

his conviction that "what was emerging towards the end of the seventeenth century was a civilisation exhilaratingly new perhaps, but strange as Nineveh and Babylon. That is why, since the rise of Christianity, there is no landmark in history that is worthy to be compared with this." The last two chapters are concerned with the eighteenth-century scientific revolution in chemistry, and with the ideas of progress and evolution which prepared the minds of men for the "Origin of Species" in 1859.

It is a tribute to the author that the presentation of his theme stimulates the reader to more detailed study; the value of "The Origins of Modern Science" is enhanced by a list of suggestions for further reading.

H. D. ANTHONY

## PEASANT WORK AND WORSHIP IN THE DECCAN

### The Aboriginal Tribes of Hyderabad

By Dr. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, in collaboration with Elizabeth von Fürer-Haimendorf. Vol. 3: The Raj Gonds of Adilabad, a Peasant Culture of the Deccan; Book 1: Myth and Ritual. Pp. xvii+450+52 plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1948.) 35s. net.

AN important gap in our knowledge of the aboriginals of India has been here filled by Dr. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, for, though Grigson and Elwin have written authoritative accounts of the Gonds of Bastar State, there was previously no comparable work on those of the Central Provinces and Hyderabad. The Gonds, numbering some three million persons, are the largest aboriginal group in India and, as is to be expected, contain many diverse elements and display levels of culture ranging from the most simple to that of the court of a Hindu raja. The author has selected for his subject the primitive and important group inhabiting the Adilabad District between the Godavari and Penganga on the north-eastern border of Hyderabad State. Here more than seventy thousand of them live, preserved, as the author points out, by many years of Moslem rule from the more aggressive elements of Hindu culture. The author and his wife lived among these people for long periods as trusted friends and toured over the whole area. It is their record of what they actually saw, aided by superb photographs, which gives such a fascinating vividness to their account.

The present volume deals with the myth and ritual of the Gonds of the uplands, where the ancient culture is best preserved, and contains also a full account of the Pardhans, who play an essential part as hereditary bards of the Gonds and guardians of their songs and traditions. The tribal myths are no dead relics of the past. They are alive, and without a knowledge of them it would be impossible to understand Gond society; to a Gond the Persa Pen, the 'great god', of his phratry is as real as the founder is to members of an Oxford college. The author was therefore right in recording the full texts of the myths; they are of the utmost value, but it may be suggested that, placed as they are, they tend to interrupt the narrative of the book, so that the ordinary reader would have found it more convenient if they had been relegated to appendixes and their present place taken by condensed and analysed versions.

In course of time the phratries split up into clans and sub-clans, each with its own Persa Pen symbolized by an iron spearhead, a whisk (curiously enough of yak hair), brass bells, a bamboo stave and a cloth, and anthropomorphic idols playing no part in the ritual. Around the simple Persa Pen shrines a most elaborate ritual centres, and the author's first-hand account of the Persa Pen Feast at Marlavai in 1942 is bound to be a *locus classicus* of ethnography.

In the latter part of the book, the annual cycle is described, beginning early in the hot season with a rite corresponding in some ways to the Holi festival of the Hindus, but particularly important for the reason that all who partake of the ritual food affirm the unity of the community by placing themselves under an obligation not to move to another village until after the harvest. At this feast, too, every householder fells a bush or small tree, in memory of the old days of shifting cultivation, and until the ceremonies are over no ploughing may be done. In May, jungle fruit is ceremonially eaten and the ban on its export from the village lifted, and at the same time all the phases of the old agricultural year of shifting cultivation are dramatized with the object of ensuring a good harvest. At this time the great feasts of the clan deities described earlier in the book are celebrated at the full moon, usually preceded by rites in honour of family gods. At one of these, witnessed by the author, a seer in a state of trance was at his own request lashed again and again with whips without showing any sign of pain or bruising. As soon as the rains have really broken, a ceremonial First Sowing takes place, followed by a period of intense activity, for delay in sowing the fields would spell disaster. In June or July another ceremony takes place at which the deities are asked to protect the wandering cattle of their herdsmen, and the ban is lifted on the blowing of horns, the noise of which, it is believed, would have injured the grain when it first began to germinate. In August or September the first fruits are eaten and the harvesting of the small millet begins. The cool season is now at hand and dry weather crops are sown, all of them dating from the time when the Gonds abandoned shifting hill cultivation for plough cultivation in the valleys. Once that work is over, the time arrives for wandering troupes of dancers to entertain the villagers with songs and boisterous pantomimes. It is the time of greatest gaiety for a happy people; but it is not allowed to last long, for the great millet is ripening and has to be protected from birds and marauding deer and harvested in time for a short rest before another strenuous year begins.

It was while serving as adviser to H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for tribes and backward classes that Dr. Haimendorf collected the material for this monograph, and it is good to know that under the present regime he still retains a connexion with the State, and that the measures he proposed for the protection and advancement of the aboriginals are being largely carried out. Many points in Gond culture are obscure, and though an explanation of some of them may be possible when other sections of the tribe are studied, the author is right in leaving a number of questions unanswered for the present. His careful field-work and wide experience have produced a book of the highest value and interest, both to the anthropologist and to the general reader, and the second volume will be eagerly awaited. The publishers have fully maintained their high standard of production, and the price is surprisingly low. J. P. MILLS