Nyamwezi people, the most numerous of Tanzania, were divided into more than one hundred chiefdoms at the end of the nineteenth century, just before the arrival of the Europeans. Blohm's ethnography (1933) shows what Nyamwezi society was like at that time. Blohm was one of the first missionaries to stay there, and between 1897 and 1916 he patiently collected more than three hundred interviews with old people about their rituals, which he published in the original language. We can therefore go beyond his German translations by turning directly to his vernacular texts.

Blohm's publication allows us to assess later works by the missionaries Bösch and Gass and the better known writings of the government anthropologists Cory and Tanner, in that it provides the background necessary for separating Nyamwezi thought from the interpretations of later authors.

In every chiefdom, the *ntemi* was a sacred king, much like the kings of the great interlacustrine African kingdoms. Among the living, he embodied supernatural forces and the collectivity of ancestors, to whom he principally directed his attention and who were the main source of public sanctions. His duties were to conduct the rites of the agricultural cycle, mainly the sacrifices to the spirits of his royal predecessors when the time came for rain-making, planting and harvesting. He also addressed his royal ancestors in case of war or epidemics and performed special rituals in case of a breach of a royal taboo, such as the birth of twins, murder, killing a lion, or failure to observe the very precise chronological order of all the acts involved in agricultural work. When the king became old or sick, he was put to death and immediately replaced.

Around him at the court lived the People of the Great Village (*banikuru*), among whom were hereditary dignitaries, but also other people who, having broken a taboo, took refuge at court by a special procedure, that of breaking at the entrance royal paraphernalia used in ceremonies related to the ancestors; or others who were seized because they were unable to pay the royal fine incurred by their breach of the prohibition. Relinquishing any relationship with their own family, they lived the rest of their lives at court, where they could reach quite high positions.

Beyond the Great Village were numerous hamlets (*kaya*) scattered throughout the chiefdom, where a small group of often unrelated families lived, having followed or subsequently joined a man who 'cleared the land'. This man might be recognized by the king as a village headman, inasmuch as he would report to the king cases of murder, the birth of twins, and so on, and organize the collective work that sometimes had to be done at court. Several *kaya* could also be grouped into a greater village (*limbuda*) under a single village headman. The smallest unit in such hamlets was the household, or *kaya*, organized around a man and his wives, each wife having her own house, or *numba*, with related elders, married and unmarried children, and adopted dependents.

Non-kinship relationships within the hamlet entailed treating and speaking of mutual assistance as 'debts' to be remembered and repaid. They were distinguished from consanguinal relationships, or *budugu*, in which assistance was obligatory and did not lead to indebtedness. Included in *budugu* relatives were all cognatic kinsmen of ego, wherever they might live, so long as they had

not forgotten the tie, continued to help in the rites and sacrifices of birth, marriage and death, and contributed toward fines imposed after the breach of taboos. Such rituals involved both sacrifice and the ceremonial payment of hoes, goats and cattle.

The yearly cycle was marked by two seasons. The rainy season, the time of the 'black' rain, was devoted to work in the fields and the cultivation of sorghum. The dry season was the time for feasts, marriages, murders and wars. The 'white' drought, if enduring, provoked terrible fear and displayed the anger of the ancestors.

The following discussion focuses on a brief example drawn from the extensive Nyamwezi system of classification. Cory (1960; but see also Beidelman 1961: 250) alone has discussed the place of right and left in Nyamwezi chicken divination, and Abrahams (1967: 5, n.3) has drawn attention to the fact that, unlike their neighbours, Nyamwezi associate left with males. Of the numerous oppositions the Nyamwezi recognize (Tcherkézoff 1983)—directional, sexual, numerical, between colours, and so on—they seem to emphasise the oppositions of black/white and back/front ('back', *mugongo*/'head', *mutwe*).

This paper will concentrate on the meanings of black and white in all the ritual contexts where these colours appear as a necessary element of a ritual act. One of the main examples, concerning the contrast between the two seasons of the year, has already been introduced. There are five such ritual contexts: 1) familial sacrifice in which a group of kin invokes its proximate ancestors; 2) royal sacrifice where the king asks his ancestors to bless the country with rain, crops, health and success in war; 3) chicken divination occasioned by illness in the household; 4) chicken divination at the selection of a new king; and 5) the ritual for initiation into fraternities.

Taken separately, the first four contexts reveal little more than the complementarity of black and white. The fifth context, or the first four taken together, reveals a more complex pattern, involving a hierarchy of levels. This pattern aids the understanding of the total ideology and the overall configuration of ceremonial circulation within Nyamwezi society.

Familial Sacrifice

The diviner prescribes the ritual known as *kuhoja* mainly in connection with illness. Depending upon the seriousness of the illness, he may order the consecration of a row of beads to be worn after the ceremony as a bracelet or necklace and the consecration or sacrifice of a goat or cow. The consecration consists in anointing the bracelet or the animal with sorghum flour mixed with water (*lwanga*),[2] a mixture which must first have been brought into contact with

2. Strictly speaking, sacrifice consists in the same consecration followed by puncturing the ear or throat of the animal with a knife. A general account of the *kuhoja* ceremony may be found in Tcherkézoff 1985.

the sick person. By means of the consecration, the soul of the ancestor passes from the sick person into the bracelet or animal. This procedure is said to 'give a house' to the ancestor, who until then had been a 'wild animal' but now becomes 'established among his descendants'. Letting the blood of the sacrificial animal fall to the ground completes the process: the ancestor's soul reunites with his body under the ground, the blood representing the principle of life.

Of interest at present is the diviner's choice of the type of bracelet or animal. If the ancestor belongs to the paternal side, the 'side of the head, of the front', and is therefore denoted by the left hand, the beads must be white. If the ancestor is on the maternal side, the 'side of the back', the right-hand side, the beads must be black (Bösch 1930: 101).

The ancestor's origin is also expressed by the animal's sex (male for the paternal side, female for the maternal side) and by the hand which the sacrificer uses to anoint the animal (left for the paternal side, right for the maternal side). The diviner also specifies the appropriate colour. For ordinary cases of misfortune, the specifications for the animal are simple: a single colour, usually black, or at most spotted black and white. In more serious cases the animal must possess 'two hairs', black and white in a special pattern, that is, with one white spot on the head (Blohm 1933, vol. iii, texts 54e, 54h, 54i; Bösch 1930: 73, 94, 128, 158, 221; 1938: 89; Millroth 1965: 160). This pattern is regarded as superior to a merely random mixture of colours when it is used in royal sacrifice.

Royal Sacrifice

In royal sacrifice the victim normally has a white spot on its head and only cattle are used, whereas in familial sacrifice such an animal is resorted to only for serious cases. Families usually use only goats. The ordinary forms of royal sacrifice apply to minor troubles and illness in the royal family or court. The king invokes his ancestors on altars which are small 'houses of the ancestors' situated near the palace.

In serious trouble, like drought, and in the principal rituals of the annual agricultural cycle, the victim must be entirely black. The diviner may even specify that the animal to be sacrificed be one which was born at night. It must always be male, in contrast to the use of both sexes in familial sacrifice to indicate the derivation of the ancestor. Sacrifices to bring rain are held at the graves of kings (Bösch 1930: 128; Cory 1951; Millroth 1965: 135–7).

The order of progression differs in the two contexts of familial and royal sacrifice. In royal sacrifice there is a transition from black and white, with a stress on the asymmetry of the single white spot, to completely black. In familial sacrifice the movement is from a lack of colour specification or at most a single colour to the asymmetrical pattern of the two colours. This difference may be called an inversion, although since we are speaking at the moment only of two

different contexts, the pertinence of the idea of inversion has not yet been demonstrated.

Divination at Death or Illness

In cases of illness or death, before deciding what procedures should be followed, the diviner may use a chicken to find out whether an ancestor or a witch is responsible and who that ancestor or witch is. The diviner looks at the situation of a spot on the chicken in terms of the oppositions of right/left and head/back.[3] White or clear spots indicate ancestors; black or dark spots imply witches (Blohm 1933, vol. iii, text 146; Bösch 1930: 220–1; Cory 1960: 22–4; Millroth 1965: 138–40). If an ancestor is responsible people say 'that is all right'; this is the expected answer and in the order of things. In the case of a death it means that the entire funeral and burial can be carried out and the deceased will become an ancestor. In a case of illness, it means that someone who has recently died has finished his walk in the wilderness and wishes to return to live among his kin. The first consecration or sacrifice carried out for him constitutes his second funeral. It could also indicate the return of a long-dead ancestor who, though already established among his kin, had gone away because no sacrifices had been made to him for a long time. An ancestor's establishment in the domestic area of the living is always temporary and must be regularly renewed. Cosmology requires this regular renewal. Sacrifice also reasserts the ancestral value of the family's cattle herd, making it possible to use them in ceremonial exchanges in connection with the various stages of the life cycle and in connection with other groups, including the royal court. Illness is actually an expected event and a link in the chain of transformations which bring about the renewal of generations (Tcherkézoff 1985).

A black spot indicating a witch is an occasion of serious trouble. The family has to go to a special and expensive diviner to obtain magical medicines against the witch's influence. Otherwise, they may decide to kill the witch, a step always taken in the case of a death. This measure involves them in another costly relationship with the king, for by shedding blood they have endangered the whole kingdom. Vengeance nevertheless seems necessary, in order to re-establish the victim in the ancestral cycle (see Tcherkézoff 1981, vol. ii, ch. 5).

3. It may be recalled in passing that this is the only previously described aspect of dual classification among the Nyamwezi, mentioned by Cory (1960) and drawn to the attention of a wider audience by Beidelman in his paper on the Kaguru (1961: 250). Beidelman's article immediately followed Needham's analysis of the Mugwe of the Meru (1960). Beidelman quoted the Nyamwezi example to underline the richness of African ethnography on this topic and to emphasise the lack of attention given to the subject there. Needham's Meru study marked a return of interest after a long neglect following Hertz in 1909 (for an account of Needham's analysis of the Meru case and of Hertz's paper see Tcherkézoff 1983).

The spot is black not just because witches are black, although of course witches work at night and their substances and actions are associated with black. Furthermore, the ancestors cannot be said to be only white, since ancestors from different sides of the family are distinguished by black and white. Black and white in this case denote the ill-omened and the propitious answers respectively in divination, and indicate either trouble disturbing the normal order of things, or else the normal presence of the ancestors. They have exactly the opposite implications in divination for the king.

Divination for Selecting a New King

When a king is selected, white spots are a negative answer and black spots a positive one. White spots say that a candidate would bring only drought to the country, while black spots presage numerous dark clouds bringing heavy rain (Cory 1951: 7).

It would be tempting to compare more closely the two forms of divination to see if there are other marked differences, or even a clear inversion of the favourable and unfavourable meanings of black and white. In familial divination a white answer is accepted with relief, whereas in royal divination it is feared. In the first case it denotes the continuity of the chain between the living and the dead. In the second case it represents a disruption of the continuity of the yearly cycle which, as the cycle of agricultural ceremonies shows, expresses the continuity of society as a whole and guarantees its persistence. These different implications mark *two levels of Nyamwezi ideology.*

We may speak about inversion here if we take chicken divination as a single context. We may not do so if we regard illness and death among commoners as an issue quite distinct from the election of kings, or regard the relationship to ancestors and witches as an entirely different matter from the relation between the two seasons. Surely, though, it is no coincidence that the two contexts of sacrifice and the two contexts of divination reveal the same inversion of symbols.

The hypothesis that this transformation is an inversion implies that it occurs within a total pattern, and we might hope to find confirmation in ritual concerned with the totality of society, such as that which takes place within the initiation hut.

The Initiation Hut

The Nyamwezi are regarded as a society without initiation, but we have several descriptions of the ritual for entering one of their 'secret societies'. Applying such a name to these clubs, associations or fraternities is misleading, though it is true

that it is difficult to describe them. The choice of a secret society is quite free, but most people enter one or another of them. Although they are numerous, the manner of initiation is similar everywhere. Entrance to a secret society appears to be a direct continuation of familial sacrifice. When all familial rituals prescribed by a diviner have failed, the diviner organizes an initiation ritual to induct his client and other candidates into his own society. Also, clients sometimes join the diviner's society after being cured. While undergoing treatment the client becomes the 'ox' of his new 'father', the diviner. In the secret society, this new family tie becomes firmly established. Initiation belongs to the context of sacrifice and the relation to the ancestors, expressed through illness, and involving divination, consecration, sacrifice (in the strict sense) and initiation. It is linked, therefore, to contexts 1 and 3, but as we shall see it also shows elements of contexts 2 and 4, the symbolism of the wet and dry seasons.

The ritual is complex and lasts several days. A period when the candidates are secluded in the bush contrasts with a period when they remain in a large hut made specifically for the occasion, where they learn the rules of their new society. I shall limit myself here to a description of the interior of this hut (Cory 1946; see also Bösch 1930: 169–202; Blohm 1933: 39–40; Gass *et al.* 1973: 400–29; Millroth 1965: 140ff.). Just inside it there are, along with other objects, two large pots representing the two sides of the ancestors, paternal and maternal, head and back, white and black. One pot is called 'man', the other 'woman'. One holds the male symbol, an axe or bow, which is used in all rituals, at birth and marriage, and so on. The other holds the female symbol, a long wooden spoon. Under each of the pots there is a jewel or *iholero*, a term applied to beads, copper bracelets, or specially shaped shells which are used to call the ancestor and which he enters during consecration. The master of ceremonies explains clearly that one side represents the paternal ancestors and the other the maternal ancestors, the two meanings being shown to everyone (Cory 1946). Neither is higher than the other, as they are both placed on the ground. Contrasting to this dual symbol on the floor there are a number of white spots made with cotton inside the conical roof of the round hut. These spots represent stars, the roof being called the sky. No distinctions exist in the sky. According to myth, the people who live there, the primeval ancestors, are one-sided, having only one eye, arm and leg (Bösch 1930: 46; Gass *et al.* 1973: 391).

In the sky there are only one-sided ancestors. On the earth are found 'head hand' and 'back hand' ancestors. Between the unity of the sky and the disjunction of the earth, there is room left for movement. Drawings are made on the wall, which of course cannot be seen all at once. First facing the door and then turning left, the candidate walks around the hut. He sees the evening star and moon, then the morning star and sun, followed by a white circle called *kipwa* for the dry season and a black circle, *kitiku*, for the rainy season. Next there is a red line representing the first light of dawn and three red, black and white semi-circles in unspecified order standing for the rainbow.

This ritual procession around the hut follows a logical order, beginning with night, proceeding to morning, then to dawn, the boundary between night and day, and ending with the totality of the three colours representing night, day

and the transition between night and day. This interpretation derives not from universal common sense, but is plain in the ethnographic context. Sacrifices are always made at the limit between night and day. The victim is killed at the first light of dawn. The white and black circles, representing the dry and rainy seasons respectively, intervene in the overall order of the procession. In this case the black circle, the last one, is superior. A dialectical or polythetical analogy between the two different associations of white and black would wrongly associate the white light of day, which is declared by many proverbs to be good and bring warmness and 'strength', with the whiteness of drought, where sunshine is viewed not as a 'fire warming the house' but as a 'devastating fire'. It would also combine the fearful black of night (witches) with the life-giving black rain (Blohm 1933: 140). I will argue later that the only relationship between the black of night, sorcery and witchcraft and the black of rain must be understood as between two *levels* of the ideology.

It can be said, therefore, that the initiation hut displays these two levels in a single pattern linked to the larger context of sacrifices. The two levels are marked by the static opposition between the ancestors of the male and female sides (the two pots) and the dynamic opposition between the two seasons (the two circles). Their occurence together within the context of initiation justifies the interpretation that the contrasts between familial and royal sacrifice and between common and royal divination involve inversion between ideological levels and not between irreducible contexts. In the totality of the two circles representing the seasons the black circle, which comes last, seems to be superior. Divination for selecting a king shows as much. Furthermore, the entire year may be referred to as 'the wet season'. People may count years by rains, but they never count by droughts (Blohm 1933: 142). Another comment can be made about the use of circles to represent seasons. The Nyamwezi oppose linear ordering of events, marking the succession of generations, to cyclical ordering of the yearly cycle, where the progression of time is inverted (Tcherkézoff 1981, vol. ii, Conclusion). Nyamwezi say that 'the year has been caught from behind, as when a hunted animal makes a wide turn and gets behind the hunter'. The tie to near ancestors is thought of as a 'straight path' (Cory 1951: 37–8).

Three different patterns appear in the contexts reviewed in this paper. The first of these may be called hierarchy in the strict sense. Here, there is a superior level marked by *a* and an inferior level marked by the alternative *a* or *b*. In the annual sacrifices conducted by the king the victim is always black, as opposed to the two coloured animals or two colours of beads used at other times in royal or familial sacrifices. Also, it must always be male, as opposed to the alternative of male or female in other contexts.

The second pattern is hierarchy broadly speaking, which may be called totalization in a sense different from that used by Lévi-Strauss (see Tcherkézoff 1983: 115ff.). Here the superior level is marked by the union $a + b$ and the inferior level by the alternative *a* or *b*. This form is the most all-inclusive and is

represented by the symbolism within the initiation hut (the two seasons one after the other) and by the white and black beads used in familial sacrifice. It expresses a very general feature of Nyamwezi ideology, and is expressed also in the relation to the nearest ancestors, thought of as being symmetrical and disjunctive and characterized by linear time, as opposed to the relationship to the collectivity of ancestors, which is embodied in the royal line and associated with the flow of life in the yearly cycle. Some of the cattle exchanged in connection with marriages and murders must be given to the court, where they are thought to be transformed into the sorghum which the king distributes annually to be planted throughout the kingdom. This sorghum is the catalyst in the transfer of souls, for the sorghum and water mixture which is fed to an infant before any other food permits the soul given by the collectivity of ancestors to pass into him (see below).

The third pattern is characterized by inversion, as in the use of black and white in chicken divination. Here at the superior level a is greater than b, while at the inferior level b is greater than a: $a > b$ and $b < a$.

Hierarchical opposition can always appear in these three forms. Had we looked at the oppositions right and left, 'head' and 'back', or odd and even, we would have found the same three patterns. Why is it necessary always to distinguish two levels? To speak only of the complementarity of a and b or an analogy of a and b to c and d is meaningless. The terms within a classificatory system, of the objects used in ceremonial exchanges, have no meaning independent of the total hierarchy of the ideology.

In Western thought, where an object is defined by its substance or intrinsic properties, change or time is revealed by a shift in location or size of the object. But in societies whose ideologies Dumont calls holistic there is no substance, only relationship to the whole. Another characteristic of modern logic, that is, to see everything only on a single level, makes it impossible to express movement of any kind. The recognition of different levels permits the recognition of movement. Inversion, so puzzling to our way of thought, is therefore commonplace in holistic ideologies. If we say that a is bigger than b, our logic does not permit us to say simultaneously that b is bigger than a, because that would imply a change in substance. If we say that a is before b and that at another moment b is before a, we will say that there has been a relative change in momentum of a and b. In holistic logic a and b do not have measurable speeds. Their only characteristic is their relationship, and change is expressed by shifts such as that from a before b to b before a. In our own language we must speak of different levels, rather than trying to explain inversion by such misleading phrases as catharsis or rituals of rebellion. In fact, problems would arise if there were no inversions, for these represent the elementary operation of holistic logic. Modern thought cannot understand inversion, while modern society has suppressed most aspects of ritual.

We shall return shortly to consider the cycle of cattle and sorghum, the coming of the rain, and the status of twins, in order to reach conclusions about the relation between classification and ritual cycle and that between levels of the taxonomy and those in the ideology.

It is a well-known feature of East African societies that cattle serve as ceremonial money and are considered to be a material manifestation of the ancestors. Many analyses ignore the possibility of reversals at different levels of the ideology, but often link values related to cattle directly to the opposition of men and women or to status differences between pastoralists and agriculturalists.

Only at one level of Nyamwezi ideology is herding by men more prestigious than the agricultural and domestic tasks of women. The determining value here is the tie to the near ancestors of two or three generations on either side. The preparation of sorghum pudding appears to be profane in comparison to the control and exchange of cattle (in bridewealth or blood-price), expressing the strength of ancestral ties. However, sorghum is the highly-valued product of an elaborate and complex annual ritual at the royal palace. Its transformation in the ritual is the condition of the renewal of life once a year for every family in the chiefdom. A different level of the ideology is of concern here, with reference to the royal ancestors regarded as the 'fathers' of all Nyamwezi.

Ceremonial exchanges concern the various types as well as the consequences or resolution of murder or marriage. In either case part of the payment is given to the king in a double form, consisting in parts called the 'head' and the 'back'. Generally speaking, the head and the back denote the two halves of the human body, and their union is considered the expression of a person's completeness. The same symbolism attaches to the main part of blood-price, which is regarded as a life-giving gift, enabling the re-creation of a complete body with elements of the 'head' half, associated with the paternal ancestors, combined with elements of the 'back' half, associated with the maternal ancestors (Tcherkézoff 1984). The implications of these exchanges go beyond the two groups immediately concerned. The exchanges are part of a total ceremonial circulation.

After death, a Nyamwezi's body and soul separate. Soon afterwards, the relatives of the deceased begin a great variety of sacrifices which take place from time to time in response to illness. The main result of these sacrifices is to reunite the wandering soul of the ancestor with its body and to give him a 'house', so that he may 'reside' among his descendants and protect them. These sacrifices are repeated regularly because the ancestor has a tendency to leave the 'house' to become 'errant' again, and then malevolent. These sacrifices have an effect on the whole family herd, even though only one animal is consecrated to the ancestor or put to death. To use a metaphor, the whole herd is 'recharged' with ancestral value, enabling it to be used in ceremonial exchanges (see Tcherkézoff 1981: 608).

Part of each exchange is directed to the court in order to 'nourish' it. Having 'swallowed' the gift (*kulya*), the royal couple, assisted by the priest, may 'push out' the new sorghum of the year (*kufumya, kuhoja*). Sorghum, it is said, is 'born' from the queen's womb and then distributed throughout the country to be sown by every family. Subsequently, royal sacrifices ensure the maturation of the sorghum. The duality of 'swallowing' and 'pushing out' expresses a general law of Nyamwezi ritual. The expression to 'push out' may apply to birth, entrance into the new year, payment of ceremonial gifts, the letting of blood in sacrifice,

and the soul's leaving the body at death. Each event must be preceded or followed by 'swallowing', which may be to die ('to be taken by the Death, *lufu*'), receiving the ceremonial gift, or eating the sacrificial meat. The queen cannot give birth to sorghum if she has not been 'swallowing' all year long or has not been nourished by the ceremonial gifts. The circulation of cattle is transformed into the circulation of sorghum from the court to each family. The final step in the circulation which begins at death occurs in the ritual connected with birth.

After the mother is 'opened', the infant is 'opened' too (his ears are 'opened' by producing a special sound near his head), in order to provide a path for the soul. Next, the infant receives its first food in the form of sorghum. In his commentary Blohm (1933: 188) says that the collectivity of the ancestors gives a soul to the infant and will return to retrieve it at death.

Sorghum seems to be the necessary medium for the renewal of life. A new body is given to the soul by its means, sorghum's efficacy deriving from its very origin. Other rituals confirm this idea, as in marriage, where balls of sorghum are used to consecrate the new union, or in the birth ceremony for twins, where their first food has to be brought from another kingdom because twins represent the essence of Nyamwezi kingship everywhere in Nyamwezi country. Hence sorghum is clearly the medium of the royal 'soul', which like the other symbol of Nyamwezi kingship, the lion, is outside. (All actual dynasties are thought to originate from 'outside' the kingdom.) After being fed, twins, though alive, immediately become like the ancestors and receive sacrifices.

These oppositions concerning the different evaluations of cattle and sorghum, men and women, concern the two levels we have already identified in connection with colour classification. With reference to the close ancestors (level 1), the 'head', 'left-hand' or paternal side is symbolized by the bow and said to be superior. A man has authority over his wife because 'he has the bow' and because men look after livestock. At this level, white beads (for the paternal ancestors) are valued because in general white stands for the ancestors, in opposition to the black of witchcraft, usually attributed to the 'back' or maternal side of the family. However, with reference to the collectivity of ancestors or royal ancestors (level 2), the 'black' side, the side of the 'back', is valued; for all royal ancestors are 'children of the back' (given that the succession to kingship is from mother's brother to sister's son) and are responsible for the 'black', in this case the rain which enables sorghum to thrive. After success in 'calling the rain', the court 'gives birth' to the sorghum for the new year (Cory 1951: 33–40).

One anecdote shows vividly how strongly linked these conceptions are. When colonial influence caused the rule of royal succesion to be changed to patrilineality, the Nyamwezi were terrified, for they thought that no more rains would come (Abrahams 1967: 46). Though the king did not lose his responsibility for organizing the ritual calling for the rain, no longer being a sister's son of his predecessor he was no longer of the 'back' and 'black' side, and therefore no longer on the side of the rain.

To say that the levels identified in the formal structure of dual classification are the same as those that appear in the ritual cycle implies that they are the levels of the total ideology and that a circular relationship exists between these

levels. Symbolic elements are not defined by particular contexts, that is, independently of the overall system of thought, the levels in that system, and the transformations, such as inversion, which they imply. Consequently, there is no need to find a specific meaning for the colour black, for instance. It is wrong to ask whether black is more closely related to witchcraft than to rain-laden clouds. Fortunately, the context of initiation brings together the associations of black with rain and with the maternal ancestors, with the difference that jewels (*maholero*, plural of *iholero*), consecrated to the ancestors, are exactly comparable to the beads (*maholero*). If we were to focus only on the binary relationship between black and white, we would miss the total position of the relationship within Nyamwezi ideology and would assume that there was something in common to the black of the maternal ancestors, the black of witchcraft and the black of rain. Depending on whether we focus on witchcraft or rain, we would assign black either to the inferior or superior column in a two-column scheme—unless we were simply to ignore one or other of the associations as being incoherent. In fact there is no single meaning behind these associations, although there are ritual connections between maternal ancestors, witchcraft and rain.

As we have seen, sometimes the victim for a royal sacrifice must be born at night. The black skin of the animal consequently refers not only to black clouds but also to night. Night is always spoken of as 'the time of the witches'. Only at night can they be seen going through the walls of huts, riding hyaenas, visiting sleeping people, and making them sick by sleeping on them. When caught, they are killed and thrown into the bush. Their bodies may not be left in the village. Rain also belongs to the outside world, to the bush, and comes from 'beyond the horizon'. The king is able to call the rain because he too comes from the bush, being a lion who has come to 'eat' the land of the chiefdom, as witches 'eat' their victims by giving them deadly diseases. In order to call the rain, the king requires the help of specialists or diviners called *bafumu*. Diviners are the only people who are not identified with a specific chiefdom. They are organized in 'secret societies' which extend beyond the chiefdom. Witches too are supposed to be organized in similar associations. In a long drought the king is thought to be sick. He must spit on a stick which is brought to a diviner in the same way as is done when a person is ill and wishes the diviner to 'dream' in order to find out which ancestor or witch is responsible. In some cases the diviner will order the king to sacrifice a human. The victim must be caught and killed at night as if he were a witch. Furthermore, as has been seen, witches are generally looked for among the maternal or 'back' relatives, those whose ancestors are associated with black beads.

We may say that the black of the superior level of the ideology (the rain) is the negation of the black of the inferior level, implying not a contradiction within a single level, but a circulation between two levels of the ideology. While rain comes from outside, witches are expelled to the outside. In a way, 'black' (and 'back') witches have to be expelled to the bush so that the king, who is the other 'black' and 'back' person and who sits now in the centre of the kingdom, may call for rain. Throughout the year, the king receives in his court the murderers of

witches, 'thanks' them in actual words, and 'swallows' the fine they bring him, which is much smaller than the blood-price paid by the murderer of someone who is not a witch. In taking on himself the weight of these murders, he protects his ability annually to 'push out' or to give birth to the rain. For this reason the king says of the killers of witches that they have made a good sacrifice for the country. They 'have done good to the country'; and the good always refers to rain.

Attention to levels also helps us to understand the ritual for twins. The ritual is too elaborate and lengthy to be gone into in detail here, but a few points may be noted. The birth of twins is an accident endangering the agricultural cycle. All work must stop in the fields, for twins bring drought. Such a birth is a white act, as is murder; and both are included in royal taboos. The purpose of the ritual is to 'blacken' this event. At the end of the ritual, the twins' parents are smeared with black soot at court, where the twins are reborn and immediately become collective ancestors for the chiefdom. At first they are kept outside the village with rubbish, where they are metaphorically killed and buried in a way that brings them back into the court. There is a homology here between the hierarchical structure of levels, and the ritual circulation from a dangerous white event to the ending of the danger and creation of a new positive influence through blackening that event. At the end of the ritual the twins' parents may work on anyone's fields, where they initiate the work and promise an abundant harvest. Twins are often invoked in prayers to the ancestors. It is as though they had to be born dangerously in order to be propitious.

It would appear that life and rain depend on hierarchically cyclical transformations of white twins into black ones, black witchcraft into black rain, and white deaths (those caused by the ancestors) into sorghum which, like twins, is thought to be born at the court as the 'child of the queen' and which germinates and grows in response to black rain. The levels revealed by the transformations of oppositions in the classificatory system, that is, by inversion and totalization, constitute the conceptual framework for ceremonial circulation and exchanges. The analysis of such a classificatory system, when carried out without the use of *a priori* notions such as the principle of non-contradiction, may provide a key to the particular ritual logic of a given society.

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