity and the death of Kings.

WE have observed that from the moment it was taken in hand the structural education of children was clearly connected and based on sex separation. The girls were associated in the Yegbe, the boys in the Egbe. We also observed that membership of the former did not continue beyond the date of their marriage. The woman then leaves the educational fellowship and, as far as regards the whole of her practical life, is relegated henceforth to her family and children; whereas, in strong contrast, the young men, although long past the period of childhood, are knit together in the bonds of the Egbe-brotherhood, and, even when very old men, always return to the friends they thus made in their youth. The tie uniting the girls dissolves in the family circle, whereas the bond of union between the boys continues in their political life. The Egbes pass over to the Ogbonis, the permanent institution of Elders, when greying with years and, as the heads of their houses, possessed of both influence and wealth. Chapter III. contains an account of my admission to the honours of this corporation.

Among the Yorubans the sex-difference which exists in the ability to combine is not only shown by the fact that girls secede from their unions while the boys remain within theirs, but by the

exclusion from external affairs, which is as noticeable in this as in most other West African peoples. The Egbe not only merge into the Ogboni ; the young men not only found life-long permanent societies ; they, so to say, shake off every influence exercised by the other sex by harshly and emphatically fending off and excluding the entire female population from all participation in male associations ; they reduce it to a lower level in public life, and they achieve their object by the agency of a favourite institution, whose expressed intention is "*taceat mulier in ecclesia.*" This is the Oro.

The Oro, also called Oru, is a community of men. It did not originate in Northern Nigeria. Its alleged birthplace is Abeokuta, and although the truth of this has not been established, its chief seat is in that city, and what I was told about it in Ibadan I heard in the Abeokuta quarter there. Now, Oro is not, strictly speaking, the name of a society, but of an instrument which, when whirled around at night, is intended to drive the women out of the street, terrify them and keep them away from men's meetings. It consists of two oblong pieces of board, with holes at one of their rounded ends, tied together with a string passed through them, attached to a cord about five feet long, and thus whirled round the head of its user. They are made in different sizes and of varying power of sound and various kinds of wood. Those I got in Ifé were neatly carved with figures in relief, each pair of boards with either a man or a woman. I also heard a myth about the creation of these buzzers, or, as the English call them, " bull roarers." This is the legend :

" Once upon a time, there was a very poor man. His father left him nothing. His wife was sick. All the women in the land were suffering then. They were ill. Nobody could cure hem. Because they could not sleep. So the man went into the forest. He struck a piece of wood from the Igi (*i.e.*, tree) Oshurun. He cut a piece from the Igi Roko. He cut a piece from the Igi Iré. He took one of the pieces of wood. He cut a piece of wood in the shape of a phallus. He cut it flat. He bored a hole at one end and pulled a string through it. He whirled it round his head. He called it Oro (it roars, buzzes, hums, etc.). He cut Oro boards of Iré wood, Oshurun wood, Roko wood. Then he hid the buzzers. Next day he went back to the town. He called his sons. He told them to take food with them and led them to the wood. There he showed them how to use the buzzers. He forebade them to mention it to anyone. They had to stay in the forest until they learnt to handle them. They all learnt it.

" Then the man one day took his buzzers and went back with his sons to the town. He went into his compound. He laid the Oro on the earth in the Gondu and said : ' This is my

great Father. We will give him a ram and a dog to eat. But we will give him a dog first of all, because my great Father once got lost. The dog showed him the road. Without the dog my great Father would not have found the way.' The women came. The men came." (Even the legend shows that the women are allowed to see the Oro boards when lying on the ground!) "Many rams were slaughtered. They were slaughtered over the Oro and their blood made to flow over the Oro. Then they ate, then they drank. There was feasting and drinking, drumming and dancing. It was a very big festival. All the people rejoiced. They did this in honour of the dead grandfather.

"At evening the old man said: 'My old grandfather will come out to-night and take the food which I have brought him.' When he said this, all the women ran away (because they were frightened). The sun was going down. They went in and made fast the doors behind them. After that the old man gave his sons the buzzers. They began to twirl them. One jumped here, then he jumped there. He was heard in this place, he was heard in that. It was a great, it was a mighty noise. The folk said: 'Listen! hark! that is the old dead grandsire himself' (Baba Oro). One son was tall and slender, and had bound a stone (an old stone axe-head) in the middle of his Oro. The people said: 'Hark! that is old grandfather's dog; he is barking here, he is barking there.' The people shouted: 'Adja Aka-oko. Hekwa Oro! Hekwa Oro!' The women were indoors. The old man prayed to his grandfather. He had many children. These children had children. Their name is Omoru (from Ongo, a child, and Oru, a roarer). Every child of an Omoru became an Omoru."

The legend, of course, arose in the wish of the natives to find a reason for the custom and the instrument of its practice, and the creation of a myth was the result of an attempted explanation, a proceeding no more peculiar to Africans of a superior type than to the ancient Hellenes and ourselves of more recent times. It is interesting inasmuch as it also connects the buzzers with a dog and because the voice of the deceased man's grandfather, the dead ancestor, is heard by his immediate relatives. Later on these sacred voices of the dead will be referred to again, when we devote our attention to the Ethiopians. At present I only want to point out that I also heard these bull-roarers spoken of by the peoples of the Upper Niger as being the voices of long bygone ancestors and their dogs, and I now accentuate the fact that the exclusion of women from the ceremonials observed by the men is founded upon the tradition prevailing among many of these nations, namely, that the Oro is the speech of their forefathers, that is, upon Manism, so called, and that is intercourse with the departed.

Seeing the buzzers in motion is taboo, or an Ewuo, to the women. They may gaze upon the Oro lying upon the ground when sacrificial blood is being poured upon it. But they must never see it in operation and are never wittingly allowed to look undisguisedly upon the thoroughly familiar mystery. On no account whatever can they

be allowed to watch it whizzing through the air. It is of extraordinary interest to notice how not only the women of the Omoro families which I could never find, but the dependents of every real Orisha, stand in most wonderful awe of these resonant instruments, even to-day, although they catch hold of and carry these bull-roarers without coming to any harm. And I always bought my buzzers off the women and never off the men. Not a single woman was ever afraid of touching the things, whatever her clan. But often enough one or the other women present at the sale would, to my secret annoyance, nudge the seller and tell her not to let me have a thing like that so cheap, since it was an object of great value. Then, as a rule, up went the price, and when it got outrageous all I had to do was to catch hold of the Oro in my right and the cord in my left hand as if I were going to twirl it, for the women to hide their faces in their hands, turn round and fly away screaming. I always had to reassure them and make them see the absurdity of the thing. This little experiment, often repeated, not only gained me the general respect which all the Yoruban women habitually have for the instrument, but clearly proved that they knew how the Oro was handled and had seen it in use. They would not have started apart, unless I had managed it properly.

It is, then, perfectly obvious that the women are terrified by the men and kept in a holy fear of this great ancestral roarer. I was unanimously told that the women who let themselves be seen out of doors in the days of old and unexpectedly caught sight of an Oro procession, were straightway killed and hung up as a warning to others. Considering the amazing love of the Yorubans for human sacrifice and the exiguous estimation in which they hold human life this statement may well be believed. Moreover, none but nimble and light-footed lads were entrusted with putting these nocturnal hummings into practice, those who were heavy in gait not being suitable. What was wanted was some lively jumping about in this and the other direction, making the dread noises resound here, there and everywhere. The women keep particularly good food on hand on the nights when the Oro procession is announced to come off. Rams and dogs are then killed and titbits are placed on dishes outside the doors. The uproarious crew takes up the mess and devours it. And, in return for the banquet thus given them, they

frighten the womenfolk with the din of the Oro till daybreak, then pack up the bull-roarers and replace them. The wood they are now made of is always cut from the Oshurun, the Iré and the Roko tree. The latter is still considered the best for making most noise. The Orogi Roko is also credited with the will-o'-the-wisps, which flit about its superbly tall white trunks. This tree is powerful "magic," although it is no more a God than the Oro. The Oro association celebrates a yearly festival like every other Yoruban religious community. However, in a certain sense, it competes with the Orisha, because no real Omoru who, consequently, only worships the Oro without belonging to an Orisha, is allowed to approach the temple of an actual divinity for worship and, should he venture to do so, is derided as a client of the Oro and told to be off. At least, so I am told. Personally, I never met a man who, only confessing the Oro, denied the Orisha, but I know that many professed adherents of an Orisha take part in the Oro celebrations. We are thus faced with the remarkable phenomenon that there is no real connection between the forces that go to the creation and maintenance of a community and the genuine Orishan constitution. Church and State in Yoruba are only united in a limited sense. The Orisha system is a method of family organization, the foundation of clanship. Irrespective of the Shango Corporation and the Alafin Institution it has no state-forming force.

The Ogboni League, already described, will be definitely shown as that institution in whose hands lies the direction of all practical political power.

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The state of Yoruba, nominally at least, is a kingdom. But even superficial observation of the conditions of its constitution will facilitate perception that its kingship is restricted to the more or less nominal rule of the Alafin, the overlord of the metropolitan city of Ojo, and that the independence of the other cities is so great in comparison with the external authority possessed by the capital that the Alafin is constrained to limit the potential exercise of his own power within his own walls, and to rest content with

a nominal supremacy, a nominal admission of his authority, and a nominal tribute from the other great towns aforesaid. The Head of the Yoruban Church, the Oni of Ifé, has almost as much power as the Alafin. These cities are autonomous and, to all appearance, ruled and governed by the Balés, a sort of elective princes. But their authority is no less illusory than the Alafin's in temporal, and the Oni's in spiritual, affairs. Their power is shadowy and unreal. They, too, are subject to another majesty, and this resides in the League of the Ogboni.

The municipal princedoms of Yoruba are, in both the narrower and wider sense, Republics, and the pride of their princely glory consists in the presidency of a court-pomp of strictly limited duration. The presidents of European and American civilized nations have a longer term of office than the Yoruban, and those who keep its existence within strictly definite periods and always succeed in carrying out their desires in the wished-for direction are the sacred associations of the Ogboni, which may roughly be described as a Senate.

This Senate of the Ogboni is augmented and sustained by power to add to its numbers, and is one of, or rather the only, fountainhead of political government—and much more so than the kingship. One statement made to me was extremely interesting, namely, that the Ogboni originally were an Egba institution and not, as such, specially Yoruban. The Egba were said to have possessed a district in Ibadan in old, very old days, and, long, long before the settlement in Abeokuta, had had their bodies politic which had been founded by the Ogbonis there. Then the Yorubans —oh, very, very long ago, indeed, when the Shango (?) had been their Alafin, or Emperor—had come to Ojo, captured Ibadan and driven the Egba out of the land. The Alafins had tried to exterminate the old government of the Ogboni, but had failed in spite of all the cruelties they practised. This was said to have occurred at an extremely remote period, ages and ages before the first settlement of Abeokuta, which also dated back to a much earlier era than any recorded in history. This tale was first told me by the Chief of the Ogboni in Ibadan. I failed to see its connection at the moment, and fancied it smelled so much of self-glorification of the Ogboni that I at first put it aside as of no

Bronze-casting in Ibadan.
(By Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 173.

account. Afterwards, however, an old relative of the reigning Alafin family corroborated it without any reference having been made to my previous informant. I was more fully acquainted with the administrative system, had succeeded in being admitted to the Ogboni, and, consequently, had got so enlightened as to be able to put questions which were pertinent to the subject and the people could understand.

It is true: there are two systems of government effectively fused in the Ojo district of Yoruba. One of these is the royal power vested in the person of the Alafin; the other is the Institution of the Ogboni, among whom the Balé is selected, not as the chief of the Ogboni, but as the head of the town. Every old city has its Ogboni, that is to say, a union of its notables, to-day. It is an association of men. Although women, and only very old ones at that, are now admitted to membership, they were not real members in the days gone by, but only officials appointed by the bond. There seemed as a rule to be twelve of these ancient women, well versed in the most arduous and wickedest arts, whose business was spying and eavesdropping and, if called upon, handing the poisoned cup to the person destined. These gruesome hags were fitting adjuncts to this abominable system.

The Ogboni veiled and yet veil themselves in mysticism, and the atmosphere in which they move is tainted with the reek of blood. Even now, after years of English rule, the gore-stained sept demands its victims, in the way which has partly been told in Chapter III. This League never received into its circle other than the so-called "Ledi," that is, old, esteemed and trustworthy persons. Its head was the Oluwo Oba, shortened to Oluoba (Oba), and also called Oluo. This office is hereditary, and is always in the hands of one of the first Oluo's descendants. He ruled in the Ogboni fashion in the land until the Alafin dynasty came to Ojo. The Oluo is said to be of Egba race, and the former old holder of the judgment-seat in Ifé boasted of the venerable antiquity of his descent at all our interviews. The members of the League assemble whenever any important coming event casts its shadow before it, whenever measures against a Balé, or other notability of distinction, are considered advisable, in order to discuss and settle the ways and means of conducting the business. The Ogboni meet

whenever an important candidate is up for election. The reception ceremonial has been referred to above.

I will now describe the working of the oracle by these mystery-mongering greybeards on occasions which call for the exercise of their activities, in order to make the basis of the power wielded by the Ogboni quite clear to the reader. The oracle is called "Mummule." It mainly consists in the throwing of pieces of kola-nut, and is conducted as follows:

Whenever an individual in the city, whatever his business, had pursued it with such success as to have risen from previous miserable poverty to wealth and the ownership of many slaves within a very short time, without any kinship of good position; that is to say, if he were an upstart who had worked his way up above his family level, he was accused of something or other and brought before the Ogboni by summons. Frequently, but naturally *sub rosâ*, it was the Balé himself who would bring the matter to the assembly's notice. If, however, the Oluwo happened to be also a Baba-lawo, a prophet and interpreter of the oracle of the god Ifa, its interpretation was, in itself, insufficient for the purpose aimed at by this denunciation. The Eda figure (*v.* Chapter III.) and one or more Abebede were laid upon the ground, and due sacrifice of old and young fowls made over them. Then the Oluwo took a kola-nut, consecrated it by laying it on the divine image and broke it into its four natural segments. Then he took one seed-grain from each of these and threw it down. Then he shook all four quarters together in his hands and flung them on the earth beside the image. Now, of course, they can either fall convex-side upwards or so that the side containing seed-grains is uppermost. The omens are auspicious when the positions are even in number. When they are odd, it is a very bad augury indeed. I need scarcely say that, admittedly and to demonstration, celebrants of the Oluwo's kidney and members of such a society as the Ogboni, have considerable practice in throwing the kola-nut sections, and are quite capable of manipulating the oracle to their own satisfaction. If these happen to fall unfavourably, woe betide the accused. He is quickly seized, his head laid across the Eda-figure, and severed from his neck with the heavy Eda-knife sacred to that God. The head is stuck up in the Oluwo's compound and the carcase hurled into the

street. But the head is not exposed to the air very long. It is buried the same or next day and so remains for three days. It is then exhumed, thoroughly cleaned, and the skull is afterwards fashioned into a beaker, whose use we shall learn later on.

This precious association loses no time in cutting up the spoil the moment its late owner is out of the way. I have said above that, as a rule, the selected victim was a parvenu, or person whose relatives were lower in the social scale than their quite exceptional kinsman. He was the only influential individual in his family circle. Once the family had been deprived of its chief prop and mainstay by murder, its property was consequently unprotected and outlawed. The slaves, its chief source of wealth, were shared out among the Balé, the Oluwo, and other Ogbonis. The rumour was spread that this particular man had, in some unspecified way, instigated a conspiracy against the Government.

Naturally, it was not quite such a simple proceeding when a member of an old family of repute was concerned. Such would certainly always have several highly respected brothers of his own, brothers- and fathers-in-law, and so on, who would be unlikely to take being deprived of the property of a man so sacrificed lying down.

The manufacture of drinking-cups from the skulls of the Ogboni victims has been mentioned already. These were called Iba-Oli-Inja. If a charge against anyone of lying or theft was preferred to the Ogboni, the poisoned draught was poured into such a chalice. The accused was summoned to the presence. He had to sup the cup to the dregs. If the accusation was baseless, and he was innocent, he would at most feel somewhat sick, but if guilty, he died. It was, then, a trial by ordeal common to many parts of Africa.

The labours of this League were not, however, confined to such profitable jurisdiction. Great and even extraordinary "magic" was said to reside in the brass and bronze images of the Ogboni. If, for instance, the Balé fell ill, he would dispatch four such human sacrifices to them to be slaughtered over this holy property of the Ogboni. But he certainly did not do so only because of the healing power of these images, but also to ingratiate himself with the older members and their kindred in whose hands, especially, lay the decision on the length of his term of office and also of his life. He laid

his offerings on the Ogboni altars in much the same spirit as Kings of ancient times and those beside the Nile. He always tried to keep on the right side of the League, and to support its plenitude of power. For how could he even tell whether his illness was not the forerunner of the poison to which the Elders had condemned him, or whether they might not kindly come to his assistance with a timely antidote, if he recognized the power of their sway and the flattery implied in such a sacrifice of slaves. And so he bowed to their superior might and contributed to their glory with his best. Moreover, it was believed that to place the symbols of their strength and intellectual force before the city's gates would stay the enemy's march against it. They would protect it, said the people, and especially if human life was sacrificed upon them. And if the Mummule spoke fairly, it was certain that the attacking host would fall down dead on seeing them.

The little brass figures worn on the arm are one of the signs by which Ogboni leaguers know each other when travelling; and another is the answer: "Ogborra," given to the whispered word "Ogboni." Some weight also attaches to the statement that the Ogboni lay so much stress upon the use of bronze and yellow metal furniture at all their ceremonial. These brazen vessels in prehistoric days came from the town of Ogbo or Ogborro, lying to the south of Ilesha or Yesha, and north of New-Ojo. The Ogboni associations were developed both there and in Ifé long before there was any Alafin and were thence transferred by the Egba. These traditions may very well accord with the reality. The League is also said to have formerly possessed a large Okqua, a holy vessel cast in beautiful yellow metal, which, however, was smashed by a collapsing wall during a great conflagration. I heard nothing definite as to its origin and use except the repeated assertion that this splendid specimen of metal casting had come from the far North of the Niger.

Now this metal work of the Ogboni reminds one of the saga, that erstwhile the institution was in the hands of the guild of smiths. And that brings back to me the legendary tale, told at their yearly festival by the Numu, or metal workers caste, when the great forging of the sacred agricultural implements takes place in Mandeland, namely, that they gained the right to sit in judgment on the conduct

of the kingly office, and, if need should be, to condemn its holder to death.

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The Balés, or civic princes of the Yorubas, are the creatures and tools of the Ogboni. The Alafin, or " King " of the Yorubans, on the other hand, is not concerned with them. In former days this ruler held his court in an old city we will call " Old-Ojo," situate near the Borgu frontiers. The tremendous upheavals in the course of the last few centuries these cities, too, underwent, did not spare either this ancient town, and caused the king and his royal household to flee southwards and to seek refuge in a city near Ibadan. This we may call " New-Ojo," for Ojo it was again named. The Alafin is a scion of the Divine Shango, the mighty Storm-Orisha of Yoruba. Tradition tells of several Alafin dynasties, of which we shall have something to say later. According to the myth, the oldest Shango ruling-family came from the land of the " Tagba," or " Tagpa," or " Tappa," *i.e.*, from old Nupéland. It seems to have ruled in Old-Ojo for a long time, and then to have made room for a second dynasty hailing from Borgu. When the adherents of the old king migrated to New-Ojo, a fresh Alafin was elected from the first Shango-clan, who naturally could not prove the possession of the same azure blood as the old Alafins of Northern Ojo of earlier days. Popular memory rumours the magnificence of the royal palace in Old-Ojo to have been something stupendous. The baked clay columns were covered with wood carvings and bronze plates. So says tradition, and so the discoveries at Benin prove. My own people brought me specially beautiful carvings from the ruins of Old-Ojo. The Alafin clan, moreover, was said to be an ancient tribe, which always went to war on horseback. Neither is this unlikely, but the statements that over three hundred and ten kings of the same tribe held rule in Old-Ojo, and that the last generation yet remembered all their names, are less probable.

The Yorubans are very proud of their Alafin, without, however, doing him more than inherited obeisance. Needless to say, the purely formal recognition due to the Alafin by the Balés, respectively elected by different states, is never refused, and that

the latter are far less responsible to him for their behaviour than to the Ogboni of their own municipality. The king has his own officers, such as the Bashorun and war-chiefs in Oja, each Balé his own officials in his own town. The Alafin's dignity is hereditary; the Balé's the reverse. While the last dynasty still endured, the Alafin continued to rule till he drew his last natural breath, and his nobles sent him the Igbava, or a covered cup full of parrot's eggs if he carried on too much; the hint it conveyed was: "Either thou fleest into the bush, or we will kill thee." Whereas, until quite recently, the Balé could only fulfil his functions for a space of two years at most; at the end of this time his life was cut short with no hope of a pension. In other words: he was given the requisite quantity of poison. In all other respects the ratio of the Balé's dignity to the Alafin's in Yoruba was the same as the Balama's to the Emperor's in Songailand. The similarity of the titles Balé and Balama is not accidental. The name is spread over the whole country between Lake Chad and the northernmost point of the Niger-bend as a historical reminder.

When the moment of the Balé's farewell to life was at hand, the Ogbonis foregathered to settle the succession. The new candidate for honours should be a worthy representative on the one hand, yet, on the other, a complaisant tool in the hands of the venerable angels of vengeance. A tacit agreement was come to only after many days of strife. For they could not always be certain whether their nominee was willing to accept office, as it always remained doubtful whether those now voting for the new aspirant to power would not hasten his departure in a comparatively short time. Obviously the position of Balé had its disadvantages. Now, when the Ogboni Council had made up its mind, his public election was held in the market-place. Here the Elders, by arrangement, approached him. They came with branches of the Ejeje and metal plates called Akoko (leaves: Ewue), ready in their hands, and laid these on the new president's head. If I am rightly informed, an old man, the Oluwo, came up and asked him to promise three things: firstly, to be generally accessible and to give an ear to every petitioner; secondly, to judge every cause justly and not to allow himself to be influenced by the social position of either party; thirdly, to take under his wing especially

those who came to him sick, because they were much less capable of putting their cases as clearly and strongly as those who were sound. The lucidity of these ethical principles is surely astonishing. And we may even take it that something to the general good might arise from the wickedly self-interested government of a few hard-bitten, case-hardened Thugs. These bloodthirsty veterans could, it is true, only maintain their hold upon all these urban populations, numbering their hundreds of thousands in bygone times, by publicly proclaiming such a noble programme of governing principles, but, naturally, neither could they permanently escape the reaction following such proclamation and the obligations thereby imposed on authority, when pressure was brought to bear upon themselves by the bulk of such an enormous populace.

The Balé was thereupon invested with the insignia of his office. He received the silver armlet (Fadaka), of which the Ewue Ejeje and the Ewue Akoko, which had covered his head in the market-place, formed part. The remaining branches were preserved. The Balé was also presented with the "Timtim," a leather-cased cushion, then with a splendid velvet frock, called Otun and Osi (right and left), which, on this occasion, is substituted for the usual over-all, called Agbada. A particularly fine headgear and several other gorgeous accessories completed the state livery handed to His Excellency the Mayor, or Balé, on the day of his election, which was designed to help him to overcome the unpleasant sensation of never knowing how long the sport was going to last. It was quaint to observe one of my old informants chuckling when he said: "When he sees the beautiful clothes, when he hears the rolling of the drums, the new Balé forgets that his life may be very short."

The leaders of the State have separate palaces for their official residences in Edé, Oshogbo and, particularly, in Ojo. But in Ibadan the Balé lives always in his own house. After his election also he continues to occupy his ancestral compound and raises it to palatial dignity. It is plain that, looked at from this angle of vision, his High Mightiness the Balé is nothing but an expanded, magnified and officially-stamped edition of the genuine West African village mayor, or headman, differing essentially from his other brethren only in the magnificence of his ceremonial election, the enjoyment

by himself and his whole family of considerable respect, considerable revenue and the restriction of his earthly existence with the close definition of his official tenure.

The august personage's staff is principally recruited from his own clan. I found the institution of the pages, who are employed as messengers, superior craftsmen and sometimes also as confidants, large numbers of whom usually surround the ruler, existing among the Mossi, the Tim and the Nupé. I never heard that a particular family or clan supplied the body of pages among the princes of the West. The Balé, on the other hand, is privileged to select children of his own for these berths. In Ibadan they are called "Magdwele," and distinguished by a velvet coat, the "Togu," granted by the voters on election day. Contrasted with the Western custom, the Balé's daughters, as well as sons, may serve as Magdwele. Wherever they appear in uniform, the commands they bring from the Balé must be obeyed.

The Balé's actual superior official staff consists of :—

Otun Balé, *i.e.*, His Highness's deputy.

Osi Balé, the left hand's deputy, apparently obsolete in many places ;

Balogun, the Prime Minister ;

Otun-Balogun, the Balogun's right hand ;

Osi-Balogun, the Balogun's left hand ;

Assuqui-Balogun, the third Balogun assistant ;

Abesse-Balogun, the fourth Balogun assistant ;

Ekarun-Balogun, the fifth Balogun assistant ;

Ekefa-Balogun, the sixth Balogun assistant ;

Asaju-Balogun, who goes before the Balé ;

Djagun, the executioner ;

Ologbo, the Balé's representative in the judgment-seat ;

Shobalodju
Maje
Ikolaba
Areagu } "Counsel learned in the law."

The list is very incomplete, because several old offices have fallen into desuetude and a variety has been created in different States, just as the titles of kings vary in different places. Be this as

Transverse rope-walks in the compound.

Working the pedal loom by Ilorin man.

(Photos by Albrecht Martius.)

[*Facing p.* 180.

it may, it seems to me that, owing to the changing estimation in which some positions were held and the degrees of cleverness possessed by their holders, some of these berths became fashionable, were superseded by others and vanished again shortly after their creation and efflorescence. But the basis of subordination is always perceptible. Each person is eventually represented by the person immediately below him in rank. Later on I shall refer to many posts of completely recent disappearance.

The Balé, in part, and the people, in part, elect these officers. The populace itself has the privilege of choosing the Djagun; the Balé determines the sequence in rank of the Balogun. The juristic experts seem to be selected according to knowledge and experience of the law. These were certainly men of importance; they squatted either in rotation or all together around the person of the President and informed him of the "procedure" in the cases before him, and so not only furnished him with desired "similar" cases, but came to his assistance with historical "precedents."

The Baloguns who, as before said, are subordinate to each other in rank, are said in former times to have led the Ogun Illua Amanno, *i.e.*, bodies of fighting men, levied from various districts when necessary, conducted by their own chiefs, who, in their turn, took their orders from their superior officers, the Baloguns. I am, however, not sure that this is correct, because of other information that the Baloguns were rather (cabinet) ministers than military captains. Levies of masses of fighting men were constantly made when wars were to be waged in far-off countries for the purpose of capturing slaves.

The Balé of Ibadan is alleged to have sent a raiding party with this object to the Kukuruku in early days; and not only were feuds now and again fought to a finish with other cities, but the Balé called for bodies of troops in his own country and this very frequently came about as follows:

All the males of the community, living under the rule of the Balé, were compelled to help him in tilling his holdings. Those who were poor did so *propriâ manu;* those better off sent slaves. This sort of general labour was paid for by the Balé in generous hospitality to the workers or their masters and by the distribution of food. Now, while those living in the neighbourhood did the

work, those from a distance supplied, by way, so to say, of compensation, foodstuffs, meals and delicacies for the great feeding, and at the same time, when the Balé's message was brought to the neighbouring people to come to work, other messengers were dispatched to those further off and demanded supplies of commissariat.

Now, the pages would come to smaller communities yet further away in order to instigate disobedience to this request. Malicious tongues were given to say spitefully that the Balé had not been displeased with this contravention of his orders of late, because it gave him a chance of increasing his wealth. For, scarcely had the report of such contumacy come to his ears than he summoned some troops, put either a military or diplomatic leader at their head, and sent them off. They invaded the alleged recalcitrant district, closed in upon it as unobservedly as might be, so that the villagers should not take to their heels, and then overwhelmed the little commune. Men, women and children, every one that was at all sound in wind and limb, was taken prisoner. Often only half the population remained, that is to say, had luckily got away. Of this remainder the majority were men, for the women were least able to escape. All the captives were taken to the homestead and paraded before the Balé, who used some of them as slaves and wives in his own household, gave some away and sold the rest.

Such of the inhabitants who had fortunately run off then gathered on the ruins of their settlement and sent envoys bearing leaves on their heads, in token of submission, to the ruler. He graciously pardoned them. When the deputation returned with these tidings, the inhabitants industriously set to work again. The fields were tilled, the houses rebuilt. The men worked double tides and tried as quickly as possible to make enough money to go with all speed into another country and get new wives there, because most of their own women had been taken away, owing to the Balé's punitive expedition. The men came back with the stranger-women; they increased and multiplied and, as soon as the village had once more grown to a respectable size, it sent another embassy to the Balé, begging him to give them an Adjelle or ruler. This was done, and henceforth the rejuvenated district obeyed its overlord and made submission. The Adjelleship of such small places is not,

however, hereditary, but at each holder's death the Balé then in power appoints its successor.

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The great distinction existing between the Ojo and the Balé, or between Kingship and Presidency, is never more evident than at the close of their lives. Within the reign of the last two dynasties the King of Yoruba in Ojo was, according to all reports, neither restricted in the duration of his royal office nor in his life's. He had to be guilty of grave abuses before the great ones of his Court sent him the Igbava (cup of parrot's eggs), which, when received, most certainly caused his rapid exit from the throne. At quite a remote period, however, the Alafins are said never to have reigned longer than seven or fourteen years. I propose to show what this meant when discussing the forms of kingship in Ethiopia. Generally speaking, however, the Alafins were, as a rule, allowed to terminate both their royal duties and lives in a natural way. After their demise an entire series of customs, unsurpassed in cruelty and significance, was put into practice. The royal corpse was at first decapitated and the skull cut off from the head, cleansed and given to the eldest son, the natural heir to the late monarch's estate, dignity and privileges. He drank some mead out of this and was thus hallowed as an Alafin in his own person. The divinity of the Shango himself, the ancient founder of the Empire, was thereby transferred to him. After that the tongue was removed from the royal head, roasted, dished up, and the son had to eat it. This was a condition precedent to the final coronation of the new ruler. Then the funeral begins. A rope is placed under the armpits of the corpse, and so it is dragged out of the palace. During the defunct's lifetime several persons promise to be buried with their ruler. They are called Apobaku, *i.e.*, people who gave their word to die with their lord. Eight living souls follow the king into his grave: women, slaves and the bridle-holder of the royal palfrey.

The royal corpse is deposited in a huge jar, a majestic urn. So-called Banka, or Onitshe Awuo, carry this funeral vase to a spot called Koso, situated in the midst of the bush. Regal tombs are side by side in that place. A large pit is sunk in New-Ojo, and into this the living companions of the monarch's corpse, enclosed within

its gigantic container, are lowered. This living grave is then filled in with earth and a mound piled over all. Then the king's steed is slaughtered on this hillock and so follows his master. In Old-Ojo the procedure is different. A trench was dug with passages eastwards and westwards, and a mound was thrown up over its central point. According to all descriptions, I may assume that this form of sepulture corresponds to that of the Binis of the Songai, as set forth and illustrated in Chapter I.

It is then said: "The Alafin has gone to the realm of the Shango," or, "The Alafin has ridden into the Shango's realm." Barra, in particular, is mentioned as the seat of the Shango. It is a hamlet, at about half an hour's to an hour's distance from Ojo, and is a royal and hierarchical private village. That Shango's temple, and, above all, Shango's tomb, is there is the belief of the people, who seem to have transferred everything from Old-Ojo in the North to the present capital in the South. And at this place, Barra, is a spot which may well excite our keenest interest: the house in which all the skulls of the Alafin who died in Ojo are preserved and carefully concealed.

Now, the close of a Balé's life was until latterly absolutely other. His departure was very seldom conformable to Nature's law. On the contrary, when a Balé became either too powerful, too independent, too wealthy, or also too cruel, the Ogboni had something to say. His average regency is said to have lasted about two years. When these elapsed, the Ogboni cast the oracle and decided whether the God would grant an extension of his term. If the deity's decision was affirmative, they were wont to take his life by poison. And the very general distrust evinced by all Yorubans of any drink offered them seems to prove that mixing venom in it is a practice in full swing among them. The Oluwo, who as the head of the Ogboni League had once made certain of his election, now decreed his death by a pernicious draught. The Balé's remains were shown the greatest honour. A large wooden coffin, called "Bossin," was got ready. Sumptuously robed, the Balé's body was bedded in it and laid to rest within his own dwelling-place, as a rule, it seems, in Oborun, but sometimes in the Gondu as well. A shaft of unusual depth received the coffin, and was filled in, a cone of earth raised over it, and horses and cows, etc., were slain. A general and very great

festival was arranged, and this made an end of the princely glory of the clan. A generation later it mostly sank into poverty. The Otun-Balé assumed the reins from the death of one until the election of another Balé, who made up another staff.

The fact that all Yorubans, except the Alafin and his family, are buried under the verandas within their own compounds, and, therefore, among the living, is very significant.

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Apart from considering the leadership of the women, to be mentioned elsewhere, the main lines of their political life, or methods of government, have now been laid down. We shall hear of the Head of the Yoruban Church, called the Oni, later on.

Summarizing the foregoing, we observe, firstly, the exclusion effected by means of the Oro, of women as women from political activity; secondly, an associated union, somewhat republican in character, of men, headed by a President who is its tool; thirdly, a King, esteemed as a divine chieftain, and, consequently, honoured at his death with great ceremonious veneration; fourthly, a scale of officialdom in which the holder of a post is always subordinate to his superior in the scale. Later on, when the political constitution of the Soudan is our theme, our task will be to discover the connection between these things and the history of its family relationships and development. We may conclude this chapter with the establishment of the fact that these elemental factors form the main links of a chain which unites the dignity of kingship with the divinity of the Orisha system; but this, however, by no means precludes the opinion that the constant and general recurrence of Otun (right) and Osi (left) hand official appointments may be invested with a very profound significance.

Pottery from Yoruban altars with symbolic ornament. Reading from left to right: 13½, 12, and 15¾ inches in height.
(*Drawn by Carl Arriens.*)

CHAPTER X

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE YORUBANS' RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Gods as the Ancestors of their Clans—Their Clan-priests, and communal, or High Priests—Their temples and appliances for worship—The fundamental laws of the system—The divine power of Ossenj—The Shâmâns.

THE Yorubans, above all other nations whose private life is saturated with the spirit of religious thought, such as the peoples under the influence of Semitic culture and the races of the classic Mediterranean, are the most brilliant example of this combination of principles which Modern Africa affords. In discussing such a combination of the practical affairs of daily life with religious feelings, I do not mean to refer to a possible habit of connecting a host of minor articles of faith, protective measures, anxious observances, or calculated ceremonial, with every petty incident of life, every part of the body, every portion of the day and season of the year, every natural occurrence and every piece of ritual. All these things sap the main strength of a nation's life more or less with a tangle of obscurity. What I understand it to mean is, on the contrary, that philosophy of life, matured by knowledge of the Gods, and so architecturally constructed as to support and hold up the separate individuals of a community, no less than the organized community itself. The life-edifice, world-conception and mythology of the Yorubans are spacious,

broad, lofty and profound, however unsympathetic, even to repulsiveness, may be their character. The Gods of old, in disguise, are most assuredly assembled in the Orisha worship still extant, and in the correspondent interpretation of their power and scope of action. Most assuredly, in different countries, legends and traditions vary. Beyond a doubt, ideas fluctuate in individual towns, nay, more, in individual persons, as they did with the Greeks and Romans, who borrowed Egyptian, Semitic, Libyan, and all kinds of other traditions and creeds, here, there and everywhere, and made them theirs without, however, sensibly altering the groundwork of their own older faith.

My personal view is that the Yoruban religion, as now presented to us, can only be regarded as having gradually become homogeneous, and that its uniformity is the resultant of prolonged and modified development and the confluence of many streams from various sources. What, however, strikes everyone desiring to observe African nations in the true African spirit as particularly remarkable; that which is so extraordinary among parallel phenomena, is that this people should give evidence of a generalized system; a Theocratic scheme, a well-conceived, perceptible organization, reared in a rhythmically proportioned manner; here—here among the swarming population of Western Africa. Who would have believed—nay, who would even have dared to hope for it a few decades ago, since this faculty for grouping, for combining the circle of the Gods into one Divine Being, is essentially lacking in every individual we customarily call "negro," or, let me rather say, is not present in the idea "negro," as we are accustomed to use it.

And I will even go further and say this: If a parallel be drawn between the religious system of the Yorubans—that is, the Orisha system—and those of antiquity, then I am emboldened to say that I consider the Orisha worship of the Yorubans as being purer and more original, more consistent and more unbroken than any other cult of the classical ages known to us. This assertion must not be applied to the beauty and venerable dignity of any particular stories or myths, because the African are not comparable with classical legends. Nor do I maintain that the religious imagination of Yoruba is capable of creating such poetical fictions as antiquity. But I do

mean to say that, especially with regard to the inner equation of social and religious development, these two elements are here represented on a common foundation, an indissoluble unity, and a radical identity, without a parallel. I cannot, I say again, at this moment quote one parallel instance from the past, inclusive of the age of humanity which was most prolific in myths. For here, among the Yorubans, the mythological individual idea and the totemistic social organization are identical. *Vide supra* for many indications of this ; my intention now is to give an account of this in its entirety, and I shall have to summarize the preceding, even at the risk of some unavoidable repetition.

The idea of individual divine descent, so that each person is a part or representative of the Godhead, is the conception on which their system of religion is based. This descent is through the male line. All members of the same family are the posterity of the same God. In so far as they return to the same Godhead when they die, and in so far as every new-born babe represents the re-birth of a pre-deceased member of its family, they are all parts of that Godhead. Therefore, that the Orisha, the divinity, should be the procreative agency present at every connubial rite, and the deity which determines the appearance of every child, is a perfectly consistent concept. The idea of the generative and fertilizing godlike force is so persistent that it is not confined to human beings ; but, on the contrary, the first-fruits of every spring-sowing, the firstlings of stock-raising without any exception, again become the share of the deity in the form of sacrificial offerings in return for having been by him begotten. And not only so, many other things go to prove the significance and inevitability of the idea that the Deity must necessarily be the originator of all successive generations. And, therefore, almost all the prayers of the Yorubans, all their rituals, always culminate in the petition for fruitfulness of their fields, the blessings of children in their families, and aid in every kind of propagation.

The consequence of this view of things is that the family deity must have its abiding-place, its temple, its altar and priest in every compound. When we treat of Yoruban architecture, later on, we shall have occasion to discuss the plan of these temples and altars, and shall then point out its several particularities. But a few

Woman weaving at loom in Ilorin. Plush manufacture.

(Photo by Albrecht Martius.)

[*Facing p.* 188.

explanatory words will be devoted just now to the priesthood, of which there are, quite consistently, two kinds, because the Orisha, the deities, possess two quite distinctly different functions.

In chief, then, every God is the founder of a family. It is of no moment whether he be the God of the tempest, of the forge, of a river, of the earth, of the sky, or of any other cause or effect. For every Godhead has its scions, and through their agency has the power of reproducing itself in their offspring. Secondly, as before said, every deity has its special and particular office. There is, for instance, a Storm God, who attends to the fertilizing rain. There is the God of Iron, who gives the smiths their metal. There is the Small-pox God, who scourges mankind with this frightful disease. When there is a drought, the whole of the community needing rain, regardless of the particular Orisha who founded its component clans, turns as one man to the Storm God. Irrespective of the Orishas of individual heads of households, if war breaks out, it turns to the God of Iron, who is also the God of Battles. Similarly when small-pox ravages the land, no matter what the descent of the families in the district thus afflicted, the appeal for mercy is made in common to the cruel lord of this pestilence. And, consequently, there must be an altar to the clan-god in every compound, where a mediator and intercessor, a familiar priest, conducts the worship. In addition to this, every township needs a temple, a sanctuary for every great God, whose help may have to be invoked, in which the great festivals and ceremonials are celebrated by a correspondingly imposing High Priest. Logically enough, these two classes of the priesthood have different names. The one who officiates within the home is called " Abosha," the communal priest's name is " Adje."

The manner of the former's appointment to his vocation is full of meaning. At the decease of an Abosha, the whole family meets to elect a new one. The absence of an Adje is important. The family approaches the altar with a vessel full of water and two kola-nuts. The water and the nuts having been offered up, they pray the Orisha, on bended knees and with their foreheads in the dust, to choose for them a new Abosha of the house and compound to conduct henceforth the sacrifices and the festivals.

The two kola-nuts are divided into their eight natural sections, which are thrown while the name of an honoured member of the family is mentioned in the question: "Wilt thou have 'M.N.'" (as the case may be) "for thy Abosha?" The person so named becomes the Abosha by Orisha's choice, if four of the sections fall on the flat, and four on the convex side. But if they fall so that they are unequally divided, it signifies "M.N.'s" rejection, and the oracle game is repeated with different names until the positions of the sections are equal, which indicates the divine consent to the appointment. It is the same kind of choosing by lot referred to in describing the Ogboni ceremonial and proves the intention of leaving the divine spirit untrammelled in its representative expression.

The Abosha's several functions were brought to our notice when speaking of the course of life among the Yorubans. They begin in the birth and name-giving and end with the death ceremonial of every member of the family. But his most important duties begin about the time of the great festival, when winter sets in, in connection with the Ebo-dung. Then the Chief of the Compound, or the Balé of the congregated dwellings (for there is a Balé to every compound community just as there is one general Balé in a city) begs the Abosha to perform the sacrificial rites. He is, of course, quite agreeable. The entire family, that is, all the adherents of the Orisha here worshipped, meet in front of the altar, with the exception, of course, of the women taken to wife from another clan, whose descent from another Orisha is settled by their exogamy. In the presence of all, the Abosha again offers up the water and the Obi (kola-nuts). As before, two are broken up; the Abosha extends them on his palm towards the Orisha's altar, saying, "Behold!" He retracts his hand, asking: "Will anybody of this household die this year?" He throws them down and interprets the augury by the relative positions of the segments as above described, favourably or the reverse. If the latter, the operation of a hostile influence which must be placated is assumed in order to allow the Orisha to avert the misfortune therein implied. I never succeeded in getting any clear explanation of this "adverse power," but from what I did hear, and by logical inference, I imagine that the Orisha is credited with personal feelings of much the same kind as Poseidon

of old showed to the long-suffering Ulysses. The probable explanation, as they think, is that the anger of the God has been caused by some member of the family's transgression of a food-taboo, or Ewuo, at some time or other. He must, therefore, be appeased, and, therefore, the most ample, most numerous and most valuable sacrifices must be offered him. These sacrifices made, the Abosha repeats the business with the nuts until they lie, four and four, in similar positions. Whenever they fall in odd numbers, the propitiation is repeated.

Proof of the cessation of divine displeasure is the final situation of the nut segments in even numbers, and, provided the Orisha's wrath is not rekindled by fresh offence, this is an assurance that for this year, at least, the ancestral deity will not demand the death of any member of the family. Then the festival begins and is continued with great rejoicings. True, the Abosha has to sit in adoration all day long before the Orisha's altar, while the others prepare and broil the sacrificial meats. It is a peculiar and very remarkable thing that the Yorubans always offer up their beasts as burnt sacrifices to the Orisha, and, before the Orisha system was abolished in South Nupéland, this practice is said to have been also common there. No nation of the Soudan or Congo-basin observes this extremely significant custom. When the victim has been slain, its blood is at first sprinkled on the image and altar of the God, and then its hide and a portion of its flesh are burnt. The rest of the blood is drained into a pot. The kidneys (Egba or Ekwa) and the liver (Ado) are cut out, inspected and then cooked in the blood with some salt without the addition of any water. I could not, to my regret, ascertain the method by which the augury of these viscera was determined, and this is all the more grievous to me, because, as we shall see, the liver played as great a part in divination with the Yorubans as among other peoples. A portion of the food so prepared was given to the Orisha with the sentence: "Here is thy 'Asun'" (that is, votive ashes). The celebrants devour the rest among themselves. The only Orisha to whom burnt offerings were not made in days gone by was Gwalu or G'balu, the Rain-God. And this is logical. Following out the mythological idea, we shall see that the activities of the rain-making deities were hindered by fire.

When blood has flowed over the altar and the sacred emblems, certain drummers are called, who have to play the music for dancing to, and then the family revels and riots all day and night throughout a week. In early times the Ebo-dung lasted, and at the present day yet lasts, for seven days. On the last day every member then asks the Abosha about the course of his personal existence during the following year. The inquirer, man or woman, makes an offering to the deceased father or mother respectively. The kola-nut auspicium is again put into requisition as before. This kola-oracle's distinctive name is "Acqua-bi-fosa," meaning, "breaking kola for the Orisha." The question about living oneself for the next twelve months is always put to a dead progenitor, father, mother, or grandfather, etc., whether recently or long since passed away. Whereas the family commune, as already stated, turns to the Orisha, or family God, the source of the family vitality, the community of the dead re-united in the God-head ; and whereas this is the expression of comprehension within the divine, on the other hand, the personal inquiries individually made resolve the basis of general ancestor-worship into its constituent parts and the idea of individual persistence after death takes the place of its collective expression. And thus a personal, individual relation to the dead and to divinely original ancestry comes into existence.

The Abosha's most important functions are concentrated in this single questioning of the oracle. However, he has to officiate at a domestic service three times a week, as well at as the clan festival at the close of the year. The Yoruban week consists of five days, four of which are sacred to a God apiece, but the fifth is given up to cleansing the temple and general worship. When we have to refer to the Oracle at Ifé again, we shall return to this division of the week. No more need be said at present of the family priest, the Abosha, and his duties.

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Besides the Aboshas, there are the Adjes. The former minister to the deity as a family-God within the compound. The latter serve him as the God of Nature, the supreme ruler in a well-defined sphere of action. They preside over the great temples at the

disposal of the entire community on great sacrificial occasions, and are the mediators and masters of the ceremonies between society at large and the God of All Nature. In the popular mouth only the associated priests of the Oshalla holy days were known as Adjes in days gone by. But, ordinarily, this term was frequently used in my presence to distinguish the communal priests, and this generalization is all the more justified, since the Yorubans of the North do not seem to possess any other name for them. But each divinity has its own village priest, who again has a title peculiar to himself. I append the names of a few of these ecclesiastical vice-regents:

Mokwa, or Mogba, the principal high priest of Shango, associated with whom is the Bambeke (*v. infra*).

Ajorumbo, the name of the head priest of the terrible God of smallpox, "Shankpanna."

Oluwo, the name of the high priest of the God usually called Ifa. Some call him Arabo, but it is only a secondary name, equivalent to the "highest." It is equally erroneous to call him "Baba-lawo," *i.e.*, "Father of the Secret," because this is a title granted to all who exercise any priestly office in the worship of Ifa.

Adje is the name given to a species of upper priest of the deity Obatalla.

Balé was formerly the priest of the Goddess Oja, with two assistants, Otun and Osi (one on either side).

Quetu-Oshin was the ancient title of the chief priest of Ogun worship, now also decaying. In Ibadan, for instance, this position was not always filled. This high priest is only met with in a few places.

Other Gods, such as, *e.g.*, Oshun, are said not to have had a priesthood, and this is not improbable. Olorun, the Lord and Supreme One, the mightiest divinity of the Upper Beyond, the Ruler of Heaven, had neither priesthood nor offspring. This Godship was much too sublime, far too remote, far too exalted, far too unearthly ever to come into contact with mankind or in relation to it. We can, however, in other respects, talk of the Adjes as communal priests in contrast with the Aboshas as the priests of the family. The Adjes are not only differentiated *inter se* by their titles and service, but also by their badges of distinction. Thus,

for example, the celebrants at the shrine of the God Oshalla, wear the Chetchefeng, a necklace of white beads, on week days. The servants of Oja, the Goddess, wear a string of red beads; those of the Thunder-God Shango one of mixed red and white beads, called the Kelle-Shango, and so on. I must mention that the wearing of these bead-strings varies with locality. And we shall see, too, the remarkable meaning which these beads have among these nations.

The duties of the Adjes vary very considerablyh, but ave two points in common, viz.: to superintend the abodes of the deities, keep them in order, multiply and cleanse them and increase the communion with the Gods. Moreover, they have to conduct the great ceremonials at the fall of the year in November on behalf of the congregation. Much fuller information about the holy days and ritual will be given further on, but just now I will give a quite general account of the temples and altars.

Two distinctly different forms of temple are observable in Northern Yoruba. One is the "Banga," *i.e.*, a room, a cubical chamber, enclosed within the principal building in the large compounds. The finest of its kind I ever saw was the Shango temple in Ibadan. Its entrance side was decorated with supporting columns like the pillars of Tembe structures. Behind it lay the altar. A stack of jars, used as the oracle's shrine, wooden images with the "Thunderbolt," cloth with plates of metal, somewhat like the Asho Ogun, the amulet-robes of the Shâmâns, wallets hanging on the walls, etc. On the altar of this rectangular Banga temple there is an absolutely incongruous jumble of modern spirit bottles, old yellow-metal casts, ornamental iron railings, all sorts of headgear and amulets, old pitchers, pieces of old stone buildings, etc., etc., all huddled together; the absolutely meaningless new stuff and antiques, which are misunderstood, in senseless juxtaposition. Careful discrimination and industrious search will, however, discover a rich and significant symbolism which formerly permeated all this, the external indications of which have been lost in a hodge-podge of mundane confusion, lacking all possibility of analysis. Ifa cups are to be found in Shango temples, Shango rattles on Yemaya altars, Shankpanna games in Oja shrines, and so forth. Although I had become fairly expert in unravelling things by now, I found it none too easy to bring order into this old lumber and make an intelligible

collection, the arrangement of which should be innocent of any too glaring blunders.

Examples of circular buildings are all the more striking in the architectural expression of this part of Yoruba, when found together with these four-cornered temples, because they exist where the plain wall, the pitched roof and the Tembe system hold the field in house-building. Occasionally, quite circular huts with conical thatches, supported either by pillars of wood or little columns of clay, may be met with in the broad streets and large squares, as well as in the sacred groves outside the city. A veranda is formed by the overlapping roof which the pillars sustain round the wall of the building under which the drums used in divine service are usually kept. The interior of these round temples is, in general, empty, as opposed to the Tembe chambers or Bangas. A jar of water, a few kola-nuts, a few snails, but no images of any kind will meet the observer's gaze. These little temples are scarcely, if ever, dedicated to the Orisha of the head of the family. The chief Orisha of the compound apparently always has his own Banga. These round temples are erected by the women who have married into the families and mostly by those who have gained influence in the clan; or they are situate in the road and are, in some ways, connected with the locality and at the disposition of the High Priest, but not of those of the compound. I once saw, at a spot outside a compound sacred to Oshun, a small circular temple dedicated to Shango which the lord of the compound had instructed the Shango priest to set up, because once the lightning had struck his chief residence. The majority of these little round temples seems to be in honour of the God called Oshalla. My information may not be correct; but certain it is, that just as many offerings are made in these shrines, so empty of symbols, as in the more opulently furnished Bangas.

This observation brings me to the general consideration of the Orishas and their manifestations. The agglomeration of all sorts of objects on their altars to-day has been mentioned before. An account has already been given of the beautifully carved doors with which the biggest temples and sacred compounds are decorated; and we have seen, on the other hand, that the insignificant temples on the roadside and within the compounds themselves are almost

completely bare. We shall learn further on that the figures and other figments and symbols are never actual representations of the Gods, but rather of priests and others engaged in sacrificial or other ceremonial in honour of some particular deity. I know but few images which really depict the God in person. In most instances the native is quite wrong in claiming a particular image as being that of a particular deity. Only the god Edju is ever—and Shango but very seldom—so portrayed as to be clearly recognizable. On the other hand, in all these carvings the costume and distinct emblems which are dedicated to their respective divinities are prominently brought to view.

Now, an Orisha can just as well have his home on a grand altar, rich in symbolic ornamentation, as in a naked, little hut. He is manifest in it and to no lesser degree than in the control of the natural agencies in which he mythologically dwells. The River God is not the river; he only animates it, he is effective in it, proceeds from it. And the Sun God is not the actual sun; the divinity lives in the sun. Every Orisha has taken up his abode in his natural attributes, and may, if he so will, leave them, move about amongst his family, and there plant the seeds of blessing and abundance of increase. Precisely in the same way he can inspire, *i.e.*, enter into, those specially destined to receive him, so that they behave as though possessed. So much, then, of the ritual and the basis of the socio-religious system. Let us now turn our faces towards the deities themselves.

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The outlines hitherto traced seem, however, to be so important that I should like to recapitulate again.

Firstly, we have discovered that the whole Yoruban nation is totemistically organized in several clans, at the head of each of which there is a God from whom all its members derive descent. Some animals are unpleasing in this God's sight, for which reason his descendants must eschew them and this is the foundation of totemistic food-taboo or Ewuo. This food-taboo is handed down in the paternal line from the divine founder of the clan to his youngest offspring. The law imposes exogamy, *i.e.*, prohibits intermarriage

Women selling foodstuffs in the market-place in Ilorin.
(Photo by Albrecht Martius.)

[*Facing p.* 197.

between descendants of the same Godship. And although branches of the same family may have diverged to such an extent that no member of them can call to mind any relation to the paternity of the other line, two young people, observing the same food-taboo, must give each other a wide berth by reason of their assumed consanguinity.

Secondly, the individual clans originate in different districts; one God came from the North in his clan, another from the East, another from the West, and so on. According to the Saga, the blood-strains intermingled more and more with the lapse of time in proportion to the political power accruing to the leaders of separate septs. One clan, originally weak, may, in the course of time, have acquired great importance and its tutelary deity thus attained to unusual potency, while another, which of old was very influential, descended in the scale. An example may be quoted in the Shango clan, which from times immemorial has maintained a victorious upperhand, while the Odudua clan has decayed and is well nigh moribund. And Odudua's destiny is also Olokun's, the power of whose posterity was on the wane, because this nation's sphere of interest had shifted ever more towards the Interior from the Coast long before the Middle Ages had begun.

Thirdly, each deity has its own sphere of influence, its own potentialities and is thus always honoured, not alone by its own immediate line, the members of the clan, who call themselves its "children," but by those who need its succour. When storms cry "havoc," every Yoruban, though not of Shango's blood, invokes the mighty Thunder Lord. When the smallpox ravages the land, the prayers of all ascend to powerful Shankpanna. But one basic principle must never be lost sight of, viz., no person can ever leave his or her clan in order to adopt the paternal and original ancestorship of another Orisha. Whenever I asked anyone different questions as to this possibility I always got laughed at for my pains, because of the implied absurdity of such an inquiry. For even though one should become a Mahommedan or Christian, he cannot any way escape from the bonds of the clan. An old black gentleman to whom I put the query answered it very simply. What he said was this: "You have a father and a mother. You should honour hese, your parents. You can, however, also disgrace your father

and mother. But you will never be able to disown them and choose others. Everyone comes from two parents and he cannot alter the fact. The only question is, whether he honours or dishonours them. So also it is with the Orishas."

Although the last three paragraphs contain the essentials with respect to the structure of the social system, I will now briefly add the following, to show whether the deities are interdependent or no. Olorun is the apex of the pyramid of divinity. He is neither worshipped nor considered in any way, but leads an entirely platonic mythological existence. There is, however, a secondary God of Heaven, Otaballa, also simply called Oshalla. The ancient legend makes this God a son of the sea, and, according to the myth current on the Coast, a spouse of the Earth-goddess. But in the Interior, Odudua, the dark earth, is regarded as a God, and for this reason, namely, that the original marriage of Heaven and Earth in these regions has lapsed into oblivion. A second happy pair of Gods is Aganju and Yemaya, the dry and moist soils. They had a son named Oranja or Orungan, who loved his own mother to madness. Yemaya afterwards bore sixteen deities of the most various kinds. Some of them are powerful rulers; Shango the Thunderer, Olokun the Sea-God, Oko of agriculture, Ogun of iron, Shankpanna of the smallpox, then the sun and the moon; others, however, the Goddesses to wit, are rivers, and rather correspond to the immortals who animate the streams in Hellenic mythology. This skeleton of Coastland God-lore is, on the whole, fairly general. Yet these fairy-tale-telling people do not mind mixing things up, and it happens that dear old Poseidon, or Olokun, is looked upon partly as the mighty ocean of the sky from which the God of Heaven is born, and partly as a creation, postponed for some three generations, as one of the sons of Yemaya. And, besides this, there is no doubt whatever that in numberless local inventions the Gods are exchanged in imagination and shifted about in the framework of theocracy. Yet, any way, this process is not so wild and confused by far as in classical antiquity. With one single exception, the greater Gods have kept their positions and powers according to the general scheme—a fact to remember. There is one thing to which our attention must at once be drawn and not lost sight of, the phenomenon, namely, of exuberant forms of divinity.

There is an entire series of mythological similes which are here and there worshipped to-day, not as gods, but Orishas. There is, for instance, the Oro, mentioned above. It is only the rustling caused by deceased ancestors returning to earth, demanding food and driving the womenfolk inside the huts. Another is Egun or Egungun. Egun is at first a mask. At a person's death and his funeral, the shroud is removed from the body once more before being for ever hidden. A wooden mask has been prepared and assumed by one of the mourners, who, wrapping the shroud around him, dances among the relatives, speaks to them in the piping treble of the dead so represented, consoles, exhorts and talks with them concerning work and so on. This Egun dancer is regarded as a direct personification of the departed. This mask is set up when offerings are made to the shade and it is assumed that it receives them itself. This Egun is also often held in estimation as an Orisha, without having any justifiable claim to this high title, since, being the impersonation of the dead, it can in reality be nothing more than a small fraction of the deity.

One more example: In the great river there lives a large fish "which has breasts and a human face." Its name is Esse. The hunters of it fasten an Ogu, or "magic," at the head of their Ofas (a javelin). After three days' hunting and prodding, the Esse puts in an appearance. Its flesh is distributed at discretion, but the Shâmân gets the bones. Sometimes this Esse is caught on the seashore when "it comes to land to graze." I am told that it, too, had once been worshipped as an Orisha. But one day, owing to some misunderstanding, there was a quarrel with it, since when the Yorubans see in it only a fish like any other and kill it wherever they can. Yet everybody knows that the Esse once upon a time was a human being living in Lubu on the borders of Enjille. There in Lobu, or the land of Lubu, there is a clan which still pays honour to Esse. But the Orisha of that ilk is at present unknown in Yoruba proper. I tracked this Orisha because of this fact, and found it to be nothing but the Manatee, the Ma of the Mande tribe and the Adju of the Houssas. The myths about it, current among the Mande and Fulbe tribes, trickled into North Yoruba, and, in this way, a new Orisha appeared on this people's horizon. And the same thing happens with numerous other

legendary phenomena, which result in the creation of an Orisha. For example, one hears of an Orisha known as Adja and is astonished to find the multiplicity of little creatures said to be united in him. It finally resolves itself into the pigmies, of which the inhabitants of Senegambia and Mossiland also tell so many stories.

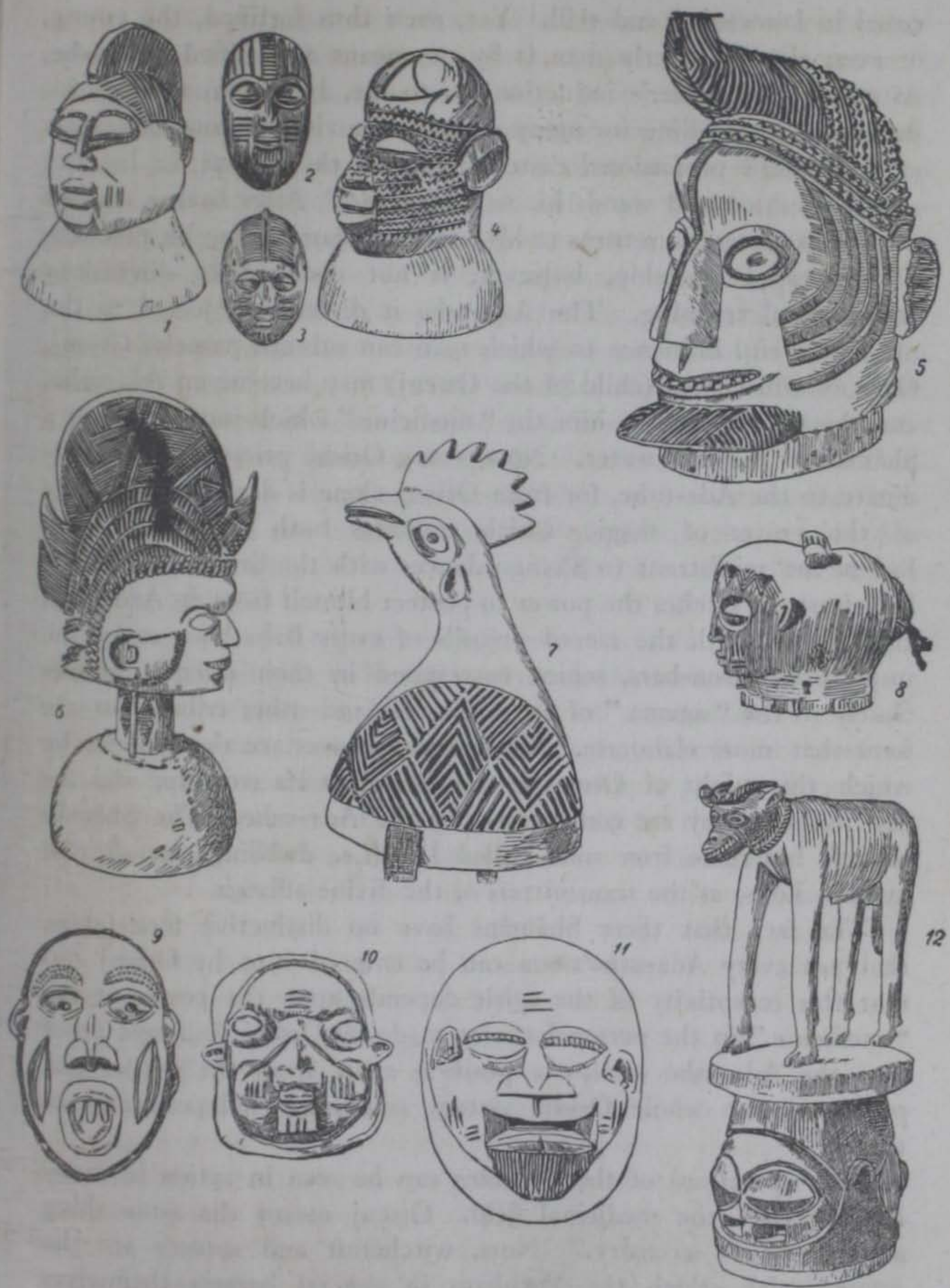
Thus the Yorubans make no bones at all about manufacturing an Orisha out of any object within the scope of their predilection for myths and incorporating it with their general belief, without its necessary inclusion in their systematized mythology.

Ifa is, however, the most pregnant illustration of transformation into a Godhead, of which Chapter XII. will furnish a fuller account. Besides Ifa, there is another prominent emblem often conceived as an Orisha, although it has nothing in common with a genuine one, and that is Ossenj : an ideal which must by no means be forgotten when considering the socio-mystical edifice of the Yorubans.

* * * * * * * *

The Yorubans, in common with almost all other African nations, believe in malignant, unrealizable, supernatural powers at the beck and call of but a very few persons specially endowed by heredity to control them. These powers are the mysterious spirits, wandering at night, smiting with sickness, corrupting and annihilating the soul and thus destroying the body. People of similar power live among their fellow-men, but are not to be recognized easily, and protection against their maleficence is of still greater difficulty. Only one class of man can afford such defence and is able to do battle against these nocturnal beings, namely, the Shâmâns, whom the Yorubans call " Ada-ushe."

This Ada-ushe's ordinary calling is that of a " medicine-man," or physician, who is a master of much pharmaceutical knowledge. But it is possible to possess this, not so much by descent from Ossenj or Osseï, but rather by being inspired because of this descent. Now this relation to the Ossenj being, however, already granted, the Ada-ushe's art has to be regularly learnt and carefully studied. Accordingly, when an aged Ada-ushe feels the pressure of years all too heavy upon him and he is plagued by premonitions of death, he begins to indoctrinate his son, so that he may, in time, be his



Egun masks representing different dead persons and used for sacrificial purposes. For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

equal in knowledge and skill. Yet, even thus fortified, the young, or even already elderly man, is by no means a qualified Ada-ushe. After his own father's induction, so to say, he has to take up his staff and go travelling for many a year. He visits famous exponents of his father's professional caste, talks with them, pays for his lore and instruction and wends his way onwards. After having studied in various places, he returns to his home and can take up his practice.

This apprenticeship, however, is not confined to discussions and medical teaching. The Ada-ushe is directly subjected to the most powerful influence to which man can submit, namely, Ossenj. Only an Om-Ossenj (child of the Ossenj) may become an Ada-ushe, and this Godhead gives him the "medicine" which stamps him as a Shâmân of the first water. Now, every Orisha priest is also subordinate to the Ada-ushe, for from Ossenj alone is derived the source of the power of magic, which animates both Gods and men. Before the ministrant to Shango dances with the fire at this deity's holy feast, he fetches the power to protect himself from an Ada-ushe. In company with the sacred utensils of every Baba-lawo stand the inspirational iron-bars, which correspond in their essential shapes closely to the "agema" of the Basserites and other tribes, but are somewhat more elaborate. These Ossenj-staves are the vehicles by which the might of Ossenj is transferred to Ifa worship, and for this purpose they are consecrated by the Ada-ushe. The Shâmân himself has these iron rods, called Ille (*i.e.*, dwelling), standing in his own house as the transmitters of the divine afflatus.

The fact that these Shâmâns have no distinctive food-taboo, that not every Ada-ushe's son can be entered into by Ossenj and that this receptivity of the spirit depends upon the power of the "medicine" in the personal choice made by Ossenj, is ample proof that the Ada-ushe occupy a position apart from the deities and priests in the whole Orisha system and work independently of them.

The operations of the Shâmâns can be seen in action in many another than the medicinal field. Ossenj means the same thing as "power of wizardry." Now, witchcraft and sorcery are the armour with which the Yorubans in general harness themselves in their active and passive relations to supernatural forces. To this end the Yoruban uses the Ogu, or amulets, daily. It is but

natural that nobody but the Ada-ushe should be able to make these Ogu, because he alone can give them the influence of Ossenj. It is only but logical that, if he is believed to be the independent and centralized instrument of supernatural forces, which is so in all the Shâmân's ministration, that he, the inspirer, servant and agent of Ossenj, is the sole manufacturer of such "magic." And it is equally logical that the effective content, the effective intention of these Ogu should reside in the Ossenj itself. And, therefore, if the Yorubans, in the first place, have a plethora of charms, they acquire their wealth in them from the Ada-ushe who provides these appliances with the assistance of Ossenj. And, in the second place, if the Gods wish to take on an external form intelligible to mankind, they, again, can obtain the power to achieve their desire from none but Ossenj. Chapter XII. will show us how, in the beginning of things, even the God Shango could only win the height of his power and might through the witchcraft of an Ada-ushe or, thus, from Ossenj.

The most mysterious section of all Yoruban mythology is undoubtedly Ossenj, and calls for our redoubled attention. Nothing, however, justifies us in identifying it with any Orisha.

I propose to deal with the true meaning of some of the Orishas in the following chapter, and then to pass on to the consideration of the true inwardness of their principal Gods, the Yoruban conception of the structure of the universe and order of the world.

Images of Shango ritual. The god in the centre; Ojas to left and right—respectively 22, 28¾, and 20¾ inches high.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER XI

THE KINGLY THUNDER-GOD

Shango, the God of Thunder—His violent end—His worship—Shango and the Ram—Rams and meteorites—Distribution in the Soudan of legends relative to "thunderbolts" and the Tempest-Ram and the Sun-Ram—Connection with Ammon, the Ram-God of Northern Africa—Shango and Thor.

FIRSTLY: The Legend of the Dying Divinity. With regard to a place in the constitution of their mythology, the uniform majesty of their ritual or the ornate symbolism of their worship, there is, among the deities possessed by all the other dark-skinned African nations combined, not one who can equal Shango, the Yoruban God of Thunder, in significance. This country's first royal ruler sprang, as its people believe, from his loins. His posterity still have the right to give the country its Kings.

The myths on the Coast relate that Shango was the mightiest man born of the All-Mother, Yemaya, in Ifé. As powerful, as warlike and as mighty a God as was ever created in the minds of a nation in these regions striving for self-expression in great ideas.

He is the Hurler of thunderbolts, the Lord of the Storm, the God who burns down compounds and cities, the Render of trees and the Slayer of men; cruel and savage, yet splendid and beneficent in his unbridled action. For the floods which he pours from the lowering welkin give life to the soil that is parched and gladden the fields with fertility. And, therefore, mankind fear him, yet love him. Terrified by his wrath, they yet pray for his presence. They picture him striding a steed to which they give the name of a ram on account of its frolicking onrush. They represent him with his hands full of hammer-bolts, surrounded by his wives, the Lakes and the Rivers. For he is the God that sends the waters from the heavens, and when he comes down, the rivers swell up. He lives in a palace of brass, which is dazzlingly bright, and whence lightning shoots forth. He has a mighty "medicine," which he took through his mouth, and a great fire comes out when he opens it. The legend goes on to say how his wife, the River Niger, once stole some of this, which lighted up her own mouth; it relates how the God, in his wrath, pursued her in flight and conquered the Gods who opposed him, and, at last, at sunset, when further resistance was useless, still went on fighting and descended into the earth. All the nations in Yoruba can tell stories about Shango. Many of the legends contain contradictions, yet, taking them all in all, their main thread is the same. The one point on which there is some want of correspondence is the actual country of this God's origin. But this detail, too, can be cleared up. Here are a few legends.

What was told me in Ibadan was this: Oranjan was Shango's sire. His mother was Yemodia; Laro was Oranjan's father, and Yemodia's Aussi. Oranjan was a great warrior in Yoruba. He once conquered Ilifé, but was driven forth again. He went to Okuland; there lived Yemodia, who was of Takpa (or Nupé) blood. There Oranjan married Yemodia. She was his only wife, and he took no second, as negroes do. Then Shango was born in Nupéland. Oranjan became king in Oduma-ushe. But Shango ruled in Old-Ojo.

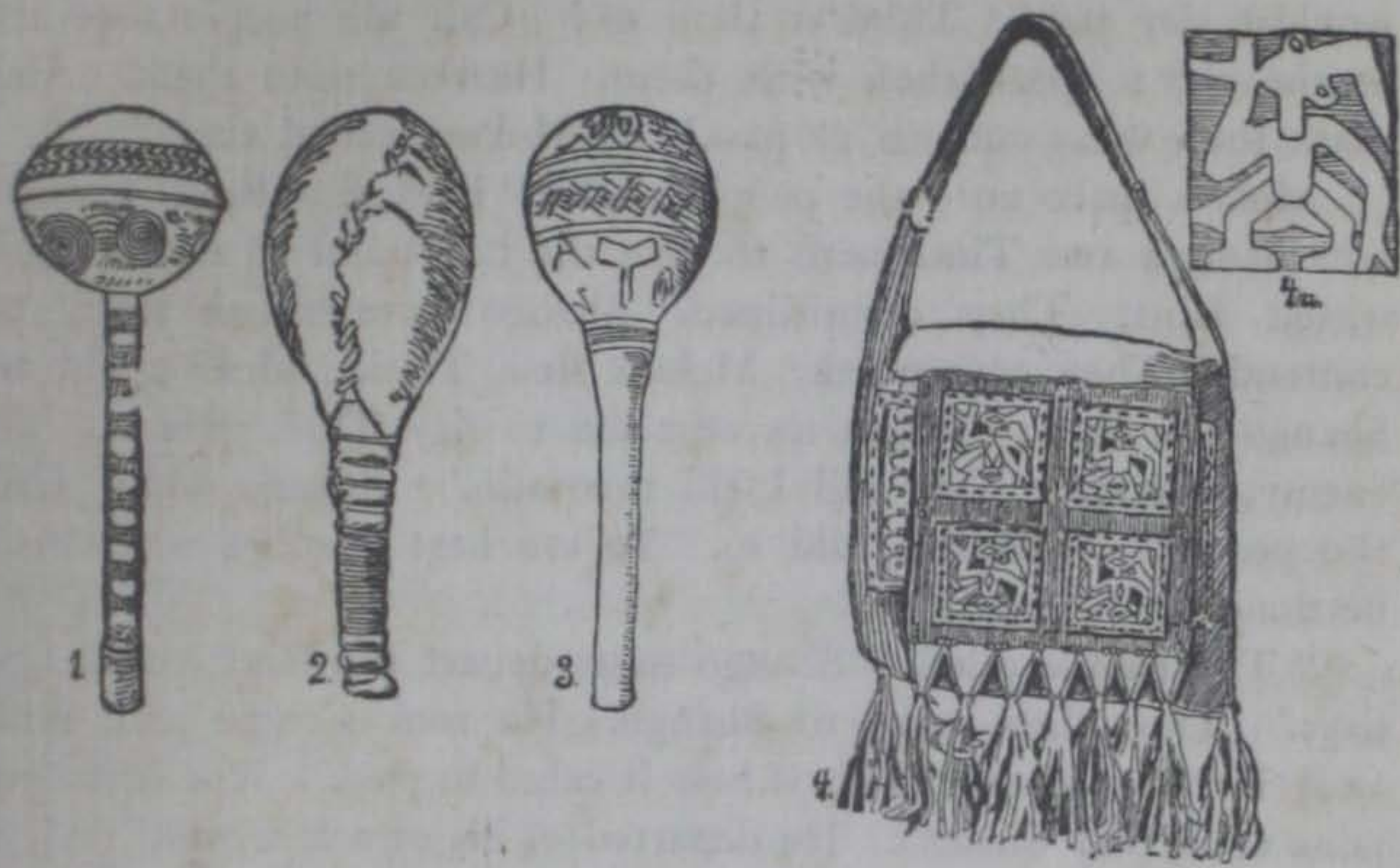
When Shango was King of Ojo, he there had two Ironse (high officers or courtiers). One was Mokwa (or Mogba), the other Timi Agbala-Olofa-no. Shango was passionately devoted to war, so he often sent Timi and Mokwa out, who waged war and destroyed

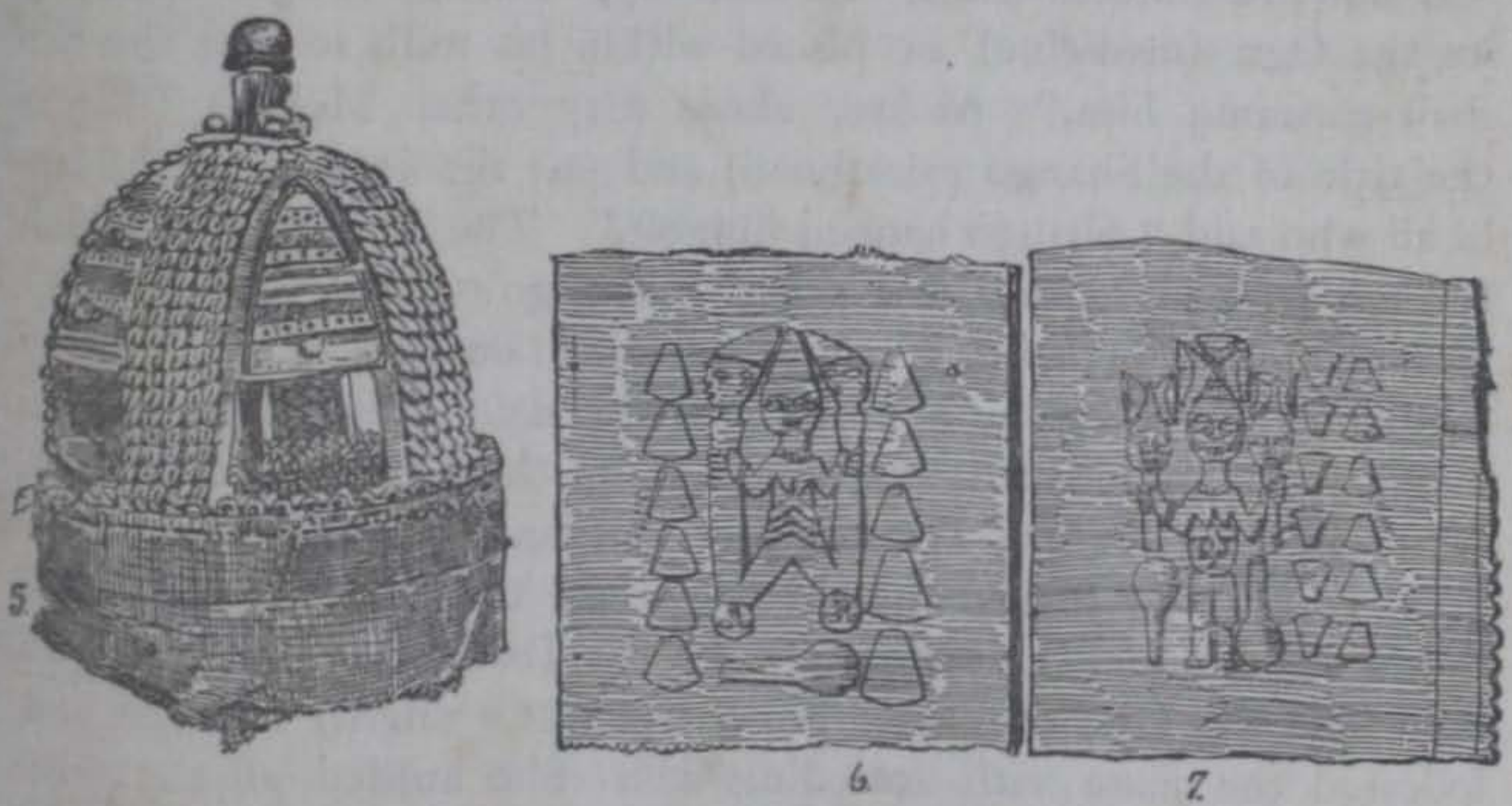
towns in his name. He was so warlike that at last the people of Ojo assembled, saying: "Our king wastes all the country round; we desire a ruler who will give us, not slaves, but meat." They sent an embassy to Shango. They said: "Thou hast been king; thou wert too strict; thou wert too cruel; wicked thou art. Therefore, thou shalt cease to be king." Shango gave the envoys ear. He said: "Ye speak the truth. Mokwa shall expound unto you the matter afterwards. I am a mighty Oni-Sheggo (sorcerer). None can compel me. But I am weary of this petty life." Shango went forth. He took a rope and went into the bush. He fastened it to a certain tree. Then he hanged himself. He was his own hangman.

The people came to the tree. They heard and saw what had happened. They shouted: "Is that Shango?" three times. Thrice they called: "Was that Shango?" "Has Shango hanged himself?" also thrice. Mokwa heard and said unto them: "If Shango hears ye speaking thus about his death, he will destroy your abodes with fire. For he is not dead. I will expound unto you how all has come to pass."

Mokwa spoke further:

"Shango sent forth Timi and Mokwa every day to wage war and destroy people and cities. He said at morn, 'Go, do thus and thus!' We went and did his bidding. At night we came, saying, 'It has been done!' Shango answered: 'Nay, I am not content. To-morrow ye must forth, and do yet more.' Each day we went. Shango spat fire and bade us go. One day we two, Mokwa and Timi, came unto him, saying: 'At thy behest we sallied out the day before yesterday against a town to raze it. And yesterday likewise. Likewise to-day. We had to obey; we do obey. But thou dost naught but vomit flames from forth thy mouth. Enough!' Then said Shango: 'I see my will displeases ye, but I am so mighty that yet ye have to do what I demand. I will make ye do my desire. Ye are come one with the other to complain of me and upbraid me for that I do nothing. But, now, I will constrain ye that ye fight one with another.' So we fought, for we were compelled. We were strong, and good our blades. I, Mokwa, slew Timi at length. I slew him. Timi, Mokwa's friend, lay dead. Then Mokwa spake to Shango:





Furniture of Shango ritual. 1—3. Metal and gourd rattles. 4. A Shango wallet. 5. Shango-priest's tiara, meteorite sewn in on its left. 6 and 7. Portions of doors with thunderbolts and a Shango woman-dancer (7) and a dead woman of the Shango-clan (6). For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

'Thou forcedst me to slay this man. He was not mine enemy. Therefore I will slay thee also.' Shango spake: 'How? Thou wouldst slay me? Think'st thou so? Call the people together in the city; speak thou with them. Hearken unto them. And mark thou what cometh to pass.' I, Mokwa, called them."

Mokwa spake unto the people thus: "Each day Royal Shango sent Mokwa and Timi forth to raze the cities and to slay. They waxed faint. They complained. Shango constrained them to contend. They contended. Mokwa slew Timi. Mokwa said to Shango the king: 'Thou forcedst me to slay Timi. He was no enemy of mine. Now will I kill thee also.' Shango said: 'Call the people.' I, Mokwa, did so. Ye are here; say ye what shall be done!"

"The people cried: 'Shango must depart the land within five days.' Thus they spake to Shango. He took a rope and went away into the forest. This is how it came to pass. It is true that none could slay Shango. He departed of his own free-will."

Thus spake Mokwa. Mokwa spake again unto the people: "If now, in time to come, one shall say, 'Shango hanged himself,' let the Ogu (medicine) be placed within his walls so that the fire shall consume him." Mokwa chose fifty other Mokwas (this is the title of the Shango priesthood) and put the Ogu in the houses of all who said "Shango hanged himself." The Anjo tree on which Shango hanged himself was called "Shango's grave," or "Ibodji Shango." Two chains sprang from this, because of his mighty medicine. By these he climbed into the sky. He did not get his magic from himself, but was taught it by the Shâmân Adja Ganti. Now, he was Oranja's grandfather (?), and, therefore, Shango's great grandfather. And thus he knew how to create the fire which shot from his mouth in flames. In the Ibadan version, Shango's only wife was Oja, the lake. Now, Oja was a mighty huntress and followed the chase with exceeding skill. She hunted all the wild things in the bush, leopards, antelopes and elephants. She had a younger brother, her constant companion on the trail. After Shango's marriage and suicide, Oja transformed herself into the River Niger.

An Ilesha man supplied this supplement: Oja was Shango's spouse; she still performs her wifely duty and sweeps the road

before him clean. She had before been married to Ogun, who was so evil that she ran away to Shango, married and lived with him. Oja ranks as the mother of Shango's children and thus of the Alafins, the blood-royal of Ojo. In her present form she abides in the sky with Shango. When the festival of Oja is at hand, *i.e.*, in December or January, many people go to the river and make her offerings. Oja's priests and priestesses always sacrifice sheep, but never goats to this deity. Goats are forbidden to be killed or eaten.

There are many legendary tales of this God's descent into the earth. One or two of its versions must be here set down. Once, when Mokwa was at war, Shango sent word to the people of Ojo to make a wood-pile not less than twenty-four feet high in the middle of the road. Palm kernels and palm oil were to be poured upon it. Everything was prepared and Shango applied the torch. When the blaze was at its height, Shango threw Mokwa on top of it. But when Mokwa had been consumed he came to life again. Shango was greatly astonished. He said: "What Mokwa can, I can. But I will not be a man, I will become an Orisha!" Thereupon he took his apron, which was made of skin, and sixteen cowrie shells. He went into the bush and hanged himself upon an Anjo tree. So Shango became an Orisha and ascended into heaven; the cowries were sacred to him, for one throws them for him (? oracle), and thus Mokwa became his first priest.

The other legend of the two leaders of armed hosts is still more interesting, if only for the reason that it is evidence of some elements of organization possessed by Shango, which are strikingly in contrast with the absence, in general, of ethical ordinances among these peoples. It is current in Ibadan and runs as follows:

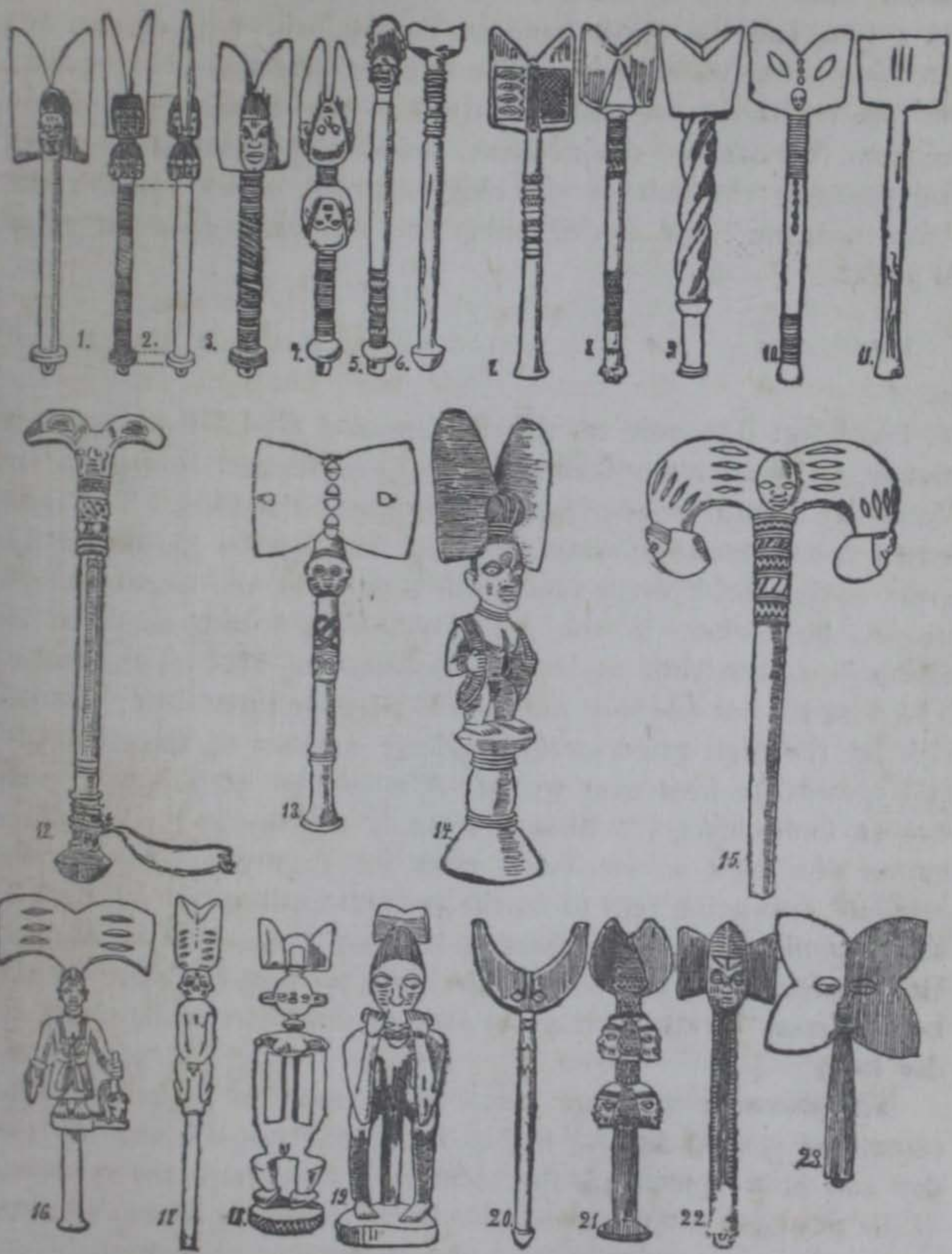
Shango the King was born in Takpaland. The first thing he demanded was the truth; lying he loathed. Nor, secondly, was it his will that people should poison each other. Thirdly, he set his face against the Yorubans stealing from each other and going into each other's houses in the cities and disregarding the laws of *meum* and *tuum*. If any offend against this triple commandment, Shango, who is to-day an Orisha, will slay him. Shango will appear in the Ara, the Thunderstorm, and he kills with the stone Ara-dung, or our meteorite.

While Shango lived he was an Oni-Sheggo and ascended to heaven

by a chain. He killed himself on high and this was the way of it. In war he had two Enondje (deputies or envoys), one of whom was very good, the other very evil. The bad one was Edju, the good one Ossenj. One day Ossenj said to the King, then dwelling in Ojo, that Edju had told him Shango could not return. Now, Edju was then in Kushi in Yorubaland. So Shango set out to meet him, but hanged himself on his way on an Anjo tree. This is why the people still appeal to him always as Obaku-su! Then he went up into the sky by a chain.

In these two royal servants, so distinctively named, it is easy to recognize the god Edju, often of evil repute, the general superintendent of the deities (*vide* next Chapter), and, in the god Ossenj, the beneficent powers of the Shâmân, the power of divination, the power of witchcraft, by which alone the Gods can be manifest to men. I stated above that the ethical postulates, the commandments to do well, at first sound "un-negro," and will, therefore, interpolate what I was told about this in Ojo. One of these people, himself a member of the royal house, said that most certainly the Alafins derived their descent from Shango, the Thunder God. But there had been two different Shangos. The elder was the Takpa or Taba, and the other the Mesi, Shango. The name of the former shows that he came from Nupéland, but the latter from Borgu. This Mesi was the first Mesi and came as the leader of the Alledjennu into Yoruba. Now, Mesi, in all the old histories and tales, is the name of the "King." The title is obsolete and legend maintains that the Mesi Shango dynasty was conquered and driven out by reason of the Taba Shango's renewed accession to power, and that all Mesis were consequently again deposed. Mesi Shango are said to be always represented on horseback. This fashion of imagery only came in, it is said, with the Mesi Shango. Shango Taba, however, was always shown in the guise of a ram. There are two such ram-masks in Ojo, forming the lid of a casket which had held the "fire medicine" of this God.

Here, then, two dynasties are clearly defined in the traditional story, of which the elder, temporarily displaced by the younger, conceives the deity in the shape of a ram with magic power, while the effigy on horseback and, more especially, the commandments



Instruments of Shango worship. Osé or Oshé-Shango dance clubs, with upper portions decorated with heads and thunderbolts in combination. For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(*Drawn by Carl Arriens.*)

to do good and live justly, were introduced by the second and interim one. This second dynasty, which came from the North and for a time had the upper hand in Yoruba, will fully occupy our attention in the second part. The singular influences of the Sahara and the civilization in mediæval times of the Soudan will be our subject. We are, for the moment, isolating this part of the myth and studying the cult of the older divinity, which conceals the "fire medicine" and the lightning and thunder behind the effigy of a ram.

* * * * * * * *

Secondly: The cult of the Ram-headed God. Even approximately, no greater sacrifices and ritual are devoted to any god in Yorubaland than to Shango, the King and the God. The most varied assortment of offerings is laid on his altar on the day of the great festival held, every fourteenth month, as the Yorubans call it, *i.e.*, November, in the great temple and compounds of all Shango's descendants, under the guidance of Mokwa, the priest. The poor kill but one ram and keep holiday for three days; but the rich let the high priest sacrifice a large number of these animals, and spread the feast over weeks. A neighbour of ours in Ibadan was an Omo-Shango, a Shango scion, a wealthy and ostentatious person who kept on sacrificing rams for twenty-one days. The revellers' drumming kept us on the *qui vive* until we set out for Ifé. Every family priest so sacrifices in his own house, but the Mokwa, his superior, must consummate it. He receives his share of the holiday roast to take home, because he must fast while the holy day lasts.

The domestic sacrifices being so splendid in their way, the communal general festival has to be indeed magnificent. At the day and hour appointed, the older and more respected members of the Shango community assemble in the venerable Mokwa's courtyard and various animals are brought together as victims. But, naturally, the most aged and well-grown rams are chiefly destined to yield the ghost. Some goats, too, must share their fate, because they are food-taboo to the Oja priests only, but not to Shango's posterity. In addition, there are poultry, pitchers of palm-wine,

Densely wooded holy lake in Ifé, in whose slimy depths archæological treasures were buried in war time.

(Oil study by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 212

maize beer, small parcels of kola-nuts and similar dainties. The sacred sacrifices are taken in hand. Blood streams over the meteorites, is sprinkled over the leathern coverings and jars and effigies. A regulated procedure seems to be observed, for I only found a few definite places in the temple and on the altar spotted with blood. Very special attention was devoted to the "lightning-stones" and the altar cover.

The crowd begins to enjoy itself when the sacrifices have been offered. The cuisine is prepared and the banqueting begins. The master of the ceremony, the priest, must himself abstain, and distributes his own share of ram's flesh amongst his household. The Mokwa must finish the service of prayer with unbroken fast and devote all his thoughts to the God. He has, first of all, to receive the message from the Orisha as to the choice of his Bambeke, or oracle thrower, because its actual interpreter is not the High Priest of Shango. The diviner is appointed by the deity, who inspires the Mokwa with understanding. The oracle itself can be read in two ways: either by throwing sixteen cowries—as is customary in the South—or by breaking and casting down several kola-nuts, which is the method most favoured in Ibadan, and known as Akwa- or Agba-Obi. Whatever the method selected, its interpretation depends on the relative number of their positions, as already explained, and the question involved is the goodwill of the Godhead towards the clan, or its prominent persons, as shown by prophesying a specially eventful, fortunate or unfortunate year. If the answer given by the augur be unfavourable and indicates obvious displeasure on the part of the God, the sacrifice is repeated as before until the answer be gracious, and then gorging and guzzling are taken in turn until the dancing begins.

A special drum, the Batta, is beaten. The Shango dances are not, however, ordinary amusements, but sacrosanct and profoundly significant ceremonial, and the entire assembly is tensely expectant of what may or may not happen to-day which is "great" or "of import." The latter lies in directly divine inspiration. The expression of this occurs quite unforeseeably, suddenly, impulsively. A highly-esteemed person spoke to me about this. Shango, some years ago, had made him his mouthpiece to the people. He was a simple fellow, unaffected, not tricky and seemingly uncalculating,

who spoke with natural enthusiasm of the great events in his life and I failed to detect the least sign of any intent to deceive. I asked him what had happened, and this is the plain tale he told me. He had danced with the rest and had danced very swiftly, and then someone asked him whether there was likely to be an Elogun-Shango (or God-inspired one) to-day ; somebody said that you never could tell, not even the Agba-Obi, nor even the person himself, because it might happen to anyone. Then he had felt very strange ; he was compelled to rush to the Banga and snatch up an Osé-Shango (a carved ritual axe). What came next he was unable to say ; but he felt very jolly and drank a lot that evening and went to sleep drunk. Everyone did him obeisance next day and that was the first time he heard what had happened. Such an account speaks for itself. The past and present experiences of people like this are not all necessarily moonshine.

The stories told by those who have assisted at these festivals and exaltations of feeling sound very much the same. Shango descends quite unexpectedly upon some man or woman dancer's head. The inspirationist rushes madly to the Banga, seizes an Osé-Shango, a beautifully carved club, or a Sheré-Shango, that is, the holy rattle. This individual begins to caper before the others. The afflatus is patent. All agree in this : a being possessed by Shango or any other Orisha dances quite differently from ordinary folk. Such ecstatic behaviour certainly shows a state of feeling now almost completely foreign to us. The beater of the sacred Batta drum joins the dancer, and they leave the temple court with all the rest at their heels. He dances to his own house, followed by them all, and then everyone well knows that this person is a friend, a darling of Shango's. Arrived at his home, the God-favoured one will provide sacrificial rams, cowries, kola and drink for the commune, so that they all may know and experience the gratitude he feels. Should there be others who are pleasing in the God's sight on that day, the procession rolls from one dwelling to the other. Shango can possess several persons on one day, but not concurrently. And what in their frenzy these rapt enthusiasts may say passes for oracular truth.

There is, too, in Ibadan, one road always taken by these temporary madmen. It leads to the house of the Balé in office. The

Shango worship appliances. 1. Lid of sacrificial urn. 2—4. Large sacrificial vessels. 5—6. Wooden stands. For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

dance goes on in the courtyard, and the master of the house will certainly honour this dancer by the grace of God. He takes off his Balé cap, the Akitajo, and lays it on the ground before the deity in human shape. This is the utmost homage which so great a man, whose forehead never bends to earth, unless the headsman's glaive parts head from trunk, can be expected to pay.

The train of those possessed is not accompanied by the Mokwa and Bambeke, who remain at home in prayer. But the Balé has to regale them, and sends them a red gown, cowries and kola *per* the frenzied dancer. These gifts are shared among the priesthood, who again make gifts to the people. The odour of sometime divinity is often commemorated in a change of name.

All kinds of very singular and bizarre offerings and actions relating to the cult are practised at these holy times. One of the most interesting is the fire-dance. I heard the following about this. The dancer has a ritual pot (Adjeri) or basket (Agba) on his head, in which burns the Jena, or Shango fire. He at first takes an apparently reckless turn or two in this way, which completely loads him up with magic forces, enabling him to perform miracles with ease. He can stoop and, *e.g.*, pick up a handful of earth which turns into salt or cowrie-shells. He can cut off one of his ears which the sacred flame on his head will replace. He can remove his tongue from his neck, and the sacred flame will make it grow again there. He pulls out an eye, burns it and swallows it. But the fire-dancer's optic will be recreated and he will see with it again as distinctly as ever. This kind of dance is carried out at the great seven-day festival and the Batta drummer drums to it. But, through it all, we must not forget that these people believe that the great god Shango himself could not do these marvellous things without help. On the contrary, the fire-dancer has first to make the power of Ossenj his own.

The fire-pot is brought back to the Shango priest at the close of this magical day, which witnessed so many miracles to the Thunder God's glory. And when it is relighted in the following year the Shâmân will well knead the head and the body of the dancer, so as to shield him from the hurt of the fire. No miracles without Ossenj! For was it not a Shâmân who gave the divinity, while

it lived, the sorcerer's strength by which flames could be belched from the mouth of the king? Should this festival be held at the time of the solstice, fires are everywhere extinguished and every one takes a brand from the burning fire of Shango to his home. Then this is the birth of the New Year for the ministers of Shango.

It need scarcely be said that a host of small superstitions have a place in this cult as in all other widespread and older forms of worship. There are herbs, holy and blessed by the deity, medicines, gifts from the god, which heal those stricken by lightning. Those who lie sick during storms can be healed by their use. These remedies are mixed with ghee, palm oil and nut oil, as prescriptions given by Shango to the priest. And the Batta drum is powerful "medicine," too, and, finally, there is a wonderful story of "Nini's death." For Shango, namely, had a son, called Nini, killed in one of his many wars. The drum, Batta, was beaten and proclamation made: "Nini, the son of Shango, is no more!" And since that time, Nini's death is a topic forbidden at the dying hour of a Shango descendant. I never could grasp this legend's quintessence, which is said to relate to some magical spell.

The Shango clan, or the Thunderer's posterity, in common with every other totemistic association of this broad-featured and delicate social organization, has its own Ewuo, or food-taboo. The Omo-Shango may eat neither the mouse, Eku, nor Ago, nor the squirrel, Eshoro. The exogamic laws of the family are singular. After what has already been said, there is no need to labour the point that the descendants of Shango in general cannot intermarry, or that no son of Shango can take to wife a priestess of Oja, the God's one spouse, who still rushes in front of her mate in the wind that heralds the storm and cleanses his pathway; for such are considered to be blood-kin. The law regulating the marriage of Mokwa, the priest, is different, since in some places he may, and, in others, he must, wed with a daughter of Shango's.

A few words must necessarily be given to the ritual furniture of this deity. The symbols of divinity are almost always present on all royal gates as well as on the portals leading to temples. These are, firstly, little stone axes, the missiles of the God; then the wedges decorated with stone hatchet heads, the Osé- or Oshé-

Shango, which occupy a place distinctly apart from the traditional ornamental, artistic sculpture of general African style; then the long-handled Shango-rattles (Sheré-Shango), apparently fashioned in imitation of the long-necked bottle-gourd; and, lastly, the great leathern wallets, or Laba-Shango. It must not be forgotten, since these objects are so frequently found on the gateways of the great, that Shango is the tutelary deity of reigning families, who make their privileges felt all the world over. The priestly hats, the Ibauri-Shango, embroidered with cowries, and into which a stone axe is now and again sewn, have their place on the altars; on the walls round the altars hang the large patterned leather pouches, whose object and intention have no mythological explanation. Here and there one meets with the plaited girdles, which are thrown over those divinely inspired and give them their sorcerer's power. The Oko-Shango are holy vessels with all sorts of strange figure ornaments. There is a plethora of emblems set up in the temples and on country roadsides, which always express the twofold prayer to the God to send the blessed and fertilizing rain, without the loss of human life by strokes of lightning. But when the peasant finds an ancient stone axe in his fields, he carefully picks it up and puts it among his produce or upon the altar of the God as the symbol and instrument of his might, praying him to bless his crops and send him rains and "foison plenty."

If, now, the stone axe, called a thunderbolt, remind us of our own mythology, the parallel is doubly remarkable in view of this deity's strong preference for a cock, and still more for a buck, as food. Shango loves and demands the male sheep, the ram. On the last day of my stay in Ibadan I was looking in the yard at my horse, which was fresh and lustily pawing the ground, eager to be off. An old Yoruban looked at it admiringly and said something obviously flattering about the beast to my servants. On asking them what it was, I was surprised to hear that he had compared the freshness of my steed to the vigour of "Shango's rams." The old fellow, on further questioning, said: "When Shango rides across the heavens in a storm, he stands upon the backs of goats and his favourite food is ram." Shango's effigy in Ojo in a ram's mask which conceals his holy, light-giving "magic," has been mentioned before. I will now bring the description of Yoruban

customs to a close and show the dissemination of this idea in the Soudan and the adjoining portions of Africa.

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Thirdly: The Ram-headed Soudanese Gods. Ara and Ara-dungs are, respectively, the Yoruban names for the storm and the thunderbolt. It has just been shown that the popular idea is that a storm is produced by a ram, and we will therefore follow the meaning of the term "sheep" in these countries. Now there are two breeds of sheep there; one is long bodied and short-legged, the other is long-legged. The former is plentiful on the Coast, the latter in the Interior and special to the whole of the Soudan between the Nile and the Senegal. The long-legged variety is called Arra-arra by all the neighbouring Houssa tribes and the people of Nupéland, whence Shango the Thunderer is said to have come. Arra-arra, then, is a clearly distinctive name as applied to the long-legs bred in the North, which corresponds to Ara (the storm) and Ara-dung (thunderbolt) in the Yoruban tongue, and to the Storm God who came from there. The Houssa name for the lightning, moreover, is Ara-di. This is all the more curious since the idea of any connection between a storm and a ram is now very faint indeed in that part. The denomination of the Storm deity and the storm is, however, still more widespread as a compound of Arra-arra. In Yoruba he is called Aku-arara; in Nupéland, Aku-arra. The phenomenon strikes one the more because the legendary lore of countries to the north of Yoruba brings sheep into relation with the sun, while the nominal connection between the storm and the breed of sheep is still maintained. I shall treat this point in greater detail further on.

There are two groups of nations in Central and Western Soudan who have led and controlled the destinies of that province as a dominant power, not only for hundreds, but, probably, thousands of years. In Central Soudan these are the Houssas, the Nupé, the Yukum, all inhabiting the districts between the Niger and Lake Chad. In the West they were the Mande tribes who were supreme in the Soudan from Senegambia towards Timbuktu and, at times, still further eastwards.

The Mandes also afford an existing connection between the storm and the sheep. According to tradition there once was a mighty god, Saga-djigi, *i.e.*, he-sheep or ram. When the tale-teller told me that Saga-djigi strode aloft through the sky on the clouds and ruled it, he hastened to add: "But you must not imagine that the God has the shape of a ram. Saga-djigi is only his name." He is the God of foul weather and tempest, to whom active and inactive captains and inferior agents are subject. More will be said about these in Chapter XIII. They are armed with club-shaped wooden knives, like the handles of hammers. The rain clouds are solid masses of rock in the sky; one of my informants said they were mountains. When rain is required these three captains take their wooden clubs, knock off some of these stony masses and break up the blocks into fragments and splinters, pounding them up to a broth which is poured into calabashes so pierced with innumerable tiny holes as to be like a sieve. When the calabash sieve is swung to and fro rain sprinkles over the earth from the sky through the holes. The three chief captains, Tulluguri, Kunato and Fianto, take it in turns to do the pouring. The amount of rain is determined by the one who is actually engaged on this work. Saga-djigi rules over them. He himself does not kill people, which only happens when Kunato, the capricious, throws down his wood-handled, stone-headed axe. Just as the Storm God is here remembered as the hurler of thunderbolts and the thunder axe, and since his name is in evident connection with the ram, so, in most of the neighbouring tribes, we find him with similar appellatives. Among the Mossi, for instance, the thunderbolt is Saga-uare and the thunder Saga-tassi. I was able to trace the name of the "thunderbolt" in connection with that of the ram right up into Mobbaland in Northern Togo, where it is called "Saga."

There is, then, one Western group, like the Mande, whose name for the ram is Saga, and one in the East calling it Arra, and in both instances they are applied to the same long-legged breed of sheep. The rams, however, are held in the highest esteem among these nations as the representation of divinity. Even to-day many kings may be seen constantly accompanied by one of these animals. These royal pets are always particularly large and perfect specimens. They often wear a little decorative metal badge which hangs to the

Entrance to sacred grove.
(Photo by Leo Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 220.

front on a necklace. In ancient days the people thought they might trust to them for their happiness and their increase. The ideas which I once heard were prevalent among the Bosso are very charming. I was told that if such a kingly ram was seen to be pawing the ground, digging on the spot would reveal a thunderbolt which, laid upon the seed-corn, ensured a plentiful harvest next season. All these peoples call the stone implements found in the soil "thunderbolts," missiles hurled during the rolling of Heaven's artillery and guarantees of fruitful fertility. And this is the reason why, in Mande and Houssa compounds, these stone axes are treasured symbols of the Lord of the Tempest, laid on the seed-corn and kept in the granary.

The views of the Houssa, the Mande and the Yorubas thus correspond to a considerable degree in this respect. Their extended dissemination in various forms may be summarized as follows: The tribes dwelling in the region of the Niger and its Delta, stretching far towards Senegambia, are thoroughly familiar with the Ram-God as the deity of the weather; among those inhabiting the East far from the Niger, namely, Houssa- and Benue-land, a slight change in the conception of the divine Ram has taken place, with a distinct tendency to transform the Storm-God to a Sun-God. A few examples will illustrate this. I heard the following myth among the Shambas on the North-western border of the Cameroon settlement.

In days of old the women always ground the millet to flour between stones on the same spot. Now, every evening a white ram came and ate up the flour which fell between the stones; he came every night and stole and ate. Once one of the women enticed him quite close to her and held him fast. Then she called her husband. He came and she said: "I have the white he-sheep who eats our meal at night that falls from the millstone." The man said: "I will tie him fast, the thief." He bound him tight, so that he could not get away. Then they laid them down to rest and slept. They went on sleeping. The night was dark. It took no end. At last they woke. They said: "What can this be? It still is night." The Gara (King) woke up. The Gara spake: "Whatever can this be? The night seems very long." He called all his people round him. He spake: "What can this be? Why

cometh not the day ?" The elders said : "Let us call the soothsayer, the Nelgebea, and inquire of him." So they called him. The Nelgebea brought his little horn for drawing water (this is the form of divination among the Shambas). He inquired of the oracle. The soothsayer said : "Somebody must have caught a ram. Does nobody know whether a ram has anywhere been caught ?" Then the husband of the woman, who had enticed and held fast the ram the evening before, said : "I know. My wife caught the he-sheep who always stole the flour, and held him fast. I bound him, so that he should not escape." Then said the Nelgebea : "The white he-sheep must be untied, or else there will be no day." Then said the man : "This will I do at once." And he went to unloose the ram. Then the white ram ran off. Immediately the sun appeared. And it was day.

This legend, which so plainly identifies the ram with the sun, spread from Benue southwards as far as the Zambesi. I never heard it in West Soudan proper. But among the Houssas, the Benue's northern neighbours, we again come upon this identification. With the ancient Houssa, however, as with other Eastern tribes, it was the bull, and not the ram, which was the supreme deity.

The Godhead represented by the bull was Maikaffo (*vide infra* concerning Maikaffo and the Bull Gods of the Ethiopians). Maikaffo had a wife, whose name was Ra. Now Ra is the mistress of the sun, or Rana. Now the sun was sunk into the sea of old within a chest of stone. The sun was shut up therein together with a white ram. None could bring up the sun and his companion again ; Ra, the goddess of the sun, did this ; Ra brought the sun and the ram into the upper world.

We find more of this in Bosso myths, and particularly in the Far West among the Kredje, to whom the ram and sun are one and the same. The Kredje tradition is of special interest, because the Sun-hero, who is also the Tempest-God, rides on a ram and rescues the creatures held captive in the melancholy rainless season from the power of the Goddess of the underworld, whose shape is that of a cow. The tail of this ram is set with razor-blades which he, as the Storm-God, hurls in the form of rain upon the earth to

fertilize the fields. Here we may again trace the connection with the storm.

We can detect the ancient Ram deity in many ceremonials. Among the Mande, the ruler of old was said to seat himself only on a cover made out of two ram fleeces which were sewn together. At Darfur, at the other end of the Soudan, the sacred ram, when decomposing, must be eaten by the royal family, and this hallows them. A Bull-God from the east under definite ethnological conditions, which are easy to understand, was insinuated and took the Ram-God's place. The direction taken by this movement is, however, capable of proof, and it is evident that the Ram for a time was supreme in the long ago.

What does this imply ?

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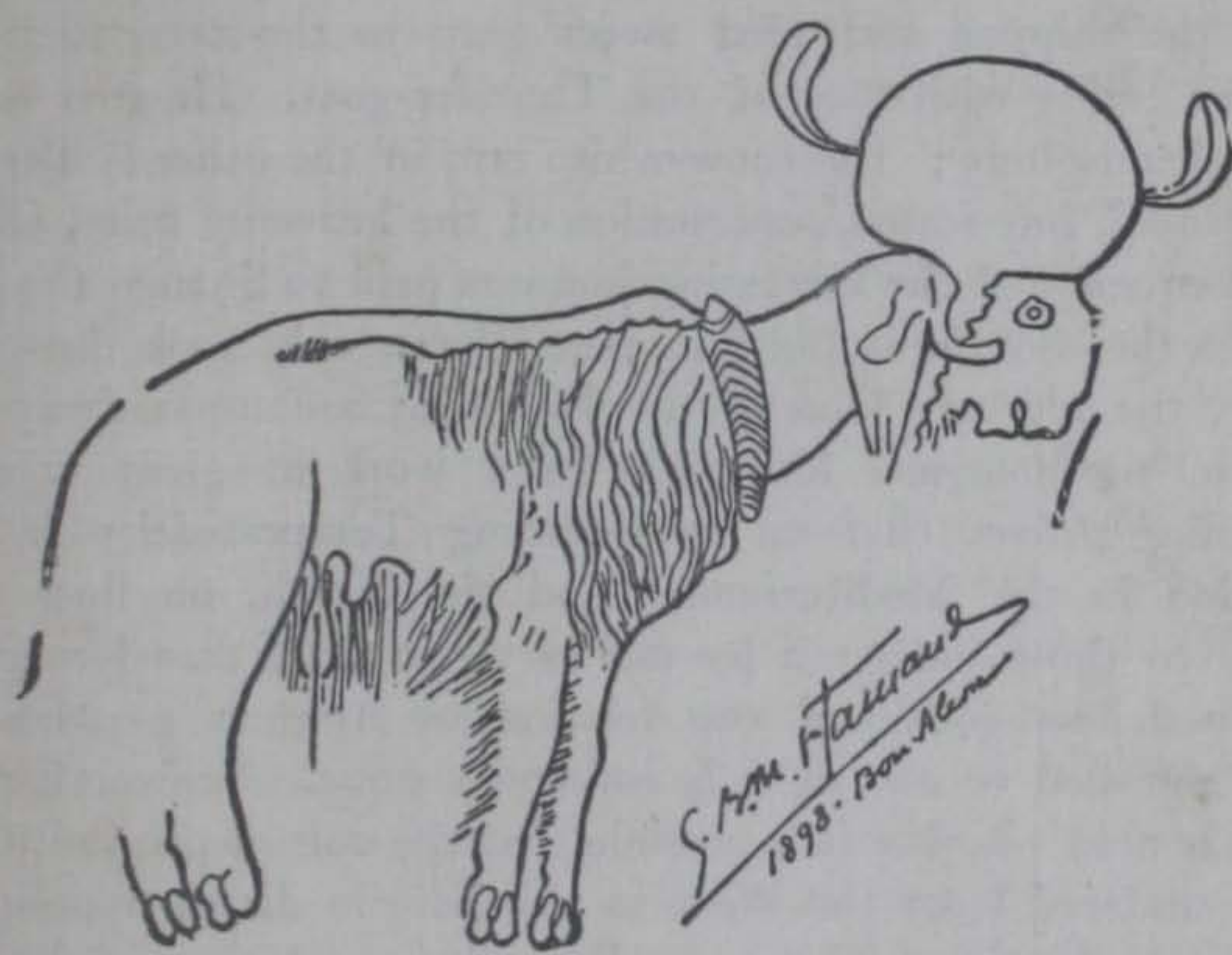
Fourthly : The antiquity of the Ram God. One of my friends in Fessan, in the neighbourhood of Mursuk, told me of a popular tradition current among the mountain shepherds there, according to which the sun is said to be a ram who hurls lightning out of the dark clouds, behind which he hides himself from time to time. We have, then, left the Soudan, travelled through the Sahara and arrived at the northern fringe of the district of ancient Libyan civilization. Here, beyond all question, we are reminded of one of the mightiest deities of antiquity, Ammon, the powerful Ruler of Oracles, who once was worshipped in the oasis of Siwa ; of that holy, ram-headed Lord-God, known to the Egyptians and Grecians of old ; of that dominant divinity whom Alexander the Great deemed worthy to place upon his own brow the crown which made him Master of the World. Herodotus mentions Ammon as having been the chief God of the Thebans in his own time. The legend says that Herakles, come what might, was determined to see Zeus, but that the Ruler of Olympus was unwishful to be so looked upon. Yielding at length, however, to protracted prayer, Zeus skinned a ram, cut off the animal's head and held it over his own divine countenance, clad his godlike body in the fleece, and showed himself to Herakles in this disguise. Since then the Egyptians made the image of Zeus ram-headed, and the Ammonites, neighbours of

the Egyptians and Ethiopians, derived their effigies from this source. The Egyptians slew a single ram on one day of the year only, namely, the Jovine festival, skinned it and garbed the statue of Zeus with it, placing then an image of Herakles by its side. When this had been done they contended for the body of the sacred animal and then buried it in a sacred vault or cave.

Ammon, with the ram's head, who, as persistent tradition maintains, came from Siwa, the oasis, into Egypt (I now follow Schweinfurth), cannot, as far as Egyptology has taken us at present, be proved to have been held in honour later than the middle Empire. The oldest buildings until now uncovered in the tomb of Ammon at Karnac are not of an earlier period. He was distinctly the Sun-God and the image of the Ram with the orb between his horns is familiar to us all. The migration of Ammon-worship from West to East has been subjected to doubt. I think this can be dispelled and in this way. There is an image in ancient Egyptian religious delineations, a figure of earlier date than the first representations of the Ram, namely, the god Min. I incline to the opinion that Min, who was specially worshipped in Koptos, can be brought into relation with Ammon. Min may well signify the Hidden One. The story from Herodotus quoted above mentions the concealment of the deity behind a ram's head. Now, while Ammon is rather the emblem of the shining sun, Min is more the God of fruitful crops. It is, however, particularly important that, as Von Hommel tells us, there is among the effigies of Min in Koptos a unique symbol, a variant, viz., the double-headed axe. A divinity with a twofold axe, considered as the God of fertile agriculture, must necessarily call to mind the Western Gods, who wield this emblem and watch over the successful harvest. As Min, therefore, so interpreted, may be claimed as a genuine Storm-divinity and a substitute for the variation in the Ammon conception, the resultant phenomenon is that, in very early historic times, the God who rides the storm was superseded by the Sun-God in the valley of the Nile. Now, this precisely corresponds with the impression made by the adoration of the Ram-deity on the Niger. In the Nile valley, too, the older Storm-Ram-God seems to have yielded to the influence of the Sun-God.

This idea can, moreover, be pursued throughout all Northern

Africa. Professor Flammand found large paintings in Algiers, south of Oran, on the cliffs, depicting the ram, neckletted, and crowned with the sun, whose rays are similar in form to the Uræus serpent. I myself was told that the Fezzanese still have a traditional legendary memory of the ram as a Sun- and Storm-God, and the Arabian explorer of the Middle Ages, El Bekri, gives an account of the worship of the ram in the region of Sus. Flammand, by examination of the plaster ground, thought himself justified in assigning an extremely ancient date to these vast pictures, and, independently



Picture of Ram carrying the Sun from Oran, found by Professor Flammand.

of the Algerian savant, Dr. Bertholon, also, while engaged in research among the relics of pre-Carthaginian religions in Tunis, came upon the ram as the chief divinity. This form seems in days of old to have prevailed from the Balearic Isles to Cyprus in the Mediterranean, and to have been replaced by the Bull-God from the East. It is worthy of note that Gaillard, in Lyons, investigated the rock-face pictures discovered by Flammand with regard to the origin of the breed of sheep there depicted, and established it as being *Ovis longipes guineensis*. It is the same stock as the Arra of the Houssas and the Saga of the Mande.

This chapter should not be closed without still more digression from our theatre of action. Who can fail to think of our own ancient Thor of the North, when he hears of the bolts of this Lord of the Tempest swinging his axe? His is the power of granting fertility to the lands of his sway, as this, too, is the office of Shango and other Soudanese deities connected with tillage. He, like the Gods of the South, sets his face eastwards. He, as they are, is the agricultural God. He does not, as do the rest of the Asa, bestride a horse, but stands up in a chariot harnessed with goats. In many country districts of Germany it is still the custom for mothers to go to the shippon and feed sweet grass to the ram, to stop the children crying with fear of the Thunder-goat. He-goat and ram in this hemisphere; the snow-white ram in the other! Parallel to the gradual, but actual, supersession of the heavenly ruler, Obatalla, in consequence of the increasing honours paid to Shango the Storm-God in the South, is the fact that Wotan only took the place of Donar, the supreme God of the North, at a comparatively recent time in mythological history. In a work of great excellence, Montelius proves that an axe-wielding Tempest-deity is also a Sun-God in the Mediterranean and the North, on lines exactly similar to those indicated by me in tracing the transformation of the Soudanese gods and the relation of Ammon to Min. The vision unrolled to our sight is eminently great. Schweinfurth asks in amazement whether it is possible that the cult of this deity should have wandered from the West to the East in direct opposition to the trend of universal history. We, who are gathering data from the survivors of ancient peoples of a time long past, survivors scarcely influenced at all by the progress of latter-day centuries, we, I say, see the same imagery in the North of Europe as in the West of Africa. We behold an old and glorious civilization, whose pinnacle is agriculture, coming to life once more, and we arrive at the same remarkable conclusion as Schrader and Hahn, which is this, viz.: "In all probability, a larger place must be accorded to sheep-breeding than to cattle-raising in primeval times, and, therefore, the sheep may well be the oldest domestic animal of the Indo-Germanic race." How, then, does this affect the question: Was not the sheep introduced from the lands of North Africa?

And now for the other problem: What were the emblems with which the Aryans migrated into Asia? What signifies the fact that Indra of the Vedas is still depicted in the form of a ram, and that this animal, in the Tuti-namé, takes its stand—as a counsellor—by the side of the Indian Emperor?

Figures of the god Edshu or Edju on planks and doors of Yoruban temples.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER XII

THE IDEA OF THE WORLD

Is Ifa a deity ?—Edshu, or Edju, and Ifa—Edju's tricks—Ifa utensils—Ifa worship—The four points of the compass—Their signs, gods, colours—Weekly and yearly holidays—The Temple and the diffusion of the Idea of the World as formed by the ancients.

WHOEVER has once lived in a corner or tiny room in one of the larger compounds of a genuine Yoruban city must often have been roused from sleep in the morning by a curious banging at dawn, proceeding from the shrine of the household's ruler or from the apartment of some other honoured and elderly man. Questioning a native as to its meaning will elicit the unhesitating reply: "So-and-so has asked the God Ifa what the day will bring forth." It is certainly honestly given, and yet is radically wrong. It is a fact that the majority of elderly Yorubans strike the Ifa-bowl with an ivory stick, then say a prayer and consult the oracle. It is equally true that the greater part of the native population call the oracle, as well as the God who inspires it, by the name of Ifa. And yet there cannot be the least doubt that there is no such deity as Ifa at all. "Ifa" means "palm-kernel," and the oracle is questioned by throwing these kernels up, catching them, laying them down, and interpreted by the positions they assume. From North to South, from East to West, throughout all Yoruban towns, there is neither altar nor image, nor anyone

who can claim to be a son of Ifa, the Orisha. Ifa is no more an Orisha than Egun, or Oro, or Ossenj. Ifa is nothing but the expression of the need of searching for a final cause, of the endeavour to find a concrete idea of a Universe which transcends native intellectual capacity. And this world of thought is incredibly full of wonders. I do not think that such a peculiar and curious philosophical system as that of the Yoruban Ifa scheme can be even approximately found in any other part of Africa.

I said there were no images of Ifa, the god. The illustrations to this chapter show all kinds of ceremonial apparatus for Ifa-worship, and every one, looking at the Ifa trays on page 249, will observe a face on the edge, which is often repeated on each of the four sides, and ask whether this is not, perhaps, the Ifa. The author inquired the meaning of this head in every corner of this land and from every detached portion of this nation, and always got the same answer, namely: "There is no picture of Ifa; those on the Ifa trays and caskets are images of Edju."

Edju! The Devil—as the black and white missionaries, coming from the Coast to preach the Saviour of Mankind to the Yorubans, have taught them to believe. Wherever a missionary has set his foot, the folks to-day talk of the Devil, Edju. Yet, go into the compounds, talk to them kindly and they will tell you: "Ah, yes! Edju played many tricks; Edju made kindred peoples go to war; Edju pawned the moon and carried off the sun; Edju made the Gods strive against themselves. But Edju is not evil. He brought us the best of all there is; he gave us the Ifa oracle; he brought the sun. But for Edju, the fields would be barren." And, therefore, we must, for good or ill, needs occupy ourselves with him, and start by banishing all thoughts about a devil. He has nothing whatever to do with this Person nor with any other mediæval impersonation of evil at all. He is a boon companion; up to all sorts of games, something like the Polynesian deity Maui; he showed himself above all measure friendly to men by giving them the Ifa oracle; and I will now tell the reader the legend as given to me by a dweller on the border of Kukurukuland.

Once upon a time the Gods were very hungry. They did not get enough to eat from their wandering sons on the face of the earth. They were discontented with each other and quarrelled.

Some of them went forth to hunt. Other Gods, and Olokun in particular, wanted to go fishing; yet, although one antelope and one fish were caught, these did not last long. Now, their descendants had forgotten them, and they asked themselves how they were to get their sustenance from men again. Men no longer made them burnt offerings, and the Gods wanted meat. So Edju set out. He asked Yemaya for something with which to regain man's goodwill. Yemaya said: "You will have no success. Shankpanna has scourged them with pestilence, but they do not come and make sacrifice to him; he will kill them all, but they will not bring him food. Shango struck them dead with the lightning which he sent upon them, but they do not trouble themselves about him or bring him things to eat. Better turn your thought to something else. Men do not fear death. Give them something so good that they will yearn for it and, therefore, want to go on living." Edju went further on. He said to himself: "What I cannot get from Yemaya, Orungan will give me." He went to him. Orungan said: "I know why you are come. The sixteen Gods are a-hungered. They must now have something which shall be good. I know of such a thing. It is a big thing made of sixteen palm-nuts. If you get them and learn their meaning, you will once more gain the goodwill of mankind." Edju went to where the palm-trees were. The monkeys gave him sixteen nuts. Edju looked at these, but did not know what to do with them. The monkeys said to him: "Edju, do you not know what to do with the nuts? We will counsel you. You got the sixteen nuts by guile. Now go round the world and ask for their meaning everywhere. You will hear sixteen sayings in each of the sixteen places. Then go back to the Gods. Tell men what you yourself have learned, and then men will also learn once more to fear you."

Edju did as he was told. He went to the sixteen places round the world. He went back into the sky.

Edju told the Gods what he had learned himself. The Gods spake: "It is well." Then the Gods imparted their knowledge to their descendants, and now men can know the will of the Gods every day, and what will come to pass in the future. When men saw that all evil things would happen in the days to come, and what they would be able to escape by offering sacrifices, they began

Ifa worship. Figures of Edju deity in wood and ivory as dancing clubs; altar ornaments and (*e.g.* 3) decorative figure to be placed next to Ifa tray. For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

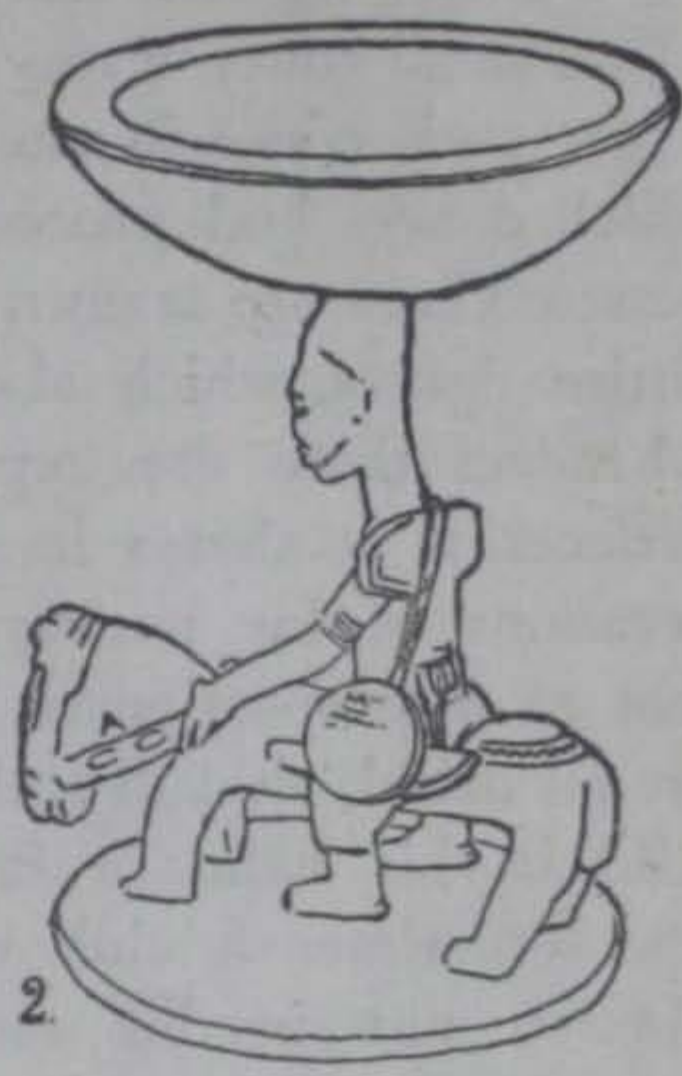
to slaughter animals again and burn them for the Gods. This was the way in which Edju brought the Ifa (palm-nuts) down to men. When he went back, he stayed with Ogun, Shango and Obatalla, and these four watched to see what men would do with the kernels.

It is quite clear from this myth that there can be no question whatever of an Ifa-deity. The essence of the matter is that the palm-nuts are Ifa, that people could not connect the complex method of their divination with an origin, and so compromised the difficulty by "interpolating" the deity Ifa. Our own task will consist in determining the meaning of this curious number sixteen, and the peculiar significance of its legendary origin. I took great pains to make those who knew anything about it unearth their knowledge. The result was very simple. Its presentation will not be difficult. But it is imperatively necessary to take one step at a time, and above all, to show the remarkable importance of Edju in the whole proceeding.

* * * * * * * *

The tribes of Northern Yoruba, in particular, worship Edju. He is merged with those in the South, particularly on the Coast, in the image of Elegba, whose idiosyncrasies must be mentioned elsewhere. The former considered Edju a God who came from the Niger or East. Once I was told he had come with the sun, and again that he had brought it. He must be in some way related to it. He not only brought the sun, but also the palm-nuts. In the Ifa legend it was he who first made the glass beads of Olokun accessible. He is also the "Bringer"!

Everywhere Edju ranks as a sort of leader or inspector of the group of some sixteen Gods, whose mother, as the Coast legend tells us, was Odudua. But he is only the "God-inspector" in the sense of being, so to say, their director and chief marshal, and responsible for keeping "law and order" on the Yoruban Olympus. Edju-worshippers declared that the other Orishas would be unable to do anything whatever without this deity, and as the descendants of the others held their peace and stood by mumchance, they practically admitted this curious divinity's supremacy. He is not,



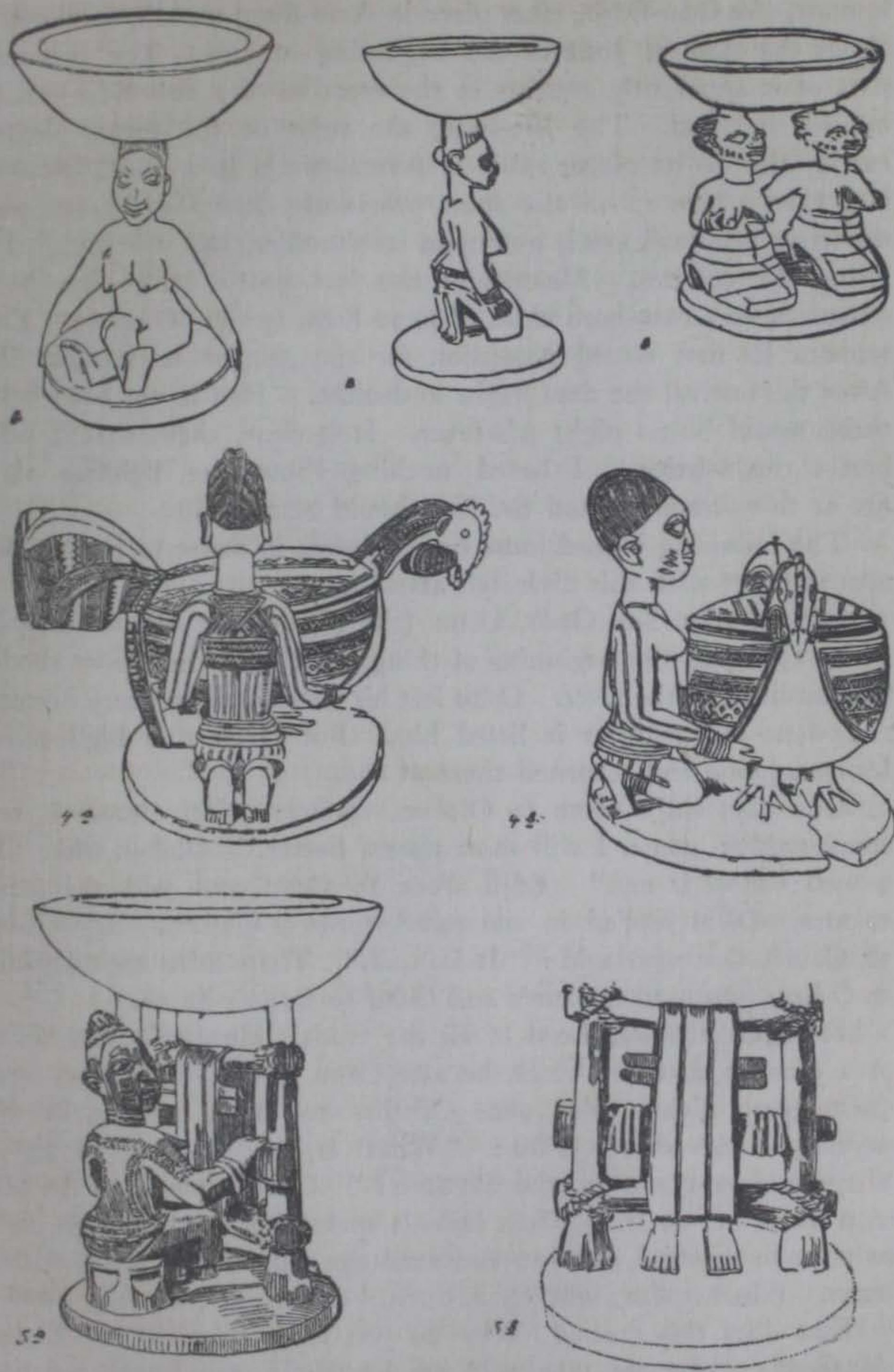
Instruments of Ifa worship. Cups for keeping palm nuts, with figures of founders of Yoruban Empire. For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

however, to be considered as the Ruler of the Gods, but rather as the marshal of their procession, whose office is akin to that of the strict master of the ceremonial of King Arthur's Round Table in the Parsifal legend. Edju dwells at all the cross-roads, or Orita, where small cones of clay are set up to him. There are similar, but larger such cones in the compounds of superior Ifa-priests, round which dances and processions take place at certain seasons of the year. There are many plastic effigies of Edju, either heads only or entire figures, which always form part of a distinct design, and, whenever these are represented on doors or planks or other flat surfaces, it is always in profile, which never occurs on any other occasions of his portrayal. All his images are characterized by feet of disproportionate breadth. They all have a pigtail. They are all naked, though sexless. A tobacco or signalling pipe is found held in his hand or in his mouth with astonishing frequency, and sometimes a club on his shoulder. When there is nothing else to put in his mouth there is always his thumb. It is the most pronounced of all the effigies in the Yoruban world of divinities.

Edju has the reputation, in Northern Yoruba, of being the real fomenter of ill-will, and the constant inciter to discontent, strife and disturbance. When four people are gathered together it is he who puts his finger in the pie to make them fall out. His proper element is the fiery flame. When a house catches fire he takes a hand in the game. His proper abode is an underground Ina (fire). And I was also told that he lived in the mountains, which had Ihu, *i.e.*, caverns, filled with fire inside. Every now and again a hill would burst open, and old Edju—he is always "old man"—would come forth. These tales may well point to some legendary memory of volcanic eruptions. And, in so far as he is connected with fire, no sacrifice can be offered him without it, and this is why the site of every shrine in his honour must be purified by a burning and ashes. This is identical with the worship of Orun, the sun, which has almost died out. Edju is chiefly the restless, the eternally wandering deity. The bird sacred to him in Okmeland is Equo, the owl. The food-taboo of the Edshu clan is Adi, the black oil, expressed from burnt palm-nuts.

But, before everything, his festival! This great holiday in his



Utensils for Ifa worship. Cups for palm nuts, with women at work. For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

honour, the Odu-Edju, takes place in Arao-dung month, somewhere about the close of June or the beginning of July. The principal part of it apparently consists in the erection of a new Edju-image, carved in wood. The Ille-sude, the ruler of the town, himself carries this to its place, raises it several times in a ritual rhythm, and then places it on the spot previously occupied by its predecessor. A small axe is put upon its shoulder, and it is hung with strings of cowries. Meanwhile the last year's image has been entrusted to a new-born child of some Edju family of repute. This remains its first sacred possession for the rest of its natural life. After the festival the days begin to decline. Had it not been held, there would be no night whatever. It is clear, then, that it celebrates the solstice. I heard nothing about the lighting of a fire at this ceremony, and the fact should be noted.

The following legend must be set down, in order to further our acquaintance with this divinity's attributes :

Olokun (the Sea God), Orun (the Sun God), and Oshu (the Moon God), in the beginning of things, had each their own abode. Olokun lived in the river. Oshu left his own dwelling every evening and went out whither it listed him. But Orun rose high above his own home and returned there at eve.

One day, Edju came to Olokun, saying : "Thy house is not comfortable ; come, I will show thee a better." Olokun said : "It is well ; show it me." Edju went to Oshu and said the same to him. Oshu replied in the same words as Olokun. Edju went to Oru. Oru also said : "It is well." Then Edju took Olokun to Oshu's, Orun to Olokun's and Oshu to Orun's house.

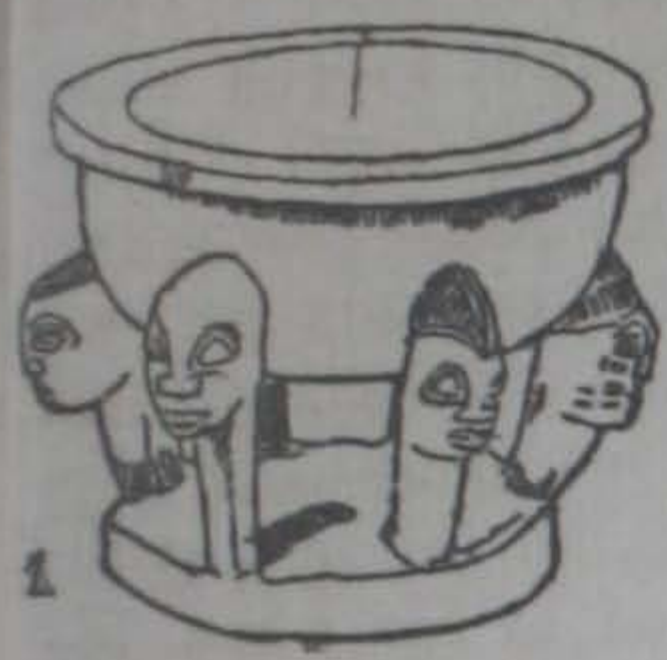
Now, Oshalla was Lord of all the Gods. He dwelt in a house at a cross-road, from which he saw Orun go by every day, and Oshu every night. But once Oshalla saw Oshu pass by in the daytime. He asked Oshu : "What is the meaning of this ? Why do you come in the daytime ?" Oshu replied : "An old man made me do it." Then Oshalla spake thus : "Oshu, go back at once to where I put you and send the old man to me." Oshu went. When it was night Orun came. Oshalla saw him and asked : "What does this mean ? Why do you come at night ?" Orun answered : "An old man told me he would take away my life unless I came this new way." Oshalla was still talking with Orun,

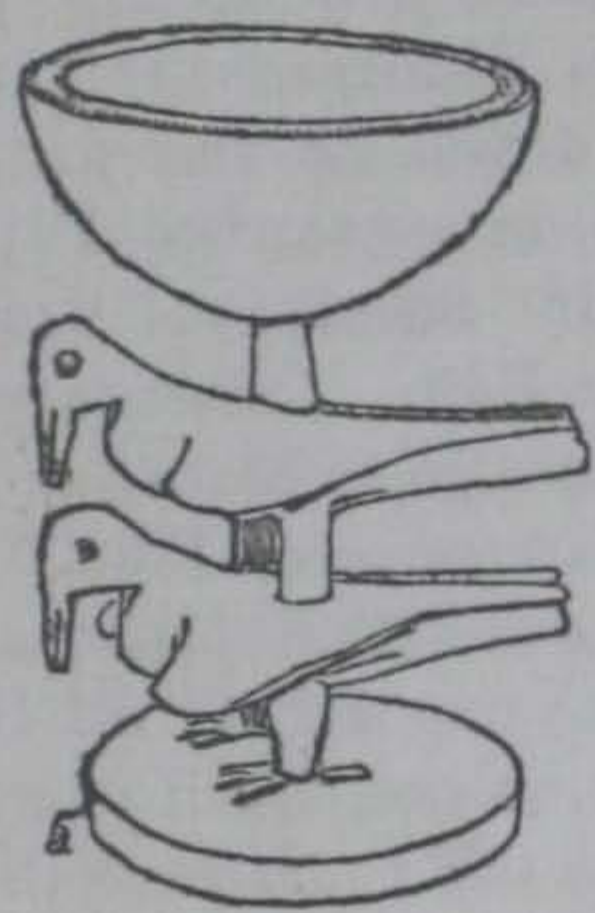
Utensils of Ifa worship. Cups for keeping palm nuts, with figures depicting the court-life of the nobles. For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

when Olokun came along. Oshalla asked Olokun: "What are you doing here? Why are you not in the water?" Olokun said: "An old man bade me to come this road." Oshalla said: "Very well—go you directly back the way I told you to your own home. And, Orun, return you, too, immediately, to your own house and get on with the work I allotted you." Orun and Olokun went home. Then Edju went to Oshu and said: "You, Oshu, if you don't do to-day what I tell you, I will kill you to-day. Go, then, to Orun's house, and, not to anger Oshalla, go round Oshalla's house in a circle." Oshu said: "If this be your will, I must perform it." Oshu set out. He went round Oshalla's house and came to where Orun lived. Orun saw Oshu and said: "Who comes here? Is this your house?" Oshu said: "Why do you not go out of it and leave it to me?" Oshu and Orun quarrelled. Edju interfered. He said to Oshu: "Why do you put up with this?" To Orun: "Why do you stand this?" Orun and Oshu quarrelled violently. Oshalla heard them. He went there at once. When Edju heard him coming he went to meet him and said: "I have already made them agree with one another. Only go home again."

Then Edju went into the water to Olokun and said: "Come out of it, or I will kill you." Olokun said: "You did not give me life." Edju said again: "Come out, or I will kill you!" Olokun came out and Edju showed him the road into the bush. Oshalla was told that Olokun had come out of the water into the bush. Oshalla gave Shankpanna a blade of grass, saying: "Go to Olokun, who has gone into the bush against my will. Tell him he shall, and must, not go back again into the water, for he was not with me when he left the water which I gave him to dwell in." Shankpanna took the blade of grass to Olokun, saying: "Oshalla sends you this. You left the water without his permission. Change yourself into an Oké (hill)." Olokun did so. Then all the children of Olokun came out of the water to look for him on the hill. Edju met them and said: "Go through the bush to find your father. Do not pass by Oshalla's place." Oshalla heard. He saw that Olokun's children had gone round his own dwelling. Oshalla transformed them all into monkeys. Since that time Olokun's children gambol about like apes.





Utensils for Ifa worship. Cups for keeping palm nuts, decorated with animal and other ornament.
For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

But now Oshalla called Shankpanna and said to him: "Bring Edju to me!" And Shankpanna set out. He came to some cross-roads and asked: "Where is Edju?" They told him: "Edju is at the market-place." Shankpanna took his Auwo (ceremonial broom of sedge-grass) and went to the market where Edju was said to be. He met him there. He said to him: "Oshalla sent me to punish you." He took his broom and began to belabour him. But Edju took up his Ogo, or shoulder-club, to defend himself, and beat Shankpanna. Orun heard the sound of blows and the voices of the fighters. Orun said: "Shankpanna is contending with Edju. I needs must help Shankpanna." He went to the opponents. He said to Shankpanna: "If I open my eyes Edju will be dazzled. So I will do this first." Shankpanna said: "Good! Do so!" Orun approached Edju and opened his eyes. Edju was struck blind. Shankpanna drove in with his broom against now defenceless Edju. Oshalla was looking on and said: "Let all the little children go to Shankpanna and Orun, and rejoice because Shankpanna has conquered Edju." All the little children went and joyfully shouted: "Shankpanna is mighty in battle." Shankpanna went on beating Edju. All his blows left wales on Edju's body. Edju ran to the river to bathe his wounds. When Edju was in the water, he said: "Henceforth the blows Shankpanna gave me shall flow with the water upon all those who bathe in it, and they all shall burn as with fire." And whoso bathes in the water in which Edju washed the wounds Shankpanna gave him, gets the smallpox and the scars it leaves behind it. So Edju's mischief has been handed down to mankind and with them remains a living thing." . . .

Now, although cosmological features play the greater part in this particular myth and the Gods contend against each other, there are yet many others in which the joy of telling tales has seized upon this fine material, to get from it as many variants as possible in depicting this deity's spitefulness. There is a story current in Ojo containing a trait, which will be shown to be essential later on.

Once upon a time, Olorun first created Enja, or mortal man, and, after that, Edju, the God. Once there was a pair of friends. When they went out they were always dressed alike. Everyone

said: "These two men are the best of friends." Edju saw them and said: "These men are very dear to each other. I will make them differ and that will be a fine beginning for a very big Idja (lawsuit or palaver)." The fields of these friends adjoined. A path ran between and separated them. Edju used to walk on it of a morning and then wore a "filla," or black cap.

Now, when Edju wanted to start this quarrel, he made himself a cap of green, black, red, and white cloth, which showed a different colour from whatever side it was looked at. He put it on one morning on his walk abroad. Then he took his tobacco pipe and put it, not, as usual, in his mouth, but at the nape of his neck, as if he were smoking at the back of his head. And then he took his staff as usual, but, this time, carried it upside down, that is to say, so that it hung, not over his breast in front, but over his shoulder behind. Both the friends were at work in their fields. They looked up for a second. Edju called out, "Good morning!" They gave him the same and went on with their toil.

Then they went home together. One said to the other: "The old man (Edju) went the opposite road through the fields to-day. I noticed that by his pipe and his stick." The other said: "You're wrong. He went the same way as usual, I saw it by the way his feet were going." The first said: "It's a lie; I saw his pipe and staff much too plainly; and, besides, he had on a white instead of a black cap." The second one retorted: "You must be blind or asleep; his cap was red." His friend said: "Then you must already have had some palm-wine this morning, if you could see neither the colour of his cap nor the way he was walking." The other one answered him: "I haven't even seen a drop this morning, but *you* must be crazed." The other man said: "You are making up lies to annoy me." Then the other one said: "Liar yourself! And not for the first time by a good deal!" One of them drew his knife and went for the other, who got a wound. He also drew his, and cut his assailant over the sconce. They both ran away bleeding to the town. The folk saw them and said: "Both these friends have been attacked. There will be war." One of them said: "No, this liar is no friend of mine." And the other one: "Don't believe a single word of his. When he opens his mouth the lies swarm from it."

Meanwhile, Edju had gone to the King of the town. He said to the King: "Just ask the two friends what is the matter with them! They have cut each other's heads about with knives and are bleeding." The King said: "What, the two friends, who always wear clothes alike, have been quarrelling? Let them be summoned!" So it was done. They came. The King asked them: "You are both in sad case. What made you fall out?" They both said: "We could not agree as to what it was that went through our fields this morning." Then the King asked: "How many people went along your footpath?" "It was a man who goes the same way every day. To-day he went in another direction, wearing a white cap instead of a black one," said one of the friends. "He lies," shouted the other; "the old man had on a red cap and walked along in the usual direction!" Then the King asked: "Who knows this old man?" Edju said: "It was I. These two fellows quarrelled because I so willed it." Edju pulled out his cap and said: "I put on this cap, red on one side, white on the other, green in front and black behind. I stuck my pipe in my nape. So my steps went one way while I was looking another. The two friends couldn't help quarrelling. I made them do it. Sowing dissension is my chiefest delight."

The King heard him. He said: "Seize this fellow; bind him; he baits folks to fall out!" The people wanted to bind him, but he ran very swiftly to a neighbouring hill. There he struck stones together. He went on striking them till the dry grass caught fire. He threw the burning hay down upon the town, where it fell on the roofs. The thatch caught fire. Edju threw fire here, he threw it there. He burnt down one house in this place, another in that. All the people ran hither and thither in crowds. Then Edju came back to town. He saw everyone trying to save what they could from the houses. One man carried a basket, a second a sack, a third some calabashes and a fourth some jars.

Edju went in amongst them. He jumped about and took the loads from them. Those from whom he took them did not care to whom they gave them; they rushed back to the blazing houses to fetch out more. But Edju carried the bundle of pots to the things that belonged to the man with the calabashes. The load of baskets to the owner of the parcel of sacks. The parcel of sacks to the heap

of pots. The fire burnt itself out. Many houses had been burnt down.

After the fire everyone looked for the goods that belonged to him. The calabash owner said to the basket man: "You are a thief! You took advantage of the hubbub to steal my bundles!" The basket man himself said: "The others are the stealers!" The real owner of the pots said to him who had got them by his side: "Now at last I have hold of the thief! I thought you were one for many a day." In their rage they took to their clubs. They let each other have it. Blows rained on the pots and the calabashes, which were smashed into bits. Then their owners grew still more enraged. They began to hit each other with the pestles used by the mortar-women. The fury of man now destroyed what the fire had spared. And several people were killed.

The King had the maniacs sundered. He asked: "What has been the matter?" Each one shouted of the other: "That man is a thief! He stole my goods during the fire!" Others screamed: "No, that man, there, he robbed me of my things while the houses were blazing." All the people shouted at once. Then the King asked: "What, are all my people thieves?" Then Edju stepped forward, saying: "Nay, O King, thy people are not thieves, they are but fools. I had a game with them and they played it well. If ever I should want to laugh right heartily again, 'twill be to this place I shall come." Edju ran off. No one could catch him.

Thus far some of the legendary lore about Edju. Some of its specially significant points will be found in what follows.

* * * * * * * *

We will at first realize the general methods by which the Ifa oracle is made manifest, and then try to arrive at this system's original intention. I have already said that Ifa really means only "palm-nuts," and most certainly not an original God, but that, on the contrary, it represents an Orisha system or its basis. It is not, therefore, surprising that Ifa is not to be found at the head of a totemistic clan. Ifa has no claim to a posterity like Shango, or Shankpanna, or Oja, or any other deity. On the other hand, anybody can devote himself to the cult of Ifa without relating this form

of worship to any special God. And, thus, those who are thoroughly initiated in its mysteries are not called Omo- (son of) Ifa, but Baba-lawo (Father of the Secret). Everyone may become a Baba-lawo, provided he have sufficient worldly means, brains and the necessary patience. Let us pursue the entrance of a youth into the Baba-lawo brotherhood.

First of all the novice or candidate has to furnish himself with the following five ingredients: Ikode, or parrot tail-feathers; the fish, Boli; an Ekete; an Eku (mouse); and the root Kanka, used in washing. He beseeches a Baba-lawo to instruct and induct him into the mysteries. He addresses him as Oluwo. This term is specifically applied to the Ifa High-Priest, but every novice uses it when conversing with his teacher. This Oluwo conducts him, carrying this bundle of the five articles on his head, to the nearest river, the Oshun, near Ibadan. They are both robed all in white. The priest takes his holy gear with him. They lay their things down on the bank and the priest washes the pupil. Then they go into the bush, where there is a holy spot consisting of three consecutive broad spaces. Anyone may stand upon the first. The introduction takes place on the second, and the Holy of Holies, which is the third, may only be trodden by the teacher in person. The eating of a tasty meal, made up of Boli, Ekete and Eku, prepared and cooked *in situ*, inaugurates the proceedings at which none are present except the priest, whose business it is to show the Way of Truth, and the candidate, together with some member of the former's family as a witness.

Then the hierophant opens his pouch, a wallet of leather, mostly with cowrie-embroidered edges. Out of this he takes the palm-nuts, which are the procedure's most important, and, in fact, essential apparatus. The wallet, moreover, contains the Oqua-Ifa, or Ifa tray, and he strews finely powdered wood upon its unornamented surface. At this point the Ifa oracle is interpreted once, in the novice's sight, as will now be described. The odd or even number of the nuts caught up in falling is recorded in a series of double or single lines, marked on the flour, four of which make up an Odu, and now the question arises as to whether the marks on the Ifa tray announce the deity's consent to the youth's initiation. If the Odu is a yea-word, the main business of the day is settled. If,

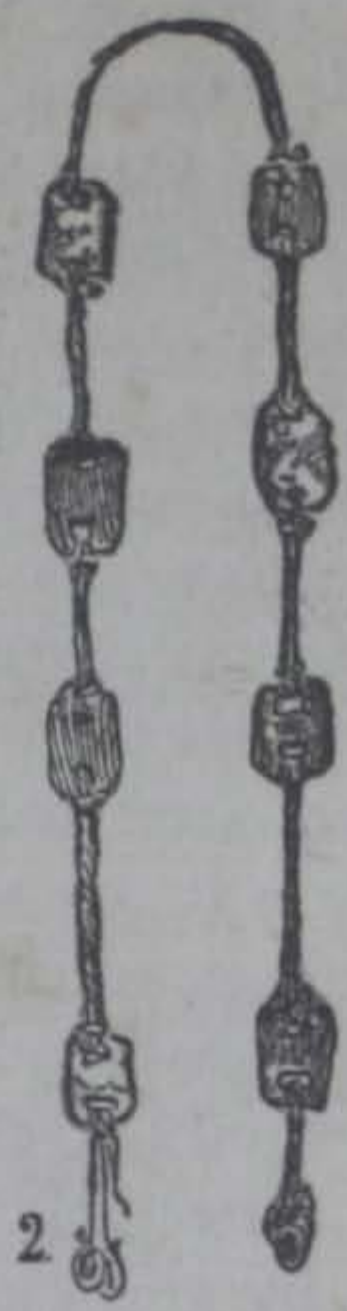
now, he has anything *in petto* requiring solution, this is his opportunity of bringing it forward, and for the first time seeing how the Baba-lawo puts the questions of daily and future fate and the method of receiving their answers. Anyhow, to repeat the phrase current among the Yorubans, "the Lord has looked upon his servant with favour." This Lord is not, to emphasize it once more, perchance a God, an Orisha, but only one of the Odu, or heads, speaking through the effective agency of the nut-signs. The priest then rubs a white mixture into the youth's hair, ties the parrot's feathers round him and endues him with the Oquelle (*v. infra*), so that the middle portion of it falls over his shoulders with its ends hanging down in front like a stole. He then gives him sixteen palm-kernels with these words: "This is thy Ifa."

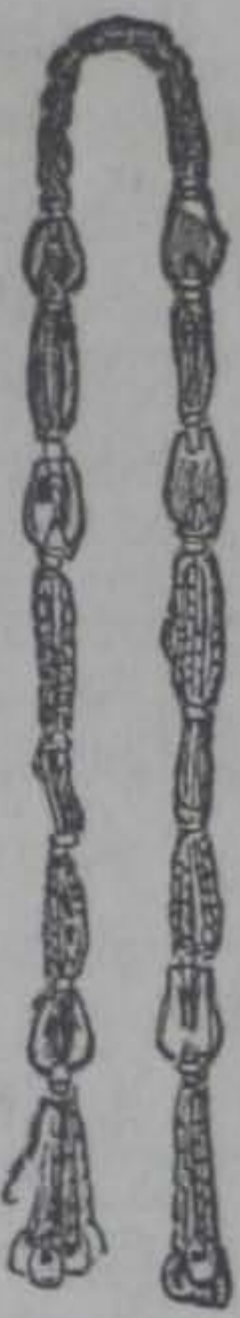
They go home, the priest leading and bearing the knife on whose handle hangs a bell. They enter his house and go to the sacred oracle's place and, when the novice steps over the threshold, the priest strews white flour about and bids him welcome in Ifa's name. For all white things, flour included, are sacred to Ifa. Other Baba-lawos now join them. They all hail and talk with the novice, telling him of the profound wisdom of Ifa and the reverence due to its worship. This is the manner of his reception into the new community of the Baba-lawo, which comprises a very large number who do homage to Ifa, interpret his oracle and salute it at every dawn.

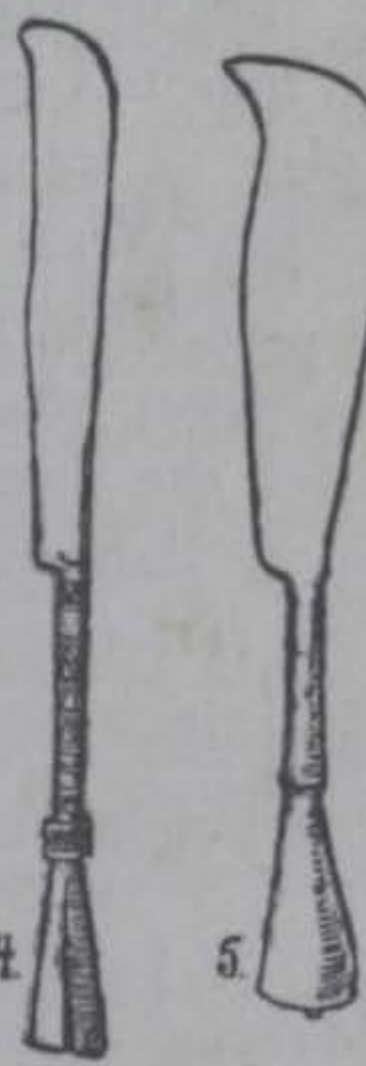
Proficiency in the oracular art is attained very slowly. It generally takes three years, the first of which the novice employs only in learning the names of the Odus. In the second, he memorizes the Sacred Verities, as far as he can grasp them; and, in the third, he busies himself in putting the knowledge so gained into actual practice. Should a man desire to be merely a Baba-lawo, the lowest grade of wisdom in the three divisions of the Ifa ministry, he will have gone through the necessary course in three years and be in a position to satisfy the household needs with regard to forecasting the daily course of things by interpreting the fall of the Oquelle, or palm-nuts. He who feels that his real vocation is to be an Ifa priest has to continue his study for several more years to attain to greater respect and more intimate knowledge of the wisdom and truth and the inwardness of the Odus, and is then in

the second class. Only the High Priest reaches the third grade, which will be dealt with later. Power to interpret the oracle is very difficult to acquire in consequence of the mass of prophetic truths and wise injunctions involved in every Odu. The foundation of the prophesies alone is said to consist of no less than one thousand six hundred and eighty dicta for each of the four thousand and ninety-six different Odus. Of course, no one can remember such an enormous total and, as a prophecy in question naturally depends upon the various positions of the different Odus, there is an absolute freedom of interpretation of this which is no less mysterious than the Pythian or Ammonite Oracle. The novice goes to his new instructor every evening. Every day, when night descends upon the earth, he gives himself up to the absorption of knowledge of the divine. He accompanies his guide wherever he may go, and sees him at work in reading the oracle from the fall of the nuts or the Oquelle. Needless to say, these lessons are not given *gratis* and that a good incoming finds its way to the hierarchical cash-box.

The learner now purchases an Adjelle-Ifa, or Adjelefa for short, that is, a cup supported by an image. There is an astounding variety of these. Some are plain, with only pierced ornamental supports; others with pigeons, antelopes, chickens with snakes in their beaks, fish, and so on. The shapes of those borne by riders with weapons are very beautiful; the weapons are spears and old-fashioned match-locks. One of these figures has spitted a child on his lance, but in his other hand, or in his mouth, holds a pipe, which reaches to the ground. An image of cheeriness *in excelsis!* Whole groups in carving of highly placed personages, women and drummers, hold up these little cups. The favourites are those of female figures at work. Two women-friends sitting together, or one nursing a baby, or offering the cup, or sitting at the loom, or carrying an infant pick-a-back in this country's prevailing fashion. They are all instinct with life. There is, perhaps, some lack of divine monumental grandeur, but all the more actual perception of life. They are delightful little bits of sculpture, which, in ignorance of their connection, would have to be reckoned among "occasional chairs" for African women, rather than holy appurtenances of a shrine.







Utensils for Ifa worship. 1. The wallet containing the strings of dice (2 and 3). 2. String with pieces of calabash for the disciples. 3. Same with halved palm-nuts for the Master. 4 and 5. Sacrificial knives. 6. The Origi, centre of sacred processional For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

Besides the cups for the sixteen nuts and the vessels which receive the holy offerings of water, mixed with maize-meal, and nut-oil, there is the Oqua-Ifa, or tray, another essential acquisition. This is rectangular towards the south, but, as a rule, circular towards the north. These boards may be compared with the bread board of Central Germany, except that all sorts of heathenish figures are carved round it, instead of the pious "Give us this day our daily bread." These trays are of extraordinary decorative beauty, just as much outside the common run of African forms of carving as the Osé-Shango, and must be invested with a very deep meaning.

Even its mere arrangement proves this to be so. On the uppermost part there is always a dominant face, throned like a watchman over, and partly encroaching upon, the bare inner surface. This face is sometimes bordered with hands or coiled serpents, or some other simple ornament. Opposite to this, or at equal spaces to the left and right, there again are other divisions. These are separated by ornaments, by greater relief, or by the repetition of the face, so that the whole is, as it were, divided into the four quarters of the compass. Each of these divisions is filled either with decorative patterns, varying in richness and boldness of execution, or with animals, events in life, or some other kind of plastic sculptures. They call to mind the strictly decorative arrangement of space prevailing in Central America, rather than African exuberance in the play of imagination. They are the most beautiful products of ancient West African industrial art, and the specimens used by the actual Oluwo are especially of quite remarkable beauty. When a Baba-lawo finally attained the dignity of an Oluwo, he generally received the finest tray from the ancient family possessions. And when the Baba-lawo died, this tray was of old put into his grave for him to rest upon. We got many different sorts from the ancient tombs, which were the finest we ever came across. If there is any possibility at all of getting at the foundation and historical origin of Ifa-worship, we shall have to study the symbolism of the boards and revert to its meaning later on.

Mention must also be made of another instrument used in ministering to the Ifa, viz.: the Iroké. This is a clapper, which was in the beginning probably an elephant tusk, as I so gather, not only from its shape, but also from the fact that an entire series of modern

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Utensils for Ifa worship. Ifa trays for strewing meal, on which the oracular signs are recorded. For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

ones is made in wood, curved like a tusk, with one pointed end and hollowed interior, and scarcely distinguishable from those in ivory from which they are copied. At the other end, which is provided by Nature with a cup-shaped cavity, there is often a little tongue or hammer arranged in such a way that, when the Iroké is grasped in the middle and the pointed end beaten against the Ifa tray, a noise like a wooden rattle is produced. The middle of the lower end of the Iroké is, in most instances, very tastefully decorated either with conventional ornament, or a head or a figure. At dawn, the Baba-lawo strikes the tray with the Iroké and so salutes Edju, the deity presiding over the Ifa.

Besides this, particularly wealthy people have an Okwong-Ifa, a box with many divisions. These caskets are curiously like the Mungerri, the handsomely sculptured wooden chests of the Bakuba, both in design and intention. The middle compartment is meant for keeping the nuts. The surrounding space is mostly divided in four, and contains clay, charcoal, chalk and redwood pigment. Sulphur, called Emi-Orun, or sun-dung, takes the place of clay with the extremely rich. The contents of this quadruple arrangement will claim our further consideration. The outsides of these caskets are mostly decorated very prettily with deeply incised or raised ornament, part of which is a head, often surrounded with snakes. We frequently, however, find the image of a tortoise or (?) a grape cluster, or a warrior, with a prisoner in his clutch. There is mostly a button in the middle of the lid, corresponding to the "navel," so-called, of the Bakuban Mungerri. These lid-handles, I was told, were named "Ishiguang."

And, lastly, there is the Oquelle. This is a string connecting eight halved palm-nuts, and its ends are usually prettily tasselled with beads. The High Priest at Ifé had one with yellow nut-pieces in place of the halved nuts, and would-be adepts in divination mainly used an Oquelle in which pieces of gourd were substituted for the palm-seeds. In fortune-telling by the Oquelle, it is taken by the middle, so that four of the nuts hang down on either side. When it falls, an Odu or figure is formed by the number of convex or concave positions assumed.

Now, to a quite considerable extent, the actual interpretation varies with its purpose. Every Baba-lawo, *i.e.*, every one at all

initiated in the mysteries of the Ifa cult, consults the Oquelle oracle each morning, and the answer given by the Odu relates to the private lives and events of each day. The Chief Priest is, however, always called in at all the weighty undertakings of the community or district. Every ruler, be it the Alafin, Oni, or simple Eminency, the Balé, has his own hierophant, who is frequently called "Araba," which, although this, curiously enough, is often maintained, has nothing to do with Arabians. The Yoruban calls every exceptional thing "Araba." The highest of a clump of cotton-trees is said to be Araba, which is, then, not a name peculiar to the High Priest. The hierarchy, on the contrary, consists of the following officers:

Firstly: The head Baba-lawo, or Oluwo. Oluwo is the communal Pontiff, but every disciple so addresses his Master.

Secondly: The Deputy of the communal Oluwo is the Odofin, who takes the place of the Oluwo in his unavoidable absence.

Thirdly: The representative of the Odofin and the Oluwo, when neither of them can be present at any priestly function, is called the Aro.

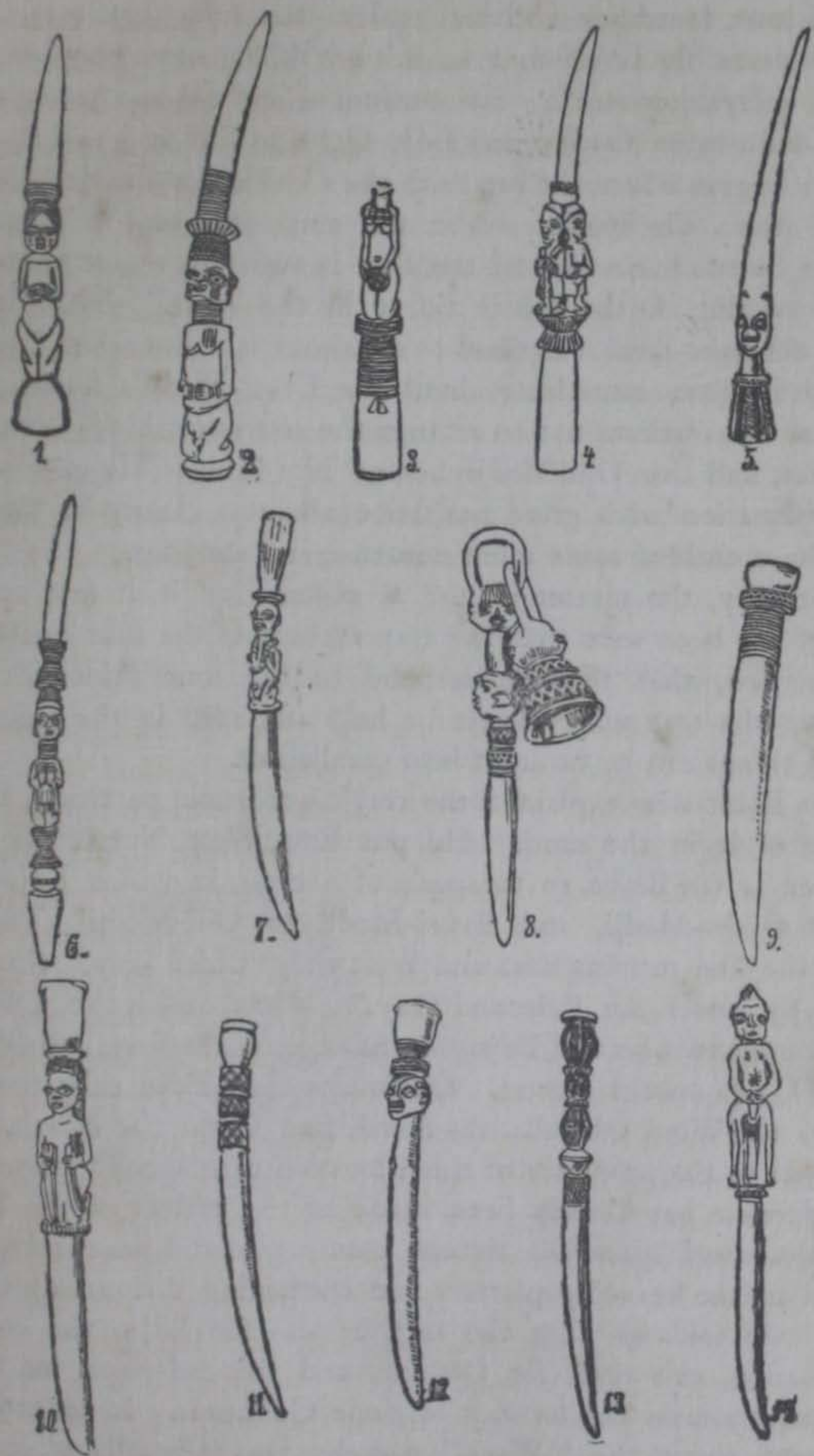
Furthermore, all Oluwos, Odofins and Aros have their adjutants, named Adjigbonas. So-called Asare-Pawo, who again have their own Asawo, officiate as messengers, servants and pages. The priests themselves are once more subdivided into Oluwo-Otun-Awo and Oluwo-Osi-Awo, attached to whom is the Olopun-Ekeji. Now, as Otun and Osi respectively mean "right and left hand," we here again find the same organization as exists in the Balé staff of the Egbe and Yegbe societies (*v. cap.* IX.—X.).

These priests, then, read the oracle. The ritual of casting the nuts is as follows: The sixteen nuts, called Iki or Ake, have a seventeenth, carved in ivory, added to them, the Oduso. Its name, too, is Iki, though not round or cup-shaped in form, but it is a head, and, in fact, Edju's, and so recognizable by its long pigtail. This is placed at the side of the Ifa tray, and, so to speak, stands sentinel over the Baba-lawo's actions and the fall of the sixteen Ikis. He strews white flour on it, takes all the seeds and throws them up towards his left hand, in which he catches some of them. If the number caught is odd, two vertical lines are drawn thus: ||. If even, a single line is drawn with the right hand finger thus: |.

Four throws are made and the marks placed beneath each other. The resulting figure of four such signs is called "Medji," or a "pair." This proceeding is repeated eight times, so that two Medjis are always marked next to, and also 4 × 2 above, each other. The numbers so noted are the Odus, laid before the oracle for the day. The picture so drawn upon the flour is read from right to left. I have illustrated the most important Medjis, as named to me in Central Yoruba, on page 255. Each Medji stands for one Odu, assumed to consist of sixteen Odus, each of which is again composed of sixteen and so on. Now, the essential and spiritually significant factors in the oracle are these Odus, which, if taken singly, are quite immaterial at this early stage. But it is very important, indeed, to establish their original meaning, in order to arrive at their primary source and general significance.

* * * * * * * *

The original sense which inspired this complicated oracular system can only be ascertained by comparing individual facts. The sixteen principal Odus, or chief items, are set down on page 255. Each of these has its proper name, its symbolic sign. Mention has also been made above that the Ifa trays are almost always divided into the four quarters of the heavens, and not infrequently so by four carved heads. The interpreter always turns to the East, and places the tray, upon which there may be more than one head, on the ground, with the Edju always pointing in that direction. There is at least one such face on every board. The praying priest casts his eyes upon this image, which is named Edju-Ogbe, so that it intervenes between him and the sun. It exactly corresponds with Odu No. 1. On trays with four heads, the one opposite the Edju-Ogbe, and thus the one corresponding to the officiating mind, has the name of Ojako-Medji; the Evori-Medji and the Odi-Medji are respectively to the Baba-lawo's right and left hands. There is, then, a clearly connected system here presented to us, with which the Baba-lawos in general seem to be thoroughly familiar. At all events, this was the explanation current in Ibadan, as well as in Ifé and among the Yorubans in Lokoja. But those who assisted me in my further attempts at elucidation failed me almost entirely. All



Utensils for Ifa worship. Ivory or wooden staves with attached bells or inserted rattles. Used for morning salutations to the God. For sizes, see index of illustrations.

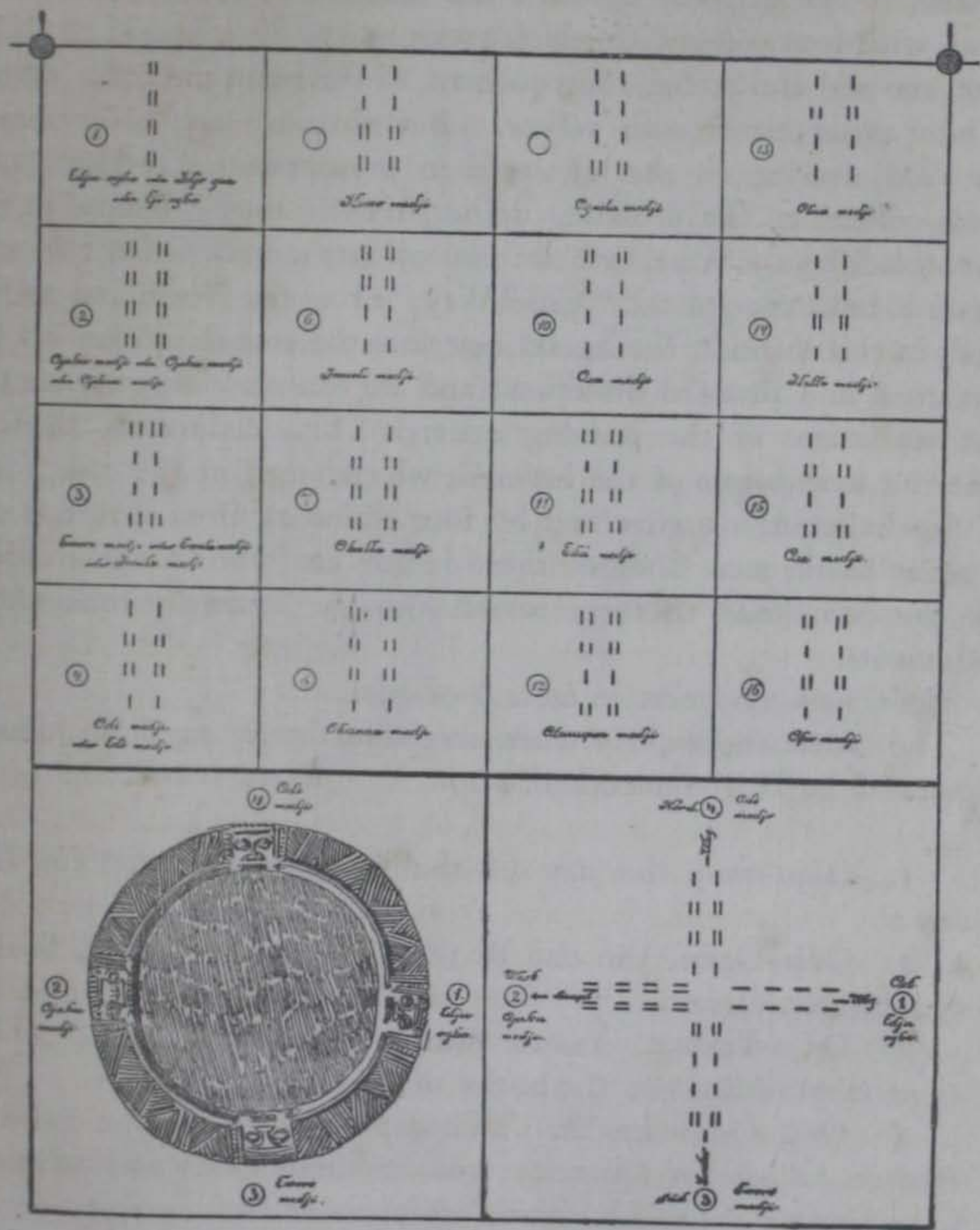
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

I could learn in addition with regard to the four faces was derived from a venerable Lokojan, viz., this: "When very, very long ago, indeed, everything was in great confusion, and old and young things dead, Olodu-mare (God) called Edju-Ogbe to him and said: 'Order thou the region where the sun doth rise!' He said to Ojako-Medji: 'Order thou the region where the sun doth set!' Thereupon Edju-Ogbe put the region of the East in order in the morning and, in the evening, Ojako-Medji did so in the West." That finished all the old Baba-lawo really had to say about it. For when I wanted him to tell me something about the Evori-Medji's functions, he said that one of them was to arrange the course of things from dawn to sunset, and that Odi-Medji helped him in it. He gave me the last explanation with great hesitation, and was clearly in the dark. Then he mumbled some more nonsense and shut up.

In reality, the matter is not as obscure as it at first appears. Once it has been seen that the tray represents the four quarters of the compass, that these correspond to the four principal Odus, and that the tray must always be held and read in the same way, various things can be brought into parallelism.

The Elder who explained the tray's quadruple partition, drew a picture of it in the sand. He put East, West, North and South together as the limbs, so to speak, of a cross, in which Edju-Ogbe led to Ojako-Medji, and Evori-Medji to Odi-Medji. Then he called the line running East and West the "Chief Way," that from South to North the "Second Way." When asked the difference between the two, he said Edju met Shango on the first, and Obatalla visited Ogun on the second. Obviously, then, Edju rules the East, Shango the West, Obatalla the South and Ogun the North. Any doubts as to the propriety of this allocation can be easily dispelled.

Reference has already been made to the caskets of the Iféans, with a central space for sixteen palm-seeds, and four receptacles related to the heavenly quarters and containing various substances. An Oluwo told me that the sulphur was for Edju, the charcoal for Shango, the chalk for Obatalla and the red-wood for Ogun. This corroborates the locality of these Godheads. It confirms the statement about the "Ways," namely, that Obatalla is opposite to Ogun (on the second), and Edju to Shango (on the Chief Way). And a third piece of evidence can be adduced which found its way



Ifa worship. The sixteen Odu signs above and below, an Ifa tray on the left, indicated with the four chief Odus; to the right, their disposition to the four points of the compass.

quite innocently into one of the previous Edju legends. It will be remembered that, when Edju wanted to breed mischief, he walked on the pathway between the fields of two friends and wore a cap with four colours, of which green was to his front, black to his rear, and red and white, consequently, to the right and left. Green is here synonymous with yellow. But then we also observe that the God, walking on the high road in the opposite direction, turns these colours to the presiding deities, that is to say, yellow to the East, black to the West, and the two colours sacred to Obatalla and Ogun to both ends of the "Chief Way," or to the North and South. And, in this manner, the legend describes the actual journey on the first road in a reversed direction; and we must not forget that this was the cause of the ensuing quarrel. The deduction, then, is that the four points of the heavens, which meet on the cross roads of the universe, are governed by four different Gods. And it still remains to be seen whether there is not yet more proof available for the correctness of these varied, though eminently concordant, statements.

Now, such evidence, in fact, does exist.

The Yoruban five-day week, ceremonially arranged as follows, presents a parallel connection:—

1. Odjo-awo, the day of the secret, and therefore, Ifa's day;

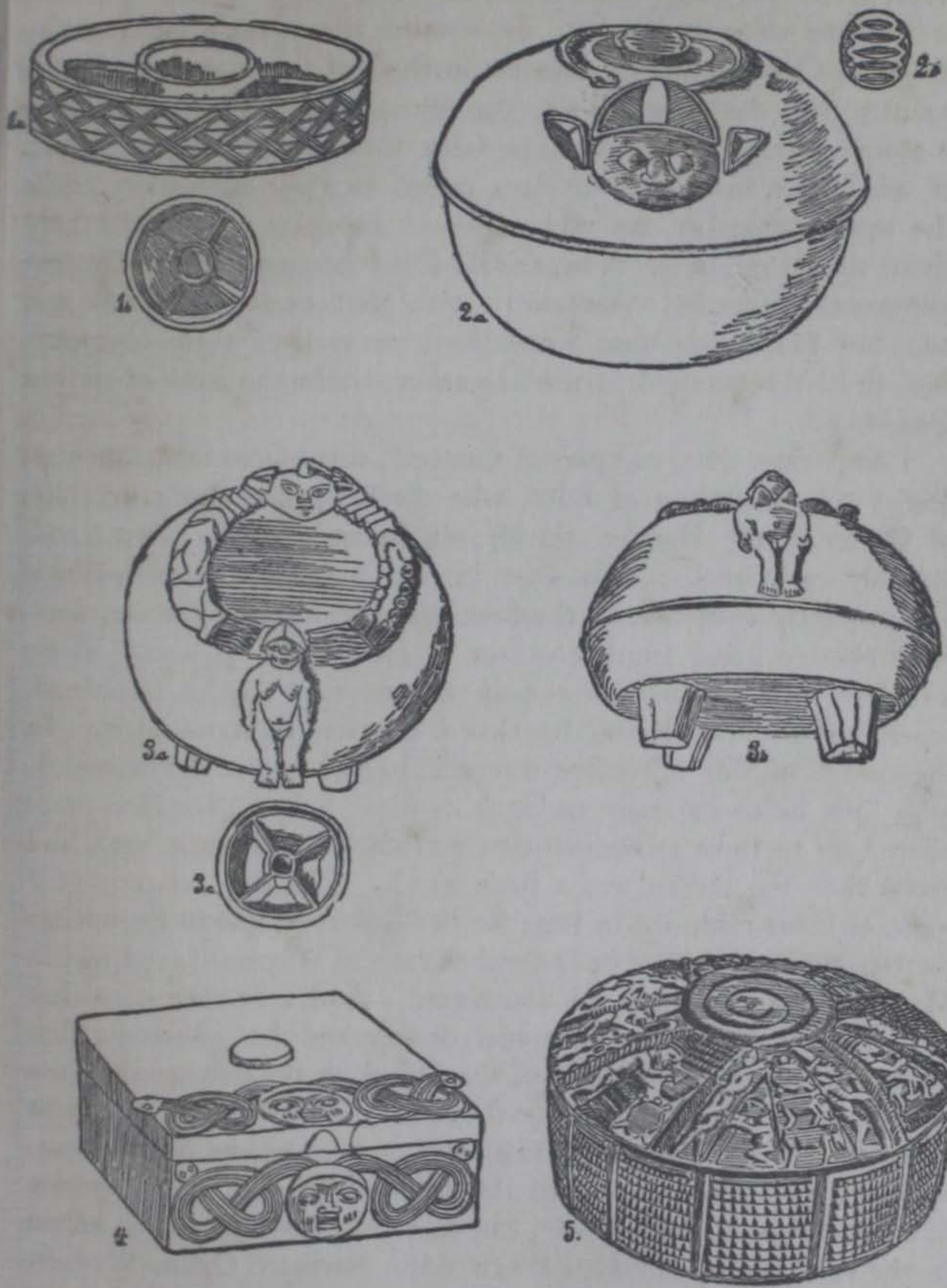
2. Odjo-Ogun, the day of the God of the Smiths, Swords and Battles, Ogun;

3. Odjo-Yakuta. Yakuta means "slinger of stones," and is an eponym of Shango, the hurler of thunderbolts;

4. Odjo-Oshe-Oshalla. This day is sacred to the Lord of Heaven, Oshalla or Obatalla; and to those Gods who wear the Che-che-feng, a chain of white beads, about their necks;

5. And, last, there is the Odjo-Oshe, the holy day, on which all the Gods are honoured by the cleansing of their temples, which are, so to say, put into their "Sunday" trim.

These days are respectively named as follows in Ifé, viz.: Odjafe (Ifa's); Adje-badju (Shango's); Iremo (Oshalla's); Nikogun (Okun's); and the fifth, Adje-Oshe, or the "holy" day. The whole



Utensils for Ifa worship. Caskets with partitions for sulphur, charcoal, chalk and redwood. For sizes, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

week, as such, is called Arun-Oshe, or " holy week," and its sequence is the same all over Yoruba. It obtains among different tribes on the West Coast in general, whereas in the vast South-western Kassai country and the Congo-basin, the four, seven and nine-day week is more generally observed. The week, then, has two distinct parts, of which the first has four days sacred to their namesakes, while the second contains one day which is set apart as specially holy about the middle of it. Now, an Old-Ojo veteran made an extremely important statement thereanent, viz., that in former times not one but four Gods were worshipped on each of these four days and, thus, this resulted in the adoration within the week of sixteen Gods in all.

Comparing, then, one part of the week, we observe this sequence: firstly, the veneration of Edju, who dwells in the East; secondly, of Ogun, in the North; thirdly, of Shango, in the West; and, fourthly, of Oshalla, who lives in the South. This disposition tallies exactly with that of the four principal Odus. We are, however, able to bring another object of comparison to bear. There was formerly a particularly holy mount near Ilesha, esteemed, indeed, to be of such sanctity that a city was built round it. In the centre of this hill there was said to have been a monument, with four heads severally facing a cardinal point. Sacrifices were offered up to these at equi-distant periods, four times a year, and every time the victim was a little child. The days so appointed were, as I was told, one in June for the Eastward, one in September for the Northward, one in December for the Westward, and one in March for the head turned Southward. And I further note that the officiating priestly ceremonial dancer and his adherents first makes his offering to the east of the hillock in the courtyard of the Edju temple, and the processional route is from East to North, to West, to South. Comparing this with the rest of our observations, we see that the four heads on the Ileshan hill were the recipients of sacrifice four times annually, and that the days of the week follow in the same order, namely, Eastern Edju, Northern Ogun, Western Shango and Southern Oshalla. A more complete coincidence is hardly conceivable. The processional of prayer, or sacred circumambulation, the symbolic apparatus of the service, the week-day sequence, the seasonal sacrificial order, and the turning round of

the body during devotion, are in mutual correspondence down to the very smallest details.

But more than that. The legendary account of Edju's acquisition of the Ifa seeds implied that this deity had to gain his experience of the mysteries and veracity of vaticination by casting the dice on his wanderings in sixteen different places in the course of the solar year. Here, then, we once more encounter the sixteen Gods, accurately linked with the organized four-times-four system, those sixteen divinities, which, in the original legend, Yemaya is said to have borne at one birth in Ifé, the sixteen divinities in precise correspondence with the identical number of Odus.

We have, then, a system combining the East with the West by a "Chief Way," the course run by the sun, and uniting the South with the North by one which is secondary—a system which describes the earth's orbit from the East through the North. Edju's cap, the four heads on the Ifa boards, the contents of the cups in the caskets; all these are in harmonious relation. Therefore we are not faced with a jumbled group of isolated particularities, but with a great plan, a philosophic construction, whose interdependence the natives no longer feel, but which can be rebuilt from its individual parts without too much difficulty. This system supplies us with the reason why the hierarchy of the Gods, as well as the constitution of the state and the life of the commune, is based on the right and the left, even as the same distinction holds good in the "Chief Way's" direction.

Before, however, bringing the Yoruban conception of the world to a close, a question of importance comes to the front, namely, whether this idea of dividing the world into four is peculiar to the Yorubans alone, or general to the rest of the Africans, and I must answer it by saying that, so far, I have found nothing like it outside the Niger district itself. I can, however, put my finger upon two views which afford some evidence of kindred philosophical systems. One is held by the Songai, whose notion of the universe was explained to me in Mopti as follows: There are eight powers in heaven which send rain upon the earth. The name of two, who live in the East, is Gala, two are called Sala and abide in the West, two answer to Arba and dwell in the North, and two more, named Nika, keep house in the South. Whichever pair is in the ascendant determines

the rains or the droughts. Their lord is, as a rule, considered to be Gala, and, more especially, Gala-Babila. The presidency of their jurisdiction has been given, but I have been unable to ascertain the seasons of the year in which this is exercised.

I found that the Mandes had a scheme similar, in fact, to the one I mentioned above when treating of the Tempest-God. Here the four rulers of the upper world are Saga-djigi, Tulluguri, Kunato and Fianto. Saga-djigi, the Storm Ram, lives in the West, which is also the creed of the Yorubans; the apportionment of the spheres of action of the other three is subject to statements which fluctuate. We consequently see that similar ideas, extending from Senegambia beyond the Middle Niger to the nations living near the river, are still alive, but the form of their fullest development has been preserved among the Yorubans on the Lower Niger. There will be occasion to speak of their distribution elsewhere, but I now wish to emphasize the need for tracing their possible offshoots in neighbouring districts in order to determine either their indigenous origin or importation from abroad.

For us, however, the greatest and most significant question is this: Can we find a conception of the universe approximate to this anywhere else in the ancient civilizations of the world?

* * * * * * * *

A savant, named Heinrich Rissen, published a book with this title, "The Templum," in 1869. In this, one of the most valuable contributions of last century to the history of civilization, its author expounded the method in which in ancient times the foundational plan of old Italian towns, military encampments, temples, and also domestic dwellings was conditioned by the lay of the land. A road was built running from east to west called Via Decumana. It started from a highway running north and south, called Via Cardua. Not only was the organization of settlements dependent on these four directions, but the site of places of worship was arranged in accordance with them. The Romans had four, but the Etruscans, from whom the Romans adopted the basic idea of the system, had sixteen of these directions. On these lines, then, every such groundplan expressed the Templum, *i.e.*, if we translate the meaning of this

word freely, the ancient philosophic idea of the universe. It was the physical expression of the belief that it was divided into four or, respectively, sixteen parts, of which each four were assumed to be subject to a divine control. Now, the antique Etruscans who are known to have been extremely credulous, arranged the whole of their lives from the points of view dictated to them by soothsayers. And they, moreover, had, *inter alia*, a species of oracle, in which the future and the will of the gods could be divined in the course taken by flashes of lightning. They cut up the entire horizon, or the world of sight, into sixteen parts, and from the section in which flashes were seen to go and, from the way they followed each other, the future and the will of the Gods were foretold. It was the Tyrrhenians who, in the course of their migrations, brought the fundamental idea of this image of the universe out of Asia Minor into Etruria. Von Hommel and Milani's researches have proved that these imaginations of the All were at the root of the religious cult and forms of worship of erstwhile Babylonia, Tiryns (or Troy) and Etruria.

If, now, we compare the true inwardness of the Etruscan religion, which is perhaps best preserved in the antiquities of Etrurian posterity, with that of Yoruban belief, we shall at once see that the Via Decumana corresponds with the " Chief Way " of the Yorubans, and that the Via Cardua corresponds with the " Second Way " of our Atlantic nations. And we shall furthermore see that the sixteen interpretations of the lightning-oracle are essentially the same as the sixteen Odus. Sixteen gods dwell in sixteen celestial habitations in Etruria as well as Yoruba.

This coincidence can be followed in its subtlest ramifications. All the believers in the ancient image of the universe, in the idea of the Templum, had, like the Yorubans, a week of five days, which was only afterwards, apparently owing to the prevalence of South Semitic elements, extended to an hebdomadal week. I should like, yet briefly, to point out that in those very remote old days there must have been nations endowed with memories of this Templum ideal, such, for example, as the Indo-Germanic peoples of the North, whose relations to centres of Asiatic culture it is difficult to prove otherwise. They, too, originally had a five-day week, and special Gods presided over the destinies of the days specially sacred to

them. Three such deities at least can be shown to be most strikingly identical with some of the Yoruban gods. Shango corresponds to the once most mighty Donar. Obatalla corresponds to Wotan, the Lord of Heaven, whose "countenance was turned towards the south." And our Ogun is the exact counterpart of the Battle-God. These divinities of the sword in the North are honoured among many Germanic tribes with symbols exactly similar to those of the Yorubans, as well as amongst the Scythians, and in the South in the form of Mars, the mighty sire of great Romulus. Attention must, however, be called to one slight difference, important perhaps on account of the digression involved. When the ancient Romans prayed, they turned, in following the course of the sun from East to West southwards; that is to say, they turned round to the right. Pliny makes this very pertinent observation: "When we (Romans) pray, we bring our right hands to our mouths and turn our whole bodies round (to the right), while the Gauls turn to the left." Now what is very remarkable, indeed, is that the custom of turning in a given direction to pray, which prevails amongst the Yorubans, should not only be precisely the same as that adopted in the mental attitude of the Romans and the Gauls, but especially that they turn to the left, which is the custom peculiar to the Gauls.

Taking it all in all then, we observe a persistent identity in the image of the world, in ritual and fundamental philosophy. We see that the religion of our Atlantic region must, beyond all doubt, be conceived as participation in a system of worship brought to the high state of perfection pertaining to a vast area of civilization, not only in its peculiarities, but in the complete and uniform originality of its essentials. This remarkable Yoruban religion is not unique. It is definitely linked to the perfected system of a primeval age. It is not incumbent upon me to compare the individual portions of an earlier civilization which permeated and dominated the world by its stimulating force and its results, or to bring the various stages of its development into connection. Recognition of the fact as such is the one essential, and we are able to point out problems and interrogations whose solution and responses will be equivalent to an enormous advancement of our knowledge of universal history.

This is the purport of the Yoruban conception of the world I was enabled to unravel.

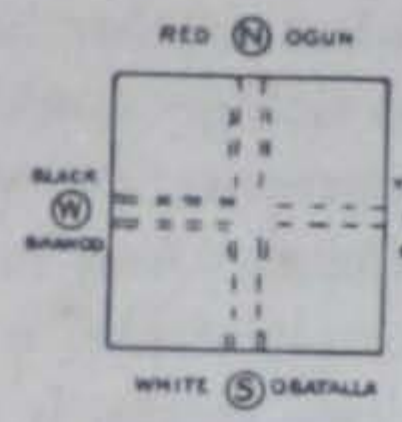
I would like to give at least one more proof of this old-world philosophy's extensive dissemination, and this ancient civilization's power of expansion.

At this chapter's close I append an illustration, where four different crosses are placed in juxtaposition. The first of these shows the picture of the world drawn by my Yoruban teacher in the sand. When he had finished, he said: "The image could be presented just as well with two sticks, and their preparation would quite exactly portray the way of arriving at the Odus. And in this way: Wherever an Odu is marked with only a single stroke, a ring of the bark must be removed. Where there are two marks, it must remain. So a picture is formed of four pieces of stick, the right hand one of which is white and bare of bark, the left, however, still quite dark, because no bark has been removed. The two ends of the upper limb of the cross are barked, and also the middle portion of the lower limb." The reader can see for himself that this picture does, in fact, correspond with the Odus presented by the Ifa tray's medium. I designed the third image from the method of divination with four dice practised by the Pueblo-Indians of Arizona, in America. It is precisely the same in the direction of the four cardinal points, according to the myths and the cult observed by these tribes. I can spare myself further description. I have gone to another part on the other side of the world, namely, Korea, for the fourth illustration. The Koreans symbolize the four quarters of the heavens in strokes, just like the Yorubans. Thus we see that there the omission of the centre line represents absolute light in the East; absolute darkness in the West is shown by the line along all the length of the limb; the light in the South by the break in the centre of the line in the inferior, and the light in the North by the break in the centre line of the ends of the superior, limb.

To throw down the glove of such challenges as these in the forum of science requires some courage. But I would like to save my soul by expressly declaring that I do not reckon to make my splendid Yorubans either the ancestors of American Indians, or the descendants of the ancient Koreans. A remnant of high-toned philosophy, which once girdled the world at its earliest dawn has

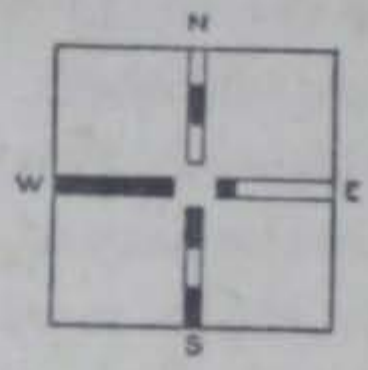
kept itself alive on the fringes of economic existence. Here and there an expert may, haply, succeed in finding its historic and prehistoric connection in the fragments which have survived.

This picture of the universe which the Yorubans designed looms as a striking monument of its actual realization across the chasm which yawns between the remotest antiquity and the age we live in to-day.

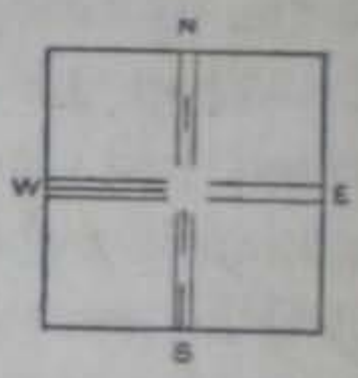


Arrangement of four chief Odus in Yoruba.

Yoruban picture of world by barked sticks.



Pueblo Indian "Order of the World" by dice-augury in Arizona.



The signs of the four cardinal points of the world among the Koreans.

Method of doing obeisance to their Lord, the Oni, used by the ceremony-loving nobles of Ifé.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOLY CITY

The City's name and situation—Its antique character and the nature of its inhabitants—The Oni's palace, court-ceremonial, and the prelatic power—Eminent dignitaries and their residential quarters—The myth of the creation—Correspondence of the civic constitution with the clan- and deity-system in Ifé and with the Yoruban idea of the universe.

THE question as to what this marvellous coincidence of civilized cults may mean is increasingly persistent. A perfect turmoil of thoughts overwhelms all the perspectives thus opened to our gaze. We must proceed coldly and warily not to lose sight of the safe road leading to knowledge at the last moment, lest we stray into the blind alleys which so easily seduce the excited footsteps of the joyous explorer. And we will once more be deaf to the questions which throng in upon us. Once more we must return to simple description. We will once again realize the actual state of affairs from another angle of vision, before approaching our final conclusions. We shall put aside all the problems which have arisen and pass to an account of the Holy City, which to-day is considered by every Yoruban as the spiritual centre of the image of the West African universe.

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The real name of the city where we succeeded in tracing the first signs of a higher civilization and superior form of its expression in art in the relics of prehistoric antiquity is, correctly written,

Illifé—that is in the popular derivation: Ille (the house) of Ifa, or, also, the house of palm-nuts. The vulgar just call it Ifé, which may be its abbreviation, erroneously transformed on the map used by the English General Staff into Ite. But I also heard it called by other names. In Ibadan it was chiefly named Illai, as the sacred city (holy = oshe), then Illoni, and, at last, Illokun. The first of these can be unhesitatingly rejected. The Illai, or, more correctly, Illari, are the officers and pages of the Pontiff-King, who are dispatched throughout the land as messengers of the high behests. Hence the derivation which is unsound and as good as obsolete. Only very old people know that it arose at the period of a cult of John,* which is long since decayed, and which prevailed for a time when one was shy of pronouncing the name of the town. Illoni, or Ille-oni, *i.e.*, the dwelling of the Oni, or Yoruban pope, is more justifiable, but more of a paraphrase than a real designation. But the holy name Illokun is just as entitled to honour as Ilifé. Illokun, or more properly, Ille-Olokun—that is, "The City of the Sea-God," is a name of probably equal antiquity with Ilifé or Ifé. I only heard it three times: once in Atakpamé (in German Togoland), once in Wagadugu (in Mossiland in the centre of the Niger-bend), and once in Lagos. It is never heard within the actual boundaries of the town, nor in the vast territory subject to the holy Oni's jurisdiction. Ifa, at all events, nominally, conquered Olokun, the Divine. I got the impression that the names, Ilifé and Olokun, might be coeval. Thus, even the mere name of the city affords rich material for thought. Its variety in appellation mirrors its historical metamorphoses and the complexity of its philosophy of life, however simple its foundation. And the intermingling of its many names is evidence of a strangely mysterious depth of its historical and spiritual existence.

Be that as it may, its multiple names and the changes thereby involved show something else, namely, an essential difference inherent in the transformation of names in West Africa and their persistence on the Northern edge of this continent. Names in Morocco, Algeria and Tunis, Cyrenaica and Egypt were, even in Arabian days, easily connected as survivals of classic antiquity, names, which were current long before the time when the Christian Era began,

* *cf.* Prester John *infra.*

are alive to this day. In them we can use the grapnel of history. Not so in West Africa. The names given to the Northern cities by the Greeks and the Romans, or which they found there, are easy to recognize now, and the Alexandria of the mighty Grecian founder of towns bears the same name at present, and at the hands of the Arabs undergoes but the slight transformation to Iskandria. It is easy to see why the development of modern civilization was the direct continuation of that which preceded it. The chain was always unbroken. Rulers and conquering nations succeeded each other, it is true, and the leading ideas and forms of civilization were constantly varied, yet the relation as such remained uninterrupted and the basis of culture in those particular territories was the same in the past as it still is to-day.

Thus North African places and names of the people in general are hereditary, tangible in history and testamentary. And this capacity for witnessing is characteristic of North African nomenclature. For the sake of more emphatic contrast with West Africa I will give an example. The Nubians and Egyptians called all who came eastwards from Timbuktu or the Niger-bend or from the Houssa lands, and therefore all the pilgrims on this road to Mecca, by the name of Tekrori (or "alike") as recently as the middle of last century. They are called Fellata to-day. In the early Middle Ages there was an ancient Empire of Tekrur in the Niger-bend, south-west of Timbuktu. The Empire went under long, very long ago. The name, however, remained, because the connection of ideas did so. It was only when the enormous power of upheaval exercised by the Fullani or Fellata revolutionized the face of Western or Central Soudan, that the new name of Fellata was acclimatized, and to-day, when the Fellani are powerless to play a part in the formation of a political state, it is become a general term. These are proofs of an uninterrupted association of ideas.

What has happened in Western Africa is the converse of this. Even in early Arabian historical records the names are greatly divergent. Towns were prevented from acquiring the documentary power and the confirmation of traditional names by the swiftness with which revolutionary upheavals were effected. They totter. This is a proof that these countries were for a long time cut off from

intercourse with the Mediterranean and relations with the civilization of the East.

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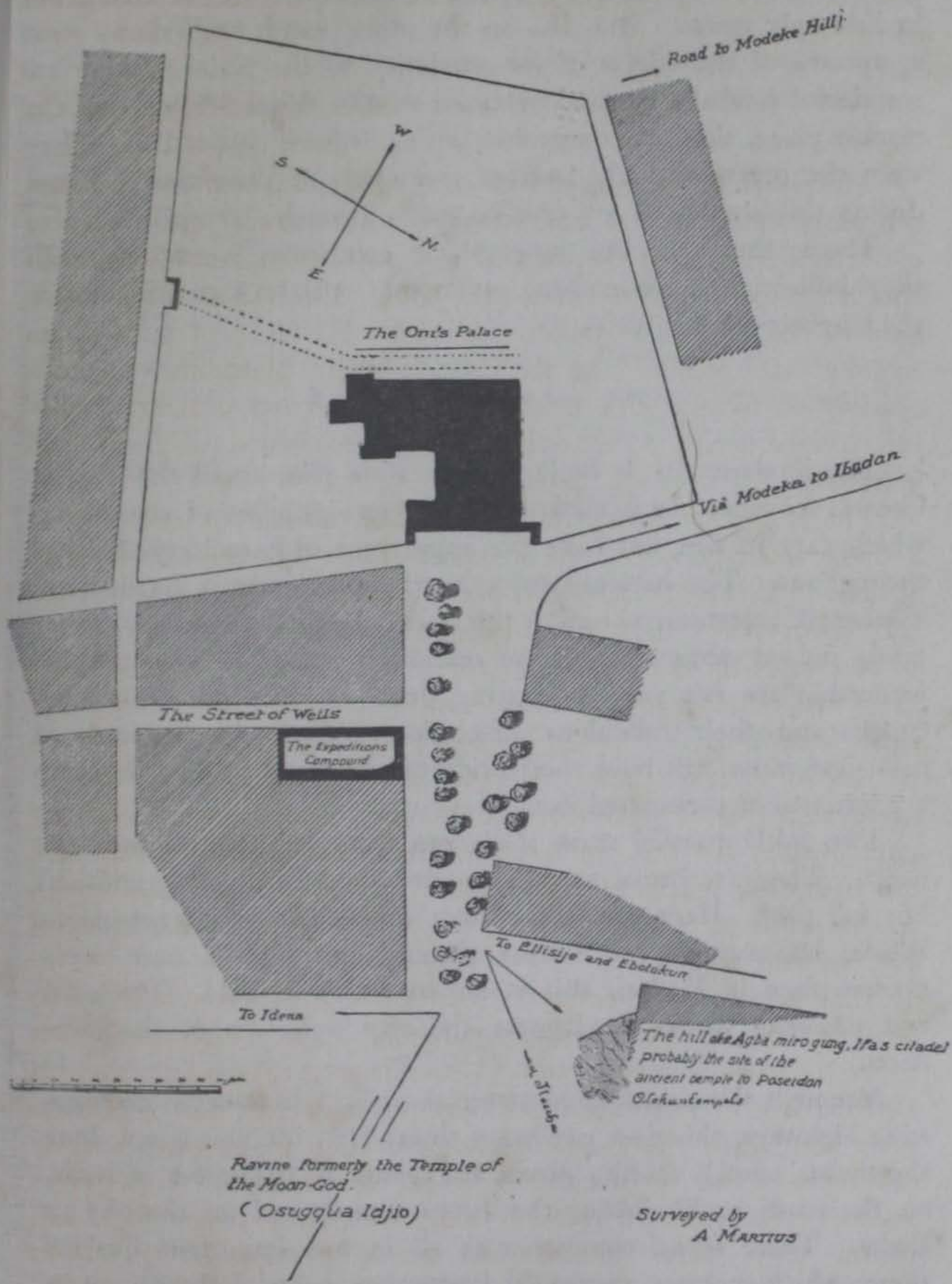
The geographical site of Ilifé is so remarkable and peculiar that this alone enables us to understand the curious fact that the plan of a city dating from the classical and pre-Christian era can remain absolutely unchanged down to this hour. Ilifé lies at the fountain head of the Oni river and to the west of a chain of hills whose summits are granite. At the foot of these highlands spreads a country of swamp with innumerable springs and purling streams, interspersed with a constantly varied succession of bogs and morasses.

The Holy City is built in the midst of this watery landscape on a slight acclivity with only one peak (Elle-sijé). On coming from Ibadan to Ilifé we had to pass over a dam, or causeway, which was laid down over miles of waterlogged marshland. A swamp has to be crossed on the road leading west to Modeké. Towards Ilesha there is bogland; going south-eastwards to the Idena shrine, one again walks on water-soaked country; there are still more swamps to the southward. Thus the city is unshiftable, surrounded by swampland. It is, therefore, not only firmly entrenched, but impregnable, for the ordinary African methods of warfare. And the river Oni, which empties itself in the sea through the lagoons to the south gets its name from the safe situation of the abode of His Holiness the Oni.

Ilifé is also, by reason of its surroundings, distinguished by its fertility. Mighty forests and magnificent banana groves bear witness to its fruitfulness. Its fields are vast in extent, especially towards Ilesha. It is of considerable socio-historical interest that the Ilifians even now, when the means of communication are so great, scarcely eat anything but maize and bananas, that yams are both scarce and dear, and that, as a general thing, millet is no longer to be had in the town. The Ilifians are a decidedly maize-eating people. Ilifé, then, lies on the northern boundary of the West African Coastlands. When we were going northwards to Edé, between Ilifé and Oshun, we came to the typical grass country, in which no forest



PLAN OF ILIFÉ.

giant stands. In Ilifé, the covering of the roof is still of leaves, but in Edé only straw. But Ifé, on the other hand, itself shows some symptoms of the effects of its proximity to the plains; there are wonderful baobabs in the courtyard of the Royal Palace and the market place, signs of connection with northern cultivation. They were the most southerly isolated specimens of their kind I found during this portion of my travels, and, obviously, transplanted.

These, then, are the geographical conditions which, although they do not of course explain, yet enable us at least to understand, the longevity of this town.

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The modern city is built on the same plan as all the rest in Central Yoruba. It is made up of a great number of compounds which vary in size, but have the appearance of hereditary affluence throughout. The hateful symptoms of modern, negro, Lagos-born, mushroom greatness, as well as the traces of real decadence, are very rarely indeed observable. The spacious compounds of patriarchal ownership are not yet swept away there to make room for newcomers and their ridiculous affectations. The majestic roofs of palm-leaf straw still hold their pride of place and in all Ilifé there are but two of corrugated iron.

Two fairly parallel main roads run from Modeké to the city's heart. They are broad enough to give the stream of agricultural life full play. Here and there they widen out to market-places. While, however, several Orisha shrines are situate near every market-place in Ibadan, this is not the case in Ilifé. The great and powerful deities dwell near the city walls within the outskirts.

Although the principal commercial traffic is transacted on these wide highways, this does not mean to say that business is not done elsewhere. Small trading places are found in the street of wells, on the roads to Ebolokun, the Idena temple and on the way to Ilesha. There is no commerce at all in one important quarter alone, which makes a very good impression, namely, the square in front of the Oni's palace. No one may squat before the palace of the Prelate; only the cattle of His Holiness are allowed to graze

ccasionally, and a few old wives may take a rest only where the path to Ebolokun branches off.

The town seems by no means regularly built. One comes upon a ruined portion here and there, but much more rarely than in Ibadan, which is so subject to the crises of modern industrialism. But the compensation for this is the pleasure given by the change of view its geographical position affords; here and there a lakelet, a bit of marshy ground, a banana grove, or a clump of well-grown trees. This tropical splendour is most luxuriant on the two roads leading to Ebolokun and the shrine of the Idena. On these one may wander through long stretches between high walls of foliage, beneath soaring palm-trees and the ruins of well-preserved primeval woods. Now and again the "sacred" palm rears its proud stem on high, and then a portal made of its crown of fronds will lead one to those holy by-paths and places which will be described below.

There can then be no doubt but that the entire plan and style of architecture gives to the city of Ilifé a pleasantly dignified character. If I am to summarize all the life and activities, the general impression made by the city of palms and divinities, I cannot, indeed, speak of anything great and sublime, because that lies buried too deep beneath the soil and the detritus of centuries, but I can say that it has a dreamy respectability and, in this respect, vividly recalls that seclusion from the busy world which is the atmosphere pervading a residential town of Central Germany far from the high roads of daily toil and struggle.

Such is a sketch of the city whose effect is heightened by the noble ruins of the palace of His Holiness and the consciousness of its traditional past. So also its inhabitants, who are as antique in their nature as any one who knows his Yorubaland could wish. Garb and gesture here go hand in hand. Here the shopman by the grace of Lagos does not set one's teeth on edge. Here the honour due to ancient worth and power still holds the field! These folk are not yet so driven as only to have time enough to get a glass of gin. Here "business" is not the only thing to talk about. Here rather broods a silence, which, if not exactly eloquent, may be said at least to be harmonious. The two engrossing occupations of the Ilifian upper class are to greet each other and pass on without a word.

This taciturnity calls for no description. It can be practised as a last resource at every beer table in every European provincial and metropolitan centre with equal dignity as in Ilifé. But the salutations are another pair of shoes. Their many variations would seem a striking oddity in Europe. Some of the other Yoruban tribes may be taken as patterns of politeness in their greeting, which may, as we think, be considered overdone. The Ilifians have created such an exquisite gradation, such a sublimely subtle light and shade in ceremonial manner, as would make the heart of an expert, whether ducal teacher of deportment or royal conductor of the ballet, dance with joy. I am, to my regret, extremely badly versed in this department and can only talk of its effect, but not of its more delicate refinements. When Ilifian men or women salute each other, be it with a plain and easy curtsey (which is here the simplest form adopted), or kneeling down, or throwing oneself upon the ground, or kissing the dust with one's forehead, no matter which, there is yet a deliberateness, a majesty, a dignity, a devoted earnestness in the manner of its doing, which brings to light with every gesture, with every fold of clothing, the deep significance and essential import of every single action. Everyone may, without too greatly straining his attention, notice the very striking precision and weight with which the upper and lower native classes observe these niceties of intercourse.

These people show such an astounding propriety in their manner of managing a dress, a shawl and a coat, such an art in the display of their movements, that the spectator rightly draws the conclusion that time is but of little account in their eyes. And once so convinced, the natural question arises, what does the life look like which goes on behind this beautiful and unanimous masquerading? This is mostly a difficult question, but in this case it is easily answered. I have previously mentioned the high degree of those qualities of intellect and its uses which bear witness to the ancient civilization once possessed by Yorubans. The Ifians are altogether Yoruban, and, generally speaking, no different from the others as such. But the Ilifians are as much specifically other than the Ibadanese and the Lagosians as the good citizens of a small town off the highways of life are other than the dwellers in the same country's metropolitan centres. To put it exactly, the Ifians, in general, can be placed by

Reverential salutation of the Oni at Ifé.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 272.

the side of other Yorubans who live intramurally as of similar racial and national type, but must, with respect to its education and growth, be said to be certainly less advanced, less interesting, more reactionary and backward. They are, however, on the other hand, unquestionably more homogeneous, more characteristic, and, in so far, more completely developed as to nature and type.

There is an element of typical rigidity in the Ilifian, and his intellectual poverty struck me repeatedly as being his most distinguishing quality. This, naturally, appears uncommonly strange to the historian of culture, and may at first seem surprising and unintelligible, on remembering that Ilifé is the religious centre, or, as its people themselves call it, the "navel" of Yoruban socio-religious existence, the city of the Priest-King, the actual Rome of all the Yoruban realm. This may sound contradictory: for the priesthood of a nation may, indeed, be reactionary, but it is very seldom deficient in thought. But this was precisely my essential discovery. The kernel of the conundrum offered by this singular African city is this, namely, that these people are managing an hereditary estate, whose creation is spiritually quite out of touch with their present conception of life. The people of Ifé lie, like a slumbering dragon, over the gold of a prehistoric treasure-house. Poverty-stricken in mind, because of their ignorance, they guard the old city which lends them respect, lofty position and religious supremacy, simply because they reside in it, because the blood of its original founders and builders has been dissipated and evaporated by diffusion, but, most indubitably, not because its salvage has come down to the present in the external form of its original antique creation in an era of productive intellectual activity. The dullness of perception brought to bear by this folk in their "explanation" of all the relics of ancient days which surround them is perfectly amazing. The Ilifians have notoriously become the poorest and feeblest people in matters of religion, because stones and terra-cotta figures stiffened their unintelligent need of explanation and robbed them of that nimbleness of mind which was increased, varied, and perhaps developed by observing and meditating upon original wooden images, perishable and frequently renewable, of their own manufacture.

Stiffened and impoverished, then, because thought-content and form were at cross purposes. The mould of antiquity stood firm, but the inoculated blood was insufficient to keep the form poured in alive. The native parasites of "negro" vegetation overran the plants of foreign birth too freely. We shall find this mirrored in the short historical notes I was able to obtain. Of all the Africans I got to know, the isolated hill tribes not excluded, the Ilifians at all events present the typical example of that mental inbreeding resulting from the absence of the struggle for existence and continuous development of their intellectual possessions. They were always equally honoured and respected and esteemed as the owners of the oldest monuments. All Yorubans were unanimous in their opinion that Ifé must be inviolate as a Holy City. So no new blood flowed into it. So nothing ever roused them into vigorous action. And thus they became etiolated mentally, as do all other earthly and religious existences laboriously shielded from all exertion, which, therefore, because so guarded, grow soft and atrophied and die.

We tried to peer into the souls of these people. And now we may ask whether what we observed of their inner nature and their works finds its equivalent expression in their outward appearance and their state of culture. For my own part, I give the rest of the Yorubans the preference. These are wont to say of the Ilifians: "They are as yellow as the Kukurukus; they are not as black as the other Yorubans." I cannot decide this point, firstly, because these others, and their nobility in particular, have an uncommonly strong dose of this yellow element, so that the term "black" is inapplicable; and, secondly, because the Ilifians also have among them a quite considerable number of dark people. And, as usually happens, the aboriginal opinion is over-generalized and exaggerated. But the observation is correct in one particular, viz.: the amount of yellow among them is astonishingly large. The skin-colour of the Malayans, not of the Chinese, must be understood by "yellow." I could only detect this latter extremely pale colour in five out of a hundred in the Oni's courtiers, and, in exactly the same ratio, in only one of twenty individuals in assemblies of the notables.

There is no difficulty in recognizing noble families among the

Ilifians: they are either entirely (which is very striking in West Africa) without any ornamental scars at all, or have but a single line running towards the cheek-bones under the eyes. Only the members of families thus signalized in Ilifé are allowed to visit the ancient holy places. One meets with very many yellow, strikingly yellow, people among those who are quite free from these scars. Arriens made a sketch of an old lady uncommonly characteristic both in form and colour, and one might well have easily taken her even for a native of Sumatra or Borneo, but never of Africa.

And, moreover, the Yorubans say: "The Ilifians do not speak our tongue." That, too, is an exaggeration and even untrue. Linguistically, the Ilifians are as thoroughbred Yorubans as any other kindred tribe. They understand each other as thoroughly as is possible with a varying dialect. Yet one does hear some quite foreign expressions. I append at least just one or two in apposition:

	In Ibadan.	In Ilifé.
My Friend:	Oremi.	Onukuni.
What is that?:	Etiche?	Kini?
Give me:	Befumi.	Mukomi.

I intentionally select these few words, because they remind me of something else. The phrases here given in Ilifian dialect will be found in the same pronunciation and meaning in the vernacular of the Yorubans in German Atakpaméland, and, in fact, on the lips of people from Dume, Kamina and Chetikwo, etc. These two dialects seem in reality to resemble each other in every particular, and, as regards this correspondence, to be a contrast to the principal group of Yoruban variations of language. Similarity between Ilifians and Atakpamians is, however, noticeable in other things, and, therefore, we soon recognize the singular shape of the straw mitres of the old patriarchs. The same form is repeated in Ilifé and Atakpamé. Then, again, the ruling families in both places are those with a slash from eyelid to cheek-bone, and lastly now, to finish up, the German Yorubans profess their descent from Ilifé, or Ifé. And in proof of it they exhibit the peculiar, beautiful, long-shaped glass beads said to be found only in the temple of

Olokun, in Ebolokun, in English Yorubaland, but which can be dug up in a certain district of German Togoland as well.

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The Palace of the Oni, whose massive walls meet the eye from whatever quarter one approaches it, is that which most impresses everyone who visits the Ilifé of to-day. Its front, especially, with the fine open square on which it stands, makes an imposing effect in spite of all its ruin. The masonry of the façade is still in fair condition, although it is denuded and devoid of interest. The walls are mighty, over a yard broad at the base and some eighteen feet high. The widely overhanging roof beams and the veranda covering are only kept up now by clumsy supporting beams, wretched rafter-work and bamboo trellises. Only a few more rainy seasons and the scaffolding will go; only another decade or two, and the upreared walls will have crumbled into the mounds upon the other side. One climbs in over the ruins of more ancient brickwork, and the rubbish heaps of bygone centuries, up the steps leading to the gate. The mighty entrance is barred by a handsomely sculptured door, but—significant, indeed!—it hangs upside-down on its hinges! The carven figures have for twenty years, or more, perhaps, been standing on their heads. Who sees it? Who cares? Apathy administers the legacy of wealth in old Ilifé!

A narrow porch leads into a large open space, where the kingly prelate held his court in ancient days, and in the last of many brilliant periods now no more. Colonnaded verandas and passages surround this square, and the entrance to it is exactly opposite the throne of the Church's prince. The might and power of the Oni are to-day so small that he no longer needs this vast expanse for his pomp and festivals. A tiny space is all-sufficient now!

We cross the great, old ceremonial piazza, pass through a doorway, along some passages and enter the first of three small courts towards the left. The ruler now occupies his cathedra in the last of these, whose small dimensions exactly suit the state he at present holds. From there the way leads to the old gentleman's private quarters, which do not occupy much room at present, and, sad to say, there is even a modern building in the West Coast style among

them. The latter, however, does not, like the others, stand upon the ancient foundations made of cemented brick-tiles, as the rest were found to be.

And now this, alas, is all! The style corresponds to the Yoruban, which consists of Tembé* structure with, however, saddle-back roofs and external verandas, here also developed into several water-storage arrangements. Most of the even older walls of the buildings of the Oni's palace are evidently recently stuck on to its quite ancient, solid and firmly constructed foundations. It is improbable that its general plan has suffered any great change in modern times. A wall which fell to pieces was always replaced by one of clay. The whole of the palace has shrunken to its original foundation, and has, besides, greatly decayed. It is obvious that the gigantic compound was once covered with buildings. The holes in which the crossbeams rested are still visible on the inside of its great enclosing walls. Lines of stables and servants' rooms ran along one side, the quarters of the women along the other and armouries, of which only sparse fragments now appear above the tall weeds and bushes and against which the feet of the royal princes must sometimes stumble when using the inner courtyard of the palace to-day for the purpose to which it is put, namely, that of a natural "lavatory."

Poor Oni! Poor palace! How are the mighty fallen! Once a glorious edifice here reared itself aloft, built of bricks well burnt, brilliant with coloured tiles and sundry other ornament! Here, on this very spot, the horses stamped their hoofs; here the smoke of burning sacrifices rose into the air and here the breath of life exhaled from many a human victim offered up, while this strange country's high priests chanted prayer.

Other times, other pictures! Let us see what the Oni is to-day; let us go to one of his audiences.

Crossing the spacious, erstwhile court of reception, we pass through the three small impluvial courtyards to the left, and are asked to seat ourselves under the veranda projecting like a baldachino in the third. In front of us there is a recess, with a sculptured door in the centre, to which two high steps, running right along

* Box-like square buildings with flat roof.—Note by Translator.

the entire wall, form an approach. When we have taken our places, an Illari enters, shown to be such by his bare upper body, covered at most by a wrapper, but never with a tobé, and by his head shaved close on one side, and the half-inch-high hair on the other cut *à la brosse*. He tells us that the Oni will appear directly.

The entry of two other pages indicates that this is imminent. These Illari, or pages, are, however, not young boys, but men from twenty to thirty, even as among the Mossi, the Dagomba and the Kotokolli. One of them sweeps the middle of the steps clean, while the other spreads a mat upon the ground before them. A third Illari brings in a thick leather squab, which is laid in front of the steps, and upon this the Oni will take his place.

Then a few elderly gentlemen come in. Each of them holds a circular leather fan, mostly embroidered with appliqué work and which can be folded diagonally acfoss the handle in the shape of a half moon. These fans are spread as a covering on the lower step on the left side of the Oni cushion, and then the old man sits down. These Elders to the left of the Primate are not as much grandees as those who follow them, but only the seniors of high-placed families. Now, after these, the train of real prelates, the Egarefé, come in from mysterious apartments in the background. They all wear a singular mitre-shaped cap of finely plaited grass-straw. They are very well advanced in years, enter together very solemnly, and let themselves down before the steps on the Oni's right hand, after having deposited their fans. There is a considerable pause, and then, at last, the Oni shows himself. He is always clad in a rich gaily patterned tobé made of European silks, and wears a mitre of similar material richly embroidered with gold in public. In private life, he is just wrapped in a toga, like a common Ilifian.

The present Oni is young, between twenty and thirty years old, somewhat stout and heavy of build, of cheery appearance, still somewhat shy and easily embarrassed, since he has only been on the throne since 1910. He has no more to say of his own initiative or about himself than the potentates of Mossi, and, therefore, if he has but little assurance, and is rather reticent and retiring, this is not to be wondered at. This Prince of the Church is accompanied by his Illari, who range themselves in two rows upon the steps behind him in the recess after he has allowed himself to sink upon the leathern

hassock, in order to fan him or to wave their wide tobés up and down to give him air and cool him.

His attitude is somewhat stiff. Those present, or fresh comers, salute him by kneeling and by thrice touching the earth with their foreheads and their right and left temples successively. The Head of the Church thanks them with inaudible murmurings and hardly perceptible nods. He sits as indifferently as he possibly can in the fashion of the East, and this may very well suit an enlightened, experienced and energetic, not to say, a comparatively independent ruler under African conditions. But the Oni of to-day is none of these things, and certainly not independent. And, therefore, his air of lassitude and his cautious ogling of the Elders are by no means impressive. This last is very observable at every turn of the conversation. The Oni's position calls for too much circumspection to allow him to give a direct consent or refusal. He looks into the eyes of the aged spokesman when anything is proposed, listens to his whispered wishes, now and again emphasizes the kindness and goodness of the patriarchal prelacy present, and, as he told me himself, has a holy terror of his management displeasing the powerful senilities of the Mummule (*v. supra*), and of their accelerating his end by violent means. He is just as much a puppet in the hands of these innocent elderly spectators as many another Soudanese chief, to whom his surrounding veteran statesmen look up with a great show of devotion and humility when others are by, but whom they, for all that, influence in anything that matters just as suits them best. The same game is always played, and played particularly hard here in the Oni's palace. The rows of old men squatting all along the steps on which stands the throne need but a single glance to make one absolutely sure that underneath the expression of most humble devotedness, unswerving fidelity and submissiveness, there is a reverence in every gesture and salutation, scarcely to be described by any other than the ugly word "lickspittle." But a second and a longer look of inquiry will reveal their totally opposite intention, namely, to watch all that his lordship may say or do without cessation, and the jealousy with which they guard the maintenance and imposition of their will can be discovered in the way they blink their eyes occasionally. Oh, yes, they are indeed obedient servitors! If, now, it be true that the Oni himself has no initiative power, it

is still more so of his staff of hierarchs. Its members cleave only to what is old, traditional, privileged and prerogative, to the meticulous observance of ceremonial and celebration, the two latter of which are, however, completely unintelligent and only apishly repeated imitations. And all the while they are the slaves of an unceasing jealousy. Each one watches his neighbour and his fellows with the utmost sharpness, and is patently concerned that none should get a greater pull upon the ruler than himself. It is an uncommonly petty sport, a disgusting snatching of the smallest successful influence, an unbroken weighing of the importance of one's own personality and family against that of others.

I will now bring this description of the court-state to an end by counting up the prelates and patriarchs and, simultaneously, the deities they adore to-day. There are seventeen in all, the first eight of whom may be called " prelates " for choice, and the remaining nine " patriarchs."

Prelates (Egarefé).	1. Igia-rua	These five honour the same god as the Oni, viz., the Orisha Lajamisan.					
	2. Aguro						
	3. Arode						
	4. Djaran						
	5. Gjagu Osin						
	6. Arunto	and all	his	family	worship	the	Orisha Osun.
	7. Abadjo	"	"	"	"		Orimse.
	8. Balorun	"	"	"	"		Omitoto.
Patriarchs (Agbafé).	9. Oba-Lara	"	"	"	"		Obalusan.
	10. Oba-Lejugbe	"	"	"	"		Orise-teko.
	11. Balea	"	"	"	"		Orisa (La).
	12. Oba-Lasse	"	"	"	"		Olu-Orogbo.
	13. Oba-Uarra	"	"	"	"		Elefan.
	14. Oko-gun	"	"	"	"		Oroninyan.
	15. Olokere	"	"	"	"		Abagede.
	16. Oba-dio	"	"	"	"		Oba-dio.
	17. Awa-okun	"	"	"	"		Olokun.

To learn anything specific of the social position of these seventeen persons was extremely difficult. I will here attempt to repeat what could be still gathered from tradition. The authority and past history of these offices seems to vary very greatly. The first five are members of the clan of the present ruling dynasty, and the Oni can undertake nothing without consulting them. Their positions are, like those of the rest, hereditary, and they habitually go

to the palace every morning to be the first to greet the Oni and talk everything over; and since they are always in common agreement, he is always informed of his "advisers'" will. Their humility at this audience in no way alters the fact that they are the actual rulers of the city and the state.

Now, while the first five to-day belong to the Oni's clan, each of the other twelve has his own Orisha. They are the directors of the city quarters, which formerly were identical with the division into clan settlements. The sons always settle with their fathers, the brothers, however, always next to each other. If, then, this setting-up of princely authorities within the realm corresponded to the old order of things, twelve other clans should have been formed and settled round the Oni's abode. But this was not the case. Ifé in times of old, according to tradition, consisted of just seventeen town quarters, *i.e.*, one central, four in the cardinal points of the compass, and twelve, made up of three to each of these four, inserted between them. Thus this total is well preserved in the number of the prelates and patriarchs, while the grouping and worship of the Gods has suffered change. We will, first of all, adhere to the statement that Ifé anciently fell into seventeen sections, but also remember that the clan-group's worship, according to native statements, has more recently been much dislocated. I shall touch upon this fact again.

The prelatic and patriarchal status is hereditary. Every such dignitary enjoys a jurisdiction, the right to levy taxes and the administration of an urban district and therewith the lordship of a domiciliary city quarter. The people themselves say that the cohabitation based on clanship is by no means as strictly regulated as it was. In days of old the *enceinte* of the city was parcelled out among different Orishas. To-day the descendants of the various deities live among each other without any ordered distinction. I was able to establish the fact that the Agbafé and the Egarefé sit respectively to the left and right of the ruler's seat in conformity with the former systematized division into compounds, and, furthermore, my venerable Shâmân remembered that an old man told him that the Agbafé, and, therefore, the Egarefé also, had originally been eight, but that the ninth Agbafé was a scion of an Oni dynasty which had meantime been expelled.

The appearance of the Egarefé is singularly solemn. When one of these venerabilities stalks along the street with his straw-plaited mitre on his brow, little boys beating an iron bell precede him to let the world know beforehand of the honourable and worthy dignitary's approach.

The essential importance of the Oni rule consists in the fact that the Primate is regarded as the owner in fee simple of all the ancient temples in the land and the *Pontifex maximus* of all the Yorubans. That is his uncontested position, although his claim to power rests on a very feeble basis. The Oni is, as a matter of fact, the ruler of the church by tradition only, and so because the present Oni's dynasty is that of an usurper. He is no longer a descendant of the deity which should really as of right rule here. But this usurpation's memory is still alive in many portions of the province. Aboriginal Ogbos and Oshogbos told me that this was the reason why the chiefs of other Yoruban cities allowed themselves to be confirmed in power by the Oni nominally and purely as a matter of form. To-day the Oni no longer dares to intermeddle with the state affairs of other princes. And tradition tells of many periods when the Oni was greatly humbled by the temporal princes of his realm and his power broken by them. This will be recognized in the traditionary fragments, so far as I have been able to collect them, and I shall again refer to the status of the Oni in relation to patriarchs and prelates.

* * * * * * * *

A reminder of the report sent me by that admirable English explorer, A. B. Ellis, in 1894, based on statements collected on the Coast, may head this section of this chapter. According to this collection the son of an Orisha in wedlock with his own sister, fell into a mad passion of love with his mother. These unbridled proceedings gave birth to the world. The divine body of Yemaya, the Mother of all Moisture, burst and gave life to sixteen Gods, the chief of whom was Olokun, the Sea God, as one of two divergent myths relates. The alleged site of this occurrence is called Ifé, the "Holy City."

This legend was unknown both in Ibadan and Ilifé, but its

existence was confirmed by people from Bagdagry. As already explained, the versions current in Ilifé and Ibadan are widely divergent, and it has already been pointed out that Odudua is not known as a Goddess, as she is on the Coast, but as a God—a God of the earth, in fact, and so adored. I will quote one or two versions of the real myth of the Creation.

First version of this:

At first there was no earth. There was only Okun (or Olokun), the ocean, a water stretched over all things. Above it was Olorun. Olorun, the Orisha of the sky, and Olokun, the Orisha of the sea, were coeval. They contained (or possessed) all that there was. Olorun had two sons. The first one's name was Orishalla (the same as Otaballa, who here is also simply called Orisha); the younger's, Odudua. Olorun summoned Orisha. He gave him some earth. He gave him a hen with five fingers (? claws) (Adje-alesse-manu). He said to him, "Climb down" (or, Go down to earth), "and make the earth upon Okun." Orisha went. On the way he found some palm-wine. He began to drink and got drunken. Then he slumbered. Olorun saw this. Then Olorun summoned Odudua and said to him: "Thy (elder) brother has got drunken on his way down below. Go thou, take the sand and the hen with five fingers and make the earth upon Okun." Odudua went. He took the sand. He went down and laid it on the sea. He put the hen with five fingers on it. The hen began to scratch and spread the sand about and forced the water aside. Ilifé was the spot where this took place, round which, at first, the sea still flowed. Odudua ruled the land of Ilifé as its first king. The sea of Olokun grew less and less and ran away through a small hole from there, a hole from which to this day one can fetch the holy water—much water and it never fails. It is called Osha. Now, Orisha was very wrath that he had not created the earth; he began to wage war against Odudua. They contended for a long time, but then made peace. They both went underground and were never seen again.

Second version:

In the beginning the earth was not. There was only water. Olorun sent down Oshalla. He gave him a ball of sand on his way. He said: "Spread this out upon the face of the waters." Oshalla

went. On the road Oshalla picked up a flask of palm-wine. He tasted it and said : " This is good." He drank while going. Whenever he was a-thirst he drank a mouthful. He drank the first mouthful very early. Then he grew weary, went to sleep and forgot what Olorun had bidden him. Then the other Orishas took a mirror (Awo-aje), looked into it and saw that Oshalla had been drinking down below, gone to sleep and forgotten Olorun's behest. Thereupon Olorun sent Odudua, saying : " Do thou what I told Oshalla to do." Odudua was a strong man. He took a ball of earth with him. He descended. He made the earth and pushed the water aside. Olorun then gave Odudua a hen, called Adje-alesse-mahun ; it was a hen with five fingers ; it pushed the water back so that it became the sea. When Odudua and Oshalla had finished their work, they went into the earth at Ilifé where they had begun their labours, and were turned to stone. Since then men worshipped these stones. Oba-diu is the high priest of Oshalla. Odudua is greatly feared. So powerful is this Godhead that before the people in Ifé can speak the name of Odudua, they must slay a sheep and drink its blood.

Besides these two, I obtained another creation legend relating to Ifé told me by a priest from Offa.

This one runs thus :

Third version of Creation myth.

In the beginning all was water. But in the middle of it there was an island (Illa-odo). The first chieftains wandered about on it, not knowing what they should do. After a long time Olorun came down from the sky. He sat down in the middle of the island. The other gods came with him. Olorun said : " Edju, sit thou behind me ; thou, Shango, in front of me. Ogu, sit thou on my right hand ; Obatalla, thou on my left. Ye other Gods, sit round me in a circle." Olorun called the chieftains and said to them : " Ye see what there is here. Now, mark ye this well. This city shall in future be called Ifé. The hill on which I am seated shall bear three palm trees. Better than in any other place the Baba-lawos will here read the Odus. Sixteen Gods have come with me. These will have children and they shall live around you. Thus will Ifé have a great people. But thou, Oni, thou shalt here hold sway and tell the Alafins what is the will of the Gods."

Ram's head as Shango effigy, about ⅓ of life, and a decorative tray from the grave of a Shango priest. ¼ life size. Both from Ojo.

[*Facing p.* 284.

Olorun departed. Thus arose the city of Ifé wherein of old abode the sixteen Gods.

The last legend leaves nothing to be desired. The only other question is, what is the relation of the seventeen patriarchs to the legend of the Creation from Offa. I got into close touch with a reverend Ada-ushe in Ifé. He was the only one whose statements proved reliable. The old man said that as a Shâmân he had nor scot nor lot in the dissensions or envious quarrels of the separate clans, and this was doubtless true. This ancient soothsayer told me this, namely : Many of the others make mutual accusations of having stolen their Orishas and are therefore not descendants of the Gods upon whom they allege dependence. He also said : Many were not entitled in any way to make a claim to such descent, for in the earlier warlike times everything got mixed. Both the clans of the Orishas Olokun and Odudua scarcely existed any longer. And they lied who called themselves after these Gods to-day. But the Oni stock itself was in the worst case of all. A forbear of the reigning Oni had been a man from the West, who one day found a stone upon his farm, announced that it was the Orisha Lajamisan (an Orisha previously unheard of), and had turned it into his own Orisha-father. Then the sly dog had deposed the Oni one day and had the Oni-mitre put upon his own head on the Oké-Ado (or coronation hill).

This story bore the impress of truth to such an extent as to justify me in its acceptance, and is unusually important since it contains all necessary information of the constitution of clans in Ilifé. I subsequently investigated the general relationship existing between the clans and the names of deities. The following notes may, I think, be taken as axiomatic, viz., that every Orisha not only has its proper name, but the most varied epithets. Thus Shango is called " the Hurler of Stones," " Breather of Fire," " He who cleaves in the Storm," " the Fertilizer," and so on. Not alone is the name thus variegated, but every God receives an adjectival appellation from the places where his influence was most strongly manifest. If anyone, for example, received any special boon and his petition had been more than generously granted as the result of prayer at the shrine of Shankpanna in Ilesha, the people in that neighbourhood will also resort to that temple and then the " Ileshan

Shankpanna" will become very influential and the Shankpanna adherents in Oshogbo, for instance, will prefer sacrificing in Ilesha to making offerings in Oshogbo if they are particularly anxious about a certain thing. Then the folk will say: "The Ileshan Shankpanna is mightier than the Shankpanna in Oshogbo." Precisely the same occurs in the case of monuments. The images are specifically denominated. If, *e.g.*, a head of exceptional beauty is found upon a spot sacred to Olokun, this head will be called "the Beautiful." It is regarded as an Olokun, but characterized as "the Beautiful One." And, moreover, the essential point is that it can be christened by the name of its finder. For instance, if this be Adeké, it will be the Adeké Olokun. Finally, the latter portion is elided and only "Adeké" remains. I met an illustration of this with a woman called Alaja. A head had been exhumed at a particular place and nobody knew to which God this head was sacred. I inquired for an Orisha Alaja without being able to find one. But I learned that an old woman with this name had said that her father had told her that in this very situation there must be an ancient image in the ground. On this statement of Alaja's they began digging, and as it was confirmed by discovery of the head this was simply called Alaja.

Now, not only have names thus been transferred in Ifé, but they have brought about very considerable social upheavals in the composition of the clans. The Oni himself told me that some of the patriarchal families had died out and that consequently others had taken their place. But, more especially, a former Oni is said, at some very remote period indeed, to have made a pretty clean sweep of his prelates and patriarchs. He had driven entire families into exile and exterminated others to the tiniest babe. The banished mostly fled to Ojo and their descendants mentioned this deed of violence to me, which was afterwards corroborated by citizens from Ilifé. But more than that, this particular Oni, who had been obviously desirous of throwing off the superiority of his princes, chose the representatives of the four highest offices out of his own family. My Ojo informant gave me the names of these four new clan leaders quite clearly as Igaru, Agoru, Arrote and Djarra. The same man also told me that this Oni's name was Rojamisa. Thus my Ilifian Shâmân's statement is verified. An usurper named

Lajamisan had once cleared the ground, exterminated his most dangerous opponents and appointed adherents of his own clan. However, he went one better still. *Pace* the Shâmân, he not only killed the previous Oni, but handed over to the son of the deceased the administration of the central quarter of Ifé, and the successor to this newly created urban district is the ninth Agbafé.

Thus, then, it is perfectly clear that the famous hill with the three palms in the centre of Ifé was in ancient days the "navel" of the Yoruban idea of the universe. The descendants of the sixteen Gods must have had their abiding-places in the old sixteen divisions of the compass, while the centre was occupied by the Oni's palace, which was regarded as the umbilicus of the world. Violent revolutions, all manner of transferences of divine appellations, expulsion of the scions of particular deities and the substitution of new clans, somewhat disarranged their formerly clear definition, but their foundation is demonstrable to-day. The weighty import of the conclusion thus arrived at must be now especially stressed, viz.:

It furnishes evidence of the fact that, at the period to which the images in terra-cotta and stone belong, the same conception of the world was current in these countries which to-day regulates the worship of Ifa in the whole of Yoruba.

It remains, however, desirable in the historical development of the "Holy City" to set down those things which can be established as being historically correct and I will devote this last section to the exposition of the truth.

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Another evil which furthered and hastened this levelling, deadening and disintegrating process had its root in Modeké. This community suffered from a peculiar state of affairs. I have been unable to ascertain the "when" and "wherefore" of its foundation, probably on account of its imperceptible rise to power. Be that as it may, at some point of time which must be relegated to the last century or two, some of the Ojo clan, relatives of the Alafins, turned up in Ilifé. The reason for assigning the date so far back is because it is said to have been founded at a time when the

residential seat of Ojo was still in the North (Old Ojo of the English ordnance-map) and before the Alafins fled southwards.

These people settled in the west of the city. I have always failed to understand how this map came to place "Modakale" (*i.e.*, Modeké) almost directly south of Ilifé. I found its very well preserved ruins in the West and North-West of this city.

A complete revolution took place in the condition of Ilifian affairs when these strange neighbours put in an appearance. They paid their "rates and taxes"—and this is significant—not to the head of Ilifé, who gave them hospitality, but to the chief magistrate of Ojo, whom they to the last looked upon as their head. They thus took up, even externally, a position apart, which gained in importance by the fact that the Ojo-Modekans were in constant touch with the outside world. My old Ada-ushe friend said: "The Ojo-folk brought Shango, who had been driven forth from Ilifé, back again." They, therefore, brought their influence to bear on essentially internal religious affairs. Many Ilifians resumed their ancient Shango-worship.

Obviously, then, the fresh element gained a stimulating upper hand against the things which made for rigidity. The conflict was according. The Modekans one day asked for leave to solemnize a great festival in honour of Shango in Ilifé itself. The Oni and his counsellors refused to grant it. In the result a great number of Ilifé families migrated to Modeké. This started the quarrel. The prelates declared that the Modekans were to depart from the city precincts. The Modekans said they couldn't think of any such thing; they felt quite competent to deal with these old Philistines. The Ilifians wanted to bring back their escaping citizens by force of arms. War broke out. The Modekans got the worst of it. The Oni and his people entrenched themselves within the palace walls. Nothing but a certain reverential awe experienced by the victors for the Holy One himself and the sanctity of his fastness preserved him and his patriarchs and prelates from extermination then as afterwards. Probably this same fear, this traditional piety in face of these "antiquities," has often saved Ilifé from entire destruction.

A peace which was, however, as unsound as possible was concluded. Although those telling the story naturally smoothed this

over, Ilifé had been obviously weakened by the Modekan blood-suckers. But now the Modekans cast an eye at the source of Ilifé's wealth, Ebolokun, which is to the North-east of the city (*v.* next paragraph). The second period of dissensions, still within the vulgars' memory, can be determined. An Ilifian who confirmed the main facts of the foregoing told me in Ibadan: "The war between the Modekans and Ilifians began in the same year as the Fulbes took possession of Ilorin."

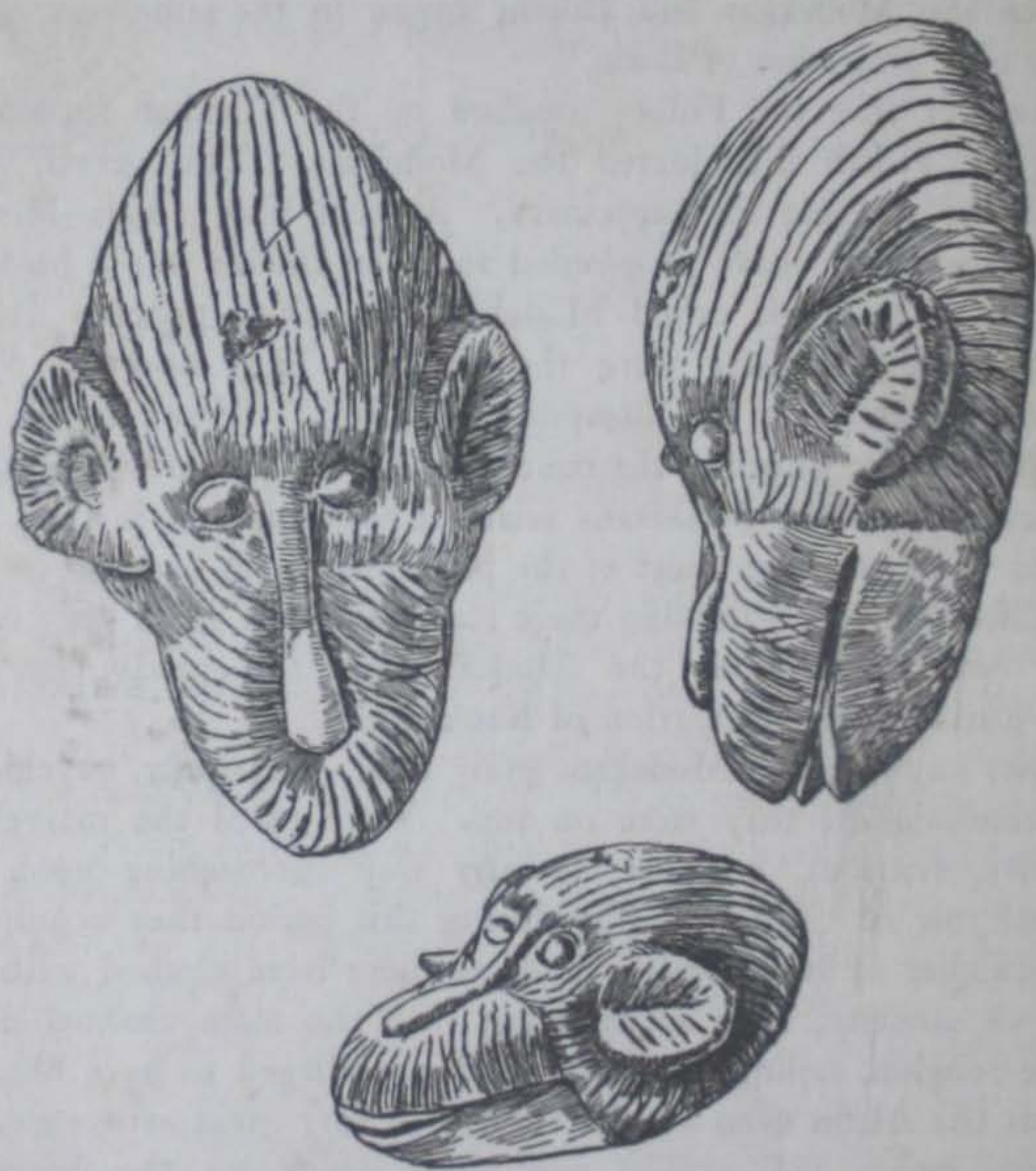
The fact that the Fulbes smashed up the Yoruban supremacy in the far North intimidated the Modekans. This greatly protracted the struggle for supremacy. At that time a Baba-lawo in Ilifé is reported to have prophesied that the Ilifians would be freed from the evil spirits, called Modekans, by white people. It was then thought that these were the Fulbes. They now say, "We were wrong, they are the Europeans (English)." However this may be, whatever the length of the contest, the good Ilifians were eventually beaten and the Modekans seized Ebolokun. It is they who are said to have driven most of the pits which have torn up its soil. The Ilifians never again dug there after that, but when they drove them away took from the Modekans all the beads they had found during their occupation of Ebolokun.

Now, anyway, the Modekans grew rich. Physically, psychically and economically, they were on top. They ruled the marvellous twin-city, without, however, in any way encroaching upon the external rule of the Oni. But during this period they acquired a large number of stone statues and, as these were clothed with the odour of sanctity, they actually got into the main channel of an archaic religion, sailing on which they are alleged to have behaved towards the Alafin even at this time with very great arrogance.

Then began the warlike confusions which set the Yorubans so by the ears at the close of the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century. As Ellis reports, the Ilifians assumed a double-faced attitude in this war between the Modeké-Ibadanese and the Ileshan-Ekiti parties. But, of course, they denied it in our presence, saying that they had never pretended to be friends to the Ibadanese, but had always championed the Ileshans. The last verse of the song was that Ilifé was stormed and destroyed in this third war, and all its inhabitants took flight along the road to Ilesha, but promptly

returned. A great part of the city was burnt down, which explains why many specimens of my collection are charred. They were obtained from beneath the accumulations of débris.

The good offices of the Governor of Lagos ended in the conclusion of peace in 1886. The protocol insisted especially on Ilifé's



Sculptured monkey in stone, exhumed in Ifé. ½ and ¼ life size respectively.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

restoration to the Ilifians and the removal of Modeké further away to somewhere between Oshun and Oba. This put an end to the continuation of the strife, but by no means satisfied the Modekans. When they departed, Ilifé once more fell back into the heavy sleep enwrapping it for centuries, from which it had been stirred for

only a little time by this quarrel and the admixture of fresh blood so foreign to its own. Once again it relapsed into the immovability, religious sterility and insipidity of the provincial town we found it.

Stiffly apathetic, its prelates and patriarchs remain squatting upon the monuments bequeathed them by prehistoric antiquity without any conception of their meaning.

Found in excavation. Handle of a vessel of quartz, from Ifé. The original is three and three-sixteenths of an inch in height.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER XIV

THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL FINDS

Description of the sacred groves; of places of sacrifice; of the stone monuments; of Ebolokun and the urns and glass objects; the bronze Olokun head; of terra-cotta art in portraiture and architecture—Lines of origin and decay of Atlantic art.

WE have so far travelled a long road. The description of our intercourse with the natives first acquainted the reader with the character and mode of life of the Yorubans. Then I attempted to give an account of this nation's home and political life. We plunged into the singular religious system until we were able to appreciate the profound significance of their marvellously clear conception of the structure of the world. Then I portrayed the ancient city which may be taken as the prehistoric central point of this vast legacy of a civilization which was both uniform and brought to maturity. And, finally, I will now also describe the archæological treasures we found and those of which we heard. We shall then be at the end of the first part of our task and have to clear up our minds with regard to the place assignable to the authors of Yoruban culture in the history of civilized nations, to which they may be entitled. We have put a long stretch of the road behind us, and the path which will now lead us to the required conclusion will

Objects found in the ruins of old Ojo An Ifa tray and a fish-shaped wooden vessel, both about one-half life size.

[*Facing p.* 292.

be so difficult to travel that I must ask the reader's patient indulgence.

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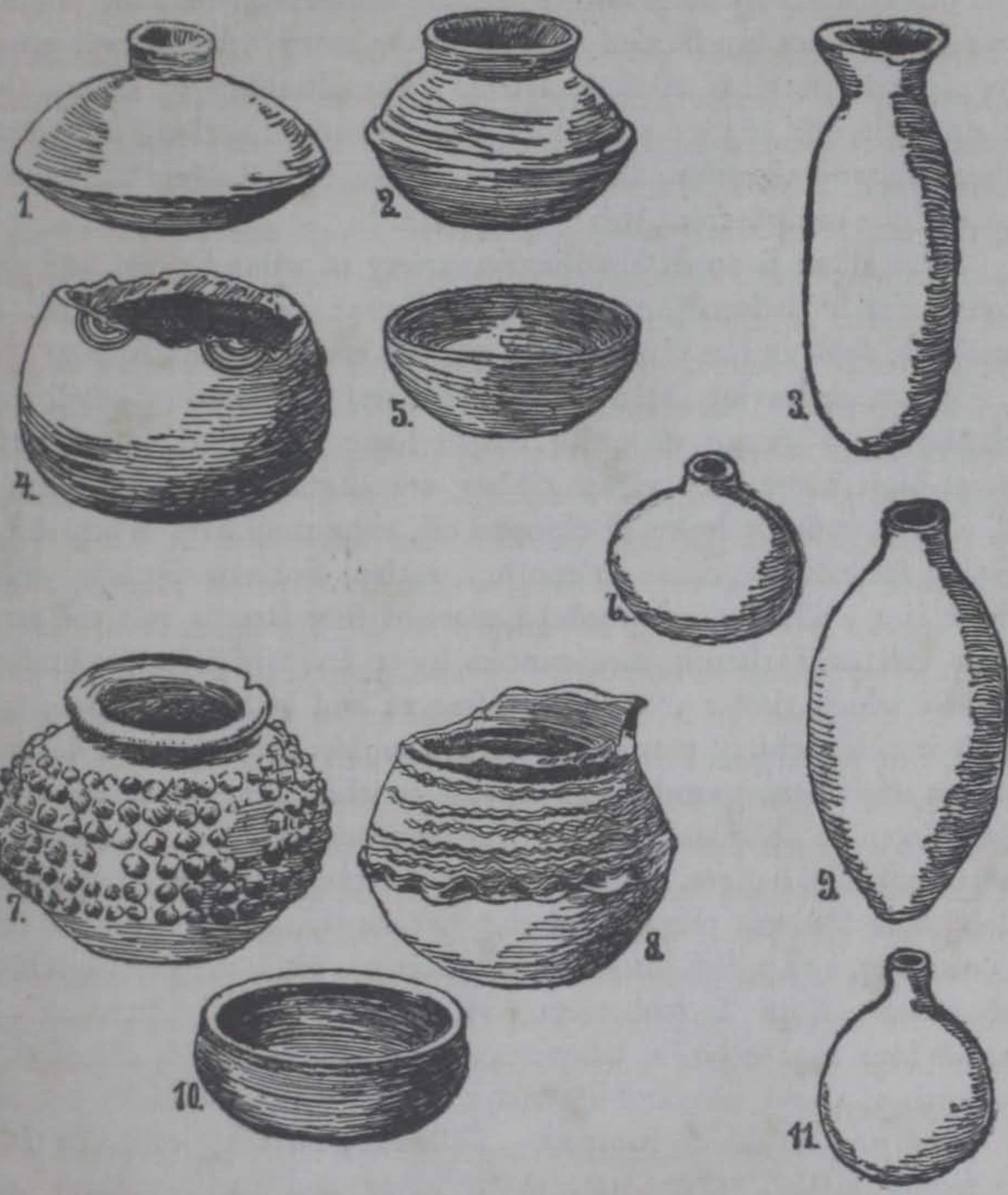
Many localities in Yorubaland where antiquities are found are familiar to me. The best known of these is Old Benin, where the Dutch and Portuguese as long ago as the Middle Ages noticed all sorts of curious bronze work in the households and architecture—a world of ornament, whose richness can be marvelled at even now in European museums, because an extraordinary quantity of it was brought to light from under the débris of ruins when towards the end of last century the English took Benin. The differences of opinion as to the date of these old things are matters of common knowledge. Some are inclined to ascribe their origin to the Portuguese, who are alleged to have there introduced and been the tutors of the art of casting in metal. Others attribute them to the teaching of Indian instructors. But up to the present no serious suggestion of a remoter date for their production has been made. A great portion of the sacred relics of Benin do actually consist of comparatively recent castings and can be so recognized, because many a dish or salver shows Portuguese with rolls of money, typical fashion of dress, beards to correspond, and muskets. It is known that these Benin bronzes were manufactured until quite recently, but this naturally affords no clue whatever to the period and form of culture from which they originated.

Ifé, or Ilifé, is the second place which conceals a wealth of archæological material. The natives, including those in Benin, call Ilifé "the" old Yoruban metropolis; and the concentration there of the entire religious system, the completeness of their conception of the world, of which Ifé is the hub, exclude all possible doubt on this particular point. Various comparatively coarse stone monuments are raised above the earth in Ifé. Below it we found old sculptured stonework, precious jars of a kind of porcelain body, which was glazed, bronze work far exceeding that of Benin in its perfection and representative skill, and at last some terra-cottas amazing to those who inspect them. Everything here discovered is a proof of an independent and homogeneous type. Let us go through these finds *seriatim*.

The natives still worship some of these old monuments. Like most other African nations the Ilifians sacrifice to their Gods in sacred groves. The city's natural site offers the most favourable opportunities because of its girdle of swamps, forests and clumps of trees. The plan of the holy places is mostly alike. Their entrance is signalized by an overhanging fringe of palm-leaves in the bush, which makes, as it were, a kind of upper portière to a path leading off the main track. Passing beneath this sort of palm-curtain, one arrives at the centre of the grove by a passage about one to two hundred paces in length at a circular clearing in the wood. Crossing this, and going on for another hundred and fifty or two hundred yards or so, one comes to a second such place, also roofed with branches of palm and other trees. Sometimes three or four, even five, such clearings succeed each other. Sometimes the path connecting them is absolutely straight, sometimes circular. These little places are marked by nearly always having an old and lofty tree at their edge. They are also all decorated by the Pandanus palms planted there. This species is quite generally known to the Yorubans as B(u)erregu or B(u)ellegu ; but if, as mostly happens, planted as a sign of the holiness of the spot, it is called Ille-Orisha (or God's house) in the West, but by Ilifians Elle-ebora (or house of sacrifice). The method or style of planting is similar to that I previously found in Togoland. Two such palms mostly stand like torches at the beginning of the side path on the right and left hand, and the little spots are mostly more or less carefully hedged in with them.

Now, as a rule, these enclosures contain the sacred monuments. Some are erected on a hillock at the base of the ancient trees and then little pots, little lamps, cups for offering, etc., are piled up around them.

If the jars are small, they are covered with an inverted one. This is usually so, and the impulse to cover them up brings into being small huts like little temples in shape, which are built over the sacred things. Some are very pitiful, tiny things, only shoulder-high, made of a few poles and leaves (*v.* headpiece to Chapter V.); others, little mud houses. Only the Obalufan and Oranja temples to the north-west-by-north of the city can really be said to be actually buildings. The former strikes one because it is not erected in a thicket, but on an open space in the town and, besides this,



Archæological treasures from Ifé. Small urns, vessels, sacrificial saucers.
For size, see index of illustrations.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

possesses a niche for an image of the deity. This effigy is quite new. Traditionally, however, the worship of Obalufan is not old either. The niche or recess reminds one very strongly of a mosque. All this is not very surprising when one remembers that the origin of the god Olufan can be determined by the word " Alfa " and proved by association with modern Islam. The dwelling of Oranja is a plain little box of clay with one step. There is nothing remarkable about it, and therefore there is no chance of deducing the form of an antique temple from this " templekin."

Now there is an extraordinary variety of stone figures, and they consequently belong to entirely different periods. Let us, for instance, look at the monuments erected on the Idena square.

When, on leaving the main road, we arrive at the first small palm plantation, a group of quite coarse little pillars of stone about waist-high come into view. They are angular, roundish, and, at all events, roughly-hewn or chipped off, absolutely bare of any detail. Going forward we come to another, rather more to the left. Here there is a wilderness of weeds, a mass of roof lattens and the straw of a collapsed thatch, surmounted by a few stakes and climbers, amidst which rises a stone image (see 2a and 2c on opposite page). This is about thirty-two inches high, roughly executed and defaced. It has one chain round its neck and another hangs over an apron skirt down to the hands folded over its stomach. On its left side it has a peculiar hanger, something like the tassels of a Houssa sword. Behind it I found the first of the " stone-stools," to which I shall again refer, and a dish made out of quartz. This, the first specimen of quartz work I had seen, claimed my special attention. It was a four square block, whose upper surface had been chiselled to a depth of about one and a quarter inches, while the lower one had a raised ring on which it stood. This was precisely similar to those I found either carved on, or attached to, wooden boxes and made either of strips of bark or wood tied together. They serve in the South to protect woven basket or woodwork from attacks by the ants if these vessels touch the ground on the flat. The interesting thing about this is that these ancient Ilifian stone saucers, of which I got to see three (one of which is depicted in the right-hand lower corner of Plate III. Archæological Finds), show indications of originally being basket work, developed in wood

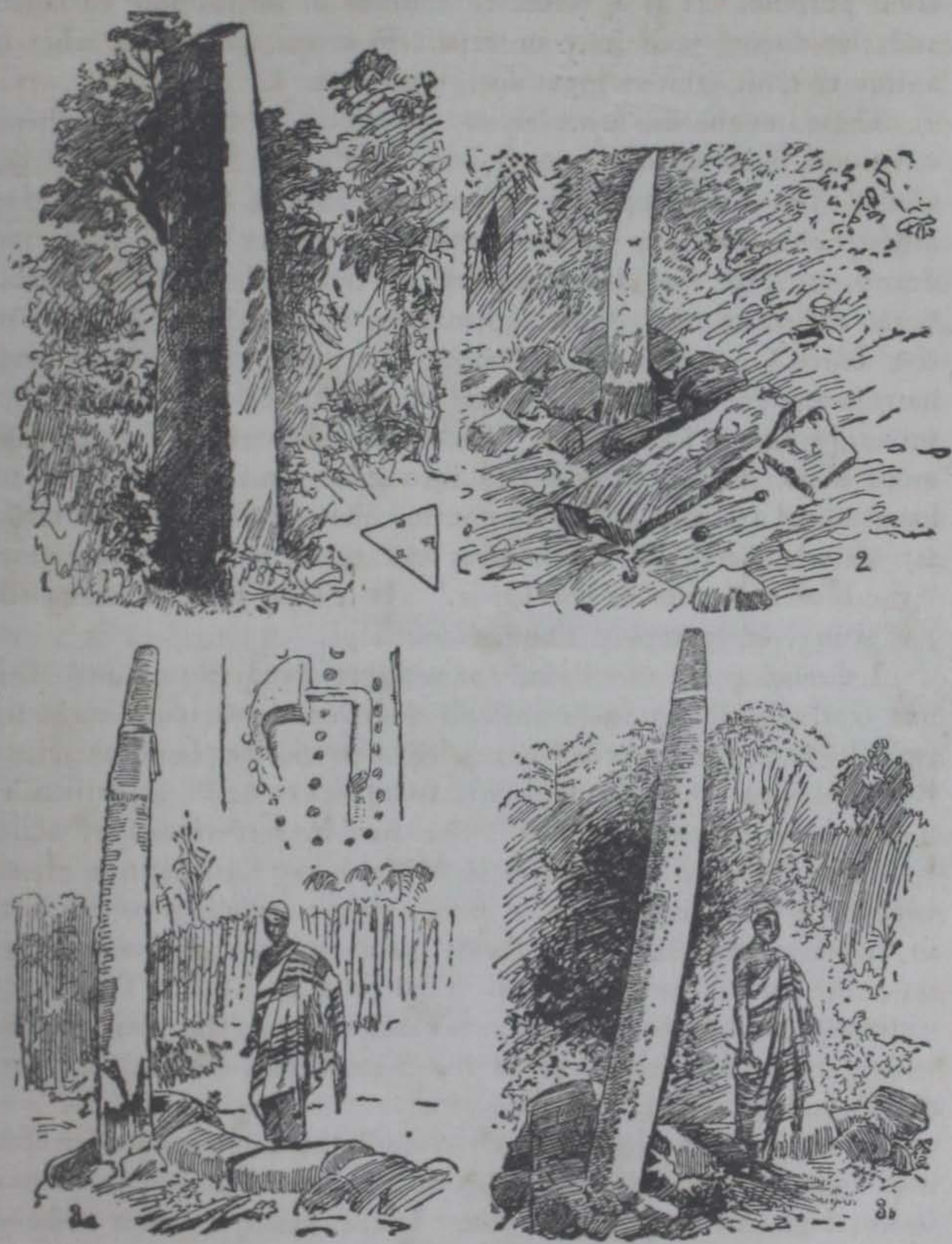
Antique monuments in Ifé. 1. The Idena (see *infra*, page 298). 2. A coarser figure, with a stone trough and stone cup on Idena square (see opposite page).

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

carving and transferred finally to sculpture in stone. This easily visible illustration shows, then, that working and shaping in stone had a historical precedent in dried grass and wooden material. Besides this, all three stone-saucer specimens known to me were ornamented at the side with lizards.

Coming back to Idena square and more to the right of it, in the next enclosure, was a stone statue of the Idena, and next to, or, rather, behind it, some other monuments. When I first made its acquaintance, it was housed in a badly-damaged little hut whose thatch almost hid it. It is a granite figure about thirty-six inches high above ground-level (*cf.* Fig. 1, page 297). I could not find out whether its feet were covered by the earth. It is exactly like the other figure with folded hands over the belly, aproned and ornately tasselled on its left. It has armlets, and a ruff-like ornament round its neck. The interesting part of the Idena is most decidedly its head, which had been knocked off and only insecurely replaced when I first set eyes on it. The thick-lipped, broad-nosed face is negroid in type. The ears are large. A long lock or tassel of hair, missing on the right, hangs down from its left ear. Its nose is damaged, but there are still traces of a wale from right to left, which sagged towards the cheek-bones and was here extended. The treatment of the hair in this granite head is especially of the very greatest interest. The hair is represented by little iron pegs, inserted in small holes. We here, for the first time, come upon this singular use of iron, which metal, as we shall soon see, played quite an extraordinary part in the realm of Ilifian antiquities.

There are other scupltures beneath the overhanging foliage behind this granite image. One is well-preserved, obviously a copy of an elephant's tusk, springing from a four-sided, much rougher block (*cf.* Fig. 2 on opposite page). A similar stone stands for Oranja. We may, and the reader can judge for himself from the pictures, unreservedly assume them to be based on such tusks—no great cause for surprise in West Africa and specially in Yoruba. Here they are frequently found set up as symbols of high station in front and at the sides of chieftain's seats and portals of princely persons. Here, whence ivory, on account of the high price paid for it, has already found its way into Europe, the Yorubans have



Monoliths in Ifé. 1. A triangular one in the centre of the old town, about 6ft. 8in. high. It is regarded as an old sundial (see page 304). 2. Obelisk or "Tooth Stone" of the Idena (see page 298). 3. Obelisk or "Tooth Stone" of Oranja (see page 294).

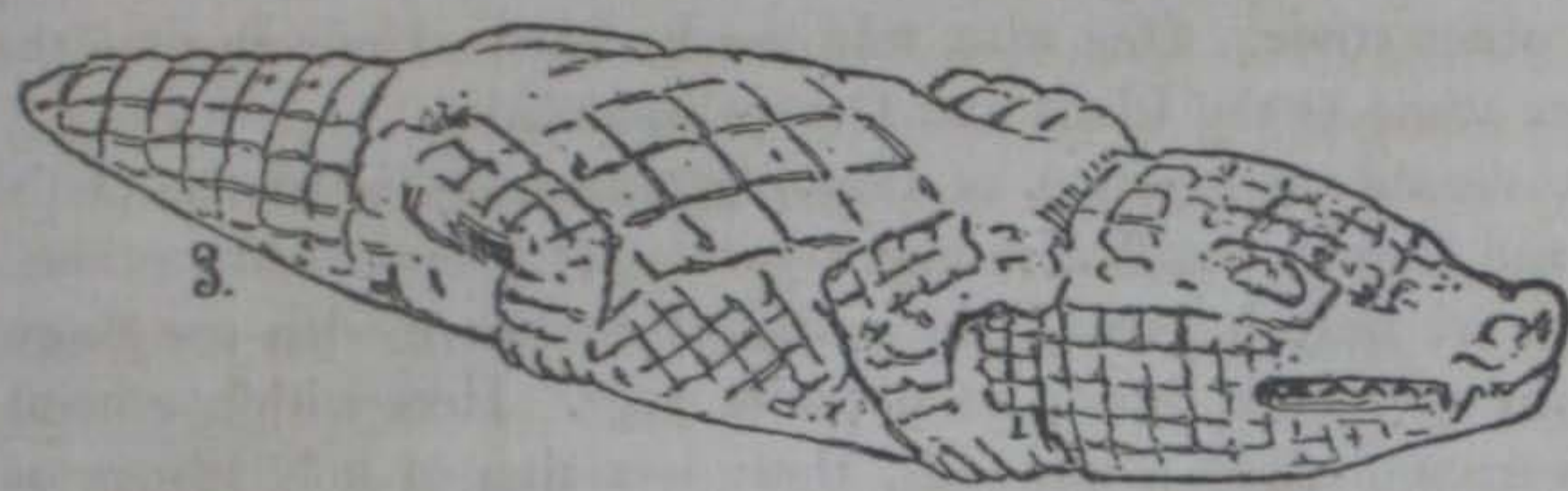
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

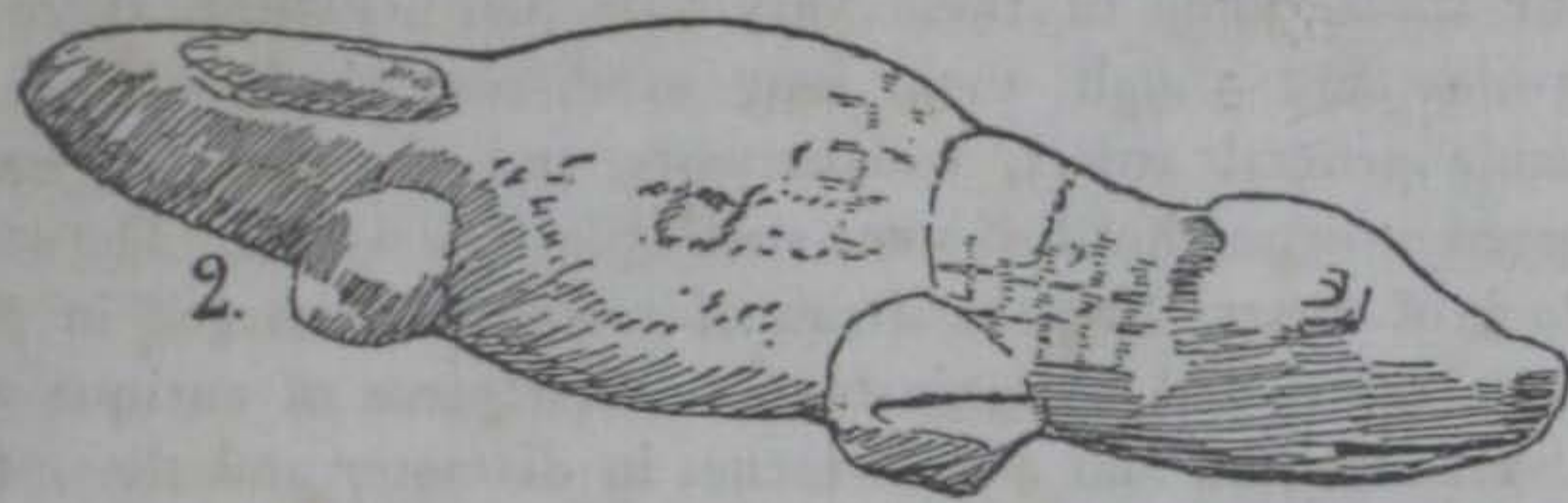
imitated them in wood and used the copies in the same way for the same purpose. It is a favourite emblem of wealth and authority and the discovery of its counterpart in stone among the relics of antiquity must excite a great deal of interest.

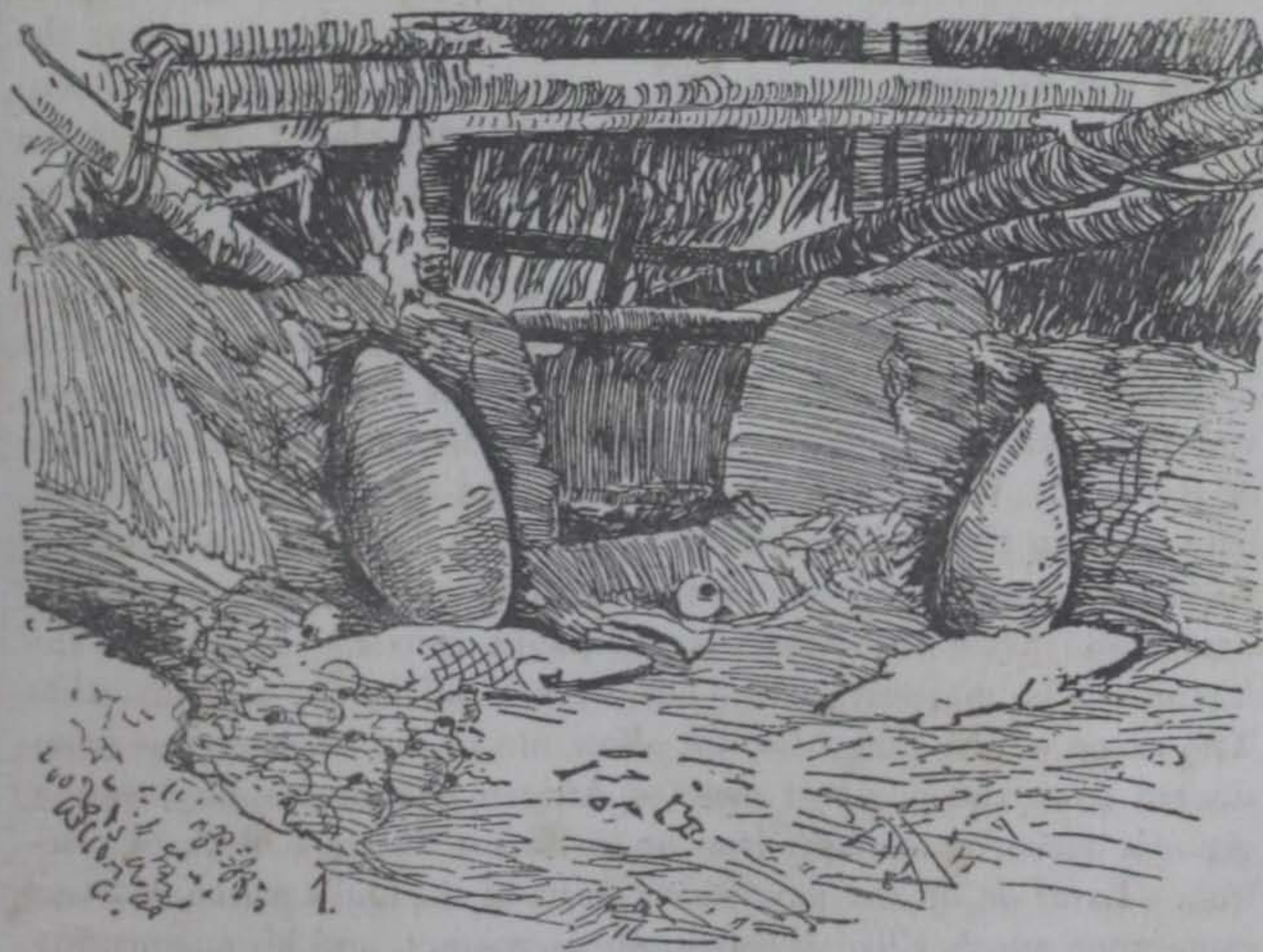
These monoliths, however, are described by the natives themselves not as elephant's tusks, but as "staffs" or "sceptres" of the Gods. The one under discussion is "Idena's staff," the other mighty one raised up in the south-west quarter of the town and drawn on page 299 is "the staff of Oranja." And the inhabitants are quite ready with explanations of the rest. In front of the Idena's tooth-stone or obelisk are the pieces of a long, narrow stone slab, fairly thin and of rough workmanship. It lies prone, broken in four pieces. There is evidence of six or perhaps more holes having been bored into it at equal distances in its longitudinal axis, but, as I could not find one piece, I cannot definitely say to what depth. The natives call these particular fragments "the broken buckler of the Idena." It is clear these moderns can "explain" every mortal thing.

A decent group of all kinds of well-preserved relics is met with in a carelessly constructed hut at the fourth and last Idena enclosure (see illustration on opposite page). Symmetrically placed there is a stone crocodile to right and left in front of a stone block, artificially rounded, set on end. These blocks, two larger specimens of which I afterwards found in the ruins of Modeké, vary but little in shape, between a drop, an egg or an onion, always inclining to the first, so that I would like to call them "drop-stones." I saw a similar type in Tomboland, south of Timbuktu, in 1908. They very distinctly remind one of Flammand's owl-stones. But their relation will be made especially clear in the monumental work in the Oni palace in Ilifé, where they are of iron.

Before each of these "drop-stones," the more oval of which is twenty-four and the more conical one nineteen and a quarter inches high, there is a crocodile. The larger and better-finished of the two is twenty-four and three-eighths, and the other twenty-one and a quarter inches long. I got to know of two more such images. The size of the one made of quartz we dug up in Modeké was between these two mentioned above; one, still worshipped in a private compound, is somewhat smaller. They are of quartz as







The Crocodile temple at the end of the Idena square. Below, the storing of the stone monuments; above, quartz crocodiles—2, 21¼, and 3, 24⅞ inches long.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

well as other stone. One man told me he knew of one in granite, the same stone as the Idena and Oranja monoliths.

The second aggregation of important antiques is in the Oni's palace and forms a small monument park. It is in several sections, of which we only inspected the eastward enclosure with the more important specimens shown on opposite page. Here within a small space, surrounded by a low wall, there is a ring of holy stones of different kinds, some of them very valuable. Firstly, there is a twenty-nine and a half inch long sandstone block, of no very remarkable general aspect, weatherworn and abraded, but ending in a jagged crowned head of some such animal as a fish. The second is a block of quartz like the drum of a column damaged in places by exposure, but still recognizable as a fine piece of antique work. It is about eighteen and a half inches in diameter and the curious part of it is five quite regularly disposed holes at one end of it like the spots on a domino. This is said to have once been set up so that the five holes were turned skywards. The tale goes that it was used in the worship of Ifa and they may possibly represent the world and its centre.

Still stranger, however, is the monument placed between the two above-mentioned ones in the same place, namely, an onion or drop-shaped block thirty inches in height and forty-one and a half inches round, and thus a large and important specimen, when one remembers it is of iron! Although it is metal, the people in general say it is stone. The story of it is this, viz.: This stone was the anvil of Ladé, the smith. Ladé was the mightiest smith of the past. When he died, Ogun changed all his tools into stone. The stone in the Oni's palace is Ladé's anvil, and its name is Ogun-Ladé. It was washed out of the earth in a season of rains at the exact time when the Koran was brought into the land. So the legend. The material of this lump cracks off in cup-shaped scales. The shape of the thing did not allow me to see whether this (considered from the point of view of African technical ability) was a gigantic piece of wrought iron or, as is less likely, a block of cast-iron. Later on, in the most secret parts of the Oni's palace, Martius came upon another like it, obviously sacrosanct, and his engineering knowledge led him to conclude that, judging by its exterior, it was cast and not wrought.

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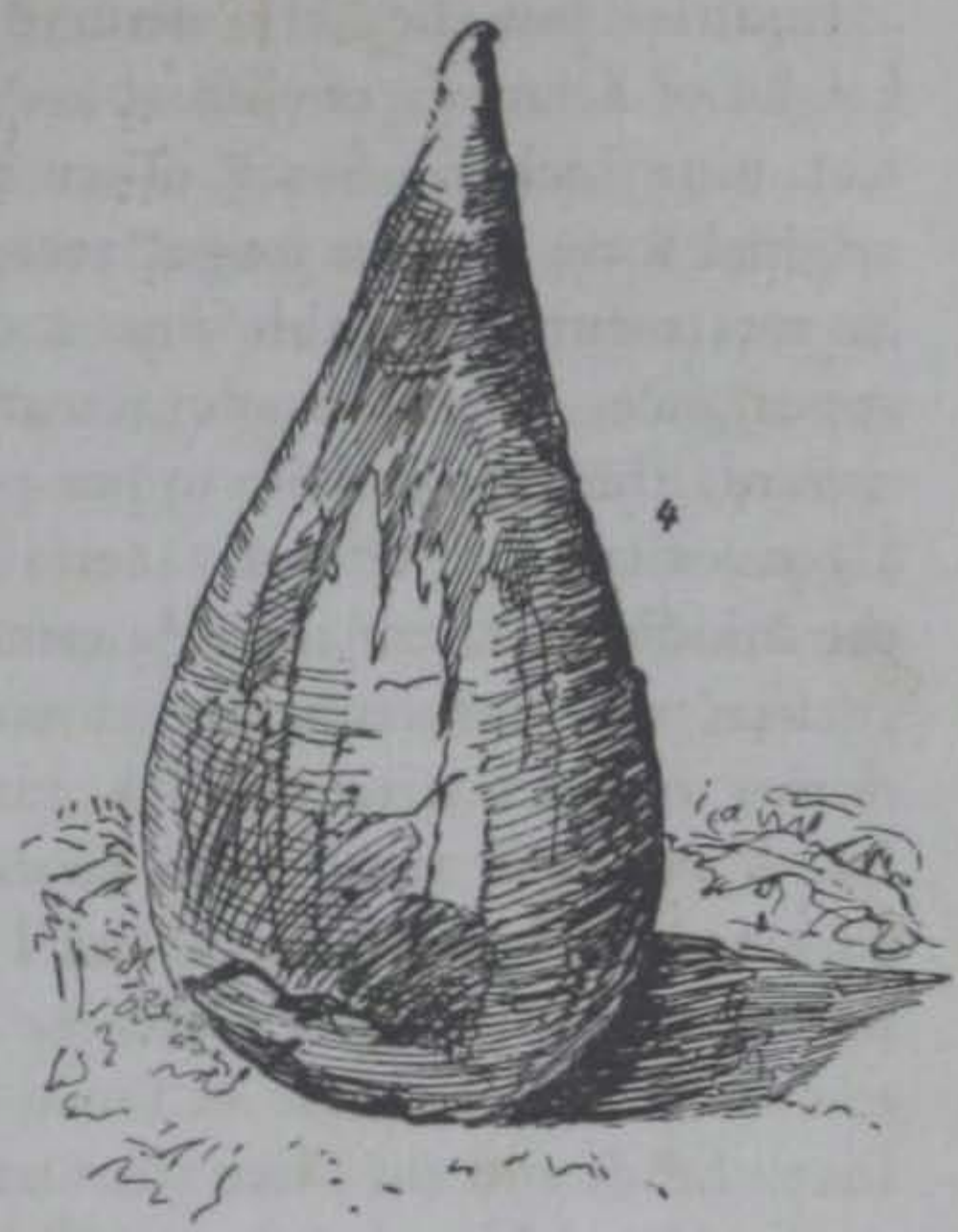

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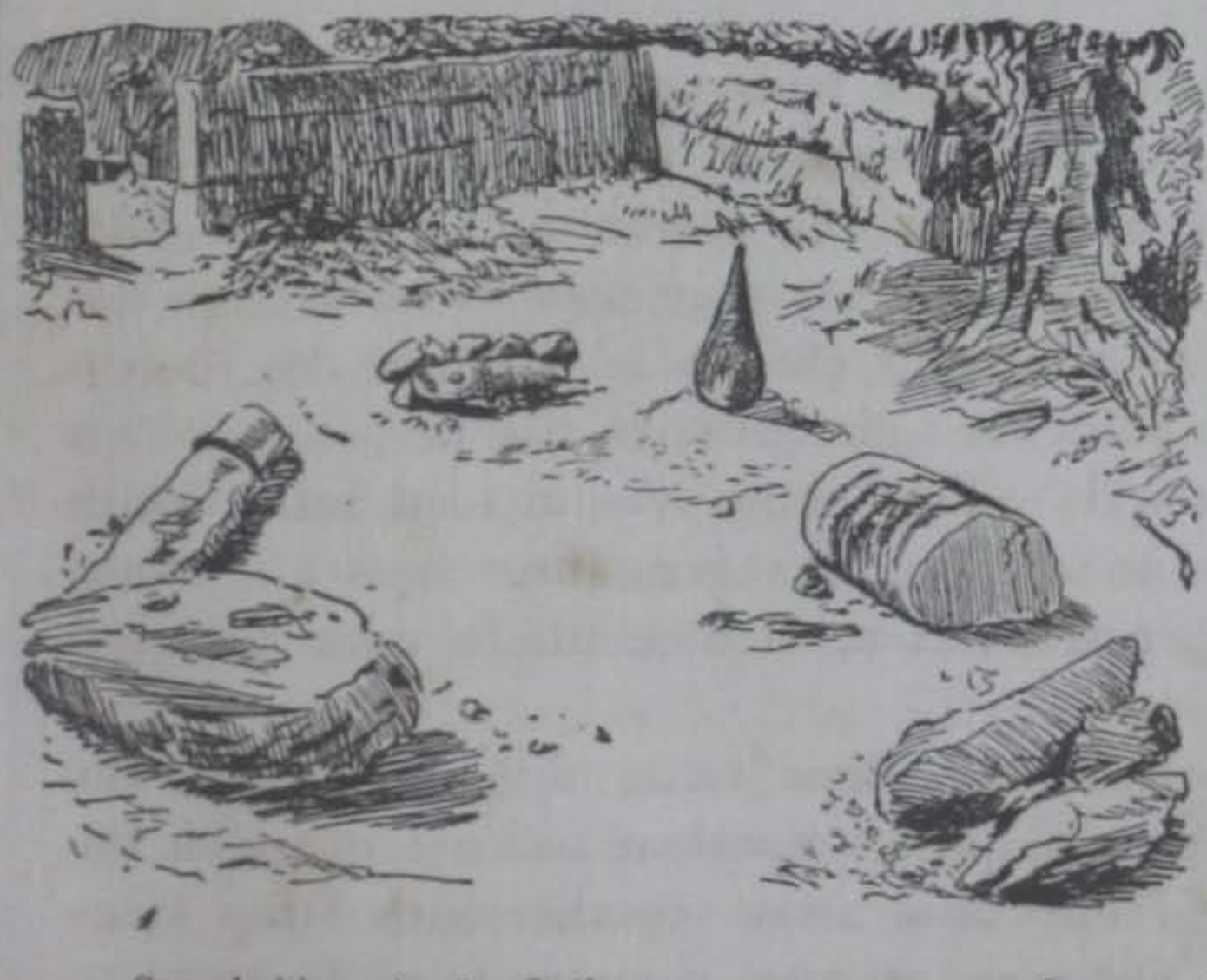

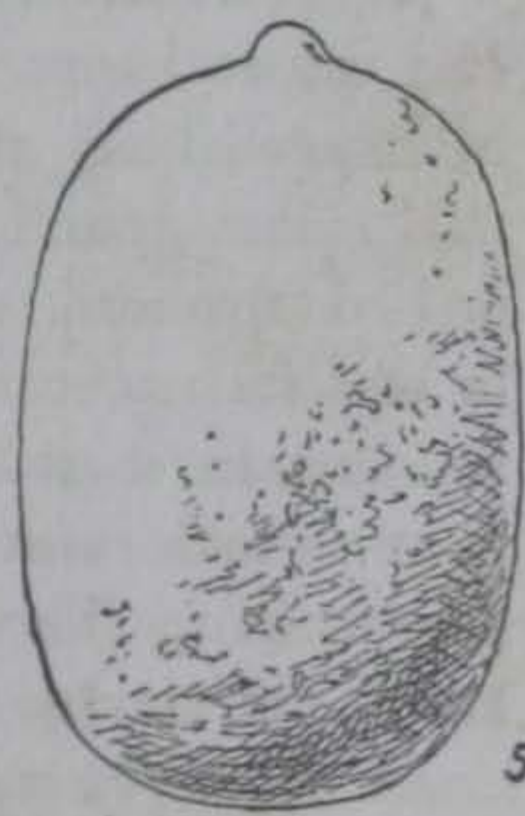

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Sacred objects in the Oni's monument square. 1. General view of the site. 2. Fish-head stone, 29½ in. long. 3. Roller stone, 18½ in. long, with five small pits. 4. Iron drop, 30 in. high, greatest circumference 41½ in. 5. Frequently found types of ovals in quartz, always very carefully worked and with slight stem at one end.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

The round we made disclosed the essential types of these stone antiquities, but they also deserve a little individual attention. The height of Oranja's obelisk above the ground was close upon eleven feet, nine inches. Some other ruined object lay beside it, whose original form was no longer recognizable. It was, however, coarser in treatment than this fine monolith, which, besides its general appearance, showed some remarkable peculiarities. It diminished towards the top, and its upper portion had an edge turned towards a convexity, and was in a certain sense sharpened. A little below the middle of its convex side something was cut in relief, whose lower portion was unfortunately absent. But, in addition, there was a setting of nails with spiral heads on this side of it. After leaving Ifé, I was told these were bronze, but when we saw them *in situ* we thought they were iron and I found one in the Oranja enclosure which is of that metal. So we come upon this use of it for the second time, the first instance being as hair ornament on the Idena head, and this, like the Oranja obelisk, is of granite. We shall see iron used in quite the same way in combination with terra-cotta and with bronze casts.

If, now, the Oranja tooth-stone takes on the monolith form, we find the real type of this frequently both in Ifé and also in ruined Modeké. They stand upright on slight elevations. One of these triangular monoliths is illustrated on page 299. The natives said it had formerly served as a kind of sundial. When the shadow of this stele reached a point on a circle drawn round it, it was time for certain sacred festivals. This circle was divided into sixteen parts, which caused us no surprise, for this number constantly recurs everywhere. These monoliths, then, were essentially time-measurers and "sun-clocks."

A word or two about the other stone things. Firstly, the "stools," of which there are quite a number, and one of which the English captain in his time took away together with other valuables from the Oni. These are stumpy columns from fourteen to twenty-four inches high. Sometimes their flat surfaces have a ring between them and the drum, sometimes not (*cf.* Plate: Archæological Treasures III.). Both quartz and granite examples are characterized by extraordinary uniformity of shape and surface polish. Their single handles at the side, mostly broken off, is the

Antiques from Ifé. Quartz sculptures.
(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

[*Facing p.* 304.

strangest part. Yet with all their tendency to monumental form, the work reminds one of "negro stools with carriers." The fact must not be overlooked—it is evidence of a certain conformity to a law. Sculpture in stone is practised among the more highly developed nations only when wood no longer satisfies their need for great and monumental expression. But here, among the Ilifians, we find the art of carving in stone beginning with relatively petty things. Following the lines of everything taught us in the development of historical art, I cannot well help drawing the inference that the idea of working in stone was introduced by a people who felt themselves impelled to monumental expression, but that this idea had been taken up and surpassed by a nation still living on a generally petty scale, or, therefore, by Negritians. If the observation that the manufacture of cups originated in the weaving of basket work started this train of thought, it is greatly strengthened by the investigation of these stone stools.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the dexterity acquired in treating quartz and granite was very considerable. There is a quantity of eminently beautiful examples of such skill extant in these countries. A proof of it is the handle of an antique cup shown at the heading of this chapter, found by one of my native navvies on the hill of the old Ifa temple, the centre of the former Templum of Yorubaland. This is quartz, and wrought with quite unusual delicacy. Its carved figure has features recalling the old Egyptian effigies of the deity Bes. A terra-cotta reveals a cognate presentation. Apart from its workmanship, its disposition of design reminds one more of Central American than African treatment of space, surface and decoration. Nor must the fact that inscribed quartz blocks are to be found in Yoruba be forgotten. Unfortunately, the events detailed in Chapter I. prevented my acquiring them.

For all that, the discovery of Ebolokun and the Ebora must supersede the stone monuments in significance. These furnish proof that at some remote era glass was made and moulded in this very land, and that the nation which here of old held rule were brilliant exponents of apt dexterity in the production of terra-cotta images. The Ebora, or Molé, are terra-cotta heads and figures of various kinds. Ebolokun is to-day a vast forest, in whose depths

there are large jars of glazed porcelain. I heard the following legends of the Eboras:

There once was an old town called Illu-Olokun, that is, the Town of the Ruler of the Ocean, to the north of Ilifé. Our fathers before us have told us that in times long, long ago this city was surrounded by a lake to the South and a river on the North, by which one could get to the sea. Olokun, the Orisha, had founded this city before the creation of the earth. The Omo-Olokun, who long since then had been driven to the South, left behind them the tradition that it actually was Olokun who created the earth on which Ilifé stood. In former days he was the only god worshipped in Illu-Olokun and in Ilifé. The legendary name of the Sea God, Isindya's first priest, and of the first king, was Oba-Idyo. Illu-Olokun was believed to be the birthplace of all mankind, both fair and dark; the Europeans also came from there! As stated, the old city was known as Illu-Olokun. The place where once it stood is to-day called Igbo-Olokun, because a great Igbo, or forest, has overgrown it. But the name Ebolokun, or Ebo-olokun, *i.e.*, sacrifice to the Sea God, is commoner, because offerings are still laid before the Poseidon of Atlantic Africa under the palms in the forest.

The Ilifians, however, believe that the Ocean deity lives not only in the sea; but rather dwells also in the beds of the streams and the Niger itself is one of his favourite abodes. Nay, there was a myth current with the Ileshans according to which Olokun lived on a hill. But this also fits in with a tale told above, see page 240, in which Shankpanna changed Olokun into a hill at Olorun's command. I do not consider it advisable here to mention the site of Olokun's Holy Hill, about which the Ileshans fully informed me. I will limit myself to saying that it is obviously an old tumulus, which could be reached within comparatively recent times by a sacrificial path. I am told its interior is richly adorned. The natives declare that all its wall-coverings, all the headgear and body ornaments, in fact, all its decorations, are of gold. But from what I was able personally to gather I think this must be a mistake. It may even now, with almost positive certainty, be said that in the main it consists of bronze with only small quantities of the precious metal.

This Olokun is mightily important not for the Ilifians alone,

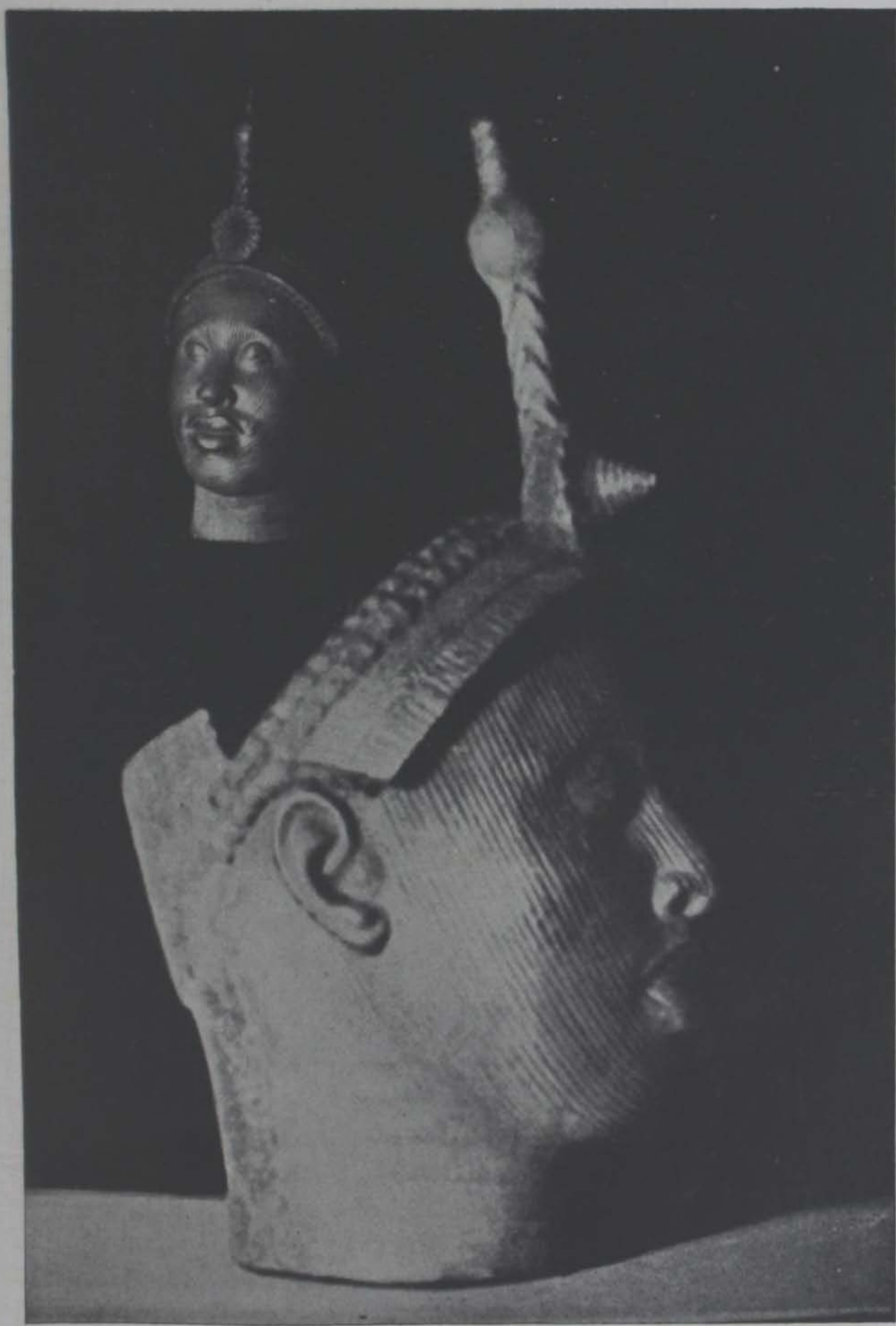
but for all the Yorubans dwelling near the coast. Thus even at present a peculiar yearly offering is made to Olo-olokun, the Lord of the Sea, or the Olokun of Lagos. Black bulls, black buck-goats, black chickens, black cloth, dark-coloured doves, are brought as sacrifices. And if floods should threaten the towns on the lagoons, it is credibly reported that two girls and two men are killed in absolute secrecy as sacrificial victims to the God, a long prayer is chanted and a lengthy ceremony performed as well. Then within three days the waters should subside.

Further legends hang around the greatest national sanctuaries of Ebolokun, which tell of a great gift left to mankind, by Olokun, say some, while others say its donors were Odudua and Obatalla. They, therefore, buried extremely precious pearls (beads), called by the Yorubans "Akká," but by the Nupés "Dukun-takun," the so-called "Illéke," or "Seggi," in large jars. The Divine Ones gave them to the people of Ilifé that they might grow richer than the rest of all mankind, and to the end that they make more splendid sacrifice unto the Gods. And since the Godhead that so buried them was mightier than the other Gods, at first no other God or member of another clan could get these pearls. The urns containing them were buried in a spot surrounded by a wall. Now, the other deities wanted gifts of equal value, and a split occurred between them, in which each one strove to uphold his own clan's claims. The first who came was Shango, but in the struggle he was worsted. Then Oja and then Ogun, etc., tried one after the other; but none could break through the wall surrounding the city. Now, once Edju went into the sky. He found the Ifa oracle. He learnt the wisdom and the meaning of the Odu. He was told that two women, two goats and cowries must be immolated. Edju offered up these victims. He found the entrance to the city. He came upon no hindrance. He discovered a hole in the earth leading to a great cave. He could put his hand inside, and found what it contained. He took out the pearls and gave them to the Oni, who would use them as money wherewith to get the sacrificial beasts to furnish forth the banquets of the Gods. Since that had happened, these pearls had been found in quantities each year, and spent in buying offerings and defraying the expenses of the Oni. And this is the reason why goats, sheep, cows,

tortoises and snails, as well as palm-wine, are offered up at the great annual festival, no longer, indeed, to Olokun, but Oshalla and Odudua. One thing forbidden to those who make such tribute is the dog, and another, meeting on the way to sacrifice at the temples of Odudua and Oshalla, or drinking palm-wine within the sanctuary of Odudua, which is named Dio or Nidi.

Although, then, the worship and possession are nominally in the hands of the Oshalla-Odudua clan, the historical phenomenon thereby implied remains far from complete. The South-Eastern Olokun adherents say that Olokun built the shrine, and that it belongs to them, as every Yoruban knew and many of them also told me the Odudua-Oshalla's kith and kin had once upon a time discovered the shrine and hit upon the holy secret very simply. Once a certain man had his farm there, and one day was pounding down his sweet potatoes. All of a sudden his pile had sunk into the earth, and when he went to find out why this had happened, he found the jars containing pearls in a cavity below. The first pot was in a cave. Then the Oshalla-Odudua said the pearls came from their Orisha. But every Yoruban knows that Ille-Olokun could not have been made by Oshalla-Odudua, and all Yorubans in fact agreed. The title to the grove vests in the Omo-Olokun, whose Ewuo is as follows: Firstly, not to be tattooed; secondly, never to speak of the mysteries of the Ebo-Olokun; thirdly, never to allow themselves to be seen when going to the bush to dig. They have no regular food-taboo. It should be noted that the Olokun family are no longer within the city, but expelled from it, and that consequently in the eyes of the Ilifians the entire sanctuary is accessible to everyone.

What, then, is this curious, much-contested Ebolokun? It undoubtedly makes the impression of an ancient cemetery, about a mile or more to the North of Ilifé. It is about half a mile broad, did hide, and still in fact hides, quite unique treasure. A great mass of timber has overgrown it. I had a great many shafts driven under Martius' directions. We went down for some eighteen feet or so, near the ground water, and can report as follows, viz.: The top layer consisted of about two and a half feet of extraordinary hard and compacted soil. Even in this we turned up several glazed



Bronze head of Olokun, full face and profile.
(Photo by Leo Frobenius.)

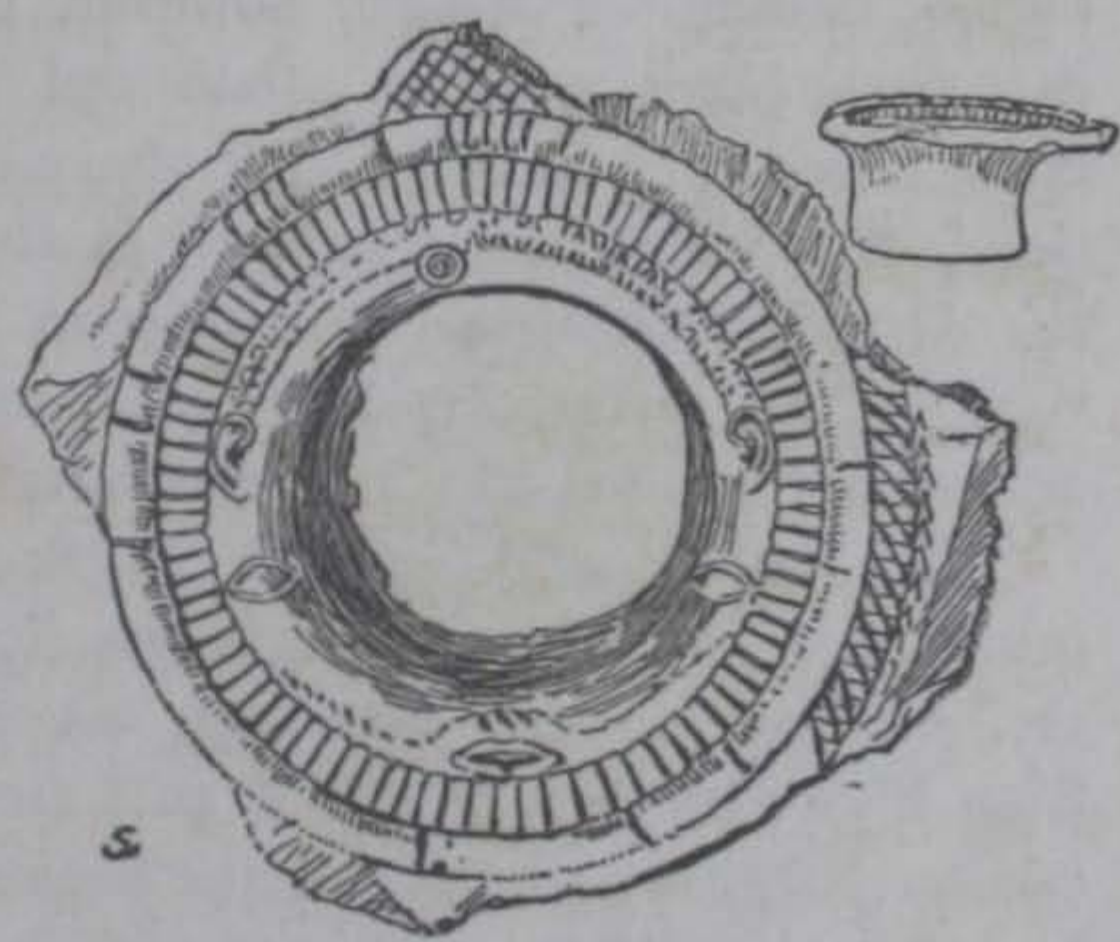
[*Facing p.* 308.

potsherds. Beneath that there was a layer of apparently suitable red and thoroughly homogeneous fire-clay, in which were embedded soft and decomposed quartz lumps, easily breakable with our picks. At about six and a half feet, however, we found pottery. But the actual adit averaged about eighteen feet below the surface. For we came upon charcoal and ash heaps at this depth. This thoroughly verifies the native statements as to finding either pearl jars or ashes so far down. The old excavation made by the inhabitants reached from twelve to twenty-four feet, or thereabouts. The jars, if whole or partly so, are said to be in a cavern, and next to them other vessels and images of terra-cotta, called Ebora or Molé. The substance of the pots is a sort of cement or stoneware or porcelain. They are from fourteen to twenty-four inches high and from ten and three-quarters to sixteen inches in diameter. They are generally oviform. The aperture is at the wider and upper end and their walls from about three-quarters to one and a quarter inches thick. The upper of these portions is covered with an irregular glaze varying from one-thirty-sixth to one-eighteenth of an inch thick inside. They were similarly glazed outside, as the edges prove, but this has perished. They never have a definitely flat upper side. A convexly curved plate or cupola, in which there are three or four holes for finger holds, serve as the lids. Inside them are glass beads, rings, irregular bits of glass tube, and always at the bottom a mass of fused bits of glass from one-eighth to one quarter of an inch in depth. The colours of the beads and the glaze on the jars vary from light green, greenish white, dark red, brown and blue. In determining the use to which such urns were put, it is essential to know that the cracks in these jars are filled with the vitreous substance of which the inner and outer glaze is composed. Professor Schäfer's inference is that they were used as crucibles for melting glass. This is a noticeable suggestion, although the small mouth of these vessels scarcely seems appropriate for this purpose. The great mass of potsherds, lumps of glass, heaps of slag, etc., we found proves at all events that the glass industry flourished in this locality in ages past. It is plain that the glass beads found to have been so very common in Africa were not only not imported, but were actually manufactured in great quantities at home.

The Ebora, or Molé, consisting of all kinds of terra-cottas, are almost of greater importance than the finds of glass and stoneware and they rise from the simplest little pots and saucers to the most artistic shapes and portraiture. There is, for instance, specimen No. 5, on page 311, which would seem to be the mouth or collar of an urn. On its inner edge there is a mouth below, an ear on either side, and a pair of eyes. The native explanation is quite satisfactory, but they are unable to say what its former use could have been. It looks almost as if this was a portion of a tube which may have been put over a grave, through which offerings might be made to the dead beneath, as though it were a mouth. Other specimens found in Ebolokun and Ifé represent heads.

Before, however, going more fully into these, the most important of our discoveries, I must describe that singular heirloom of antiquity, known as the head of Olokun, the Divine. Two plates are given of this. It measures fourteen and a half inches from the tip of the diadem to the neck line; the face from the edge of the forehead to the chin, sixteen and three-quarter inches. It is cast in what we call "*à cire perdue*," or hollow cast, and very finely chased indeed, like the finest Roman examples. It cannot be said to be "negro" in countenance, although it is covered with quite fine tattooed lines, which at once contradicts any suggestion of its having been brought from abroad. The setting of the lips, the shape of the ears, the contour of the face, all prove, if separately examined, the perfection of a work of true art, which the whole of it obviously is. The diadem surrounding the head is specially remarkable. There is a flower in its centre, behind which rises an entwined staff, ending in a button.

This crown reminds me involuntarily of some works of art found in Sardinia, where artistic skill in terra-cotta was brought to very great and wonderful perfection. My brother sketched two of these masklike images at Cagliari in 1910. I found several similar ones both in the Tunis museum and in Sardinia. The style of feature varies between the Greek and the Egyptian. Most of the heads are tattooed, some in strokes, others in bunches. A typical "negro" is once so figured. The two specimens shown on Plate V. of Archæological Treasures are numbered 5,214 and 20,848 in the Cagliari Museum. One has four and the other five tattoo lines running



Terra-cottas found at Ilifé. 1. Part of a vessel with man and owl, 4⅜ in. high. 2. Richly-robed torso, 4 in. high. 3. Fragment of richly-ornamented torso, 6¾ in. high. 4. Foot on pedestal, 6¾ in. high. 5. Jar-collar (?) with tattooed mouth, ears and forehead (*v.* opposite page), diameter of outer ring, 5½ in.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

across the cheeks. On the first there is a band running right across the forehead, with an obvious flower in its centre, above which there is a bud. The second one again shows the diadem band and several blooms, also ending in a bud. I should like just to mention that I found a terra-cotta head in Ifé decorated with two incised flowers and buds like those on the Olokun. This specimen is, however, not fine in execution, but undoubtedly antique, and therefore important.

Thus, then, we know of two places near the African Coast where the terra-cotta industry was not only in a state of high development, but where the details of its execution corresponded, as instanced by the diadem bearing flowers and buds. We are, however, completely ignorant who the people producing these works of art either in North or West Africa were. Their attribution to the Phœnicians is due rather to a traditional habit of glorifying this nation than to a critical judgment of its actual productive capacity.

One thing more must be said about this head of the Lord of the Sea, viz.: When it was exhumed a piece broke off at a corner, and this showed that iron pegs had been inserted in it. These may, of course, have served to hold it together in the process of hollow casting. I would, however, point out, on the other hand, that these brads were set as hair and as hair ornament in the terra-cotta heads in holes made for the purpose. I, therefore, establish the fact that I found iron curls in the granite Idena, iron nails on the Oranja toothstone, iron pegs in the Olokun bronze, and iron curls in the terra-cottas. That, then, means that in that remote period people used iron as a decorative material!

The noble work of art in bronze which the dark-skinned inhabitants of Africa brought to light has been thoroughly examined, and we can now pass on to the terra-cottas obtained from Ebolokun in part, and in part from the depths of Ilifé. These can be placed by the side of the bronze as equal in importance, and perhaps of still greater beauty. These heads are reproduced on several plates. Their "infinite variety" is apparent, and I need not particularize. Every observer will see that they are patently portraits. They differ both in type and in treatment. One of them is an absolute negro, the others are so far removed from that

Below: Drawings of Olokun head, by Carl Arriens. Above: Sketches of ancient terra-cotta masks in Cagliari, Sardinia, by Herman Frobenius. Compare the head ornaments.

[*Facing p. 312.*

type as to make one think of Libyans and Berbers. And the more aristocratic heads are those which are finer in execution. But it is more especially the tattooing and the general expression of all the better examples which correspond exactly with the Olokun character. I do not think there can be the least doubt but that we are faced with a form of local art, whose perfection is absolutely astounding. And that head in particular, named "Mia" by the natives (why I do not know), must be regarded as the most important hitherto found on African ground and as the finest work of art so far discovered outside the narrow Nile valley on the further side of the old Roman jurisdiction. We may look upon the uniformity and pitch of excellence attained in portraiture as the most significant indication of the success attending our exploration.

There remain yet further observations to be made with respect to these remains of ancient epochs. The dresses must have been very rich and handsome. The torso, Fig. 2, on page 311, in especial, shows a noteworthy completeness. In the holes, scattered on the breast-plate and shoulder-piece, there were, perhaps, formerly inserted metal or iron pegs as ornaments. The end of the garment thrown over the shoulder is patterned like the old textures. We shall have to remember that the weavers' art had already produced such lovely things when we come to treat of Yoruban handicraft.

Among our terra-cottas some may have served as pedestals for the busts (see Fig. 7 on page 315). Again, we find a peculiar fragment, belonging possibly to some sort of vessel (see page 311, Fig. 1). On one side we see an owl, whose hooked beak is badly damaged, on the other a complete figure holding a weapon. This one recalls the quartz handle at the head of this chapter, and also of Bes effigies. Now, Bes was known not as an Egyptian God, but one imported from the valley of the Nile.

All these things, and some to come, are found at a depth of from about eighteen to twenty-four feet in Obolokun, and in the city under old walls, trees and in sacred enclosures. I should like to bring my descriptive remarks to a close by reference to the head-piece of Chapter XV. This shows, on a fired, square, thin plaque a crocodile in the shape of the letter S, so shaped that it seems to finish in a tightly bound head. The details are not easily seen. But the position of the legs seems to indicate that the beast is tied

there with cords, and meant to seem fastened to the surface, with a sort of hood over its eyes, ending in string-work and tassels as if in a cunningly made basket. The other flat side shows a rearward projection on its top, which explains the meaning and nature of the piece. It is an antique tile unearthed by Martius, the industrious, from the rubbish of the Oni's old palace. Various other bits came from the same corner, tubes with strange herringbone patterns, and obviously ramlike heads. These are less careful in execution than the tile. They could thus only be effective at a distance in a large frame, so to say. The place of their discovery, *inter alia*, shows that these were parts of the building of the Oni's former castle. As a matter of actual fact, the walls of the present edifice rest on foundations made not of sun-dried but of fire-burnt bricks. Its front—and this is a most significant fact—to-day presents in the main precisely identical features with those of the building erected at the period when this civilization was budding. The tile is an index of its decorative external beauty, just as the foundations may be hailed as the preservation of the original construction. And thus we have made a considerable step towards knowledge of the ancient architecture of an era which is replete with so much archæological interest.

The conclusion we draw, then, is that the ancient architecture was the same as that of to-day; that the technical summit of that civilization was reached in the terra-cotta industry and that the most important achievements of art were not expressed in stone, but in fine clay baked in the furnace; that hollow casting was thoroughly known to, and practised by, these people; that iron was mainly used for decoration; that, whatever their purpose, they kept their glass beads in stoneware urns within their own locality, and that they manufactured both earthen and glass ware; that the art of weaving was highly developed among them; that the stone monuments, it is true, show some dexterity in handling and are so far instructive, but in other respects evidence a cultural condition insufficiently matured to grasp the utility of stone as monumental material, and, above all, that the then great and significant idea of the universe as imaged in the Templum was current in those days.

* * * * * * * *

Terra-cottas found in Ilifé, apparently architectural ornament. 1. Head of an animal, 4⅜ in. long. 2. Ram's head, 4¾ in. long. 3. Ditto, 6¾ in. high. 4. Ditto, 7¼ in. high. 5—6. Pipes; the first 15⅛ in., the other 10¾ in. in circumference. 7*a*. Fragment of a stand (?) about 7⅛ in. broad, restored in 7*b*.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

We ought also now to discuss the question whether these ancient relics can be brought into any sort of relation with the growth of civilization in an ascending scale in ancient or more recent times which perhaps lead up to our own.

First of all, I must state that the discoveries made during the excavations and explorations by me and my friends from 1910 to 1912 in Ifé or Yoruba in general, disclosed nothing affording a clue for thinking that this great skill in art had been developed autogenetically, *i.e.*, spontaneously in the country itself. If really older types which could be considered as a more primitive expression had been in existence—forerunners, as it were, and starting-points of perfected terra-cotta art—I think I should have come across them somewhere, because the natives are themselves very keen on the disco.ery of ancient things. There was, however, absolutely nothing which could be regarded as being even anywhere near a "gradus ad Parnassum" to the heights of Ilifé. The terra-cottas, the bronze, the tiles, the stoneware jars, face us as types of perfection. Up to the present there is no proof of any more ancient stratum.

And although the fact of many hundreds of specimens from all over the country having passed through my hands may mean a good deal, it does not exclude the possibility of its existence. On the contrary, it is quite possible that some day or other a find will be made somewhere on the coast or in the interior or the woods or lagoons which will permit of the excavation of older, more original, and less homogeneous forms. At all events, up to now we are not entitled to claim what has been found as being autogenetic. So far, an antecedent development has been lacking, and thus the local impression one gains is that this noble legacy of civilization, introduced from afar, very quickly reached the apex of its characteristic perfection.

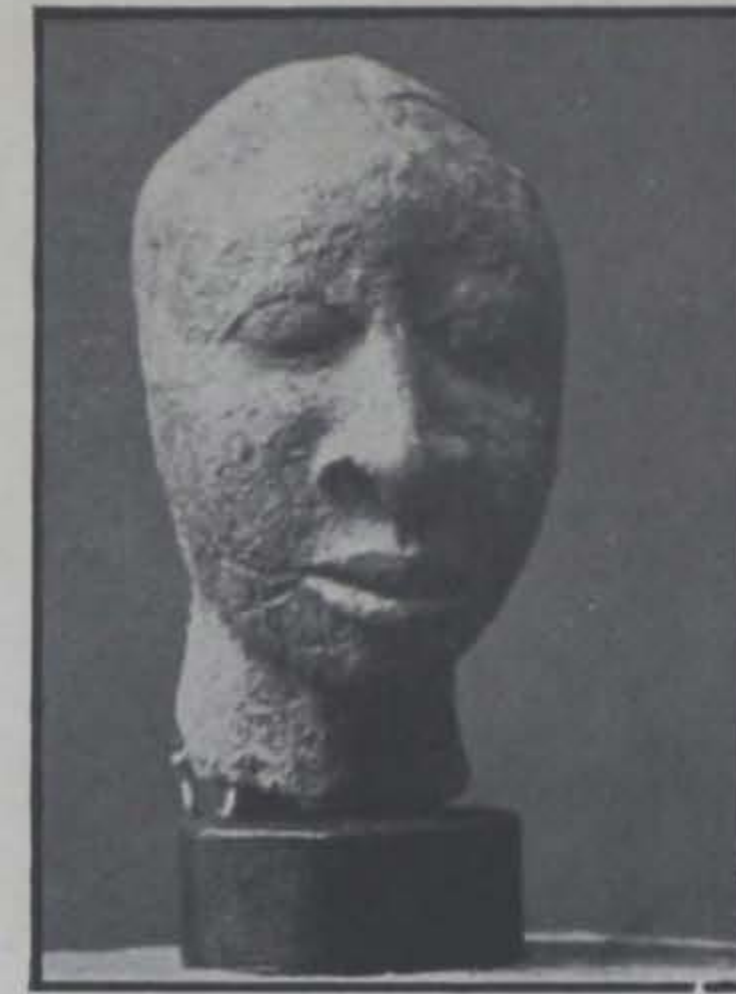
Whether, however, the tremulous afterpains of the birth of an older civilization may not, even in our own age, be perceptible is a question which must be answered in the affirmative. The continual effectiveness of the conception of the universe expressed in the worship of Ifa, in the ritual and intellectual life of this people, was proved to demonstration in Chapter XIII. The persistency of its foundational principle is easily evidenced by comparison of

the present architectural system with the ground-plan of the Oni's palace, shown to be undoubtedly very antique. All that is wanting is its decoration with tiles and other terra-cotta ornament. Taken as a whole, the structure conveys the impression of grandeur in decay. I shall have to work up the picture in detail in the following chapter. Besides this we can say that, although in Yoruba itself the production of terra-cottas no longer exists, the art of modelling in wax and the subsequent hollow casting in bronze survive to this hour.

Needless to say, Benin is the city which affords the best information in respect of casting in bronze on account of its wealth of monumental possessions. Many a head no less perfect in its technique and undoubtedly of great beauty, though not equal to the old classical style of the "Mia" in brilliancy of charm, has been unearthed from the *débris* of Benin. Comparing its treasures with each other it will be seen that all the finer specimens, all the examples of old plaque work, verifiable as to date, are more finely handled, more perfect in finish, and more intelligently put together than those of the more recent Dutch period. And the latter in their turn surpass everything of modern manufacture, both in their make and design. Now, as a matter of course, antique bronzes are particularly scarce. The Ashantis told me of a law according to which all royal articles of bronze and of gold, except such as went into the tomb of the king, were recast after his death. But, as their form very plainly shows, the process did not improve them artistically, but brought about a shallowness and ended in what, for want of a better term, may be called "negrification." The production of bronzes to-day must be declared to be thoroughly "niggerish" and at a very low level. The enormously increasing importation of brass cannot alone be made responsible. This importation undoubtedly influenced art detrimentally, and since its material was less costly than of yore its employment grew vulgarized trivially. What was formerly as precious as gold sank to the value of nickel. Many incapable craftsmen and undexterous fingers made use of this mass of material. Surely the result of all this must be noticeable. But the influence so exercised fails to explain altogether the absolute death of the culture which was steadily growing from the era of Olokun down to these days of our own.

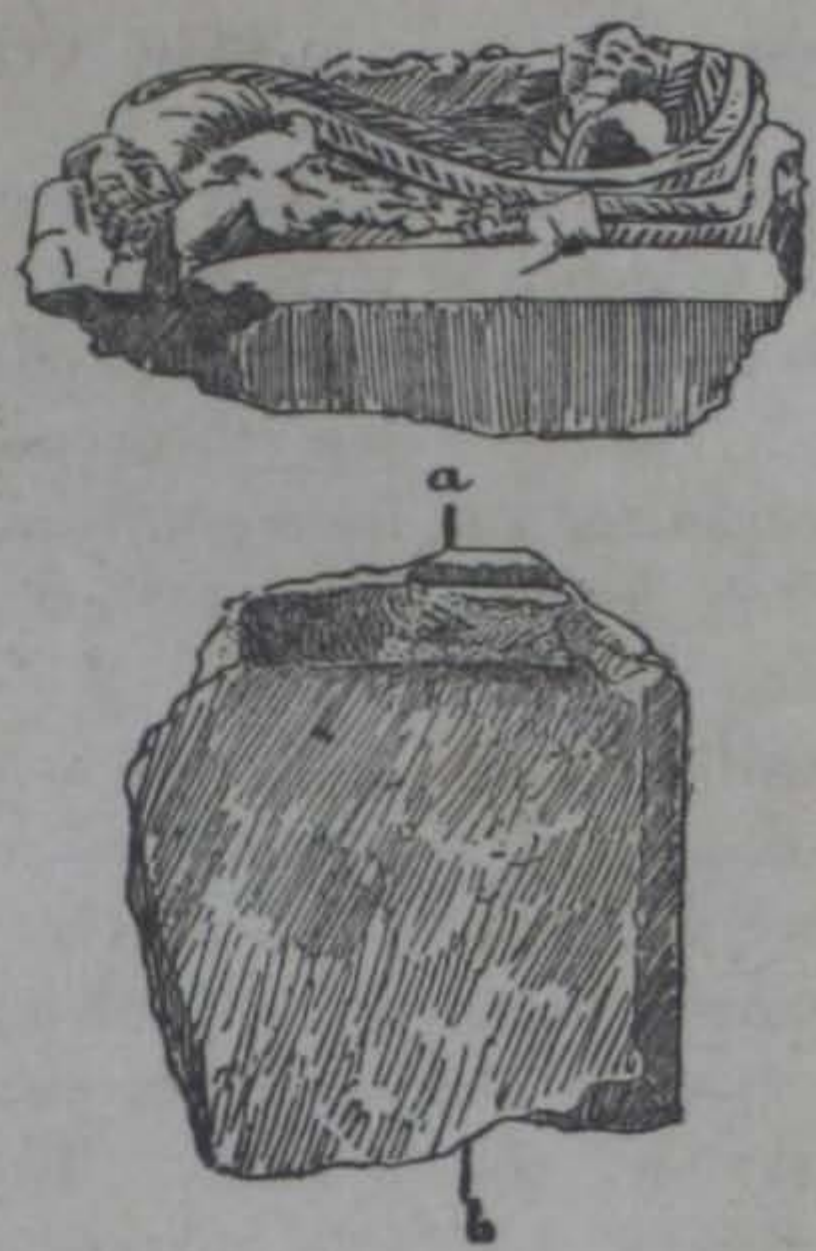
And the same art degeneration can be seen in the sculptures of stone. The antiques were of granite and quartz. I found one head of an ape, obviously ancient in date, which was made out of steatite. But ancient art as a rule would have nothing to say to soapstone. Now, modern "fakes" are all carved in steatite, and one is struck with their coarseness and African clumsiness, tastelessness and lack of distinction. Excavations I undertook in the district of Offa allow me to state that there, too, in recent times, that is, about the Dutch period, stone images were manufactured larger in size than those in Ilifé. The accompanying plates bear witness to the fact that they show the greatest partiality for dressing the hair and ornamenting it as fantastically as might be, exactly as happens with the Benin bronzes of the same period. They are, however, so poor and degenerate in form as to possess no importance as works of art, but may well serve as documentary evidence of decadence in steatite shape.

Yet in the whole of the course of its development downwards the forms, as such, retained much of the basic idea. We see these same hollow bronzes and terra-cottas open at the top and cut off at the neck, as in the Olokun; once more in the older and finer bronzes of Benin and finally botched together in the very worst modern workmanship, finding their way as alleged Benin bronzes to the insatiable curio market. There is, then, discernible a well-marked descent in which we, who look backwards, are so far unable to prove the existence of any tendency upwards. Thus, in the same way as the mighty architectural proportions of the Palace of the Oni dwindled away to the miserable forms shown in the abodes of the deity, the great art of Ilifé guttered down to modern factory products. The great era flowered; its art became "negrofied." This is the pregnant result of our inquiry into the growth of the flower of art in Atlantis.



Portrait-heads in terra-cotta, excavated by the German Inner African Exploration Expedition, December, 1910, about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ natural size.

[*Facing p.* 318.



Terra-cotta tile, 5¼ in. high. Formerly one of a long row ornamenting façade of Oni's palace.

(Drawn by Carl Arriens.)

CHAPTER XV

ATLANTIS

Recapitulation—Connection of Yoruban civilization with Africa (architecture, arms, dress, religion, stone bead industry)—Age of Yoruban civilization—The Phœnician problem—Historical notes on the Etruscans and the "Western Powers" of the Mediterranean in the thirteenth century B.C.—The romance of Atlantis—Its peculiarities—Tasks for other explorers.

THE road on which we started with describing our wanderings and first encounter with the tough spirit of the Yorubans has been till now a long one, and all kinds of pictures, so curious of their kind, have risen up to the right and the left of it as to warrant their being once more recalled to our memory. The soul of this people appeals to us as being so originally un-African, because of the unanimous consciousness which they show for the common inheritance of their clans—a consciousness lacking in purely African families and possessed only by tribes or, if so great an idea is permissible in this connection, by peoples doing battle for the

preservation of their paternal and national temples, but never in evidence in mere groups of individuals such as these clans. This is not a " negro " quality of mind !

Then we saw them educating their posterity on lines well organized and from points of view carefully considered ; not merely from feeling, as is usual with " children of Nature," but knowingly and logically. Then we examined the functions of their state-craft, in which the helm was systematically held in the weighty hands of archaic associative institutions and clan representatives ; and we particularly noticed that this entire people presents a religious, clearly-circumscribed and highly-developed organization of society, of which the units are the clans descendent from the highest, namely, the Orishas. These, however, are not the tottering, diabolic, African grotesques, but well-formed, actual, godlike shapes, wreathed with legends, hallowed and distinguished by separate rituals, the offspring of Great Nature's womb, ruling with well-ordered laws the companionship of their posterity and ever recreated there in human form. The Lordship of these Gods is the Mighty Thunderer, clothed in the transparent drapery of a sun-myth, who, with his double-headed axe and symbol of a ram, bears so close a likeness to the Over-lord of Northern nations in the dim and legendary Past.

And, after that, we inquired into their methods of divination and the meaning of their primitive myths, and were surprised here to find an exalted idea of the universe, in which the State and its clan-units, the past ages and the present times, the dead and the living were combined. It is a system whose equal in consistency of conception is only paralleled among the famous Etruscans of legendary Rome. The centre of this antique Templum, within whose frame the world of Gods, sixteen in number, is enclosed in habitations suited to their respective powers, finds crystallized expression in the ancient Holy City, the fastness of the Sea God, the Holy City from whose soil relics of classic beauty, specimens of an older form of art and proofs of long-lost craftsmanship can be extracted.

The path we trod took time. Yet, in travelling it, we learnt of things whose inwardness cast vivid light upon the history of man-kind's growth. For all these descriptions and observations justify

Head of "Mia," excavated in Ifé by the German Inner African Exploration Expedition, 1910. Natural size, 6½ in.

[*Facing p.* 320.

the inference that we have now become acquainted with a nation and a cultured system whose two main features are, on the one hand, majestic homogeneity, splendid uniformity and dignified perfection, and, on the other, astounding independence and intelligibility of style. Now, since this civilization has its home on the Atlantic Ocean's shores, I shall begin by calling it "Atlantic," and will now give my reasons for venturing so to name it, even in the historical sense attaching to the word "Atlantic."

In any case, the problem of the possible origin of this Atlantic civilization, which has obviously so long and successfully held its own against disintegration, calls for its solution. The fact is in itself amazing. Every form of culture which has approached this Western Coast, be it on the continental high road or from seawards, perished from its advent onwards almost so completely as to leave only some outward indications of its pre-existence in its wake. It is immaterial whether we direct our gaze upon the traces of European settlements during the last four centuries, or upon the possibly more essential influences of Islam which were repeatedly thrust forward from the Interior to the very edge of this œcumenical realm. Where once stood fanes and churches in San Salvador within the Christian Congo Empire of the Middle Ages, the saints then introduced continue their existence, but only in the shape of miserable fetishes. And where Islam still possessed, not very long ago, its mosques and schools, the people only know the use of Safis, or sentences from the Koran, which, written on paper slips and bound in gaily coloured leather cases, serve as special amulets of magic power. The essence perished and nothing but outward, feeble symbolism survived.

How vastly different is the immeasurably older Atlantic culture of Yoruba, whose conception of the universe and deific system, whose social law and clan formation, architecture and industrial manufactures continue to exist in easily recognizable and independent forms, albeit they have lost the freshness of their youth! This is a mighty factor for all who have studied and everywhere observed the flattening, corruptive, and "negrofying" tendency of African civilizations. The godlike fortress of the sixteen-membered Ifa religion is enthroned, a solitary and sumptuous castle, on a hill, rearing its front on high above the lower levels of African

spiritual debasement, and whose shining light illumines the spreading plains of this vast Continent.

At present, the question of the connection, the origin and the sphere of influence of this unique phenomenon is of all-important significance in the historical record of African civilization.

* * * * * * * *

The Relationship of Atlantic Yoruban Civilization in Africa Proper

In discussing this, I, in the first place, maintain that Yoruban civilization must, in its present form, be unhesitatingly declared to be essentially African. By this I mean to say that it not only rests upon the surface of African soil like a bubble blown from abroad which a breath can also dispel, but, rather, that it is actually incorporated with it. It is as much an integral part of, as deeply rooted in, the body and soul of the Yorubans themselves as the terra-cottas are part and parcel of the homogeneous soil of Yorubaland. Here there is a state of culture which has been realized in flesh and blood, drawing the breath of life from its aboriginal form. We are, then, faced with the question whether it was here developed or transplanted hither, *i.e.*, whether we are to regard it as autogenetic, or in symphonic relation to foreign civilizations. The question is, did it originate in this country itself, or, if it was brought from beyond, which was the road that it took?

And it can, moreover, be proved beyond question that this civilization has its cognate expression. We saw how delicately and sublimely, how carefully cultivated to ripeness, the Templum ideal, the notion of the interdependence of the world-structure, was among the Yorubans, and, only to mention the instance closest to hand, we found its counterpart among the ancient Etruscans. This close correspondence implies their original twinship. And its assumed correctness is all the more justified because the Yoruban philosophy must have been born and nourished on a pre-Christian, primeval foundation, which, considering the discoveries and statements made in Ilifé, must also, chronistically and essentially, have been coeval with the condition of ancient Etruscan civilization. Our

Stone heads from Northern Yoruba, excavated by German Inner African Exploration Expedition, January, 1912. Some of these are made life-size.

[*Facing p.* 322.

own task will consist in further testing this relationship later on. But we will use it at first as a working hypothesis and pass on to the second question, namely, whether the assumed connection with this Etruscan civilization, also widely prevalent in the Atlantic region, reached it by way of the continent, that is, by crossing it, or by way of passage by the sea, that is, through the Pillars of Hercules or Straits of Gibraltar.

It will be as well in posing this problem to commence its practical discussion by glancing at the general basic principle of the geography of culture. It is common ground that the modern history of ethnology and culture has its beginning in a dogmatic contest between two sharply divided parties, one of which, starting with the assumption of a once-existing general level of civilizations all the world over, maintains the development of each separate one independently of the rest, while the other side, taking its stand on the meagre capacity of ordinary humanity for self-development, would have it that separate civilizations could only be explained by connected relativity and, therefore, by transference. I call this first form of locally circumscribed civilization, autogenetic; the second one, which is the result of concurrent transmission, symphonic. It must, of course, be self-evident that there is no such thing as an absolute division of autogenetic from symphonic culture. It may, as a general proposition, be taken for granted that every development in civilization corresponds with a movement in space. When, for instance, a people with well-marked propensities and neighbourly relations migrates from its own habitation and settles in other districts with dissimilar characteristics, it will alter its own civilization by adapting it to the people and circumstances of its adopted environment. And, equally, a cultural transformation and growth must be presumed to take place when the neighbours and the outside influences they bring to bear, suffer any change. All things, then, considered, we may say that change of locality in civilization or peoples is followed rather by autogenetic development, whereas symphonic development is rather the result of shifting external relations.

All such phenomena, however, elude classification under a small number of general laws in view of the fluctuating character of particular civilizations. Every question so arising must be judged

on its separate merits. I have made an attempt to establish a systematic investigation on this basis in "Petermann's Communications" and "Origin of African Civilization," then in the little book, "Problems of Culture," and, finally, in the small volume, "Types of Civilization in Western Soudan," since 1898, a method of research founded on the constant examination of several characteristic indications of well-marked civilizations, both in their geographical distribution and transformation in separate provinces, rather than on the foreign influences to which they were subject. At that time I had no difficulty in concluding that most of the mutual relations of culture were proved in their birth, extension and change. The demonstration of similar occurrences in the historical unfolding of certain circles of civilization results in a picture of its relativity. No essential progress in the methodical field can be reported since then, and a difference of opinion as to the method pursuable is, as a matter of fact, far less important than its justification by the light of increased illustration. I will try to trace a few lines for direction in what follows.

Now, leaving the simple theory aside, let us propound the question of the relation in which the Atlantic civilization of Yoruba stood to the others existing in Africa, that is to say, where there are others akin to it, either as donors or recipients. Yoruban culture offers many extremely weighty points of contact for such comparative investigation.

I lay the utmost stress upon the fact, which will subsequently be fully proved, that the territorial influence of specially Yoruban civilization retrogressed during the last few centuries exactly as its works of art lost their vitality. In precisely the same manner as this people knew how to produce marvellous artistic creations in an old and prehistoric period, which ran through a plainly visible course of degeneration down to to-day, so also has its sphere of influence dwindled away from its eminent ancient extent till it reached the miserable level it occupies now. This process of becoming stunted and restricted is even observable in the legends, especially in those woven about the "glorious" city of Benin. The veteran traveller, Römer, heard even in 1759 that the Gold Coast was said to have been a part of the great Empire of Benin, whose might had formerly stretched to the banks of the

Gambia river, and thus comprised the whole of Upper and Northern Guinea to the West. But southwards and eastwards the imperial power was said to have extended still further. According to a memory still alive in the Idjo nation, the Yorubans in days of old went on sea voyages which lasted a year before they came home again. These were made chiefly to the South for the collection of tribute raised by the Emperor of Benin in these latitudes. It is easy enough to connect these traditions, which are clear and plain of their kind, with the actual spread of certain ethnographical peculiarities. It will be my business, later on, to prove that this vast Atlantic kingdom of Guinea extended in reality from Gambia to Angola. And if, perhaps, this jurisdiction of a single realm with a single centre was nothing but a transient historical phenomenon, the fact that it was just this Atlantic culture which, even in times not so very remote, had embraced the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, is not only expressed in legendary forms, but evidenced by the dissemination of all kinds of ritual appurtenance. It was a civilization whose essential nature drew it seawards, drew it to the coasts. It is the voice of Atlantic civilization of the Middle Ages we still hear in local traditions and which must have been the later flower of Atlantic culture known to antiquity, because in this era of the so-called Empire of Benin its art-products were not the same as they had been of old, and for the reason that all their conceptions were no longer able to spread themselves abroad with the same exceptional vigour with which they, even at present, make themselves felt in the motherland of the Interior.

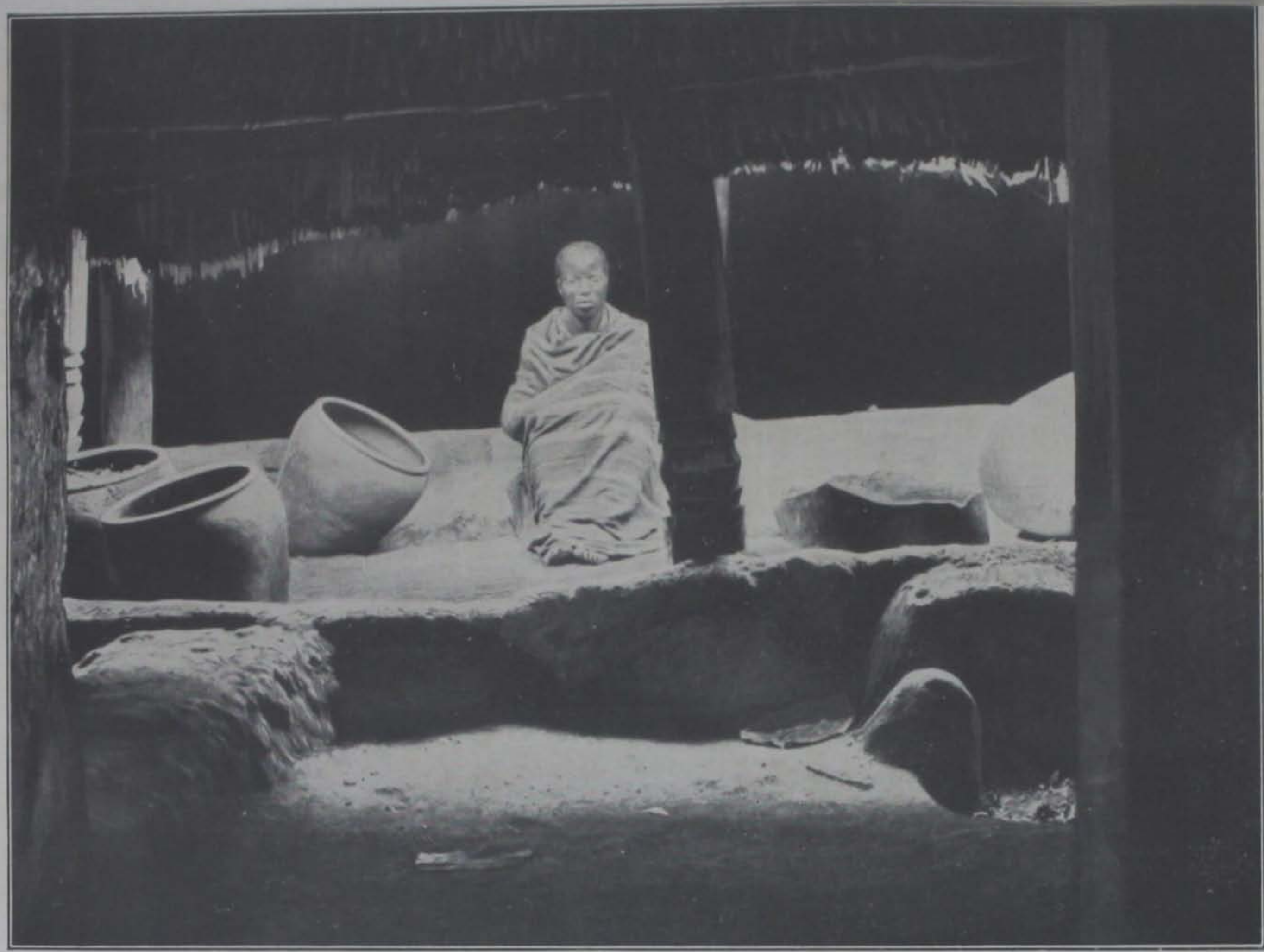
This being established in fact, we now ask what is the relation in which this coastal civilization, this extension of power along the littoral, stands to the Interior. Historically considered, it cannot be said that proof of any such connection exists. Perusal of all the ancient and mediæval records still in preservation and, thus, all classical accounts, all the stories of Arabian explorers, all the notes written down by the pupils themselves of the Mahommedan schools in the land, furnish no indications of the existence on the West Coast of Africa of any power or civilization which hinted at a high road of communication over the vast surface of this continent. All that we know with regard to the interior of North Africa is that there were considerable kingdoms and civilized regions on the

southern fringe of the Sahara which were in connection with the North. There is no trace in literature of knowledge of the continent's Western edge acquired in the North by way of the overland route. And, therefore, there is no historical association to be found which is based on an overland road from the North.

The question whether there may not have been some kind of quiet and unobserved civilizing influences at work, which combined the interior with the countries on the Atlantic side, puts a different complexion on things. There is no actual difficulty in proving the existence of relations between the sphere of Atlantic culture and the growth of the civilization proper to Inner and Northern Africa. We will now bring forward these proofs and, guided by the material so furnished, put to the test the extent to which a trans-continental connection unrecorded in history may have tacitly existed, and what was the autogenetic or symphonic significance possessed by such a connection.

1. Water Storage Construction

It is a self-evident proposition that a nation ruled by such a remarkable religion and philosophy, such an idiosyncratic ritual cult, and other such signs of an independent civilization, should also show some individual symptoms in the forms of its housing arrangements. I select compounds three and four out of the copious matter sketched by my colleague Martius; a schematized drawing, an idealized construction precedes them, and with the help of these the way in which the Yorubans are housed may easily be imagined. Every Yoruban compound is surrounded by a great wall, to which all kinds of edifices, in the shape of elongated chambers, are attached inside, but in its centre there is before all other things a double-fronted chief edifice. All the dwelling-rooms really consist of long clay boxes. Every separate apartment is ceiled with rafters and covered with beaten clay. Over this cover there is the mighty saddle-back roof made of poles and foliage, which drops far beyond the walls and is supported by posts. This makes a veranda, through which one must go to get to the actual rooms. In the frontispiece, a view of the Shango temple in colour, Arriens, my artist, has most



Peep into a Yoruban rain-shed yard.
(Photo by Leo Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 326.

excellently rendered the vista along the veranda and the rafter-work. But the relation of the roof—timber covering the clay box-buildings—to the edifice in the middle, is very singular. This always has two little yards next to each other at right angles to the surrounding buildings. Those parts of the roof which overhang this part of the building form galleries and two water-sheds inwards. These rain-collecting constructions, of which compound No. 4 is an excellent example, are the main feature and characteristic of the Yoruban style.

This method of construction is an essential departure from the circular Inner African hut and the pitched roofs of the West Africans. It combines the clay-box form common to the North, the Sahara and the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, with the saddle-back style so extensively prevalent on the West Coast. Clay buildings such as those on the Northern shores and inland of Africa could not last long under the heavy rains of the Atlantic coast, but had to be protected by roofs raised on them, and, to effect this object, use was made of the suitable light pole timber and foliage so freely offered by Nature and which almost all West Africans turn to account. Putting aside, then, the ridge roof, what remains is the clay box, or let us call it, the Tembe fashion, as the prime particularity. The two distinctive rain-shed yards are things which peculiarly differentiate the Yoruban Tembe style of building from that favoured by the other dark peoples of the West side of the Continent. These " impluvia " are only common in those Atlantic regions where there are other copious indications of cultural relations with the Yorubans, namely, among the tribes of the Cameroon pasture lands and the Ashantees. We have thus to ask ourselves whence did the Yorubans get this rain-collecting variant of the Tembe style ?

The fact that this Tembe style cannot possibly have originated in West Africa because the tropical rains would have washed off the " lid " so to say, must be especially borne in mind. This method, then, of building is not native to the soil. It could only endure by erecting the ridge roof over it in the West African manner ; but it could not be further developed here.

A considerable amount of the Continent has to be crossed before reaching the lands bordering on the Atlas Range, namely,

Morocco and Algeria, in order to light upon any buildings closely akin in their style to the Yoruban. There is a drawing on the plate referred to of such an "impluvial" edifice from the Zab in Southern Algeria. Excepting that this has two stories (but there are also one-storied such houses), it is clear that the adaptation to water-storage purposes is the same as that obtaining in the edifices in the regions of the Atlantic. Here we also find the columns surrounding the courtyard and the characteristic veranda between the house and the inner court, as well as the method of draining the water into the middle in the same way as it is caught up in jars in the rain-yards in the Atlantic borderlands. And looking around for an answer to our general question with respect to a trans-continental relation between Yoruban and Algerian buildings for water conservation, we find many varieties of them in many parts of the Great Desert right up to its edge or as far as the Niger-bend. The typical Timbuktu house, probably the most southern "sucker" on this part of the Continent of the indigenous architectural growth, furnishes an example. Here again there is a right-angled Tembe building round an inner yard. We observe, however, two differentiating characteristics of the Timbuktu and the Yoruban houses, first, the absence of the roof and, therefore, of the actual "impluvium," and, secondly, the construction of several parallel tembes in the front buildings. The lateral juxtaposition of several chambers is a distinctive mark of all Soudanese and Saharan structures, most highly developed in old churches and mosques in which as many as ten such divisions are placed side by side. This disposition of space is, in principle, absent from the Yoruban no less than the Algerian style. There is certainly, on the one hand, a variation, as well as a connection, observable in the formation of the inner court, but this does not, on the other hand, entitle us to regard this difference in style as a link which connects Western with North African rain-shed architectures, because the relation between them lies further Eastwards.

The essential result of these observations, then, is that the "impluvial" construction of North Africa prevails to the same extent on this littoral as on the West Coast. This fact is very important and thoroughly harmonizes the other coastal connections

with Atlantic civilization. The conclusion so drawn is the more significant since the antique foundations which support the Palace of the Oni supplied us with proof that in the remotest past the Atlantic style of architecture was the same as it is to-day, although its dimensions and formation no longer attain the level it reached in antiquity.

2. The Bow

None of man's older weapons offer such opportunities for comparison as the bow, the dissemination of which in a variety of shapes over the African continent to-day is very familiar to us, because to me it has been a fascinating subject for a number of years. (To start with, *cf.* Common types of bows, illustrated geographically, reproduced in "Types of West African Civilization," Gotha, 1910.) The ancient Yorubans had a very peculiar style of this weapon, as singular, in fact, as the other distinctive indications of their individual civilization. It was comparatively short and, according to old representation, generally not more than forty inches long. The wood of the bow had a fairly strong curve with two holes bored in it and notches made on the outside away from the face of the bowman, for tying the sinew. This was threaded through both eyes and strained over the notches. This is the so-called frontal method of stringing and its distribution is uncommonly interesting. Following the line of the coast, it embraces the Gold Coast, the Slave Coast, Nupéland, and then trends southwards, where it travels along from the coast of Loango to the banks of the Congo as far as Katanga, along the banks of the Kassai as far as Bakubaland and penetrates to a point south of Luebe. The district of its use is, therefore, strictly defined. (Northwards there is only a distributive wedge, so to speak, of this frontal bow, and, in fact, in the zone of the Tombo temporal bow in the Niger-bend, which will now be described.)

Other shaped bows are native to this region and around it. However, to the north of it, on the banks of the Niger and Benue rivers, there is a sacred form of it which we call "temporal." The eyes have fallen into disuse in their method of stringing them. Nor is the notch placed frontally in the middle of the ends of the bow

staff, but crossways, towards, as it were, the archer's temples. In the Western forms of stringing this lateral notch is double, in the Eastern one single. It must be regarded as a compromise between the degenerated frontal and the "butterfly" knot coming in from the East, which consists of a simple winding round of the sinew; we may, perhaps, call it a "double-hitch." We may assume that the "temporal" stringing, which is a development of the "frontal" method from the fringe of its place of origin northwards, represents an older influence of the last-named fashion.

The question has now resolved itself into the possible discovery of a similar form on the northern edge of the continent. And it can be affirmatively answered. A few years ago, at Rostock, I came across an old and indubitably Moroccan bow, painted in lacquer of typically Moroccan colours and conformable to native accounts of such a weapon. It is essentially frontal and, therefore, the nearest relative of the Atlantic Yoruban weapon. I have inquired times without number of those who have travelled through the Sahara, and always heard reports so similar from the Moors and the Tuaregs as to enable me to say with more or less certainty that both the "frontal" and "temporal" varieties are absent from the Desert of Sahara and the countries to the north of the Niger.

Since, then, the Yoruban form changes to the temporal as we go northwards and no intermediate shapes are found on the trans-continental route, its distribution appears to indicate its confinement to countries of the littoral, for the trans-continental introduction of which there is no sort of warranty.

In this connection I may mention that the distribution of arrow peculiarities follows that of the bow. The Benin and Congo arrow heads were socketed and feathered exactly like those described to me as Moroccan. But, here again, in the method of winging them there is no evidence of any connection whatever between the two littoral and peculiarly "African" phenomena. All the Saharan and Soudanese arrows are pointed with thorns and are never feathered. Once more, then, everything is opposed to the idea of trans-continental relation.

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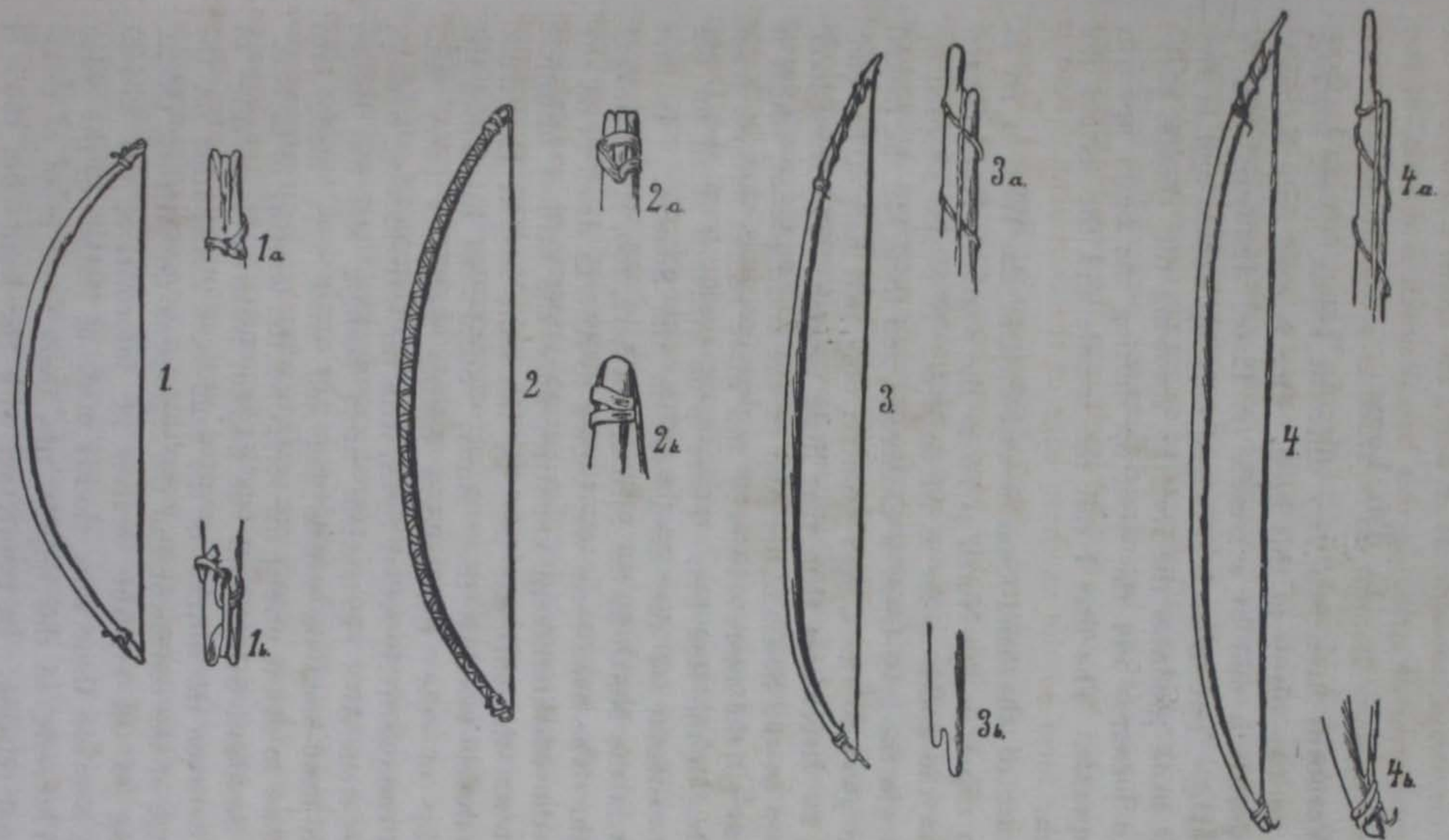

Atlantic frontal and cognate bows.

1. Benin, etc., Congo bows, about 36 to 44 in. long. } Strung frontally.
2. Moroccan bow in Rostock Museum, 44¾ in. long. } Strung frontally.
3. Mande and Dagomba bows, 40 to 44 in. long. } Strung laterally.
4. Houssa bows, from 46 to 62 in. long. } Strung laterally.

3. The Loom

The Yorubans have two very different looms, whose working is shown on two plates in this book. One is used only by men, and the shuttle is shot by a treadle (*v.* Plate. Industrial Life in Yoruba. III.). The other is managed only by women and in this way: the hand produces the weft by throwing the shuttle backwards and forwards and the woof by shifting the beam upwards and downwards. The first I call the treadle and the second the hand loom.

The use of the hand-loom is extended in the West as far as the Togo tribes, in the North as far as the southern Nupé-Gwarri peoples, in the South as far as Moonshees. It is also adopted by some tribes in the grass-lands of Cameroon, and then, like the frontal bow, right away to the Congo country, only that here it has conquered a far larger area than that little weapon. The hand-loom is unknown in the Soudan, the land of the treadle-loom, which is familiar to all the more advanced and more recent nations from Senegambia to the Red Sea. There is no evidence at all for the previous existence of the hand-loom in the Soudan. It first reappears in the North in the Sahara, and here, too, it is managed by women. The hand-loom was known to African dwellers on the edge of the Mediterranean countries since the earliest historical eras, and was the only one used by the most ancient Egyptians. In his valuable work on the "Aures," Stuhlmann has shown the probability of the treadle-loom having made its entry into Africa in comparatively recent times, with the introduction, namely, of cotton from Asia. In ancient times nothing else was known than the hand-loom on which flax and wool were made into cloth. And to-day it principally serves for the weaving of carpets.

The Southern Sahara and the Soudan make a broad zone of division between the districts of the hand-loom distribution on the north edge of the continent and the regions on the Atlantic Ocean. According to all available sources of information, the nations dwelling between these wore clothes made of leather in the olden time. Therefore, in this respect, too, there is no proof of transcontinental relation. In connection with the hand-loom there is

the general use of the manly togo, whereas the distribution of the treadle-loom accompanies the use of the tobé, or tunic, and, hence, tailoring, all of which is in the hands of the men-folk. As the finds make clear, the ancient Yorubans also wore togas, not tobés.

I now finally leave the field of material culture, although various additional proofs, as, for example, the occurrence of certain drum-shapes, etc., contributing to establish my point, could be furnished and pass on to the consideration of sublimer matters.

4. The Distribution of the "Templum" Idea

All that was possible with regard to the ideas of the universe entertained by the nations of Africa proper has been said. I have shown that the Atlantic Yoruban conception of the Temple signifies an organized imagination of the world and religion on a much larger scale. Not so much as a spark of clearness in this respect was I able to find amongst other African peoples. The Mandes and Bossos, it is true, very well remember that four gods or pairs of gods rule over the four seasons of the year and dwell in different parts of the heavens. But beyond this one legend and tradition they have lost all other knowledge. Therefore, the religion of the Atlantic nations is unique, and we should be forced beforehand to renounce every possibility of being able to trace any transcontinental relation, if there were nothing whatever left by which the continuance of investigation were assured.

All the "higher type" inhabitants of Western Soudan, the Yolofs, Mande, Songai, Mossi, have a kind of oracle which is drawn on the sand. (See plate: "Sand Oracle in South Algeria.") Its interpreter makes a square with his finger, divides it in smaller squares and marks these with signs as answers to the questioner. I failed to solve the real nature of the oracle; and I doubt whether there is a single individual native who still knows what it actually means. But this much is certain, namely, that there are sixteen such squares in all among all the older, but amongst the Islamite tribes a greater or a less number is made. And it is also an established fact that the non-Mahommedan Mossi arranged

the symbolic four divisions according to the cardinal points of the heavens. Here, then, we should have a phenomenon which, in a certain sense, is allied to the Ifa oracle in the form of sand-divination.

I found exactly the same divination by sand in Algeria. And here I could find no more, and perhaps less, meaning in it than in the Soudan. I am scarcely of opinion that this kind of oracle was introduced with Islam, and the less so, because the signs used by the Soudanese tribes show no traces of Arabic. Sand-divination is said to be unusual in the Sahara, and, if so, we should again see a proof of littoral distribution and lack of trans-continental relation.

It is not advisable to attach any great importance to the matter, especially as Islam has quite similar forms of fortune-telling. Anyhow, the wretchedness of these oracular ruins proves the vast significance pertaining to the complete retention of the Templum idea.

Summarizing the results, we obtain a uniform picture. Northern Africa shows elements of civilization similar to those of the Atlantic side. There is no forthcoming evidence of a continental connection. If such had ever existed, it must to-day be declared to have been completely wiped out. The development of the " temporal " bow is alone sufficient to prove that the Yorubans actually exercised a great influence upon their Northern neighbours. And I shall have to revert later on to the fact that there is an enclave, in the bend of the Niger, of a people using the frontal bow, who, as we shall subsequently see, have preserved many reminders of the civilization proper to ancient Atlantica down to the present day. Other facts also point to this erstwhile contact. Let me bring a proof of it :

Even the chroniclers of the reverberating Middle Ages tell of a very special festival of the King of Benin, which they called the " Festival of Corals," on which he lent out chains of red beads which the old historians took to be " corals." I got some of these, which are still considered in Benin to be of great value, and was told that they were a kind of red jasper. At all events, they are a precious stone. They are mostly wonderfully cut tubes, with an absolutely magnificent polish. No Benin-man was able to say what their origin was. All that I could gather in South Yoruba

Sand oracle. Divination practised by the Berbers of the Northern Sahara.

(Photo by Leo Frobenius.)

[*Facing p.* 335.

was that they came from the North. But in Nupéland I first got more definite information. I was told that these stones, called Susi or Lantana, were mined in the North and cut in Ilorin. So I sent Martius to the Niger and Ilorin to investigate further. He got the statement confirmed. Dealers come a good distance up the Niger, buy the pieces from the native miners close to the border of the Sahel region, take them down to Ilorin and there sell them to expert bead-polishers.

Now, bead-polishing is a very ancient art, not only among West Africans, but the tribes in the North and in the Saharan regions in general. Thousands and thousands of natives dig among as many thousand graves scattered on the boundaries of the Great Desert for old jewellery, and bring them southwards to the markets of Kano, Katsena, Bida, and so on. In more removed days these stone beads found their way to Carthage. The clear and translucent kinds of quartz were the most beloved in that ancient city, and thence they were exported to Rome and Hellas, to all the great Mediterranean centres of commerce, or there sold. Now, as the old Carthaginians were called Karchedonians, these transparent stones were, after the traders in them, called Karchedonian stones, and this was turned into chalcedonyx. We see, then, that this article is a product of the old-world African Interior. We can see by the simple fact that the Atlantic nations also attracted these products to themselves and at this hour are able to manufacture them, that their civilization was thriving in the more ancient periods when those Northern races were still technically proficient. This skill no longer exists in those originally productive Saharan countries. And this furnishes another proof of the age and the power which Atlantic peoples possessed in those periods of antiquity. They alone knew how to acquire and preserve the dexterity of the past.

This fact, however, is not, naturally, a proof of trans-continental influence in the sense of "symphonic" acceptance of Atlantic civilization from the North. It is, on the contrary, rather evidence of an existing and producing central belt, dividing the South from the North, precisely as the Sahara acts as a line of division in general between the civilizations of the West and the North of Africa.

I will not conclude this section without alluding to one symptom which confirms the absolute independence of Yoruban culture.

For the Yorubans are the only people among all those known to exist in the Soudan who still make their offerings in the form of burnt sacrifices like the ancient races of the Mediterranean. Not a single native does this to-day, and not even the poor survivals of tradition which crop up here and there go to prove that burnt sacrifices were very much in general favour in the Africa of the Interior at all times.

We are thus face to face with a civilization entirely confined to the littoral and find no evidence of its trans-continental transference. I need not point to the unique quality of the Ilifian terra-cottas. I need not refer to the fact that it is only here where we found evidence of the ancient manufacture of glass beads and moulding in glass. There is no necessity to repeat that it is only here that a religion based on the conception of the Templum, or universe, still exists.

We simply certify that :

Firstly : All the monuments of ancient culture are concentrated on the Coast ;

Secondly : There is, apparently, no originating influence by way of the Interior ; and

Thirdly : Definite and characteristic signs at the northern edge of Africa, such as the construction for water storage, the hand-loom for women and the " frontal " bow, are recurrent indications of the fact that identical elements of civilization were predominant both in the North and South at an extremely remote period.

* * * * * * * *

What, then, was their era and to what were they akin ?

The great ages of universal history are not measured by the duration of their years, but by their style. The work of a Leonardo da Vinci or of a Boecklin is inconceivable in an age when the shapes created by a Phidias set the mould of form. When the Renaissance was in its bloom, nor " Odyssey," nor " Faust " could well be born. This may sound trivial, but I must set out from this simple truism in going on to say that " style " in art is only its noblest flower, but that style in itself is much more deeply rooted, namely, in the philosophy and social conditions of human association and the

growth of the sentiment of human kinship, and that it suffers periodic transformation no less in economics than in politics, ethics, or garb.

And Yoruban culture belongs to antiquity by virtue of its inherent "style." The slave traffic of Mediævalism, modern industrial conditions, and the foreign rule of to-day have, beyond question, distorted, transformed and ruined it. Yet we need not first delve a few yards beneath the soil and dig up terra-cottas to see from their features after such long concealment that these have an austere severity, a "beautiful" style, which is a certain index of their antiquity. We need but to be absorbed in their conception of the Templum, and compare it with other religions we wot of, to find that this philosophic idea corresponds to that ancient style and method of thought, the profoundest essence of which is still stirring the life of this nation to-day.

That is the epoch!

What, now, is the connection?

The survival of an antique form of civilization in the littoral districts of the African Coast necessarily brings to mind the wanderings and voyages of the Phœnicians of old. Now, after I had in 1910 pushed to the front the interesting question of the relation of classical antiquity to a prehistoric civilization of high development, Johannes Dahse published in 1911 a compendious and excellent volume called "Solomon's Second Gold Country" in the "Ethnological Journal," which was evidently the result of many years of intense study of sources of original information. The book's title covers the ground. Dahse distinctly recognizes the Gold Coast as the country where all ocean wayfarers coming from the East harvested their treasures. He adduces proof of his contention in nomenclature, the study of astrology, the correspondence of classic stories with the state of things at present existing, and tries to give depth to the general by discussing some things in particular. It is a very happy piece of work. We place it on record and pass on.

There are especially two documentary proofs in writing which corroborate an African coastal commerce in the past.

One is the account given by Herodotus, IV., 42, of Necho's sending a Phœnician fleet south-eastwards round Africa when the construction

of the canal from the Nile to the Red Sea was interrupted, which fulfilled its task after a two-years' absence by sailing round Africa and came home by way of the Straits of Gibraltar. Herodotus closes this report with the very significant notification that the Karkedonians, meaning Carthaginians, were aware of the feasibility of sailing round the continent, whereas failure had accompanied Persian attempts to achieve it. The other proof is a report by Hanno, fragments of which have come down to us, that report, in fact, which was hung up in the Temple of Melcarth, in Carthage, about 500 B.C., and describes the voyage of thirty thousand settlers which took them through the Straits of Gibraltar along the Coast very far to the South.

These accounts, then, establish the fact of voyages having been undertaken. I, however, incline to think that the statements of the ancients bear a construction different from their customary explanation. I do not regard them as establishing ascertained facts, but as indicative descriptions. The historians of antiquity were always in many respects prone to concentrate the description of persons and events in a regularly connected chain of experiences. They adopted the same procedure in recording historical events as in mythology. The recurrent course of the sun with its special episodes was symbolized mythically in the form of a single event. Only one "twilight of the gods" stood for the annually recurrent turn of the year; only one legend did duty for the rhythmical recurrent phases of the moon. All such stories go to prove that the ancient attitude of mind which created these myths was always accustomed by its method of both observation and description to record the rhythm as such, but not its repetition. Taking into consideration, then, this law, based on innumerable instances of its applicability, the description of a single voyage undertaken by Hanno becomes an account of a series of such undertakings, and the document suspended in Carthaginian Melcarth's temple need no longer be taken as the narrative of a particular happening, but as a report, in the fashion of the period, of a road which many a sea captain had read to him before embarking on it on behalf of his merchant prince or as the leader of a band of emigrants. It was a sort of guidebook, another kind of ancient Baedeker for traders, colonizers, etc. I have a lively recollection of a book which played a great part

in my childhood's days and described how John became the master of a ship. The story told was of how a sailor's life began, and it depicted its development in detail. My John's history was just as personally precise as Hanno's and everything which could happen in a seaman's calling was here put down as something special in John's life on the ocean wave. And the attribution of circumnavigation to a "Hanno" is not merely accidental, for this was as much a generic name on Carthaginian lips of that old time as "Jack-tar" is on ours.

Now the account given of this circumnavigation contains one point which cannot be over-emphasized and emphatically confirms my own idea. The fragment preserved states that Hanno set out with a fleet of sixty fifty-oared triremes and thirty thousand settlers. Thirty thousand colonists; think of it! Whether this number be exaggerated or no is of no consequence. The mere assertion of such a number is enough to prove that it was not merely a "voyage of discovery," The Phœnician voyage round Africa described by Herodotus may at best be so conceived, but most certainly not the departure of such a host of settlers. At all times these have only begun to form colonies in foreign countries when their coasts were familiar and it was known what might be expected there. Great numbers of colonists would never have joined a bold exploring expedition, and least of all the commerce-loving Carthaginians, who from time immemorial were always practical enough only to go where trade was seen to be beginning to flourish. The account, then, proves that the traffic with West Africa was fairly regular, as is also already clear from the statement Herodotus makes that the Carthaginians knew all about the circumnavigation of Africa. It therefore also shows that the "Periplus" described the repetition of emigrational voyages and that the mariners of old were well acquainted with the ocean road to districts well known to be very productive and profitable.

Now, many attempts have, of course, been made to re-construct the passage taken by Hanno and have apparently resulted in the conclusion that the knowledge of the ancient Carthaginians stopped short, more or less, at Sierra Leone or the Gold Coast. One thing, however, is plain from these recitals, namely, that the Carthaginians were ignorant of the existence of a civilized country such as our

old world of Yoruba depicts. Such a significant fact as the existence of a colony as powerful as the Atlantic fastness of Poseidon would not, if still possessed of any great actual importance in the Phœnician era and even if traffic with it could only be mentioned as a secret of commerce, such a fact as this, I say, could not possibly have been kept altogether dark. Such a pre-eminent settlement, however, demonstrably the oldest colony of Western civilization on the African Coast, must have been Yorubaland, for, were this not so, we should not have been able to dig up and bring to light evidences of glass foundries, terra-cotta art-work and a completely traditional religion and architecture, all of which are characteristic and indigenous to the soil of the country itself. The conclusion of the whole matter, then, is this: The Yoruban settlement was, even in Phœnician times, cut off and isolated from the mother country. And, as a matter of fact, the glass-bead products of Yoruba are different from and more archaic in style than those the Phœnicians carried to all the ends of the earth and also to the Gold Coast. Neither does it seem necessary or to the purpose to claim the Phœnicians in general as being the earliest colonizers in West Africa. Classical writers have listed all the nations whose vast commercial fleets sailed in Mediterranean waters and the Phœnicians are only seventh or eighth in the catalogue. Besides this, there is an accumulation of evidence that this splendid nation of traders in the majority of ascertainable cases played only the part of inheritors, and statements to the effect that others of earlier than Phœnician days also went down to the sea in ships are amply borne out. The Phœnicians do not appear in Greece, Southern Italy and the North African Coast before 800 B.C. And on closer inspection, on correct interpretation of the legend of Dido and on the basis of all that has been discovered, even Carthage turns out to be a city whose proper atmosphere was redolent of the Libyan spirit, containing comparatively few elements specifically Phœnician, and which, when these had died down, was founded on the ruins of the ancient Empire of the West as one of its heirs, among whom were Etruscans, etc. The Phœnicians scarcely anywhere produced values of their own and the great place they occupy in history is mainly due to their exploitation of relations which other nations created and to profiting by the industries of others. We must, then, assume that the Phœnicians resumed

and continued the apparently interrupted relations without creating the connection themselves, but, rather, took them over from an older commercial and civilized nation together with their echoing traditions and that the road to Atlantis was subsequently forgotten when the autocratic power of Phœnician commerce collapsed. The Phœnicians then—to drive the point home—seem to have been the last to have traded with Northern Guinea in the days of long ago. This is, however, absolutely no reason for crediting them with having been the founders of such business relations.

The touchstone of accurate investigation being, then, applied to the civilization of Yoruba, we find that the Phœnicians were not the possessors of forms of culture corresponding to those peculiar to the Yorubans. Only the glassware would hint at a possible connection. We, however, now know that the Phœnicians were by no means the first workers in glass, but that they, on the contrary, only carried it to a higher pitch. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, they only took on the "Templum" religion in its complete decadence (they were much more addicted to star worship), and would thus have been unable to hand it on in its original type to more distant peoples. And, lastly, the Phœnicians had no kind of "impluvial" buildings.

The Etruscans were the first to introduce the "Impluvium" as a classic feature in the world's architectural history. The correspondent method of building was known as the "Atrium toscanicum" even when the Roman Empire was tottering to its fall. Now, the Tuscan atrium, in its detailed measurement and minutest peculiarities, almost exactly resembled the water-storage structures of the Yorubans, who are compelled to cover them with the high saddle-back roofs owing to the weight of the rainfall on the West Coast, and this proves that this style of edifice is not indigenous but can have been naturalized in the course of time alone. This highly significant harmony in architecture, which, in a measure, means harmony in the forms assumed by domestic life, is decisively accentuated by the striking similarity of these two nations' religious systems. I pray you to realize what Chapter XIII. explained. As in Etruscan lightning-lore the flashes decide the Fate in store for the world, so, in Yoruba, reigns the God of Thunder. How clear and simple and yet how pregnant with meaning sounds the

legend: "Ifé was built by seventeen people, one of whom lived in the centre and the other sixteen on the sixteen heavenly roads round about him!" How plain our examination of Decumanus and Cardo now seems! How clear the sacred circumambulation, the seasonal sacrifice! Yea, and even the colours of the Gods and the division of the skies can be brought into concordant unison. All things, indeed, and everything uniform and in sound conservation! And down to this instant the Yoruban buries his dead in his own compound like the Etruscan of old.

Both these civilizations then are sisters in culture, in nature, in form and also in—time! For we see that the older road of connection between the Mediterranean and Atlantic Oceans was no longer available in the time of the Phœnicians and must, therefore, have already been obsolete. And the supremacy of the Western group of nations and their culture was actually five hundred years older, at least, than the first appearance, out of the East, of the Phœnicians in the central Mediterranean, which may be placed in the year 800 B.C. Let us picture to ourselves the ascendancy to power and the decline of the culture attained by these "maritime nations" of the West.

After much conflict of opinion, science has agreed to regard the Etruscans as identical with the Tyrrhenians or Thyrsenes of the Hellenes, and the Turs or Tursh or Turishas of ancient Egyptian inscriptions. They play an important part, especially under Ramses III., or in the twelfth pre-Christian century, amidst all the maritime peoples whose assault might easily have eventuated in the temporary destruction of the realm of the Pharaohs. In alliance with a variety of tribes, they had conquered Alashya, Kedé, in Asia Minor, and, lastly, the Hittite and Amorite kingdoms. Ramses III. offered them the first naval engagement recorded in history. In this contest the Turs appear as the allies of the Libyans. Therefore, this attack on the home of Eastern civilization took place 1200 years B.C.

That this invasion took place from the West is beyond all possibility of question. W. Max Müller roundly declares: "The Turs undoubtedly belong to the nations of the furthest West." In their migration eastward they seriously threatened the eastern Mediterranean basin; they were sufficiently vigorous to establish

themselves in various places along the Ægean Sea. They most certainly had a definite connection with the Libyans, their allies. Historical records vouch for the fact, and we need not first search for personally corresponding names, in company with Daniel G. Brinton, in them both. We can, like Von Hommel, bring these Tursha-Etruscans into cultural relation with the Iberian national groups, which in ancient times were spread over the whole of North Africa, Spain and Gaul.

The fact of a stream of civilization flowing from the West to the East, or, in this sense, a wave of maritime nations, is of eminent weight. We are, at this particular moment, not greatly concerned whether this strong movement from West to East means a recoil induced by a stimulus acting from East to West and an imported civilization. For if an important, highly developed, locally circumscribed culture had not already existed here on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean's littoral districts, a stimulus arising in the East would have been powerless to call forth a reaction strong enough to shake the Orient's might, and, after having spent its force and perished in the West, to leave behind it so great a legacy as the fulgural, or "lightning," religion of the Etruscans. We need especially to prove that the pressure from the East already found opposition in this vast block of culture sufficiently endowed with vigorous vitality to resist the Oriental influence and to fight its own way successfully Eastwards for some time upon the sea.

Some hesitation has been shown in venturing upon the assumption of a national and cultural movement "against the trend of universal history," which implies the progression of civilization from East to West. There is no need to shudder. We see this movement proved in history. It is more than possible to establish the fact of a march of civilization from West to East, by documentary history, from Egypt, where the predominance of the Ram-God moves with it step by step. The ancients, on the other hand, clearly remember the wrestling of the Western with the Eastern powers, as the accounts of Diodorus Siculus and Plato's "Story of Atlantis" (reproduced in my "On the Road to Atlantis," pages 3–9) plainly show. The latter begins with the classic reference that, in ancient times, "that" war was waged between the nations dwelling "beyond the Pillars of Hercules," and all the others within

them. Diodorus and others are much more precise; what they say is: "The nations of the West wrestle for the mastery (of the world) with the nations of the East."

And thus I identify the civilization of the West which the keels of the Tursha fleet carried in the thirteenth century B.C. with the peoples dwelling "beyond the Pillars of Hercules." I draw my courage from the constant effects observable in the swing of the pendulum of universal history, always responsive to the laws which govern the surface of the globe. I think we are entitled to select material evidence from analogous events in more recent periods for the desired comprehension of occurrences in the ages behind them. In order fully to grasp the expansive power and effective radius of a particular culture which, like that of the ancient West, included Gallia, Hispania and Libya, we must be clear as to what was happening when the young civilization of the East by slowly shifting its territorial and cultural centre from stage to stage of its growth, extended itself from Asia Minor to Hellas, onwards to Italy, and, finally, over the Pyrenean Peninsula, thus invading the sphere of influence of the older civilizations of the West. When that took place, civilization was compelled to put to sea, for the weight of the pressure from the East westwards was expulsive; at that period the colonization of the West Coast *had* to begin, and then America *had* to be discovered. A littoral civilization simultaneously effective in Gaul, in Spain, and in Libya, will always be forced to aim at the dominion of naval power in the West and to bring home the riches gathered out yonder from the other littoral regions of the Atlantic Ocean.

This train of thought leads me to suppose that this ancient Western culture must of necessity have travelled with the "nations who dwell beyond the Pillars of Hercules." The seaworthiness of these folk, so repeatedly mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions as "peoples of the sea," and, as such, to be feared, must have been very considerable and have led them to foreign countries. And when, in the backwash from the East westwards, they threatened the East with naval warfare in the thirteenth century, their prowess on water cannot have been in its infancy; it must certainly have been completely matured at that time, and, therefore, have gone through a long period of development. The primitive

and profound Druidic civilization must also have arrived at its summit then. From this I infer that when this civilization of the Occident adventured on the face of the waters to the East in 1300 B.C. in its slender equipment, it had previously sailed the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and there conquered its settlements and territories adjacent, among which I also claim the culture of Yoruba. And this is the method by which I maintain I have re-discovered Atlantis, the Emporium of the culture of the West on the further side of the Straits of Gibraltar, that Atlantis, whose walls, as Solon informs us, held within them Poseidon's castle, where there was a wealth of luxuriant vegetation; where tree-like plants grew which gave forth food and drink and unguents (the oil-palm); that a fruit tree, with quickly decaying fruit (the banana), and desirable condiments (pepper) there flourished abundantly; that elephants lived there; that bronze, or brass, was won there (as till recently was so, behind the Yoruban mountain range); that the natives wore dark blue (? tree indigo) garments, and that they had a somewhat foreign style of architecture (ridge roofs of palm leaf). Therefore I lay claim to Yoruba, so tropically lush and rank in its vegetation; Yoruba, with its channelled network of lakes on the coast and the reaches of the Niger; Yoruba, whose peculiarities are not inadequately depicted in the Platonic account—this Yoruba, I assert, is Atlantis, the home of Poseidon's posterity, the Sea God by them named Olokun; the land of a people of whom Solon declared: "They had even extended their lordship over Egypt and Tyrrhene!" Here, once more, we meet with the bellicose sea-folk of the pre-Christian thirteenth century. Here we again lay our finger upon the bond of union between the cultures of the Orient and Occident and upon the conflict in which Eastern civilization was the conqueror and received for its guerdon the earliest message of the magic enchantments of the beauty of those tropical countries which lay "far beyond the Pillars of Hercules!"

The culture of the West was laid low. Phœnicia and Grecia succeeded to the Empire of the Ocean held by the nations of the West. The former union of the Western states was dissolved, and the Etruscans stood alone. The Tyrrhenians grew to be a continental people more and more, and in this capacity supplied the seed of the nascent power of Rome, whose first rulers were an Etruscan

dynasty, the Tarquins to wit. The sea-nations' art of navigation, as history tells us, decayed with comparative rapidity, and the more productive Orient became the predominant factor in commerce and colonial policy, at first fulfilling its task in the basin of the Mediterranean. When the Phœnicians, 800 B.C., began to settle in the Central Mediterranean, they fostered, it is true, a recrudescence of Western sea-power on Carthaginian soil; but by that time the sea route to Atlantis had fallen into desuetude, and its civilization been restricted to commerce with the Interior. This is the reason why the Phœnicians, who circumnavigated Africa under Necho, about 600 B.C., and the Carthaginian Hanno, who sailed along the West Coast, about 500 B.C., found the Atlantic Ocean so lonely. The seafaring of bygone Western culture was now decadent and, at that time, obviously confined itself to the Mediterranean seas. Consequently, Phœnicians and Carthaginians had to rediscover the sea route through the Straits of Gibraltar in pursuit of the still surely living tradition of its existence, whereby the legend of older Atlantic voyages continued to survive among the Egyptians only, who, as is well known, had settled the conquered Tyrrhenians as mercenaries amongst themselves. And it is in this way that Solon heard of the legend through the Egyptian priest at Sais.

But, in this story, Atlantis was crowned with the aureole of sanctity, which shone all the more brightly, partly because the memory of the actual existence of the westerly tropics was dying out among the dominant civilized nations from day to day, and partly because the splendid ideal picture of the world was being obliterated. It did, however, find an abiding place among the Greeks, with whom the uniformity of this religion would otherwise be incapable of proof, and the last remainder of the unifying power of the idea of the Templum is actually contained in one sentence of Plato's fable of Atlantis, namely: "Once the Gods shared all the regions of the earth among themselves without all strife by casting lots. Thus some of the Gods got this country, the others that, and ruled it . . . and they peopled them with autochthones or aboriginal human beings, and breathed into their souls the desire for ordered government. . . ." And further: "It has already been said that the Gods shared out the earth in greater and in lesser

lots and founded for themselves their temples and sacrificial altars. And thus the Island of Atlantis fell to great Poseidon and he settled his posterity . . . upon a certain place within the island. . . ." Herodotus also knows that Poseidon is a deity of the African West. Now, Olokun is the ruler of the land whose shore was on the Great Ocean which lay far beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

This passage of Solon's narrative is all the more pregnant with meaning because, as already mentioned, the Greeks had neither inherited the Idea of the Universe in its essence and regularity, nor even understood it. And yet here the casting of dice and drawing of lots; the holy establishment of a uniform celestial region; of a God and a godly possession; together with a perfectly clear idea of posterity in divinely founded clans, are all preserved, in exactly the form in which the Tyrrhenes and, before them, probably all the Occidental nations of culture possessed them, and as the Yorubans in particular hold and observe them to-day. Solon's story in Greek, then, says that Atlantis is the Island in the Tropics where all the tropical plants flourish and elephants gambol, where brass is smelted and the houses are strange; an island which, in the beginning, by the cast of a die, fell as his share of the earth to Poseidon, who colonized it with the seed of his loins. The account attributes a growth of power westwards to this indigenous posterity of the Straits of Gibraltar, which extends into Egypt and as far as the Tyrrhenians; shows them in an arduous contest with the Orient powers, amongst whom Athens is, in his own view, particularly important; and he, therefore, singles out the Tyrrhenians and Egyptians, both lying respectively exactly within and exactly beyond the sphere of the powers of the West, precisely those nations who fought the fight for final supremacy to a finish in the thirteenth century before the Saviour was born. The story of Atlantis as related by Solon is, indeed, a romance, a Saga enwreathed in a myth; but its kernel is as essentially real as the "Pigmy" romance, the core of which Schweinfurth proved to be true; as the fable of Troy, which the labours of Schliemann disclosed as historical fact; as the tale of the Hyperboreans, which Schuchhardt lately unveiled; as the fairy stories of the Scythians; no less true indeed than all these legends prove to be when traced to their sources, namely, as the imaginative and brilliantly bedizened memories of once actually living and

magnificent happenings and realities in the pages of the history of the world.

The comparison of the ethnological facts with recorded history and tradition has now been established. The correlation between impluvial architecture in all its finer details and the religion of the Templum, with all thereby implied, among the Yorubans and Etruscans, cannot be accidental. It is no accident that similar terra-cottas displaying the same fashion of head-dressing should be found precisely in the Tyrrhenian sphere of power. The events set down upon the page of history enable us to bring the South into connection with the antique civilization of the West without much difficulty, and even to grasp some occurrences in universal history with greater ease. The culture of Yoruba is the crystallization of that mighty stream of Western civilization which, in its Eur-African form, flowed from Europe into Africa, and, when it sank in volume, left behind it the Etruscans as its cognate and equally symphonic exponents.

I cannot finish without devoting a word or two to a certain symptomatic conformity of this Western Atlantic civilization with its higher manifestations in America. Its cognate features are so striking that they cannot be overlooked, and, as the region of Atlantic African culture is Yoruba which may some day be made available to some extent as a cable-station or place of anchorage for a fleet between the Mediterranean and America, or, so to say, a hyphen between the state forms of Old America and the Eastern lands, it seems to be a present question whether it might not be possible to bring the marvellous Maya monuments, whose dates have been discovered by our eminent American archæologists, into some prehistoric connection with those of Yoruba.

This task, however, is not my own. My watchword is: "Cobbler, stick to your last!" And in many another respect I must not forget that moderation is a mark of the master mind. Being neither a geologist, and so debarred from entering upon the interesting questions once more propounded by Habenicht of a former conjunction of Europe and America; nor a philologist, and thus unable to explain the etymological identity of "Atel" (in the book of Jubilees) with "Atl" (an American word which means both "water" and "crown of the head"), and of Atlas with Atlantis,

neither also do I consider myself called upon to go into the spiritual sciences and their possible relation to the assumptions of Atlantic religious beliefs. Of all such things I am in ignorance. I am an African and rejoice exceedingly in any attendant success upon the production of evidence that my own "tedious" Continent has one thing to offer, namely, real puzzles whose eventual solution is merely deferred and a question of time.

This is the way I look at Atlantis myself!

END OF VOLUME I

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