

Das Problem des Totemismus.

Eine Diskussion über die Natur des Totemismus und die Methode seiner Erforschung.

(Fortsetzung.)

8. Totemism in Southern Nigeria.

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During my 1909—1910 tour I obtained information as to ritual prohibitions¹ among the Edo or Bini people of Southern Nigeria. I collected a large number of genealogies and found that every family had one or more ritual prohibitions, either as to the use of certain animals or plants, or as to the performance of certain actions or the utterance of certain words. These prohibitions are known as *awa* or *awaiḡbe* (*egbe* = family) and associated with them is the practice of exogamy.

There is one exception to the prohibition observed by a family: in many cases the animal, plant or action which is normally prohibited is actually prescribed as a part of the burial ceremonies; but at the conclusion of the rites, more especially if the forbidden animal or plant has been eaten, ceremonies of purification are performed precisely in the same way as if the animal or plant had been eaten inadvertently in the course of ordinary daily life.

The use of certain animals, plants and objects and the performance of certain actions is forbidden either absolutely or except on ceremonial occasions; in rare cases ordinary acts are forbidden when certain words, properly useable on such ceremonial occasions, have been pronounced in common daily life. These bans or prohibitions are of two kinds: 1. *awailimi* (*awa* ban, *elim* heaven) laid on a person by a priest, or incumbent on him as the worshipper of a certain *ebo*; 2. *awaiḡbe* (*awa* ban, *egbe* family) inherited in the male line, apparently whether the child be legitimate or not, from the actual father.

In the Edo district I found few traces of descent in the female line, though in the north-east, in Fuga, the children accept the mother's bans without apparently passing them on to the next generation. In two cases at Iyawa the *awaiḡbe* was said to be derived from the mother's family; in the first case my informant was the head man of one of the quarters; the second case was that of the next man to him, who was said to be a stranger but was in fact descended from the same great grandfather (*fa . fa . fa .*). The statement appeared to be entirely incorrect, inasmuch as the *awa* were the same in both cases, though there was no traceable connection between the mothers families; and the mothers came from entirely different parts of the country. There may however be some tradition of female descent among the descendents of Imokpai, as my second informant assured me that he avoided calabash seed (*ikbuko*) for his mother's family and calabash seed, though very common as *awaiḡbe*, never, so far as I know, occurs as *awailimi*.

¹ A summary of my information was published in FRAZER'S "Totemism and Exogamy", vol. II, p. 589 ss.