

A Short Account of the present position and possibilities for  
the future of a hunting tribe in Tanganyika.

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Preliminary.

The Tindiga (or Hadza as they call themselves) are a tribe of hunters and collectors living beside Lake Eyasi in Northern Tanganyika. Their food consists of bush products such as wild berries, roots, the fruit of the baobab tree, honey and the meat of the animals they hunt <sup>2</sup>. No agriculture of any sort is practised (except by a group who have settled near the Isanzu) and no cattle, sheep, goats or chickens are kept. They have never been governed and have neither chiefs nor courts and pay no taxes <sup>3</sup>.

For many years they have been losing land to surrounding tribes particularly to the Iraqw. Recently, with extensive tsetse clearance, a vast area of land traditionally used by the Tindiga has been occupied by the Iraqw and if they continue to lose land at the present rate many Tindiga will be faced with a severe

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1. The author is carrying out social anthropological field research among the Tindiga and has so far spent over a year living in their camps. The research has been supported by the award of an Honorary Research Fellowship of the East African Institute of Social Research, a Goldsmiths' Company's Post-Graduate Travelling Scholarship, a Sir Bartle Frere Exhibition and a grant from the Mary Euphrasia Mosley Fund. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

2. Their right to hunt is guaranteed by Game Ordinance.

3. A minority of them (those living in Sukumaland) are, writes Malcolm, "administered by their clan elders under the final authority of the Sukuma chief of Kimali". (See D.W. Malcolm, Sukumaland, 1953, p.20). This does not hold good for the Tindiga to the East of Lake Eyasi (except the cultivating Tindiga) who owe no allegiance to chiefs of other tribes (though the Isanzu mtemi has some influence with them) and whose senior men have little in the way of authority over other members of the tribe. They are beyond the reach of the European administration.

shortage of food and perhaps even with starvation in the next few years. In this account I shall sketch the background to the problem by outlining the present position of the Tindiga and drawing a few comparisons with hunting and gathering peoples in other parts of the world. For the sake of clarity I have omitted unnecessary detail. However, I have added a list of the more important published material on the Tindiga and I shall be happy to supply further information on request.

### Economy.

For most of the year the Tindiga depend primarily on wild roots and fruits for their food. Meat and honey are much less frequently sought and do not appear as regularly in their diet. In many areas, game animals are systematically hunted only during the dry season <sup>1</sup> when vegetable foods are in short supply.

The size and movement of camps depend largely on the available sources of food and water. In the wet season camps tend to be small and usually contain less than twenty people. Camps move about every couple of weeks when most of the nearby sources of food have become exhausted. In the dry season vegetable foods, animals and honey all tend to be concentrated around the few available sources of water and Tindiga congregate in these areas in camps often containing fifty or more people. Camps move much less often at this time of year. At the very end of the dry season even larger groups, sometimes a hundred people, camp together to eat the red berries of various species of grewia. Trees bearing these berries are found concentrated in large numbers in very few places. One such place is the lower end of the Maranjoda valley near Saikobe <sup>2</sup>.

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1. One reason for the relative lack of hunting in the wet season is that the bowstring, made usually from the nuchal ligament of a zebra or eland, is liable to break if it becomes wet and is difficult to replace.

2. Berry trees in this area are threatened by tsetse clearance in 1960.

Distribution and Population:

Three Provinces meet in Tindiga country: Northern (Mbulu District), Central (Iramba District) and Lake (Maswa District). Fifty years ago the territory of the Tindiga was probably nearly twice its present size and they had it to themselves. Since then the Iraqw (Mbulu), Isanzu, Sukuma, Barabaig and others have gradually occupied land on the fringes of Tindiga territory and two settlements of outsiders have been established right inside it. Mangola, the larger of these settlements, has about 900 taxpayers, while Yaida has about 100 taxpayers.

There are five different groups of Tindiga:

- (1) Those living to the East of the Yaida valley. The approximate Northern boundary of this group is the Aicho-Mangola road and its Southern boundary lies a little South of the Bashai-Yaida road. The Eastern boundary is constantly changing as the Iraqw occupy more and more of Tindiga country.
- (2) Those living between the Yaida valley and Lake Eyasi. Their country extends South up to the edge of the land cultivated by the Cultivating Tindiga (see(5) below) near the Isanzu, a Bantu-speaking tribe in Iramba district.
- (3) Those living near Mangola. To the South their country borders on the territories of the two groups already listed. The Western boundary is Lake Eyasi. To the East are the Iraqw and here again the boundary is constantly changing as the bush is cleared and the Iraqw move into the cleared area.
- (4) Tindiga in Sukumaland. These live to the West of Lake Eyasi. I have not yet had an opportunity of living with them and I am not able to state their boundaries.
- (5) The Cultivating Tindiga. They live on the fringe of the territory of the Isanzu. They have to some extent intermarried with the Isanzu and follow a mixture of Isanzu and Tindiga custom.

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They speak Tindiga as their first language and maintain strong trade and other links with the bush Tindiga.

These groups are surprisingly similar in size, each consisting of about 100<sup>1</sup> or so people<sup>2</sup>. The total population is about 600. This population figure should not be considered low. Elkin, writing of Australian aborigines who have a similar economy to that of the Tindiga, states: "The membership of a tribe varied from about 100 to 1500 and averaged about 500 or 600"<sup>3</sup>. The Australian aborigines are not exceptional. Nearer at hand two tribes of Southern African Bushmen who are still living a comparatively independent life, the Auen and the Kung, were estimated some years ago<sup>4</sup> to number 500 - 600 and 500 - 800+ respectively<sup>5</sup>. Hunters and gatherers in all parts of the world are found in small groups with populations numbering hundreds rather than thousands. The Tindiga are not the remnant of a dying tribe: they have a vigorous and flourishing society with a population figure that is healthy and normal for a tribe with a hunting and gathering type of economy.

#### Immigration and Emigration:

Frequent assertions are made that the Tindiga are not a genuine hunting tribe but are Iramba, Isanzu, Sukuma and others who have taken to bush life to avoid punishment for some crime or to escape taxation. This I can now state positively is not true.

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1. For the Tindiga of Sukumaland of whom I have no personal experience, I am relying on Malcolm's figure. (See D.W. Malcolm, op. cit. p. 20).
2. These groups do not have corporate and exclusive rights to land. A Tindiga may live, hunt and gather in the territory associated with another group without interference. The word 'band' is not therefore appropriate.
3. A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, 1954, p.11.
4. More recent estimates are not available to me here.
5. I. Schapera, The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa, 1930, pp. 33 and 34.

I have now met most of the Tindiga on the east side of Lake Eyasi and know many of them very well. Much of my time has been spent inquiring into their parentage and collecting detailed genealogies. In only three cases known to me were people now living among the bush Tindiga brought up as members of another tribe. All these three are of Isanzu origin but in each case they had close kinship links with the Tindiga before taking up bush life. Immigration into the bush of outsiders without kinship links with the Tindiga does not now occur.

A few Tindiga women now marry out of the tribe. These marriages are often unsuccessful and frequently such women return later to bush life.

However genealogical material has made it clear that in the past immigration of Isanzu has at times occurred. Famine at Isanzu appears to have been the main cause <sup>1</sup>. These immigrants were never very numerous (they appear in only a small percentage of the genealogies) and generally did not stay long in the bush. They were almost all men. Those who stayed long enough married Tindiga wives. Their children were brought up as Tindiga and generally have not maintained contact with their fathers' relatives at Isanzu.

#### The Tribal Identity of the Tindiga:

The Tindiga have a distinct tribal identity of their own. In language, social structure, economy and custom in general, they have little in common with their neighbours <sup>2</sup>.

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1. F.J. Bagshawe, *The Peoples of the Happy Valley*, Part II. The Kangeju, J.R.A.S., 1925, p. 126.

2. Though the cultivating Tindiga follow Isanzu custom in some respects.

There is some evidence of a link with Bushmen in Southern Africa. Bleek, an authority on Bushman languages, asserts on the basis of a six week visit to the Tindiga in 1930, that Tindiga is a Bushman language. I have re-examined the evidence <sup>1</sup> which she quotes and do not believe that she has proved her case conclusively. I agree with Westphal that "the validity of the classification of Hadza with Bushman is by no means established" <sup>2</sup>. Phonetic and morphological similarities with Khoisan (Bushman and Hottentot) languages do however, suggest that a distant link is likely <sup>3</sup>.

The Tindiga are often thought to be closely related to the Sandawe, a tribe in Central Province who also have clicks in their language. The limited amount of work that has been done <sup>4</sup> indicates that as far as language is concerned, the link is no closer and no more certain than that between Tindiga and Southern African Bushmen.

No detailed work has yet been done on the physical anthropology of the Tindiga and their racial classification remains unknown.

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1. D.F. Bleek: (i) Traces of Former Bushmen Occupation in Tanganyika Territory, South African Journal of Science, 1931, pp. 423-429; (ii) The Hadzapi or Watindega of Tanganyika Territory, Africa, 1931, pp. 273-286; (iii) A Bushman Dictionary, 1956.

2. E.O.J. Westphal, The Non-Bantu Languages of Southern Africa, p.170, in Handbook of African Languages, Part III, The Non-Bantu Languages of North-Eastern Africa by A.N. Tucker and M.A. Bryan, 1956.

3. See also, J.H. Greenberg, Studies in African Linguistic Classification, 1955.

4. See Bleek (i) op. cit., Greenberg op. cit., Westphal, op. cit.

The Future of the Tindiga.

I believe that the Tindiga will, in the course of the next generation or two, take up agriculture or pastoralism. As I have mentioned earlier, there are at present a number of people of mixed Isanzu and Tindiga origin cultivating near Isanzu and when the Tindiga do settle, they will probably do so mainly in this area acquiring the necessary skills from their relatives in these mixed communities.

But the transition from hunting and gathering to a completely different type of economy will inevitably be a very difficult one. A number of attempts have already been made to persuade the Tindiga to give up their present way of life and all have been totally unsuccessful. To quote Malcolm <sup>1</sup>, "On several occasions the Bahi <sup>2</sup> have been given cows, hoes, and maize seed by the chief. They keep the cows for a few days but cannot resist the temptation to eat them! They also eat the maize seed and use the hoes for making arrow-heads". I know of two attempts made to settle the Tindiga on the east side of Eyasi. The first <sup>3</sup> was in the early twenties when some <sup>4</sup> Tindiga were taken to near Mbulu to be taught to cultivate. Within a few weeks more than ten of them had died, presumably of some infectious disease, and the remainder were allowed to return to the bush. The second attempt was in the late thirties when a game scout with Tindiga wives was encouraged to persuade the Tindiga to settle at Mangola. A number of them stayed for a few weeks but then ran away to the bush.

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1. D.W. Malcolm, op. cit. p. 20

2. The Tindiga in Sukumaland are often called Bahi.

3. My information here is based on the statements of a number of Tindiga and one Tatoga informant. I believe it to be substantially accurate.

4. A total of almost certainly under a hundred people.

Hunting and gathering societies in other parts of the world show similar reluctance to change their traditional way of life. In a number of cases such tribes, when they have lost enough land to make survival by hunting and gathering difficult, have taken to stealing cattle and crops from their neighbours. With Southern African Bushmen this happened particularly often <sup>1</sup> and the punitive action which followed thefts forced many Bushman tribes into isolated and barren areas where in the course of a few years they starved. Few members of these tribes were absorbed by their more sophisticated neighbours. In Natal, Basutoland the Orange Free State and especially the Cape, Bushmen were still fairly numerous in the middle of the last century, but in these areas they have now completely disappeared or perhaps only a few individuals still survive <sup>2</sup>.

The existence of the cultivating Tindiga <sup>3</sup> makes it hopeful that the bush Tindiga will eventually settle. I imagine the process taking place gradually with families settling one by one. A gradual decrease in the amount of game available combined with an increasing desire for clothing, saucepans, ornaments, axes and other articles which are difficult to obtain in exchange for bush products alone will, I believe, cause increasing settlement without any persuasion being necessary.

However, if the Tindiga do continue to lose land at the present rate, it seems to me that they will be much more likely to start thieving <sup>4</sup> than to settle under pressure.

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1. See G.W. Stow, *The Native Races of South Africa; a history of the Intrusion of Hottentots and Bantu into the Hunting Grounds of the Bushmen, the Aborigines of the country*, 1905.

2. Schapera, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 and 32.

3. p. 3, Group 5.

4. Sporadic theft of food already occurs at Mangola where there has been great encroachment by members of other tribes. In a recent case a hungry Tindiga stole a goat and was speared to death by the owner who found him eating it.

Once cattle theft starts, fighting with their neighbours and the punitive measures which government may have to use will be likely to drive the Tindiga into the most isolated areas of their territory where they will gradually starve and within a few years the Tindiga will have died out as the Bushmen have in many parts of Southern Africa. I think it inevitable that the tribal identity of the Tindiga will in the long run disappear and they will become fully absorbed by their neighbours; their physical extinction is, I believe, avoidable.

It has been suggested that the Tindiga should be moved to another area where there is plenty of game and where the land is not needed for other purposes. I do not believe that this would be advisable. The Tindiga are dependent much more than a pastoral or agricultural tribe on really detailed knowledge of the country in which they live. They have to know in great detail about places where edible roots and berries can be found at particular times of the year, where water supplies are in the dry season, where the trees are to be found out of which they make their bows and arrows and their arrow poison. Away from their country they would be lost. Moreover it would be quite a problem to find all the Tindiga before the move and much more of a problem to compel them to remain in their new area. Most important of all, they would be isolated from the cultivating Tindiga<sup>1</sup> and opportunity for eventual settlement would be diminished. After all, wherever they go, they will in the end have to settle.

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1. Unless the cultivating Tindiga were moved too. If they were, they would probably give up cultivation and resume a hunting way of life.

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