
OBITUARY**HANS CORY, O.B.E.****1889 - 1962**

HANS CORY was an extraordinary person in so many ways. Born in Vienna and an early student of Freud, he came to Africa at Freud's request to study the dreams of Africans in what was then German East Africa. Caught up by the 1914-1918 war, Hans Cory spent several years in a prison camp in Palestine but returned to Tanganyika to grow sisal. This was not his true vocation and it was not long before his outstanding capacity for understanding the special and particular mentality of African communities led him into sociology.

He once said that the best advice he could give a young man coming to Africa to study was first of all to collect the songs of the district and then to learn about its medicines. From the songs, he said, you will glean an insight into the whole social structure, their beliefs and customs, their opinion of themselves and the extent of their understanding of the world around them; and from their medicines you will find out just how soon faith takes over from empirical knowledge.

Hans Cory was one of the first, if not the first, to make a collection of Sukuma and Nyamwezi songs and he always regretted not having more time to devote to their music. His broad humanity, vivid sense of fun, and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Tanganyika peoples around him, made him a most sought-after adviser amongst administrators and students alike, so much so, that up to the day of his death at the age of 73 years he was still in harness, at work on a tome about the Unification of Bantu Customary Law. He was never allowed to retire, he was far too useful and too wise.

The African Music Society pays tribute to a great spirit and a beloved counsellor, who fully realised the part that indigenous arts, both tangible and intangible, must play in the mature future of Africa.

In a recent letter to us he wrote:

“When I think of African music it is like a call from a better world which I have lost in the modest attempt of bringing order into the sometimes all too radical political demands.”

H.T.