

emptied. Then each of the other huts was searched and all the meats taken. Cephu's family protested loudly and Cephu tried hard to cry, but this time it was forced and everyone laughed at him. He clutched his stomach and said he would die; die because he was hungry and his brothers had taken away all his food; die because he was not respected.

The kumamolimo was festive once again, and the camp seemed restored to good spirits. An hour later, when it was dark and fires were flickering outside every hut, there was a great blaze at the central hearth and the men talked about the morrow's hunt. From Cephu's camp came the sound of the old man, still trying hard to cry, moaning about his unfortunate situation, making noises that were meant to indicate hunger. From our own camp came the jeers of women, ridiculing him and imitating his moans.

When Masi had finished his meal he took a pot full of meat with mushroom sauce, cooked by his wife, and quietly slipped away into the shadows in the direction of his unhappy kinsman. The moaning stopped, and when the evening molimo singing was at its height I saw Cephu in our midst. Like most of us he was sitting on the ground, in the manner of an animal. But he was singing, and that meant that he was just as much a BaMbuti as anyone else.

The Giver of the Law

CEPHU HAD COMMITTED what is probably one of the most heinous crimes in Pygmy eyes, and one that rarely occurs. Yet the case was settled simply and effectively, without any evident legal system being brought into force. It cannot be said that Cephu went unpunished, because for those few hours when nobody would speak to him he must have suffered the equivalent of as many days solitary confinement for anyone else. To have been refused a chair by a mere youth, not even one of the great hunters; to have been laughed at by women and children; to have been ignored by men—none of these things would be quickly forgotten. Without any formal process of

law Cephu had been firmly put in his place, and it was unlikely he would do the same thing again in a hurry.

This was typical of all Pygmy life, on the surface at least. There was a confusing, seductive informality about everything they did. Whether it was a birth, a wedding, or a funeral, in a Pygmy hunting camp or in a Negro village, there was always an unexpectedly casual, almost carefree attitude. There was, for instance, little apparent specialization; everyone took part in everything. Children had little or no voice in adult affairs, but the only adult activities from which they seemed to be rigidly excluded were certain songs, and of course the molimo. Between men and women there was also a certain degree of specialization, but little that could be called exclusive.

There were no chiefs, no formal councils. In each aspect of Pygmy life there might be one or two men or women who were more prominent than others, but usually for good practical reasons. This showed up most clearly of all in the settling of disputes. There was no judge, no jury, no court. The Negro tribes all around had their tribunals, but not the Pygmies. Each dispute was settled as it arose, according to its nature.

Roughly, there were four ways of punishing offenses, each operating as an efficient deterrent but without necessitating any system of outright punishment. In a small and co-operative group no individual would want the job either of passing judgment or of administering punishment, so like everything else in Pygmy life the maintenance of law was a co-operative affair. Certain offenses, rarely committed, were considered so terrible that they would of themselves bring some form of supernatural retribution. Others became the affair of the molimo, which in its morning rampages showed public disapproval by attacking the hut of the culprit, possibly the culprit himself. Both these types of crime were extremely rare. The more serious of the other crimes, such as theft, were dealt with by a sound thrashing which was administered co-operatively by all who felt inclined to

participate, but only after the entire camp had been involved in discussing the case. Less serious offenses were settled in the simplest way, by the litigants themselves either arguing out the case, or engaging in a mild fight.

I came across only one instance of the first type of crime. We had all eaten in the evening and were sitting around our fires. It was with Kenge and a group of the bachelors, talking about something quite trivial, when all of a sudden there was a tremendous wailing and crying from Cephu's camp. A few seconds later there was shouting from the path connecting the two camps and young Kelemoke came rushing through our camp, hotly pursued by other youths who were armed with spears and knives. Everyone ran into the huts and closed the little doorways. The bachelors, however, instead of going in with their families, ran to the nearest trees and climbed up into the lower branches. I followed Kenge up one of the smaller trees and sat among the ants, whose persistent biting I hardly noticed. What was going on below took all my attention.

Kelemoke tried to take refuge in a hut, but he was turned away with angry remarks, and a burning log was thrown after him. Masisi yelled at him to run to the forest. His pursuers were nearly on top of him when they all disappeared at the far end of the camp.

At this point three girls came running out of Cephu's camp, right into the middle of our clearing. They also carried knives—the little paring knives they used for cutting vines and for peeling and shredding roots. They were not only shouting curses against Kelemoke and his immediate family, but they were weeping, with tears streaming down their faces. When they did not find Kelemoke, one of them threw her knife into the ground and started beating herself with her fists, shouting over and over again, "He has killed me, he has killed me!" After a pause for breath she added, "I shall never be able to live again!" Kenge made a caustic comment on the logic of the statement, from the safety of his branch, and immediately the girls turned

One of the huts was in flames, and people were standing all around, either crying or shouting. There was a lot of struggling going on among a small group of men, and women were brandishing fists in each other's faces. We decided to go back to the main camp, which by then was filled with clusters of men and women standing about discussing the affair. Not long afterward a contingent from Cephu's group came over. They swore at the children, who, delighted by the whole thing, were imitating the epic fight and pursuit of Kelemoke. The adults, in no joking frame of mind, sat down to have a discussion. But the talking did not center around Kelemoke's act so much as around the burning of the hut. Almost everyone seemed to dismiss the act of incest. One of Kelemoke's uncles, Masalito, with whom he had been staying since his father died, had great tears rolling down his cheeks. He said, "Kelemoke only did what any youth would do, and he has been caught and driven to the forest. The forest will kill him. That is finished. But my own brother has burned down my hut and I have nowhere to sleep. I shall be cold. And what if it rains? I shall die of cold and rain at the hands of my brother."

The brother, Aberi, instead of taking up the point that Kelemoke had dishonored his daughter, made a feeble protestation that he had been insulted. Kelemoke should have taken more care. And Masalito should have taught him better. This started the argument off on different lines, and both families quarreled bitterly, accusing each other for more than an hour. Then the elders began to yawn and say they were tired; they wanted to go to sleep; we would settle it the next day.

For a long time that night the camp was alive with whispered remarks, and not a few rude jokes were thrown about from one hut to another. The next day I went over to Cephu's camp and found the girl's mother busy helping to rebuild Masalito's hut; the two men were sitting down and talking as though nothing much had

their attention to our tree and began to threaten us. They called us all manner of names, and then they fell on the ground and rolled over and over, beating themselves, tearing their hair, and wailing loudly.

Just then there came more shouts from two directions. One set was from the youths who had evidently found Kelemoke hiding just outside the camp. At this the girls leaped up and, brandishing their knives, set off to join the pursuit. The other shouts, for the first time from adult men and women, came from the camp of Cephu. I could not make out what they were about, but I could see the glow of flames.

I asked Kenge what had happened. He looked very grave now and said that it was the greatest shame that could befall a Pygmy—Kelemoke had committed incest. In some African tribes it is actually preferred that cousins should marry each other, but among the Bambuti this was considered almost as incestuous as sleeping with a brother or sister. I asked Kenge if they would kill Kelemoke if they found him, but Kenge said they would not find him.

"He has been driven to the forest," he said, "and he will have to live there alone. Nobody will accept him into their group after what he has done. And he will die, because one cannot live alone in the forest. The forest will kill him. And if it does not kill him he will die of leprosy." Then, in typical Pygmy fashion, he burst into smothered laughter, clapped his hands and said, "He has been doing it for months; he must have been very stupid to let himself be caught. No wonder they chased him into the forest." To Kenge, evidently, the greater crime was Kelemoke's stupidity in being found out.

All the doors to the huts still remained tight shut. Njobo and Moke had both been called on by the youths to show themselves and settle the matter, but they had both refused to leave their huts, leaving Kelemoke to his fate. Now there was an even greater uproar over in Cephu's camp, and Kenge and I decided to climb down from the tree and see what was going on.

happened. All the youths told me not to worry about Kelemoke, that they were secretly bringing him food in the forest, he was not far away.

Three days later, when the hunt returned in the late afternoon, Kelemoke came wandering idly into the camp behind them, as though he too had been hunting. He looked around cautiously, but nobody said a word or even looked at him. If they ignored him, at least they did not curse him. He came over to the bachelor's fire and sat down. For several minutes the conversation continued as though he were not there. I saw his face twitching, but he was too proud to speak first. Then a small child was sent over by her mother with a bowl of food, which she put in Kelemoke's hands and gave him a shy, friendly smile.

Kelemoke never flirted with his cousin again, and now, five years later, he is happily married and has two fine children. He does not have leprosy, and he is one of the best liked and most respected of the hunters.

I have never heard of anyone being completely ostracized, but the threat is always there, and is usually sufficient to insure good behavior. The two attitudes which disturb the Pygmy most are contempt and ridicule. Contempt is most effectively shown by ignoring someone, even if he comes and sits at the same fire. But it is difficult to maintain for long because hunters cannot afford to ignore a fellow hunter. So ostracism of this kind is infrequent and does not last. Almost as effective, and of much longer duration, is ridicule. The BaMbuti are good-natured people with an irresistible sense of humor; they are always making jokes about one another, even about themselves, but their humor can be turned into an instrument of punishment when they choose.

Such a case was a great fight between the same two brothers who had fallen out over Kelemoke's misdemeanors, Aberi and Masalito.

This incident shows as well as any how a tiny, and often imagined, fault can be magnified out of all proportion until it becomes a serious quarrel, threatening the peace of the camp. In any small, closed community, there are hidden tensions everlastingly at play. They are unperceived, they are fluctuating and vapid, but every one of them is potentially explosive.

(Of the two brothers Aberi was the elder. He was aggressive and angry, and he considered himself the head of the family. The oldest brother, Kelemoke's father, had died. But Kelemoke had been brought up by Masalito rather than Aberi because everyone agreed that Masalito, if younger, had much more sense. He was also a better hunter, a better singer, a better dancer, and considerably better-looking. He had a prettier wife too; Aberi's wife had lost half her face, which had been eaten away by yaws. So between these two brothers there were always strained feelings. Open conflict was avoided because Masalito usually lived with the main group, of which his wife was a member, while Aberi always hunted with Cephu, his cousin.

But Masalito was kindly and liked peace and quiet, so when Cephu joined the main group at Apa Lelo he often used to visit his brother in Cephu's camp. Aberi's wife was a hard-working woman, and although it was difficult to look at her without flinching, she was loved by everyone. One afternoon, on a rainy day, Masalito wandered over to visit his brother. Rainy days are not happy days in a hunting camp; they are often oppressive, and of course hunting is impossible. People are coupled up in their tiny leaf huts, thinking of all the game that is going uncaught. Aberi was sleeping, so Masalito sat down beside his sister-in-law, Tamasa, and asked her for a smoke. She passed him the clay pipe bowl and a little tobacco, and a long stem cut freshly from the center of a plantain leaf. She had recently come back from a visit to a Negro village and had brought several of these stems with her, as they give by far the best smoke.

Masalito smoked a few puffs, then passed the pipe to Tamasa. But

instead of accepting it she abruptly turned it upside down and knocked the remaining tobacco out into the dirt. This was not only wasteful, but a deliberate insult. Masalito did not want to take offense, so he gave Tamasa the chance to re-establish good relations. He asked her to give him one of the new pipestems to take back to his hut for himself and his wife to enjoy. To refuse her husband's brother would be an open act of aggression quite uncalled for, and if she made the gift she would automatically cancel the previous insult. Masalito thought that he had not only maneuvered the political situation to his advantage but also won for himself and his wife a new pipestem. Unfortunately he had chosen a bad day.

Tamasa felt that Masalito was trying to get the better of her, and to get her to give away her husband's property while he was asleep, without asking him. She said, "Certainly I will give you a pipestem." Then she went behind the hut, where all the rubbish was thrown, and came back with a withered and smelly stump of a pipe. It had been pared away so often between smokes, to keep the mouthpiece fresh, that it was now only two feet long instead of six or seven. And instead of being fresh and green and juicy it was stale and brown and dry, reeking of old tobacco and spittle. This she presented to Masalito, who was so upset that he cried with rage, and asked why she and Aberi always treated him so badly. Tamasa promptly retorted that it was not bad treatment to feed him and give him tobacco every time he came over from his camp. Didn't his wife look after him, that he had to come and scrounge from his brother?

This was too much for Masalito, who had wanted only to be on good terms with everyone. He called Tamasa a name that one should never use to one's brother's wife, and Tamasa started crying. This awakened Aberi, who came out of his hut sleepily, looking uglier than ever. Without trying to explain, Masalito, still sobbing tearlessly with rage, hit his brother over the head with the withered pipestem Tamasa had given him. Brandishing the offending article above

he heard he stalked back to the main camp shouting at the top of his voice what miserable wretches his brother and his sister-in-law were. The dirty old pipe was damning evidence, and all sympathy was with Masalito. Njobo's wife took her husband's pipestem and gave it to Masalito, who quickly regained his good humor. But by now Aberi was aroused, and came storming into the camp, saying that his brother had insulted Tamasa. He declared that it was a matter for serious action; Masalito should be thrashed.

Everybody thought this was a great joke, and burst into laughter. Only children and youths get thrashed, and Masalito was a father. Aberi did not like being laughed at and he went over to where Masalito was sitting down on a log, smoking his new pipe. He demanded an apology. Masalito, now completely composed, simply picked up the old pipestem and threw it at his brother's feet, saying, "There! That is for her!" By now a crowd had gathered around, and the hotter Aberi became the more relaxed Masalito seemed to be.

Aberi shook his fists and said that if nobody else was going to thrash Masalito he was. This brought more laughs as Aberi was positively puny beside Masalito, who himself was little more than four feet tall. Masalito invited his brother to come and try. Aberi then pretended that he was holding a spear, and in a high-pitched voice, squeaking with anger, he cried out, "I am going to get my spear and I am going to kill you completely!" Whereupon he imitated a spear thrust in Masalito's direction. There was a gasp of horror, as this is something one does not say to one's brother even in jest. But Masalito replied calmly, "Go and get your spear, then, and come back and kill me. I'll still be here. You don't have the courage to kill your brother." He said a lot of other things, goading Aberi on to an even higher pitch of fury. Aberi tried to make himself more impressive by a graphic dance, which was meant to show exactly how he was going to leap in the air and twist around and drive the spear home. But he

was not a good dancer, and when he tried to illustrate the leap he fell flat on his face.

That was the end of the matter for Aberi. For weeks he was ridiculed, everyone asking him if he had lost his spear, or telling him to be careful not to trip and fall. But it was not quite the end of the matter for Masalito. He felt more angry than ever at his brother, because Aberi had made himself, and so the whole family, an object of ridicule. Masalito felt this an added insult to himself. Even Kenge was furious. So relations between the two brothers got worse and worse, and every time there was a silence in the camp Masalito would complain in a loud voice about his brother and his brother's wife.

At first this was tolerated, but finally it threatened to split the camp in two. Masalito began naming all his friends and relatives to support him in ignoring Aberi; he refused to say a word to his brother. Of course his brother could claim support from the same relatives and friends, and tension was spreading throughout both camps. That was when the molimo stepped in and showed public disapproval of Masalito. The original source of the dispute, and Aberi's undoubted wrongdoing, were forgotten. Masalito was guilty of the much more serious crime of splitting the hunting band into opposing factions. He himself was then ridiculed and shamed into silence. After that it was only one or two days before the two brothers became good friends and hunting companions once again.

Disputes were generally settled with little reference to the alleged rights and wrongs of the case, but chiefly with the intention of restoring peace to the community. One night Kenge slipped out of our hut on an amorous expedition to the hut of Manyalibo, who had an attractive daughter, one of Kenge's many admirers. Shortly afterward there was a howl of rage and Kenge came flying back across the

clearing with a furious Manyalibo hurling sticks and stones after him. Manyalibo then took up a position in the middle of the clearing and woke the whole camp up, calling out in a loud voice and denouncing Kenge as an incestuous good-for-nothing. Actually Kenge was only very distantly related to the girl, and the flirtation was not at all out of order, though marriage might have been. Several people tried to point this out to Manyalibo, but he became increasingly vociferous. He said that it wasn't so much that Kenge had tried to sleep with his daughter, but that he had been brazen enough to crawl right over her sleeping father to get at her, waking him up in the process. This was a considered insult, for any decent youth would have made a prior arrangement to meet his girl elsewhere. He called on Kenge to justify himself. But Kenge was too busy laughing and only managed to call out "You are making too much noise!" This seemed a poor defense, but in fact it was not. Manyalibo set up another hue and cry about Kenge's general immorality and disrespect for his elders, and strode up and down the camp rattling on the roofs of huts to call everyone to his defense.

Moke took the place in the center of the camp where Manyalibo had stood, and where everyone stands who wants to address the whole camp formally. He gave a low whistle, like the whistle given on the hunt to call for silence. When everyone was quiet he told Manyalibo that the noise was giving him a headache, and he wanted to sleep. Manyalibo retorted that this matter was more serious than Moke's sleep. Moke replied in a very deliberate, quiet voice, "You are making too much noise—you are killing the forest, you are killing the hunt. It is for us older men to sleep at night and not to worry about the youngsters. They know what to do and what not to do." Manyalibo growled with dissatisfaction, but he went back to his hut, taunted by well-directed remarks from Kenge and his friends.

Whether Kenge had done something wrong or not was relatively immaterial. Manyalibo had done the greater wrong by waking the

whole camp and by making so much noise that all the animals would be frightened away, spoiling the next day's hunting. The Pygmies have a saying that a noisy camp is a hungry camp.

Some misdemeanors are very simply dealt with. A Pygmy thinks nothing of stealing from Negroes; they are, after all, only animals, as seen by Pygmy eyes. But among themselves theft is virtually nonexistent. For one thing, they have few possessions, and for another there is no necessity for theft except through laziness.

Pepei was such a lazy Pygmy, and he was always stealing from the Negroes. But out in the forest he was forced to work for his food, to build his own hut if he wanted one (he was a bachelor but liked having his own hut, sharing it with his younger brother), and he had to make his own bows and arrows and hunting net, and to cook his own food. This was hard on Pepei, and although he meant no harm he could not resist slipping around the camp at night, taking a leaf from this hut and a leaf from that, until he had enough to thatch his own hut—which he made by acquiring saplings in a similar manner. Food used to disappear mysteriously, and Pepei had always seen a dog stealing it. But finally he was caught in the act by old Sau, Amabosu's mother, who was a very strange and frightening old lady. Pepei crept into her hut one night and was lifting the lid of a pot when she smacked him hard on the wrist with a wooden pestle. She then grabbed him by the arm, twisting it behind his back, and forced him out into the open.

Nobody really minded Pepei's stealing, because he was a born comic and a great storyteller. But he had gone too far in stealing from old Sau, who had lost her husband and was supported by her son Amabosu and his wife. So the men ran out of their huts angrily and held Pepei, while the youths broke off thorny branches and whipped him until he managed to break away. He went running as fast as he could into the forest; he cried bitterly and wrapped his arms around

himself for comfort. He stayed in the forest for nearly twenty-four hours, and when he came back the next night he went straight to his hut, unseen, and lay down to sleep. His hut was between mine and Sau's, and I heard him come in, and I heard him crying softly because even his brother wouldn't speak to him.

The next day Pepei was his old self, and everyone was glad to see him laughing; they were happy to be able to listen to his jokes, and they all gave him food so that he wouldn't have to steal again.

But sometimes a dispute cannot be settled in any of these ways. It blows up too quickly to be ended by ridicule; the participants are too old to be thrashed; yet it is not serious enough to merit ostracism. Such disputes are usually trivial in origin, and often arise from the confined and close conditions of living. Personal relations become very involved in a hunting group, particularly when both members of a sister-exchange marriage are living in the same group.

Under this system, when a boy chooses a wife he becomes obliged to find a "sister"—actually any girl relative—to offer in exchange to his bride's family for one of their bachelor sons. This can be quite a chore, as it may be difficult to find a "sister" who is willing to marry the youth his in-laws have in mind as a groom, and whom the groom himself will also like.

Amabosu had married Ekianga's sister, and Ekianga had married, as his third wife, Amabosu's sister, the beautiful Kamaikan. He had just had a child by her, while Amabosu was still childless. Since Kamaikan was nursing a child, Ekianga was under an obligation not to sleep with her, and his two other wives were happy that at last they could expect him to pay them some attention. But to everyone's dismay he continued to sleep with Kamaikan. And one day Amabosu started making loud remarks across the camp about his sister's health.

This was not at Apa Lelo, but at a later camp, Apa Kadiketu. Amabosu's hut was to my right, and it faced directly across toward

the first of Ekianga's huts, the largest and the best, built by himself and Kamaikan. Amabosu was sitting down at his fire at the time, and his wife was sitting near him, peeling mushrooms for the evening meal. Ekianga was inside the hut with Kamaikan, who had given the baby to her old mother, Sau, to look after for a few hours. At first Amabosu's remarks brought no response from the closed hut. But he became more and more explicit, denouncing Ekianga's shame in considerable and intimate detail, hinting that what was going on inside the hut at that moment was precisely what every new mother should avoid if she was to be able to look after the baby properly and give it lots of milk.

At last Ekianga retorted angrily from inside the hut. Amabosu continued to sit quietly, staring into the fire, with his wide, strange eyes. He answered in as caustic tones as he could find. In the end, Ekianga's door burst open and Ekianga appeared, spear in hand. He looked wild with fury and shame, and he flexed his muscles and hurled the spear at Amabosu with all his might. Amabosu looked up from the fire for the first time, but sat perfectly still with not a flicker of emotion on his face, his eyes still wide and cold and staring. The spear struck the ground within twelve inches of his feet, which was probably exactly where it had been intended to land. Amabosu calmly rose, pulled the spear free, and tossed it behind his hut into the rubbish dump. This was just about as insulting a gesture as he could have made at that moment, and it started one of the most dramatic fights I have seen in a Pygmy camp, and one of the most complicated.

As long as it was between the two men all was well, but the wives were torn between their loyalties as wives and as sisters. Amabosu's wife entered the fray by swearing at her husband for throwing her brother's spear into the rubbish dump. Amabosu countered by smacking her firmly across the face. Normally Ekianga would have approved of such manly assertion of authority over a disloyal wife, but as

the wife was his sister he retaliated by going into his hut and dragging out Kamaikan, whom he in turn publicly smacked across her face. Kamaikan was made of tough stock. She picked up a log from the fire and beat her husband over the back with it. It is difficult to remember just exactly what the sequence of events was after that.

The two wives began fighting tooth and nail, quite literally. The men battled with burning logs, three or four feet long, swinging them from the cool end, but always just missing each other. Every now and again one of the girls would break free and go to the assistance of her brother, and the other would run and pull her away.

As always, a large crowd gathered—men, women and children. But nobody volunteered to stop the fight or to adjudicate in any way. They took one side or the other, either according to the rights and wrongs of the issue, or merely on the grounds that one or the other was the better fighter and more likely to win. The general opinion was that Ekianga should certainly not be sleeping with Kamaikan while she was nursing a baby, but since Kamaikan was equally at fault, Amabosu was wrong in defending her. By and large, however, the onlookers were more interested in the fight than the issue at stake.

As the fight grew more serious, and some visible damage was being done to all four parties, first relatives and then friends began to take sides more vigorously, and it looked as though fighting were going to break out all over the camp. At that moment Arobanai, Ekianga's senior wife, came striding out of her hut and announced in her deep contralto voice that she couldn't rest with all this noise going on, so it would have to stop. To make her impartiality quite plain she added that her animal of a husband could sleep with anyone he wanted to as far as she was concerned. She then went to where the two girls were locked together, both looking very much the worse for wear. She pulled them apart, and having given Amabosu's wife a hefty kick she took Kamaikan tenderly and led her back to her own hut.

At this, old Sau, who had been sitting on the ground throughout, with Kamaikan's baby on her lap, handed the baby to her weeping daughter-in-law and slowly got to her feet. Her son and Ekianga were now both armed with stout sticks, about four inches thick and three feet long, and they were lashing out with no reservations. Sau hobbled up to them and calmly pushed her way between; then she turned and put her head against Ekianga's stomach and her backside against her son's legs, and forced them apart. They continued trying to fight each other around the old lady, reaching out far so as not to hit her, but it was just too difficult. Ekianga was the first to throw away his weapon, which he did over Sau's head, with all his might. But Amabosu ducked and it missed him. Amabosu then threw his club on the ground and led his mother back to his hut. His wife meanwhile had been joined by Kamaikan, and they both were playing happily with the baby.

This incident illustrates one of the most remarkable features of Pygmy life—the way everything settles itself with apparent lack of organization. Co-operation is the key to Pygmy society; you can expect it and you can demand it, and you have to give it. If your wife nags you at night so that you cannot sleep, you merely have to raise your voice and call on your friends and relatives to help you. Your wife will do the same, so whether you like it or not the whole camp becomes involved. At this point someone—very often an older person with too many relatives and friends to be accused of being partisan—steps in with the familiar remark that everyone is making too much noise, or else diverts the issue onto a totally different track so that people forget the origin of the argument and give it up.

Issues other than disputes are settled the same way, without leadership appearing from any particular individual. If it is a matter involving the hunt, every adult male discusses it until there is agreement.

The women can throw in their opinions, particularly if they know that the area the men have selected is barren of vegetable foods. But the men usually know this anyway.

If the question is one of marriage, and a father announces that he does not like the girl his son has chosen, his son can call on all his friends to help him. If he is strong and holds out, the whole group will be assembled to discuss the case. If they agree with the father, then either the boy has to give up his talk of matrimony or else make up his mind to marry the girl anyway. In the latter case he would probably go and live with her hunting group. But it is seldom that things come to such a pass.

In fact, Pygmies dislike and avoid personal authority, though they are by no means devoid of a sense of responsibility. It is rather that they think of responsibility as communal. If you ask a father, or a husband, why he allows his son to flirt with a married girl, or his wife to flirt with other men, he will answer, "It is not my affair," and he is right. It is *their* affair, and the affair of the other men and women, and of their brothers and sisters. He will try to settle it himself, either by argument or by a good beating, but if this fails he brings everyone else into the dispute so that he is absolved of personal responsibility.

If you ask a Pygmy why his people have no chiefs, no lawgivers, no councils, or no leaders, he will answer with misleading simplicity, "Because we are the people of the forest." The forest, the great provider, is the one standard by which all deeds and thoughts are judged; it is the chief, the lawgiver, the leader, and the final arbitrator.