

original source; human sacrifices — especially those of household slaves — were not rare. The isolation in which the tribes lived had favored the multiplication of dialects. While the arts, especially sculpture, were in full bloom, literature on the other hand had not gone beyond the oral stage; and aside from a few geographical representations, writing was unknown.

This ancient population, sparse and scattered over an immense and hostile area of forest lands and savannas — to this day there are not more than fourteen inhabitants per square mile — has nevertheless changed the face of the country far more than is apparent at first sight. Continually pulling up stakes to establish their temporary villages elsewhere, and constantly seeking fresh ground for planting their crops, these people moved across the country stripping the soil of its vegetation. Each year, they cut down the trees on the piece of land they needed and set fire to it, using the burned debris as fertilizer. The following year, once the harvest had been gathered, this first field was abandoned and given a long period of rest while a new portion of fertile soil was sought out and cleared in its turn. Such methods required enormous stretches of land, stretches which covered — in view of the duration of the fallow period — at least fifteen times the area actually cultivated.

It is therefore understandable that these tribes, moving on as they did century after century in search of richer lands, scattered the soil with fires and exhausted it mercilessly, leaving traces which may not be apparent to the layman but are significant for the knowing observer. Thus, numerous secondary forests have grown on the sites of ancient fields, and savannas have encroached on forests. The far-reaching consequences of this mark left on the country are obvious when one sees how few primary forests have remained intact. Indeed, for centuries clans and tribes cut across each other's migration trails and covered the country with a network of ancient fields, traces of which are still visible. The arrival of the Europeans was destined to stop this migratory movement and bring a new way of life to the country.

What was the Congolese community like in the past ?

Its basic and essential unit, much more essential than the married couple, was the clan. A living unit, at one and the same time religious, social, and economic, the clan included all the descendants of a common ancestor, not only the living, but the dead and the generations yet unborn. Within the confines of the clan, marriage was forbidden, being looked upon as incestuous. It was permitted only between different clans, and the children born of these unions belonged, not to the couple as such, but to the father's clan or to the mother's according to the region. Marriage involved the payment of a dowry to the wife's clan, a dowry representing both a guarantee and an indemnity for the loss suffered by the clan in giving up one of its productive elements. In this traditional community, polygamy was customary; however, it did not generally take the form of a harem — except in the case of chieftains — but of a small « household » polygamy limited to a few wives.

Clanish units with common ancestral ties tended to group themselves in order to form the embryo of a social organization within the bosom of a larger agglomeration such as the tribe. In certain places federations were constituted, such as that of the Bakubas, or kingdoms such as that of Kongo, or military empires like that of the Lundas; in these cases a centralized power appeared that was based on a feudal organization. Within these political systems numerous associations were created: handicraft corporations, brotherhoods of initiates, and age groups — all of which played an important part. Finally, the traditional community included various social classes, essentially free men and serfs, the latter being subjected to domestic slavery. As for ownership of property, it had no individual character; land was the collective property of the clan, that unit which comprised the living, the dead, and future generations. The economy was on a mere subsistence basis: food growing, hunting, fishing, and handicrafts, all of which had the limited aim of assuring the survival of the social group; any commerce was limited to rudimentary barter. Religion consisted of private worship of God and public worship of ancestors, but it was covered up with numerous superstitious beliefs which had come to debase its

The European group — a small minority — constitutes above all a fundamental cadre, an indispensable frame. It consists of at least 100,000 people of whom four-fifths are Belgians; the Portuguese, Greeks, and Italians taken together make up more than half the foreign element and devote themselves especially to commerce (1).

The African element consists of a mass of over 13,000,000 people. The great majority of them are Bantus; on the northern frontier there are Sudanese tribes, and in the eastern regions, Hamitic and Nilotic tribes. As for the Pygmies, the survivors of the first occupants of the land — who were driven back by the Bantu invaders — they represent barely 1.5% of the population and in many areas their type is changing because of cross-breeding with the neighboring tribes.

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What have been the consequences of this confrontation on the same soil of two human groups whose manners and customs, civilization, and standard of living differed so greatly, one of them being still at the stage of semi-nomadism, and the other at the height of its civilization and in full mastery of its techniques?

The European element itself was the first to be affected by this state of things, and it has undergone striking transformations. To begin with, the physical environment imposed a new way of life on the Europeans: housing, climate, hygiene, diet, recreation — everything here was different from what they had known in Europe. The tasks entrusted to most of them were also completely new: the office worker turned to building trading-stations, the

(1) The Asiatic element — 1.5% of the European group — is negligible. It is composed chiefly of Pakistanis, Hindus, and Arabs.

2. The Congolese Community of Today.

Today the Congo's population is of an essentially transitional nature characterized by a constant interreaction of the two elements composing it: the European and the African. Between these two groups — white and black — no class of half-breeds has sprung up as in the case of other countries. The reason is simple: there has never been any large-scale European immigration in the Congo; on the whole, only those whose presence was indispensable have gone there, and furthermore, the bachelors of the earlier years have been gradually replaced by European families that have become more and more numerous.

could develop. On the contrary, often the leading enterprises had to be set up in areas that were almost uninhabited, and the workers had to be recruited in distant regions. Soon the new centers became so many lodestones for the country people, and the usual exodus began. As of today, almost a quarter of the native population has abandoned its rural habitat and has flocked to the cities.

Such a situation obviously raises the question of equilibrium between the two fractions of the native population. It seems that in many localities, the limits beyond which this equilibrium will be in jeopardy have been or are on the point of being reached. But it also seems that this migratory phenomenon is in the process of slowing down. Indeed, for several years, the hiring of workers has been proceeding at a slower rate, thanks to progress in mechanization, to more efficient management, and also to the rise in salaries which necessitates cutting down the labor force; furthermore, a policy of stability in the rural areas has been launched by the creation of the « paysannats » which are at one and the same time agricultural and social groups.

These migrations have given rise to the problems common to all new countries; while in the rural centers the female population exceeded the male, in the new centers the women were too few in proportion to the men. This lack of balance, which was bound to diminish, does not seem to have affected the general increase in population. What is the extent of this increase — if any? And is the native population actually growing or decreasing? It is not possible to know with any degree of certainty — for lack of reliable means of investigation — what the population of the Congo was at the end of the 19th century. It seems however that it was at best stationary, and perhaps even diminishing as a result of the slave traffic. It appears also that the population, badly prepared for new ways of life, has reacted at certain times and in certain places by a loss of vitality. At the time of the first shake-up of the native masses brought about by the introduction of industry, they were attacked by epidemics that found them defenceless; in certain tribes the birthrate fell for reasons that are still unknown, while others developed and proliferated briskly. It seems therefore that civilization and its after-effects

small farmer grew new types of crops, the lawyer laid down roads; but at the same time, from the small businessman to the governor general, all were called upon to assume in one way or another — sometimes even without being aware of it — duties involving authority, and tasks of an educational nature. A new psychology was created, and thus a special form of European society adapted to African conditions came into being. However, on the whole the European group has not taken root in the Congo; with the exception of the colonists who have settled down there permanently, and the missionaries, most of the Europeans are career men and women who remain there from fifteen to thirty years on the average.

Nevertheless, the African element has been much more profoundly affected by the new state of things. Contact with the European minority has literally shaken it out of the lethargy into which the old clamish civilization had plunged it. It awakened, and a transformation took place in its demographical structure and its way of life. But, whereas the European group as a whole underwent a change that was relatively superficial, the African population was split in two; this cleavage soon divided the natives into two categories: one, still clinging to the rural environment, is coming into contact with new ideas only very gradually; the other, lured by the large industrial and urban centers, has been uprooted and has entered the orbit of modern life much more rapidly.

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This cleavage in the native masses had its first effects on the demographical structure of the Congo. Originally, the rural population was very unequally distributed: even today one-fifth is scattered through half the country — about three inhabitants per square mile; the other four-fifths are concentrated in nuclei that give some areas an average population density ranging from approximately thirty to sixty per square mile. But this distribution was far from coinciding with the regions that the Europeans

At the same time new social classes have come into existence.

Industrialization, now in full swing, is promoting this evolution. For the last few years the entire country has been concerning itself more and more with manufacturing industries in addition to its basic industries, while in the rural areas a market economy has replaced the old subsistence economy. This evolution is far from having reached its goal; indeed, the entire program planned for the next years aims at developing the productivity of the natives, expanding the home market and, consequently, bringing about a new improvement in the standard of living.

The authority of the chieftains and the native institutions have been upheld whenever possible. Doubtless, the traditional concepts will govern a large part of both community and individual life, but some of them have already crumbled to ruin, and a large number of the natives have now found themselves. Many institutions have been officially blotted out or shaken; certain customs — such as ritual murder or other barbarous practices — have been under direct attack for a long time, while others — such as household slavery and polygamy — have been or are in the process of being stilled, after having lost all legal recognition. As for the institutions still surviving, they have had to withstand an insidious assault by new ideas; the customs concerned, even if they still prevail, have evolved and, with them, the institutions that they inspire. Furthermore, the diffusion of education — which today reaches over a million children, the conversion to Christianity of more than half the population, the mingling all over the country of people who until recently had lived within the narrow confines of their village or their tribe — all these factors have introduced new ideas that have sometimes caused ancient structures to break down. The return of former city dwellers to their villages has also been an active ferment; they have disclosed to the young people a new approach to life and have aroused in them the will to free themselves from the domination of their elders. Under these influences, the cloak of clanish constraint has been lifted, and everywhere today, in the rural areas as well as in the cities, the Congolese is beginning to find himself and to feel that he wishes to be a free individual.

However, the rural zones have been affected by modernization to a far greater extent than appears at first sight. Doubtless, in conformity with the Belgian policy in the Congo,

Indeed, a general evolution is noticeable in the country, an evolution which operates on many different levels. It is obviously more rapid and more apparent in the urban centers, where the proximity of European social life serves as an example, and where symbiosis is already under way; it must not be forgotten that more than half the Europeans are concentrated in the eight leading cities of the Congo.

Any attempt to describe this reaction is plainly a very difficult task, since the phenomenon in question is in constant evolution, and its limits are vague and changing; such factors as milieu, origin, education, and the human element contribute to its extreme variability.

In the presence of western civilization, what is the social behavior of the two fractions — rural and extra-rural — that have been created within the native population?

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are not the only factor at work here, and that variations in the vitality of different tribes have actually played a more important part. But, however that may be, accurate figures on the demographic situation in the Congo, which have been available for several years, show that on the whole the population is now increasing. Made up above all of young elements, it is growing at the annual rate of 1%; it seems that this rate of increase is showing a tendency to accelerate, which permits the hope that the population will number at least 15 million Africans within some fifteen years. The results achieved must be attributed chiefly to the struggle against infant mortality and to a general improvement in hygiene; the progress has been most striking in certain urban centers.

more than 350,000. The Congo has shaken off its prolonged lethargy, and now a new country emerges and asserts its vitality. Like all the new nations of the 20th century, it is still seeking its philosophy of life, torn as it is between the traditional subservience to the old clannish discipline and the call of individualism, between the old stereotyped forms and the forward outlook of social progress. Nearly half its population is under the age of fifteen, and this fact constitutes its brightest hope for the future.

The ancient traditional community consisted almost entirely of semi-nomad plowmen; today, one man out of two — on the average — is a wage-earner, and more than 150,000 farmers constitute the first generation of Congolese who have rallied to the intensive and rational agricultural methods applied by the native farming developments; throughout the country, new classes of society made up of independent businessmen and craftsmen are appearing, and they will contribute their share to the strengthening of the community of tomorrow.

But another and much more important transformation is the interpenetration which has begun to take place between the two groups, white and black. For a long time this interpenetration was difficult to bring about, on account of the immense differences in the ways of life and the background of the two elements; because of those differences, all the managerial activities were entrusted to the Europeans. Today new Congolese social strata are coming to the fore; equipped with sufficient intellectual training, they are capable of relieving the European technicians and of participating with them in the organization of a great mass of people whose evolution is now in full swing. It is certain that this interpenetration, as it becomes generalized, will give the country the social structure advocated by the Belgian colonial policy; the latter, rejecting all quibbling, aims at building a Belgo-Congolese community based on association and free from all racial discrimination.

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The primitive Congo that Stanley came in contact with is a thing of the past; the old face is fading away and new features, more dynamic, clear-cut, and varied have given it a new look. In the forests, oil refineries are busy, and on the high plateaus of Katanga the silhouettes of slag heaps and blast furnaces stand out; on all sides, vast plantations stretch out. Young cities project their high buildings against the sky. Leopoldville, the capital, which had 22,000 inhabitants in 1933, now boasts of

Note. The picture presented in this chapter of the social situation in the Congo and of its evolution constitutes only a brief introductory sketch. The chapters that make up the rest of this book treat each topic individually.

PART II
A HISTORY
OF THE CONGO

CHAPTER I
PREHISTORIC
TIMES

SUMMARY

- 1. PREHISTORIC TIMES IN EUROPE. 53
- 2. PREHISTORIC TIMES IN AFRICA 56
- 3. PREHISTORIC TIMES IN THE CONGO . . . 59

Prehistoric Times in Europe.

1.

The Prehistoric Age in the Congo, which is a part of all we know about Africa, must be assigned to its proper place within the perspective of the Prehistoric Age in Europe; thus it takes on a comparative significance that constitutes its real importance.

It was not until the past century, and in Europe, that humanity became aware of its real origins and came to realize that the oldest peoples mentioned in history had been preceded, in the course of a very long past, by a series of primitive human types linking present-day man to simian ancestors.

At that time were developed the converging disciplines of geology, climatology, the general paleontology of the Quaternary, human paleontology, and prehistory. France, Belgium, and Great Britain were responsible for the first scientific syntheses in these fields. Such syntheses have established the facts that primitive

man at last expresses itself freely. He not only used stone and bones for his implements, but he created an art; this was expressed at first in his personal belongings, and then on the walls of grottos that are famous today. The phases of this Paleolithic period are Aurignacian, Perigordian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian.

The Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age is very important in the prehistory of Western Europe. Indeed, whereas during the Paleolithic Age, humanity knew only the precarious existence of hunters, during the Mesolithic Age, which appears after the last Ice Age, men feel new needs: they take to food gathering and begin to domesticate animals.

The Neolithic Age loomed up some thousands of years ago; it was a period of tremendous progress in civilization. The techniques of agriculture, pottery, etc. made their appearance. This period of major discoveries already foreshadows modern times.

As for the Age of Metals, it is generally placed in the proto-historic period, which precedes the times of written records but is often borne out by oral traditions and legends that were later recorded.

man had gradually progressed, both physically and mentally, and that this evolution had been accompanied by a series of different stone civilizations; these civilizations won greater and greater victories over a hostile and ever-changing environment marked by several Ice Ages with interglacial epochs (warm intervals) between them. Paleontology, for its part, has proved that these primitive men had been the contemporaries of species of animals that have since disappeared from the European scene: the elephant, the hippopotamus, the lion, etc.

The French, English, and Belgian studies in these new scientific fields show that the first chronological succession of prehistoric human cultures has been traced in Western Europe.

The human cultures of prehistoric times comprise four great successive periods which are:

- Paleolithic Age or Early Stone Age
- the Mesolithic Age or Middle Stone Age
- the Neolithic Age or Late Stone Age
- the Age of Metals.

The Paleolithic Age in its turn comprises three successive periods:

- Lower Paleolithic
- Middle Paleolithic
- Upper Paleolithic.

Lower Paleolithic lasted a long time. It was characterized by two stages in the production of stone implements; the first stage was marked by hand axes, also known as fist-hatchets, while the second was marked by flint or flake tools and weapons. The first stage was subdivided into Abbevillien or Chellean, and Acheulien; the second, into Clactonian and Levalloisian.

Middle Paleolithic continues the Levalloisian phase and includes besides the Mousterian Phase.

During the upper Paleolithic period, the inventive spirit of

Furthermore, later discoveries have shown Africa to be the principal center of the evolution of fossil Hominians some 25 million years ago, viz., in the middle of the third Ice Age. Later, when the northern regions of Europe and Asia were plunged into glacial and periglacial periods that were unfavorable to humanity, Africa knew warm and damp climates, a fauna rich in mammals, and it was inhabited continuously by successive forms of primitive humanity.

As a matter of fact, Africa is still today the only part of the Old World where remains can be found representing all the morphological stages through which humanity has passed in its slow evolution from a purely animal state: the Australopithecus stage, the Pithecanthropus stage, the Neanderthalian stage, and finally the present stage of Homo Sapiens. What is more, the stone implements which literally pave vast regions of the African continent make it possible to follow the successive steps in the technical progress of the human mind.

What are the conclusions to be drawn from these discoveries in Africa?

Today we are in a position to affirm that Africa witnessed the first stage in the existence of primitive humanity: the stage of the Australopithecus. This must have happened in the woodlands and the grassy savannahs that border on the thick forests of Central Africa.

The Australopithecus was still very close to primitive animality, but he already belonged to the morphological type of man by his erect stature and his dentition. He already had the inventive spirit of man. Discoveries made in the grotos of the Transvaal have shown that this human type, even before the Stone Age, had made use of bones to shape implements; he systematically gathered and used the roughest and sharpest cranial and post-cranial bones of animals he had killed in hunting. The Australopithecus is probably responsible for the later discovery of stone-cutting and the fashioning of pebbles into instruments for cutting,

Prehistoric Times in Africa.

2.

Such are the traditional divisions of European prehistory. The knowledge already acquired was destined to be suddenly enriched by later discoveries made in Asia and Africa, discoveries that in their turn threw a new light on the origins of humanity.

First of all, in Southeast Asia the remains of a primitive human type, the Pithecanthropus, were discovered; and then those of another, the sinanthropus, closely related to the first.

The prehistoric exploration of Africa began rather late, but it had sensational results. Indeed, it was destined to prove not only that Africa was one of the cradles of humanity, but that it had known a human type even before the Pithecanthropus: the Australopithecus. Before the other parts of the world, Africa had thus seen the first men work stone in a manner which was definitely more primitive than European Paleolithic. This phase, which was characterized by the rudimentary shaping of pebbles, was called pebble culture.