A society wedding in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1910. By the end of the 17th century, white had become identified with maidenly innocence. But pink, blue, and yellow bridal dresses persisted until the late 19th century, when "white weddings"—with bridesmaids, the best man, and composer Richard Wagner's "Bridal Chorus"—became an established tradition.

Traditions

Defining "tradition" is no easy matter. Sociologist Edward Shils called it "anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present." In Chinese weddings as in the U.S. Marine Corps, beliefs, images, social practices, and institutions may all partake of the traditional. Yet the symbols and rituals are less important than the human motives that guide their transmission down through the ages. Tradition may simply function as a means of promoting social stability and continuity. On the other hand, scholars note, it may be deliberately developed and cultivated as a way of rewriting the past in order to justify the present. Here, in two case studies, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Terence Ranger suggest that what we now regard as "age-old" traditions may have their origins in inventive attempts to "establish or legitimize . . . status or relations of authority."

THE HIGHLANDER MYTH

by Hugh Trevor-Roper

Today, whenever Scotsmen gather together to celebrate their national identity, they wear the kilt, woven in a tartan whose colors and pattern indicate their clan. This apparel, to which they ascribe great antiquity, is, in fact, of fairly recent origin. Indeed, the whole concept of a distinct Highland culture and tradition is a retrospective invention.

Before the later years of the 17th century, the Highlanders of Scotland did not form a distinct people. They were simply the overflow of Ireland. On the broken and inhospitable coast of western Scotland, in that archipelago of islands large and small, the sea unites rather than divides, and from the late fifth century, when the Scots of Ulster landed in Argyll, until the mid–18th century, when it was "opened up" after the Jacobite revolts, the west of Scotland, cut off by mountains from the

east, was always linked rather to Ireland than to the Saxon Lowlands.*

The Gaelic language spoken there was regularly described, in the 18th century, as Irish. The native literature, such as it was, was a crude echo of Irish literature. The bards of the Scottish chieftains came from Ireland or went thither to learn their trade. The creation of an independent Highland tradition occurred in the 18th century, with a cultural revolt against Ireland or, more precisely, with the usurpation of Irish culture and the rewriting of Scottish history. The claim that the Celtic, Irish-speaking Highlanders of Scotland were not merely invaders from Ireland but were in fact the Caledonians who had resisted the Roman armies, was of course an old legend. It was reasserted successfully in the 1760s by two writers of the same surname: James Macpherson, the "translator" of Ossian, and the Reverend John Macpherson, pastor of Sleat on the island of Skye. These two Macphersons, though unrelated, were known to each other, and they worked in concert.

The sheer effrontery of the Macphersons must excite admiration. James Macpherson picked up Irish ballads in Scotland and, in 1763, reworked them into an "epic," which he attributed to a legendary third-century Gaelic bard named Ossian; he transferred the whole scenario from Ireland to Scotland, and then dismissed the genuine ballads thus maltreated as debased modern compositions.

John Macpherson, the pastor of Sleat, then wrote a *Critical Dissertation* in which he provided the necessary context for his colleague's "discovery": He placed Irish-speaking Celts in Scotland four centuries before their historical arrival and explained away the genuine, native Irish literature as

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*The Jacobites supported the restoration of the Stuart dynasty to the thrones of Scotland and England. James VI of Scotland had become James I of England following the death, in 1603, of his first cousin once removed, the childless Queen Elizabeth. Eighty-five years later, in 1688, James II, a Catholic and the fourth of Britain's Stuart monarchs, was deposed in the Glorious Revolution that brought the Dutch Protestant William of Orange to the throne. Led from France first by the unseated King, then by his son, James Francis Edward, and then by his grandson, Charles Edward ("Bonny Prince Charlie"), the Jacobites sought to achieve their ends by invasion (1708) and insurrection (1715). Jacobite opposition was finally crushed at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.—ED.

Hugh Trevor-Roper, 70, now Lord Dacre of Glanton, is the master of Peterhouse at Cambridge University. Born in Glanton, England, he received both his B.A. (1936) and M.A. (1939) from Oxford University. Among his many works are The Last Days of Hitler *(1947) and* The Rise of Christian Europe *(1966). This essay, © 1983 by the author, is excerpted from* The Invention of Tradition *(Cambridge University Press) and printed with permission of the author.*

having been stolen, in the Dark Ages, by the unscrupulous Irish from the innocent Scots.

Of the success of the Macphersons in literary London, no more need be said than that they seduced even the normally careful and critical Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1788). He acknowledged as his guides in early Scottish history those "two learned Highlanders" and thus perpetuated what historian M. V. Hay has called "a chain of error in Scottish history."

These two insolent pretenders had achieved a lasting triumph: They had put the Scottish Highlanders on the map.

Previously despised alike by the Lowland Scots as disorderly savages, and by the Irish as their unlettered poor kinsmen, Highlanders were now celebrated throughout Europe as a *Kulturvolk* which, when England and Ireland were sunk in primitive barbarism, had produced an epic poet of exquisite refinement and sensibility, equal (said Madame de Staël) or superior (said F. A. Wolf) to Homer. And even as the Scottish Highlands acquired, however fraudulently, an independent ancient culture, a new tradition sprang up—that of a peculiarity of dress.

Inventing the Kilt

Since the Scottish Highlanders were, in origin, Irishmen, it is natural to suppose that originally their dress was the same as that of the Irish. And indeed this is what we find. Accounts written in the 16th century show that the ordinary dress of the Highlanders was a long "Irish" shirt, which the higher classes—as in Ireland—dyed with saffron; a tunic; and a rough cloak, or "plaid," which, in general, was of a russet or brown effect, as protective coloring in the heather.

Chieftains and great men who had contact with the more sophisticated inhabitants of the Lowlands might wear trews, a combination of breeches and stockings. Trews could be worn outdoors in the Highlands only by men who had attendants to protect or carry them: They were therefore a mark of social distinction. The higher classes' plaids and trews were probably of colorful tartan, a design that seems to have come originally from Flanders and reached the Highlands through the Lowlands.

In the course of the 17th century, the Irish long shirt fell into disuse. Accounts of the British civil wars depict Highland officers wearing trews, but the ordinary soldiers with their legs and thighs bare. The name "kilt" first appears in 1727, when Edward Burt, an English officer posted to Scotland, wrote a series of letters, mainly from Inverness, describing the character and cus-
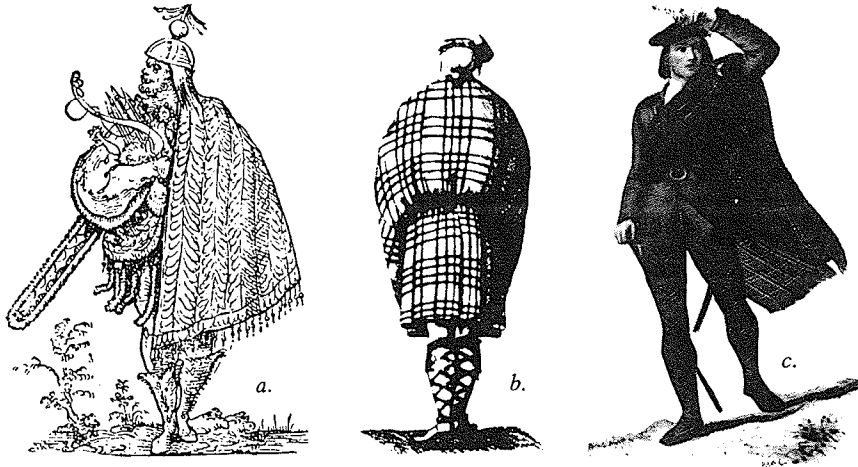
The (a) Irish dress, adopted by the Scots, of long shirt and cloak gave way to the (b) belted plaid in the 17th century. (c)Trews were worn by the upper classes. In 1727, Thomas Rawlinson designed the (d) short kilt. Restricted

toms of the country. In his letters, he gives a careful description of the "quelt," which, he explains, is simply the plaid "set in folds and girt round the waist to make of it a short petticoat that reaches half-way down the thigh, and the rest is brought over the shoulders and then fastened before." This petticoat, Burt adds, was normally worn "so very short that in a windy day, going up a hill, or stooping, the indecency of it is plainly discovered." Clearly he is describing not the modern kilt but a particular method of wearing the plaid, called the belted plaid or *breacan*.

Burt was explicit about the Highland dress because already, in his time, it was the object of political controversy. After the Jacobite rebellion of 1715, the British Parliament had considered banning it by law, as the Irish dress had been banned under Henry VIII, to help integrate the Highlanders into modern British society. The proposed law, however, was not passed. The Highland dress, it was conceded, was convenient and necessary in a country where a traveler must "skip over rocks and bogs and lie all night in the hills."

Ironically, if the Highland dress had been banned after the rebellion of 1715, the kilt, which is now regarded as one of the ancient traditions of Scotland, would probably never have come into existence. Its inventor was an English Quaker ironmaster from Lancashire, Thomas Rawlinson.

to British Highland regiments from 1745 until 1782, the (e) kilt returned in a more elaborate mode, and is now a symbol of all things Scottish, including the (f) Dewar's Whiskey Highlander.

In 1727, Rawlinson made an agreement with Ian MacDonell, chief of the MacDonells of Glengarry near Inverness, for a 31-year lease of a wooded area at Invergarry. There he built a furnace to smelt iron ore, which he had shipped up from Lancashire. During his stay at Glengarry, Rawlinson became interested in the Highland costume, but he also became aware of its inconvenience. For men who had to fell trees or tend furnaces, the belted plaid was "a cumbrous, unwieldy habit." Being "a man of genius and quick parts," Rawlinson sent for a tailor and, with him, set out "to abridge the dress and make it handy and convenient for his workmen."

The result was the *felie beg*, philibeg, or "small kilt," which was achieved by separating the skirt from the plaid and converting it into a distinct garment, with pleats already sewn. Rawlinson himself wore this new garment, and his innovation, we are told, "was found so handy and convenient that in the shortest space the use of it became frequent in all the Highland countries and in many of the Northern Lowland countries also."*

The first painting to feature a person wearing a recognizable modern kilt, not a belted plaid, was a portrait of Alexander MacDonell of Glengarry (the son of Rawlinson's friend) and his

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*This account, from Ivan Baillie of Abereachen, was published in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, March 1785.

servant. It is interesting to note that, in this portrait, the kilt is worn not by MacDonell but by the servant—thus emphasizing, once again, its "servile" status.

If this was the origin of the kilt, a question immediately arises. Was a distinctive "sett" or pattern of colors devised for a Lancashire Rawlinson, or did he become an honorary member of the clan of MacDonell? When did the differentiation of patterns by clans begin?

The 16th-century writers who first noticed the Highland dress did not remark any such differentiation. They describe the plaids of the chiefs as colored, those of their followers as brown, so that any differentiation of color, in their time, was by social status, not by clan. A carefully painted series of portraits of the different members of the Grant family by Richard Waitt in the 18th century shows all of them in different tartans. The only way in which a Highlander's loyalty could be discerned in battle was by the colored cockade in his bonnet; tartans were a matter of private taste.

The great Scottish rebellion of 1745, however, changed the sartorial as well as the social and economic history of Scotland. Acts of Parliament that followed the victory at Culloden not only disarmed the Highlanders and deprived their chiefs of their hereditary jurisdictions but also forbade the wearing of Highland costume—"plaid, philibeg, trews, shoulder-belts . . . tartans or parti-coloured plaid or stuff."

Touting the Philibeg

This last draconian measure remained in force for 35 years, years during which the whole Highland way of life quickly crumbled. In 1773, when Samuel Johnson and James Boswell made their famous tour of Scotland, they found that they were already too late to see what they had expected, "a people of peculiar appearance and a system of antiquated life." It was during this period that the Macphersons composed their ancient literature and inventive history.

The Highland costume did indeed die out among those who had been accustomed to wearing it. When the ban was lifted in 1782, the simple sheep-raising peasantry of the Highlands saw no reason, after a generation in trousers, to resume the belted plaid or the tartan, which they had once found so serviceable. They did not even turn to the "handy and convenient" new kilt.

On the other hand, the upper and middle classes, who had previously despised the "servile" costume, now picked up, with enthusiasm, the garb discarded by its traditional wearers. Dur-

ing the years when it had been banned, some Highland noble-
men had taken pleasure in wearing it and being portrayed in it
in the safety of their homes. Now that the ban was lifted, the
fashion spread. Anglicized Scottish peers, improving gentry,
well-educated Edinburgh lawyers, and prudent merchants of
Aberdeen would exhibit themselves publicly, not in the historic
trews, the traditional costume of their class, nor in the cum-
brous belted plaid, but in a costly and fanciful version of that re-
cent innovation, the philibeg, or small kilt.

Two causes explain this remarkable change. One was the ro-
mantic movement in Europe, the cult of the noble savage whom
civilization threatened to destroy. Before 1745, the Highlanders
had been despised as idle predatory barbarians. In 1745, they
had been feared as dangerous rebels. But after 1746, when their
distinct society crumbled so easily, they combined the romance
of a primitive people with the charm of an endangered species.

Enter George IV

The second cause was the formation, by the British govern-
ment, of the Highland regiments.

The creation of the Highland regiments had begun before
1745—indeed, the first such regiment, the Black Watch, had
fought at Fontenoy in 1740. But it was during the years 1757–60
that William Pitt the Elder systematically sought to divert the
martial spirit of the Highlanders from Jacobite adventure to im-
perial war. The Highland regiments also helped to establish a
new sartorial tradition. For by the "Disarming Act" of 1747,
they were explicitly exempted from the ban on Highland dress.

Originally, the Highland regiments wore as their uniform
the belted plaid; but once Rawlinson had invented the kilt and
its convenience had made it popular, it was adopted by them.
Moreover, it was probably their use of the kilt that gave birth to
the idea of differentiating tartan by clans; for as the Highland
regiments were multiplied to meet the needs of Britain's over-
seas wars, so their tartan uniforms were differentiated.

At least one Scotsman, from the beginning, raised his voice
against the whole process whereby the Celtic Highlanders, so re-
cently despised as outer barbarians, were claiming to be the sole
representatives of Scottish history and culture. John Pinkerton
was a man whose undoubted eccentricity and violent prejudices
cannot rob him of his claim to be the greatest Scottish antiquary
since Thomas Innes. He was an implacable enemy of the histor-
ical and literary falsification of the two Macphersons. He was
also, in the late 1700s, the first scholar to document the history

of the Highland dress, terming the philibeg "modern," "grossly indecent," and "effeminate."

He wrote in vain. The Highland takeover, already begun, was given emphatic publicity in 1822 by King George IV's state visit to Edinburgh.

Never before had a Hanoverian monarch appeared in the capital of Scotland, and elaborate preparations were made to ensure that the occasion would be a success. The master of ceremonies entrusted with all practical arrangements was Sir Walter Scott, already the author of 11 novels, including *Waverly* (1814) and *Ivanhoe* (1819). Carried away by romantic Celtic fantasies, Scott was determined to forget historic Scotland, his own Lowland Scotland, altogether. "Do come and bring half-a-dozen or half-a-score of clansmen," Scott wrote to one Highland chief. "Highlanders are what he will best like to see."

The Highlanders duly came, wearing the clan tartans provided by local manufacturers who had a long history of resourcefulness in creating markets for their wares.

The greatest of these firms was that of William Wilson and Son of Bannockburn. Messrs. Wilson had seen early the advantage of building up a repertoire of differentiated clan tartans and thus stimulating tribal competition. For this purpose, they entered into alliance with the Highland Society of London (which had been founded in 1788, and whose early members included both James Macpherson and Sir John Macpherson), thereby throwing over their commercial project, a cloak, or plaid, of historical respectability.

In 1819, when the royal visit was first suggested, the firm prepared a "Key Pattern Book" and sent samples of its various tartans to London, where the Society duly "certified" them as belonging to this or that clan. However, when George IV's visit was confirmed, the time for such pedantic consistency had passed. The spate of orders was now such that "every piece of tartan was sold as it came off the loom."

The Brothers Allen

In these circumstances, the first duty of the firm was to keep up the supply and ensure that the Highland chiefs were able to buy what they needed. So Cluny Macpherson, heir to the discoverer of Ossian, was given a tartan from the peg. For him it was now labeled "Macpherson." Previously, having been sold in bulk to a Mr. Kidd to clothe his West Indian slaves, it had been labeled "Kidd."

Thus was the capital of Scotland "tartanized" to receive its

King, who himself came dressed in a kilt, played his part in the Celtic pageant, and at the climax of the visit solemnly invited the assembled dignitaries to drink a toast, not to the actual or historical elite, but to "the chieftains and clans of Scotland."

So we come to the last stage in the creation of the Highland myth: the reconstruction and extension, in ghostly and sartorial form, of that clan system whose reality had been destroyed after 1745. The essential figures in this episode were two of the most elusive and most seductive characters who have ever ridden the Celtic hobbyhorse or aerial broomstick: the brothers Allen.

They came from a well-connected English naval family. Their grandfather, John Carter Allen, had been an admiral. His son, their father, had served briefly in the Royal Navy; their mother was the daughter of a learned clergyman in Surrey.

An Exciting Discovery

The early life of the two sons is undocumented. All that we can say of them is that they were both talented artists in many fields. They wrote romantic poems in the style of Scott; they were learned, though evidently self-taught, in many languages; they were skillful draftsmen, woodcarvers, furniture makers. Their persuasive manners and great social charm enabled them to move at ease in the best society.

The exact occasion of their first appearance in Scotland is unknown, but they were evidently there with their father during the royal visit in 1822. There is some reason to think that the Allen family was in touch with Wilson and Son at this time.

In the following years, the brothers may have spent some time abroad, but they also appeared occasionally in great Scottish houses or at fashionable functions, dressed (as one English observer put it) "in all the extravagance of which the Highland costume is capable—every kind of tag and rag, false orders and tinsel ornaments."

They had now Scoticized their name, first as Allan, then, via Hay Allan, as Hay; and they encouraged the belief that they were descended from the last Hay, earl of Errol. (As the earl had remained a lifelong bachelor, they presumably credited him with a secret marriage; but their claims were never weakened by explicit assertion.)

Much of the brothers' time was spent in the far north, where the earl of Moray gave them the run of Darnaway Forest, and they became expert deer hunters. They never lacked aristocratic patrons such as Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, whose wife had an estate in Elgin. To him, in 1829, they revealed that they had in
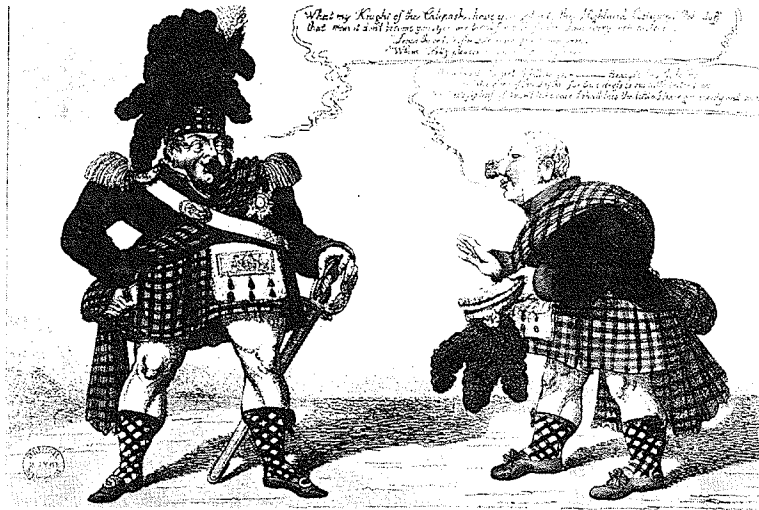
On his 1822 visit to Edinburgh, King George IV (left) gave royal sanction to the Highlander craze by donning the kilt. This caricature depicts him proclaiming, "I am every inch a Scot," to William Curtis, London's Lord Mayor.

their possession an important historical document. This was a manuscript that (they said) had once belonged to John Leslie, bishop of Ross, the confidant of Mary Queen of Scots, and had been given to their father by none other than the Young Chevalier, Bonny Prince Charlie.

The manuscript was entitled *Vestiarium Scoticum, or The Garde-robe of Scotland,* and was a depiction of the clan tartans of Scottish families, declaring itself to be the work of one Sir Richard Urquhart, knight. Bishop Leslie had inserted his date—1571—but the manuscript could have been, of course, much earlier.

Sir Thomas was very excited by this discovery. Not only was the document important in itself, but it also provided an authentic ancient authority for distinct clan tartans, and it showed that such tartans had been used by Lowlanders as well as Highlanders—a fact very gratifying to Lowland families eager to scramble in on the act. So Sir Thomas made a transcript of the text, which the younger brother obligingly illustrated for him. He then wrote to Sir Walter Scott, as the oracle on all such matters, urging that the document be published to correct the numerous "uncouth, spurious, modern tartans which are every day manufactured, christened after particular

names, and worn as genuine."

Scott was not taken in. He did not believe that Lowlanders had ever worn clan tartans, and he suspected a tartan weavers' scheme. At the very least, he insisted that the original manuscript be submitted to experts at the British Museum.

Sir Thomas followed up this suggestion, and the elder brother very readily agreed; but that line of research was blocked when he produced a letter from his father, signed "J. T. Stuart Hay," firmly reprimanding him for even mentioning the document, which (he said)—apart from the futility of seeking to revive a world now irrecoverably lost—could never be exhibited to profane eyes on account of certain "private memorandums on the blank leaves."

Seeing Is Believing

Defeated by the authority of Scott, the brothers retired again to the north and gradually perfected their image, their expertise, and their manuscript. They had now found a new patron, Lord Lovat, the Catholic head of the Fraser family, whose ancestor had died on the scaffold in 1747. They also adopted a new religious loyalty, declaring themselves Roman Catholics, and a new and grander identity. They dropped the name of Hay and assumed the royal name of Stuart. The elder brother called himself John Sobieski Stuart (John Sobieski, the hero-king of Poland, was the maternal great-grandfather of the Young Chevalier); the younger became, like the Young Chevalier himself, Charles Edward Stuart.

In 1842, the brothers at last published their famous manuscript, *Vestiarium Scoticum.* It appeared in a sumptuous edition limited to 50 copies. The series of colored illustrations of tartans was the first ever to be published.

John Sobieski Stuart, as editor, supplied a learned commentary and new proofs of the authenticity of the manuscript, including a "traced facsimile" of Bishop Leslie's autograph. The manuscript itself, he said, had been "carefully collated" with a second manuscript recently discovered by an unnamed Irish monk in a Spanish monastery, unfortunately since dissolved. Another manuscript, recently in the possession of Lord Lovat, was also cited, although it had unfortunately been carried to America and there lost; but it was being actively sought. . . .

The *Vestiarium Scoticum,* being of such limited distribution, attracted little notice on its publication. Scott was now dead, and Dick Lauder, though he had remained "a believer," held his peace. Had he scrutinized the printed setts, he might

STAGING AN EMPIRE

"Britain may have lost out on a number of things, but we can still show the world a clean pair of heels when it comes to ceremonial. Yesterday's pageantry . . . proves there is something to be said for doing things the old-fashioned way." So proclaimed London's *Daily Mirror* on the occasion of Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Yet, according to Cambridge historian David Cannadine, the "old-fashioned way" isn't all that old: Most British royal ceremonial "traditions" date back a scant 100 years.

The antics of drunken undertakers marred the funeral of Princess Charlotte in 1817. In 1821, George IV indulged in a coronation of pomp and style "so overblown," writes Cannadine, "that grandeur merged into farce": Prize fighters were called into Westminster Hall to maintain order. By contrast, William IV's coronation in 1831 was "so truncated that it became mockingly known as the 'Half-Crownation.'" Victoria's in 1838 "was completely unrehearsed." And the 1861 funeral of her consort, Albert, was described as "almost a private affair."
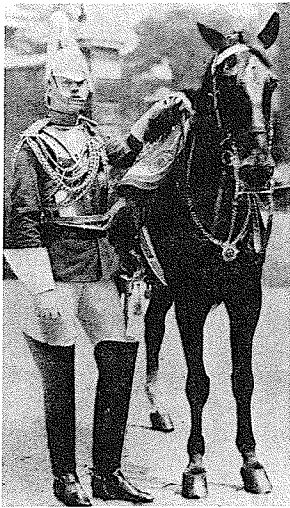
So it was that the last century in which the British monarchy exercised any real political influence saw royal pageantry that was downright shabby. But according to Cannadine, this contradiction was no coincidence. In an age that boasted of self-made men, "continuing royal power made grand royal ceremonial unacceptable." Royal ritual remained "a group rite in which the aristocracy, the church, and the royal family . . . re-affirmed their solidarity (or animosity) behind closed doors."

Toward the end of the century, however, a change occurred. It began, somewhat shakily, with Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebration in 1887. (Victoria refused to don the robes of state or even the crown, but nonetheless, as the *Illustrated London News* reported, the occasion produced "pageantry such as this generation never saw.") The trend developed in earnest during the reign of Edward VII (1901–10), when many cherished "traditions" were inaugurated— the opening of Parliament in full regalia, the elaborate yet dignified coronation, even the public lying-in-state of deceased monarchs at Westminster Hall.

Credit for the royal face-lift goes to three men: Sir Edward Elgar, whose stirring compositions such as "Pomp and Circumstance no. 1" rescued British ceremonial music from the previous century's banality; Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher, the deputy constable and lieutenant governor of Windsor Castle, who oversaw every major royal ceremonial from Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897) to Edward VII's funeral (1910); and finally, Edward VII himself, whose own "promptness, imagination, and invention" in ceremonial matters drew Esher's high praise.

Edward, age 59 at his accession, had waited a good long while to en-

joy the trappings of monarchy. The reasons for the growing British infatuation with elaborate royal ritual are more complex. An important factor, as Cannadine points out, was the "gradual retirement of the monarchs from active politics." Victoria's reclusion in widowhood and Edward's penchant for vacations, acquired during his long years of unemployment, were one side of this coin; a broadening franchise and growing party strength were the other. No longer a *force* to contend with, the monarch became a symbol of unity above the fray during an era when rising worker unrest was making political and social dealings increasingly fractious. As the Archbishop of Canterbury put it after Victoria's Golden Jubilee, "Everyone feels that the Socialist movement has had a check."

Moreover, the British Empire was finally facing serious competition abroad. The scramble for Africa intensified during the century's third quarter. And by 1886, both Germany and the United States were outproducing Britain in steel; Britain's annual rate of growth dropped below two percent, and its textile industry declined. Nations jockeyed symbolically for status: Germany and Italy's "*parvenu* monarchies," Austria's Habsburgs, and Russia's Romanovs all strove to outdo one another in ceremonial displays; even republican nations got into the act, with the French creating Bastille Day in 1880, and the Americans staging a mammoth Centennial. But in Britain, similar efforts, hailed by the populace, were "an expression of . . . bravado," observes Cannadine, "at a time when [the nation's] real power was already on the wane."

In the 20th century, the British monarchy has grown more visible as the world's other major monarchies have vanished. As the British Empire has faded, new royal ceremonies have been invented and elaborated—notably, the public weddings of royal offspring. For this, the British press must take some credit. Just as the popular illustrated newspapers of the late 19th century fanned Britons' enthusiasm for royal events, so have radio and television nurtured growing affection for the royal family, heightened popular enjoyment of regal ceremonies, and reinforced prevailing misconceptions about their origins.

The truth, says Cannadine, would no doubt surprise "those commentators and journalists who, on every great royal ceremonial occasion, talk glibly of a 'thousand-year-old tradition.'"

have noted, with surprise, that they had been considerably re-
vised since they had been copied by the younger brother into
his own transcript.

But the published *Vestiarium*, it soon appeared, was only a
preliminary *pièce justificative* for a far more wide-ranging origi-
nal work. Two years later, the two brothers published an even
more sumptuous volume, clearly the result of years of study.
This stupendous folio, lavishly illustrated by the authors, and
dedicated to Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, as "the restorer of the
Catholic arts of Europe," was entitled *The Costume of the Clans*.

Claiming Royal Blood

The Costume of the Clans is an extraordinary work. It cites
the most arcane sources, Scottish and European, written and
oral, manuscript and printed. It draws on art and archaeology
as well as on literature. It is intelligent and critical. The authors
admit the modern invention of the kilt. Nothing that they say
can be immediately discounted. On the other hand, nothing can
be taken on trust.

Elusive manuscripts cited in *The Costume of the Clans* in-
clude "a large copy of the original poems of Ossian and many
other valuable Gaelic manuscripts" obtained from Douay by the
late chevalier Watson but now, alas, invisible; a Latin manu-
script of the 14th century found, with other manuscripts, in that
Spanish monastery now so unfortunately dissolved; and, of
course, the *Vestiarium Scoticum* itself, now firmly ascribed "on
internal evidence" to the end of the 15th century.

The thesis of *The Costume of the Clans* is that Highland dress
was the fossil relic of the universal dress of the Middle Ages. It
had been replaced throughout the rest of Europe in the 16th cen-
tury, but had survived, debased but still recognizable, in that
forgotten corner of the world.

For in the Middle Ages (according to these authors), Celtic
Scotland had been a flourishing part of cosmopolitan Catholic
Europe, a rich, polished society in which the splendid courts of
the tribal chiefs were nourished—thanks to the advanced Heb-
ridean manufactures—by the luxuries and the enlightenment of
the Continent. Unfortunately, that rich civilization had not
lasted: By the close of the Middle Ages, those humming Hebrid-
ean looms, those brilliant island courts, that "high intellectual
sophistication" of Mull, Islay, and Skye had declined; Highland
society had become impoverished and introverted and its cos-
tume drab and mean.

Only the *Vestiarium*—that great discovery of the two broth-

ers—by revealing the brilliance of the original tartan setts, opened a narrow window onto that splendid culture now gone forever. For the authors professed no interest in the modern attempt to revive the costume alone, divorced from the Catholic Celtic culture of which it was a part. That was to convert it into mere fancy dress. The only true revival was one in which the whole past lived again—as it was lived by the Stuart brothers, writing poetry, hunting the deer, maintaining their own tribal court on an island in the Beauly River.

Unfortunately, *The Costume of the Clans* never received the criticism, or even the notice, of the learned world. Before that could happen, the authors made a grave tactical error. In 1846, they went as near as they would ever go toward explicitly claiming royal blood. They did this in a series of short stories, which, under romantic but transparent names, professed to reveal historical truth.

The work was entitled *Tales of a Century*, the century from 1745 to 1845. The burden of these tales was that the Stuart line was not extinct; that a legitimate son had been born to the wife of the Young Chevalier in Florence; that this infant, through fear of assassination by Hanoverian agents, had been entrusted to the care of an English admiral who had brought him up as his own son; and that, in due course, he had become the legitimate father of two sons who, having fought for Napoleon at Dresden, Leipzig, and Waterloo, and been personally decorated by him for bravery, had then retired to await their destiny in their ancestral country, and were now seeking to restore its ancient society, customs, costumes.

Creating Prosperity

At this point, a hidden enemy struck. In 1847, under the cloak of a belated review of the *Vestiarium*, an anonymous writer published in the *Quarterly Review* a devastating exposure of the royal claims of the two brothers. The elder brother attempted to reply. The reply was Olympian in tone, but weak in substance.

The household at Eilean Aigas, the romantic residence lent to them by Lord Lovat, suddenly broke up; and for the next 20 years, the two brothers maintained abroad, in Prague and Pressburg, the royal pretensions that had been fatally damaged at home. In the same year, Queen Victoria bought Balmoral, and the real Hanoverian court replaced the vanished, illusory Jacobite court in the Highlands of Scotland.

The Sobieski Stuarts never recovered from the exposure of

1847. But their work was not wasted. The *Vestiarium* might be discredited, *The Costume of the Clans* ignored, but the spurious clan tartans devised by them were taken up, without their damaged names, by the Highland Society of London, and became the means of the continuing prosperity of the Scottish tartan industry. For the rest of the century, numerous books of clan tartans were regularly published. All of them were heavily dependent—directly or indirectly—on the *Vestiarium*.

This essay began with reference to James Macpherson. It ends with the Sobieski Stuarts. Both imagined a golden age in the past of the Celtic Highlands. Both created literary ghosts, forged texts, and falsified history in support of their theories.

But Macpherson was a sensual bully whose aim, whether in literature or in politics, was wealth and power, and he pursued that aim with ruthless determination and ultimate success. The Sobieski Stuarts were amiable, scholarly men who won converts by their transpicuous innocence; they were *fantaisistes* rather than forgers. They were genuine in the sense that they lived their own fantasies.

Unlike Macpherson, they died poor. The wealth that they generated went to the manufacturers of the differentiated clan tartans now worn, with tribal enthusiasm, by Scots and supposed Scots from Houston to Hong Kong.
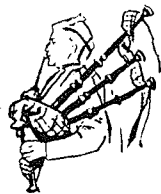
THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN

by Terence Ranger

The 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s were the time of a great flowering of invented tradition—ecclesiastical, educational, military, republican, monarchical—in Europe. They were also the years of the European rush into Africa. There were many and complex connections between the two processes. The concept of empire was central to the process of inventing tradition within Europe itself, but the Europeans' African empires came so late in the day that they demonstrate the effects, rather than the causes, of European invented tradition. Deployed in Africa, however, the new traditions took on a peculiar character, distinguishing them from both their European and Asian imperial forms.

In contrast to India, many parts of Africa became colonies of white settlement. This meant that the settlers had to define themselves as natural and undisputed masters of vast numbers of Africans. They drew upon the freshly minted European traditions both to define and to justify their roles, and also to provide models of subservience into which it was possible to draw Africans. In Africa, therefore, the whole apparatus of invented school and professional and regimental traditions became much more starkly a matter of command and control than it was within Europe itself.

In contrast to India once again, Africa did not offer its conquerors the framework of an indigenous imperial state nor existing centralized rituals of honor and degree. Ready connections between African and European systems of governance could be made only at the level of the monarchy. Africa possessed, so the colonizers thought, dozens of rudimentary kings. Hence, in Africa the British made an even greater use of the idea of imperial monarchy than they did within Britain or India. The "theology" of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent monarchy became almost the sole ingredient of imperial ideology as it was presented to Africans. For the Germans, the Kaiser stood as the dominant symbol of German rule. The French had the more difficult task of incorporating Africans into a republican tradition.

But serviceable as the monarchical ideology was to the British, it was not enough in itself to provide the theory or justify the structures of colonial governance. Since so few connections could be made between British and African political, social, and legal systems, British administrators set about inventing African traditions for Africans. Their own respect for

"tradition" disposed them to look with favor upon what they took to be traditional in Africa. They set about to codify and promulgate these traditions, thereby transforming flexible custom into hard prescription.

There were two very direct ways in which Europeans sought to make use of their invented traditions to transform and modernize African thought and conduct. One was the extension of training in a neotraditional context to some Africans, a concrete expression of the belief that certain Africans could become members of the governing class of colonial Africa after considerable exposure to British custom. The second—and more common—was an attempt to make use of what European invented traditions had to offer in terms of a redefined relationship between leader and led.

Crash Courses in French Glory

The best illustration of the first idea—that some Africans might be turned into governors by exposure to British neotradition—is perhaps King's College, Budo, the famous school in Uganda. As G. P. McGregor observes in *King's College, Budo* (1967), in Uganda, the missionaries aimed to impose a neotraditional, British-style secondary education on a British-style elementary education. They were always clear that their aim was "the adaptation of our English Public School method to the African scene." They succeeded to an extraordinary extent. King's College was built on the Coronation Hill of the Buganda kings, so that "both Coronation Services of this century have been held" in the college chapel; "though some of the traditional ceremonies were observed," the service "followed many of the features of the English coronation service. The English Public School house spirit [was] quickly established," and the Gandan members of Turkey House petitioned that its name be changed to Canada House so as to go with England House, South Africa House, and Australia House—Turkey seemed "distinctly unimperial." The school motto, again said to have been chosen at the request of the pupils, was a Gandan version of Cecil Rhodes's dying words, "So little done—so much to do."
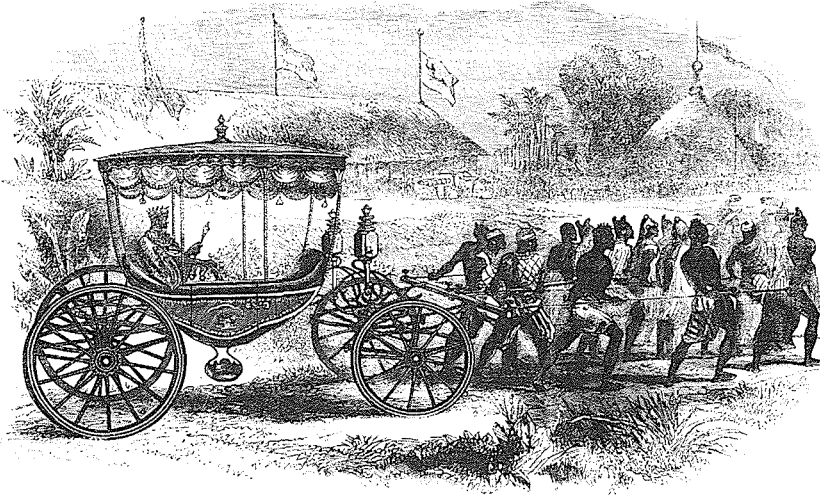
Gelele, the King of Dahomey, riding to a state ceremony during the 1860s in a carriage given to him by the British. The King also received a silk tent and a coat of mail with gauntlets.

McGregor quotes a letter written by a Ugandan pupil in the first year of the school's existence, which enables us to see this remarkable process of socialization through Gandan eyes. "First in the mornings when we have got up we arrange properly our beds. If you do not arrange it properly there is judgement or rebuke when the Europeans make a visit. . . . We sing one hymn and pray and then we learn English. . . . When we come out at four, we go and play football, on one side eleven and on the other side eleven, and we arrange every man in his place, goal-keeper and back men and ba-half-back and ba-forward."

There is no doubt that the missionaries created at Budo a successful complex of new traditions that paralleled the increasing ceremonialism of the role of the kabaka and the other Ugandan kings, thus achieving a synthesis similar to that accomplished in 19th-century England. The Golden Jubilee ceremonies of the college—"We had four Kings at the high table"—were also a ritual expression of the commitment of a large section of the Gandan ruling class to these by now hallowed invented traditions.

But the Budo experiment was not to become a general model: The British themselves came to regret their original alliance with the Ganda chiefs and to believe that real modernizing change could not be brought about through their agency. Real

change would be the product of European commanders loyally supported by African subordinates.

Various traditions of subordination were available. One was the traditional hierarchy of the great-house. Few whites in Africa, however, maintained domestic establishments of a size that would have allowed the full "traditional" panoply of the British servant hierarchy. A more elaborate application of European neotraditions of subordination came with the restructuring of African armies. In Sylvanus Cookey's fascinating account of this process, the French emerge as the first and most imaginative manipulators of the military invented tradition, disbanding demoralized pressed levies during the 1850s and attracting African volunteers with "séduisant" uniforms, modern arms, Koranic oaths of allegiance and crash courses in the military glory of the French tradition.

The British were slower to follow such a policy. But in the face of the French threat, they also moved to regularize their African regiments. Lord Frederick Lugard devoted his meticulous passion for detail to the transformation of his Nigerian levies from a "rabble" to a disciplined and effective fighting force. Soon he came to esteem them highly; official praise was lavished on them for their conduct in campaigns in the Gold Coast and northern Nigeria.

The Socialization of Idi Amin

This kind of admittance of Africans into the European military tradition had both the same ambiguities and the same degree of success as did the operation of the spirit of Budo. Sometimes the two forms of socialization came together, as in the case of Kabaka Edward Mutesa. Mutesa became Kabaka while still a schoolboy at Budo and remained there to complete his studies; his coronation was solemnized in the school chapel; he led the procession celebrating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. But he was also admitted into the regimental tradition of the British Army, joining the Officers' Corps at Cambridge and later becoming a captain in the Grenadier Guards.

The acceptance of Mutesa into the officer ranks was, however, a rare exception. Much more common was the production of men like Mutesa's successor Idi Amin as president of Uganda. In his *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda* (1975), Ali A. Mazrui argues that the rise of Amin and his "lumpen-militariat" can be seen as a revival of pre-colonial military traditions, in abeyance since the colonial conquest. But in fact, Amin's career provides us with an excellent example of socialization through the colo-

nial army. As Mazrui tells us, when Amin was recruited into the King's African Rifles in 1946, he showed "all the signs of colonial conditioning into dependency. . . . Within seven years, he was promoted to lance corporal and was displaying the qualities which so endeared him to his British superiors—instant obedience, fierce regimental pride, reverence toward Britain and the British, a uniform which crackled with razor sharp starched creases and boots with toe-caps like black mirrors."

Black mirrors of English privates and noncommissioned officers were precisely what African soldiers were intended to be.

Hail to the Kaiser

Admission of Africans into what were intended as replicas of the neotraditions of Britain did not end with schools like Budo or with recruitment into the army. Bishop Frank Weston's hypothetical African Christian in search of "brotherhood" might, if he were very fortunate, "conceivably learn to be a typist," and many mission-educated Africans were taken into the lower ranks of the bureaucratic hierarchy. African clerks came to value the rubber stamp and the row of pens in the breast pocket; African dance societies made use of purloined rubber stamps to authenticate their correspondence with one another and danced in full bureaucratic, as well as military, array. And of course, the African Christians, who were taken up as clergy into the imperfect brotherhood of the Christian churches themselves, were trained to perform the invented and reinvented rituals of 19th-century European ecclesiology.

Colonial governments in Africa did not wish to rule by a constant exercise of military force and they needed a range of collaborators that extended beyond those Africans who were brought into the neotraditions of subordination. In particular, they needed to collaborate with chiefs, headmen, and elders in the rural areas. This collaboration was, in essence, a very practical affair of exchanged benefits. But the colonial rulers felt the need for a shared ideology of empire that could embrace whites and blacks alike, dignify the practicalities of collaboration, and justify white rule. The British and the Germans found this in the concept of imperial monarchy.

In German East Africa, the notion of the monarchy had two aspects. On the one hand, the Germans believed that Africans themselves had a rudimentary idea of kingship. Especially in the first stages of interaction with African rulers, they were prepared to play up to African assertions of kingliness and to decorate Africans with some of the stage props of 19th-century

TRADITION IN THE NEW WORLD

European traditions, invented or not, never caught on in America as they did in Africa. Indeed, the Founding Fathers considered their colonial past under the English an impediment to the future. As Thomas Jefferson noted in a letter to James Madison in 1789, "The earth belongs in usufruct to the living. . . . The dead have neither powers nor rights over it."

The robust, egalitarian principles of the new republic went against the established, hierarchical ways of the Old World thrones. George Washington, importuned by many to become "king" of America, rejected the trappings of monarchy. His Presidency opened with a simple oath of office and a short speech at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets in New York City on April 30, 1789. Despite attempts at embellishment by later presidents, the simplicity remains. At his inauguration in 1976, Jimmy Carter wore a blue business suit instead of the morning coat worn by John F. Kennedy in 1960 and (to the delight of the TV networks) walked down Pennsylvania Avenue hand-in-hand with his wife to the White House.

The constant shift in population and westward expansion of 18th- and 19th-century America hindered the development of "native" traditions. But some religious, ethnic, and regional observances of custom did flourish. One of the earliest and most popular (especially along the Eastern seaboard) was Thanksgiving, originated in 1621 by Governor William Bradford of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who ordered turkeys roasted to celebrate a bountiful harvest. In 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln officially set aside the fourth Thursday of November "as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

Many Christmas traditions, including the exchange of gifts, caroling, and decorated fir trees, arrived in America with Dutch and German immigrants during the 17th and 18th centuries and were quickly adopted. Santa Claus was homegrown. Dr. Clement Moore based the "right jolly old elf" in "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (1823) on his handyman and borrowed Washington Irving's idea of a reindeer sleigh that flew through the air. In an 1863 issue of *Harper's Illustrated Weekly*, illustrator Thomas Nast added the final touch—the red, fur-trimmed coat worn by modern department store Santas.
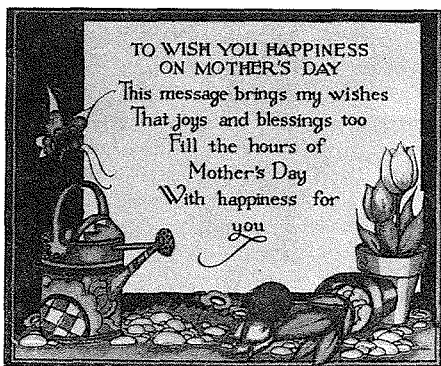
As Americans moved further away in time from the revolutionary era, their distrust of *nationalistic* rituals waned. Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 observation that "there are no traditions, or common habits, to forge links between [Americans]" became less and less true. The placing of flowers on the graves of soldiers on Memorial Day (originally on May 30) was begun three years after the Civil War by General John A. Logan. Special ceremonies were held in the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, marking the first formal observance of the day, an ob-

servance that continues today with little change.

During the 1890s, the divisive effects of labor unrest, economic depression, and renewed immigration made many Americans yearn for common national bonds. The Sons of the American Revolution, founded in 1889, and the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames of America, both founded the following year, together helped institute such practices as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance (first done by Boston schoolchildren in 1892) and the flying of U.S. flags over public buildings. These "American" rituals aided the assimilation of the more than 18 million immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1920.

In many cases, merchants exploited and abetted the new receptivity of Americans to the creation of traditions. Stirred by the success of Christmas cards (first marketed in America by Marcus Ward and Company in the 1870s), greeting card manufacturers endorsed schoolteacher Anna M. Jarvis's campaign to designate the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day; florists promoted the designation of the carnation as the official Mother's Day flower. On May 9, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson gave federal approval by signing a joint congressional resolution lauding mothers (who still lacked the vote) as "the greatest source of the country's strength and inspiration." But even with commercial and federal encouragement, other rituals—such as the observance of Father's Day (the third Sunday in June) and Grandparent's Day (the first Sunday in September)—have yet to catch on.

The armed services, notably the Marine Corps, have been the one consistent exception to the relative indifference of Americans to the preservation of traditions. Officers in the Corps (established in 1775) have worn dress trousers with distinctive scarlet stripes since 1798 and carried the Mameluke Sword since 1805. The Navy, following British custom, still "pipes aboard" senior officers and lines the rails in salute to the Commander-in-Chief.

TO WISH YOU HAPPINESS
ON MOTHER'S DAY
This message brings my wishes
That joys and blessings too
Fill the hours of
Mother's Day
With happiness for
you

The pageantry surrounding the nationwide 1976 Bicentennial suggests that Americans have not lost a yen for parades. But they draw the line at pomp: When President Nixon ordered fancy new uniforms with gold braid, gold buttons, and plastic shakos for the White House police in 1970, widespread ridicule in Congress and the press soon forced him to shelve the new attire.

European ceremonial drama. Thus, a German officer reported to the Kaiser in 1890 that he had presented gifts from the emperor to Chief Rindi of the Chagga: "While the soldiers presented arms, I . . . encircled his shoulders with the coronation cloak . . . from the Berlin Opera House and placed on his head the helmet under which Niemann once sang Lohengrin." On the other hand, the Germans believed that African ideas of personal rule by a monarch could be infinitely enlarged so that the figure of an all-powerful Kaiser could come to personify German imperial authority.

The British King had nothing like the very real executive power of the German Kaiser, and he was spoken of more in mystical than in practical terms. J. E. Hine, bishop of Northern Rhodesia, found the coronation of King George V "a great ceremonial act of religion. . . . It was no mere piece of medieval pageantry. . . . It was symbolism of the utmost splendour, but there was reality behind it all."

In Northern Rhodesia itself, the acting administrator summoned all the Ngoni chiefs and their people to a Coronation Day fete: The "native police" band played; the Anglican "representative robed and said the special prayer chosen for the occasion, standing near the saluting flag." An enraptured missionary reported on the celebrations of that evening: "In the valley were four huge bonfires, around which some hundreds of dusky natives capered and danced. Some had bells on their feet, and almost all carried knobkerries. . . . The Europeans, sheltered by a grass

4.12.1977 COURONNEMENT DE S.M.I. BOKASSA 1er
EMPEREUR DE CENTRAFRIQUE
60 F
POSTES
EMPIRE
CENTRAFRICAIN

Jean Bedel Bokassa became President of the Central African Republic following a coup in 1966. After the discovery of local uranium and oil deposits, Colonel Bokassa declared his nation an empire and spent $22 million on his 1977 coronation as Bokassa I.

screen, sat in a semicircle, and between them and the fire danced the inhabitants of the soil. . . . Then the police band came forward and in the dying flames regaled us with 'The March of the Men of Harlech,' 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' and other tunes."

Secular administrators presented to African audiences a King who was almost divine—omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. A series of official speeches to the Sotho, for example, stressed the royal knowledge of their situation, the royal concern for their well-being, and the royal responsibility for decisions that, in reality, had been taken by the cabinet. In 1910, Prince Arthur of Connaught told the Sotho Paramount Chief that the new King George V "remembers the representations you made to His late Majesty, King Edward," and that he knew "that, if and when, He decides that the time has come for Basutoland to be included in the South African Union you will loyally obey His decision."

Tea Parties for Lewanika

When the King addressed the Sotho directly—as in the Royal Message of 1910—British colonial officials put into his mouth words of a high patriarchal tone: "When a child is in trouble, he will go to his father, and his father after hearing all about the matter will decide what must be done. Then the child must trust and obey his father, for he is but one of a large family and his father has had great experience in settling the troubles of his older children and is able to judge what is best not only for the young child but for the peace and advantage of the whole family."

To give credibility to these claims, colonial administrators regarded the ceremonial side of the British monarchy as crucially important. When, in 1919, the Paramount Chief of Basutoland petitioned for permission to visit the Vatican as well as Buckingham Palace on his journey to Europe, the high commissioner feared that he "might be unduly impressed by the pomp and state of reception at the Vatican and might form the conclusion that the pope was more important than the King!" Permission was refused.

Not surprisingly, "tribal" African rulers found themselves contesting for the visible attributes of monarchy because their status came into question. In the early days, colonial administrators were happy enough to recognize African rulers as kings, and to present them, like Rindi, with the properties of stage monarchy. But as the colonial regimes established themselves and became less dependent on concessions extracted from African rulers, so there began a process of deflation. Thus, much of the British South Africa Company administration's claim to northwestern Rhodesia depended

upon the concessions it had gained from Lewanika of Barotseland. Lewanika was described as a great King and rewarded with access to the glamour of the British crown.

The symbolic climax of Lewanika's career came with his invitation to attend the coronation of Edward VII in 1902. Lewanika was received with honor by English high society. According to historian Brian Willan, "He had royal carriages put at his disposal, his horses were taken out of his carriage in a Dorset village so that village people could drag the carriage, he was taught to play simple games at tea parties by people like the Duchess of Abercorn." He was encouraged to acquire for his use both in England and back home some of the symbols of British royal ceremonialism—a royal coach, the uniform of a full-dress admiral, scarlet coats for his servants at Lealui. "When Kings are seated together," proclaimed the old Lozi ruler, "there is never a lack of things to discuss."

But soon the old man was being denied his kingliness altogether. As the North Rhodesian administration came to feel more secure, it cut back Lewanika's powers, rebuffed his protestations, and dramatized this withdrawal of favor through a double manipulation of royal symbolism. It was laid down that the high commissioner and the administrator must be greeted with the Lozi royal salute; it was also laid down that Lewanika himself should no longer be referred to as "King," since this elevated him above the other chiefs and drew what was considered to be an altogether inappropriate analogy with the imperial monarch. A similar pattern is apparent in the Ankole kingdom in Uganda. There was an initial period of colonial support for the Ankole monarchy, followed by a reaction in which, as M. R. Doornbos notes in *Regalia Galore* (1975), "officers at work in the country disliked the title of King being used for the rulers of small African states."

Beyond Victoria Falls

Nevertheless, African "paramounts" still strove to gain the title of king, to obtain invitations to British coronations in faraway London, to dramatize their internal authority with crowns and thrones, British-style coronations and jubilees. The Omugabe of Ankole managed to acquire a throne and a coat of arms and a crown. Lewanika's successor, Yeta, worked indefatigably to proclaim special royal status. He had certain advantages. Whenever a royal personage visited Northern Rhodesia, the local administration looked fairly desperately around for something other than the Victoria Falls to show him. They always had to fall back on the Lozi. Reviewing the ceremonial possibilities for the Prince of Wales's visit in 1925, the British governor

Boy Scouts from the Nyadiri School in Southern Rhodesia during the 1930s. Founded in 1908 by Lt. Gen. Robert Baden-Powell in Great Britain, the Scout movement soon spread to the rest of the empire.

complained that "generally speaking, none of these Chiefs are likely to look very impressive," but consoled himself with the thought that the Lozi "aquatic display" was likely to be "a fairly picturesque affair as native ceremonies go."

Those African rulers who *did* succeed in acquiring some of the trappings of neotraditional monarchy were caught up in an ironic process. What was involved, as Doornbos notes, was a transformation from flexible and adaptable customary monarchical institutions to a colonial monarchy "fitted into the bureaucratic structure and in time adorned with a thick overlay of new ceremonialism." The essence of the change in Ankole was to turn the Omugabe "into an instrument of bureaucratic hierarchy and to relegate the traditional values to the level of folklore." Aspirations to become more like the king/emperor ended in African rulers *really* becoming more like him, as they came more and more to occupy the ceremonial center, rather than the political or cultural center, of their societies.

It was a process neatly summed up by the title of Doornbos's book, *Regalia Galore*. But unlike the ceremonial of the king/emperor, which still serves a function in shrunken, post-imperial Britain, the ceremonial of African kings ultimately failed to mirror anything very important. The Ankole kingship was abolished without a ripple of dissent, and the local press headlined the

transition to a more openly bureaucratic symbol of authority—
"The Throne Replaced by Chairman's Seat."

But it was not only African rulers and clergymen who tried
to manipulate the symbols of European invented tradition. They
were also seized upon by thousands of others who were experi-
encing the colonial economy, whether as migrant laborers or as
petty clerks and functionaries. Both of these two groups sought
to come to terms with the new colonial society, and they did so
partly by means of participation in dance associations, which
drew on various European invented traditions to express the es-
sence of colonialism.

In his *Modern History of Tanganyika* (1979), John Iliffe has
described the coastal dance associations in German East Africa
just before the First World War. Dances were performed in the
Kaiser's honor in 1911 by *ngoma ya kihuni*—the hooligans'
dance association, a name defiantly chosen by "low-class, up-
country immigrants." They danced the *Bom*, an imitation of
German military drill, named after the sound of the machine
gun. The dance associations of clerks and bureaucratic servants
gathered in houses furnished in European style; they drank tea;
"and at the end of the feast they said 'Hurrah' three times."

The Myth of Tribes

In the towns of the Kenyan coast, a similar class division
produced competition between the Arinoti up-country migrants
and the Marini Swahili youth. The Marini rejoiced in rich aris-
tocratic patrons, and they triumphed over their plebeian oppo-
nents with processions headed by replicas of British governors
and their equerries; with floats of battleships, with admirals in
full dress taking the salute on the bridge; and on one glorious oc-
casion, still much celebrated in the photograph albums of
Lamu, with a stately line of peers of the House of Lords, all in
full ceremonial dress.

Ironically, the most far-reaching inventions of tradition in
colonial Africa took place when the Europeans believed them-
selves to be respecting age-old African custom. What were called
customary law, customary land-rights, customary political
structure, and so on, were in fact *all* invented by colonial admin-
istrators as these Europeans codified what they thought to be
African tradition.

There is a growing anthropological and historical litera-
ture on this process, which it is not possible to summarize
here. But the essentials are clear. For example, John Iliffe de-
scribes the "creation of tribes" in colonial Tanganyika: "The

notion of the tribe lay at the heart of [Imperial Germany's] in-
direct rule in Tanganyika. Refining the racial thinking com-
mon [at home, Kaiser Wilhelm's] administrators believed
that every African belonged to a tribe, just as every European
belonged to a nation. . . . Tribes were seen as cultural units
'possessing a common language, a single social system, and
an established common law.' Their political and social sys-
tems rested on kinship. Tribal membership was hereditary.
Different tribes were related genealogically."

This concept totally misrepresented the realities of African
societies. Almost all recent studies of 19th-century, pre-colonial
Africa have emphasized that, far from adopting a single "tribal"
entity, most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, de-
fining themselves at one moment as a member of that cult, at an-
other moment as part of this clan, and at yet another moment, as
an initiate in that professional guild.

Similarly, 19th-century Africa was *not* characterized by
lack of internal social and economic competition, by the unchal-
lenged authority of the elders, by an acceptance of custom that
gave every person—young and old, male and female—a place in
society that was defined and protected. Marcia Wright has
shown, for instance, in a stimulating account of late 19th-century
society in the Lake Tanganyika corridor, that economic and polit-
ical competition overrode the "customary securities" offered to
women by marriage or extended kinship relations. Women con-
stantly found themselves being shaken out of the niches in which
they sought security. Later on, of course, and in the 20th century,
the dogmas of customary security and fixed relationships grew
up in these societies. But, as Wright remarks, the terms of this re-
construction "were dictated by the colonial authorities in the
years after 1895, when pacification came to mean immobilization
of populations, reinforcement of ethnicity and greater rigidity of
social definition."

In the end, Africans were left with an ambiguous legacy
from the colonial invention of tradition. After independence,
those Africans who repudiated the British-style "elite" culture
and regimental traditions imported from Europe faced the para-
doxical danger of embracing another set of colonial inven-
tions—dubbed "native African custom"—instead.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

TRADITIONS

Man has always been shaped to some degree by tradition, whether in his personal relations, his economic life, or his capacity as a political animal. As late as the 18th century in the West, most people still ordered their lives (as historian Marc Bloch wrote of medieval man) "on the assumption that the only title to permanence was that conferred by long usage. Life was ruled by tradition, by group custom." The intellectual upheavals of the Renaissance and Reformation, and the triumph of the Enlightenment two centuries later, helped to change all that.

"Ignorance, superstition, clerical dominance, religious intolerance, social hierarchy, [and] inequality in the distribution of wealth"—all of these, writes sociologist Edward Shils in **Tradition** (Univ. of Chicago, 1981, cloth & paper), were blamed by Voltaire, Diderot, and other Philosophes on blind adherence to custom.

In France, the leaders of the 1789 Revolution set out to break with the past and create a new, egalitarian social order. Powdered wigs were frowned upon. Townsmen were to greet one another as *citoyen* rather than *monsieur*. On playing cards, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity replaced Kings, Queens, and Jacks. Crane Brinton chronicles these and other failed attempts to make over French society in **A Decade of Revolution: 1789–1799** (Harper, 1934, cloth; 1963, paper).

The Founding Fathers of the new United States of America did not go so far. But as historian Michael Kammen relates in his **A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination** (Knopf, 1978, cloth; 1980, rev. ed., paper), which traces evolving perceptions of the American

Revolution, Americans did share the Gallic distrust of anything tainted by the ancien régime (in this case, the British version).

Yet in America, as in France, the vacuum created by the rejection of one set of traditions was eventually filled by another. "Authority once achieved must have a stable and usable past." That is the conclusion of historian J. H. Plumb, who reflects on the use and misuse of history in **The Death of the Past** (Houghton, 1971, cloth; Penguin, 1973, paper).

Between 1870 and 1914, industrialization, expanded suffrage, and the emergence of new nation-states prompted all of the great powers to experiment with what the University of London's Eric Hobsbawm has described as "the use of ancient materials" to devise "novel traditions."

In Britain, the late 19th century saw a popular revival, abetted by church and state, of supposed "chivalric" values. As architectural historian Mark Girouard observes in **The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman** (Yale, 1981), "organizers" of every stripe combed the medieval past for rituals and credos pertinent to new groups such as the Boy Scouts. Chapter 7 of Lord Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* was entitled "The Chivalry of the Knights" and aimed at imbuing working-class boys with "the code of the Victorian gentleman."

Across the North Sea, in a newly united Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm I sought to provide a popular focus for the Second German Empire. As George L. Mosse notes in **The Nationalization of the Masses** (Fertig, 1975, cloth; New American Library, 1977, paper), a study of political symbolism

in Germany, "Festivals, gestures, and forms had to be created which, in turn, would themselves become traditional." Every year, German schoolchildren commemorated the fatherland's victory in the Franco-Prussian war (1870–71) by singing the "Wacht am Rhein" ("The Watch on the Rhine") and planting "imperial" oak trees—the oak having been revered by ancient Germanic tribes for its magical powers.

As modernization gained momentum throughout the Continent, traditional folk culture slowly vanished. In **Peasants into Frenchmen** (Stanford, 1976, cloth & paper), a portrait of rural France during the half century before World War I, historian Eugen Weber shows how dance festivals, charivaris, and other rural celebrations—decried by government authorities as sources "of moral laxity, superstition, and heathenish debauchery"—were supplanted by officially sanctioned events such as Bastille Day.

Some countries proved more adept than others at integrating old and new. In **Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture** (Princeton, 1971, cloth & paper), a collection of essays covering the Meiji era (1868–1912), historian Donald H. Shively and others describe how a "nativist reaction" halted the wave of Westernization that threatened to engulf Japanese culture. Japan's leaders labored, says Shively, to "stress the merits of Japan's past" and to resist unnecessary innovations.

Beisubaru (baseball) swept the country, but fancy dress balls never displaced the tea ceremony, and by the end of the 19th century, the old concept of ancestor worship was successfully incorporated into the structure of a modern government, led by a figurehead emperor.

Joseph Stalin faced a problem of a different sort. In **The Rites of Rulers** (Cambridge, 1981, cloth & paper), Christel Lane notes that the new Communist regime in Moscow during the 1920s not only had to confront "the necessity of immediate radical social and political transformation" but was also committed to "achieving an ideal end-state, a secular millenium." To help rally his countrymen, Stalin contrived the "cult of personality," building one first around the person of V. I. Lenin (a cult that has persisted) and then around himself (a cult that has not).

Yet, as the experience of the Soviet Union, France, the United States, and other countries has shown, the past cannot be shed like a reptile's skin. Despite continued Soviet attempts to secularize the burial rite, the ancient religious custom of throwing dirt onto the coffin as it is lowered into the ground has been preserved in popular practice.

At its best, tradition satisfies a fundamental human yearning for continuity and stability, for a bit of ballast. "The idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation and a sure principle of transmission," Edmund Burke stated in 1790 as he reflected on the upheavals in France. "People will never look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Several of these titles were suggested by Michael Kammen, professor of history at Cornell University.*