

# Abstracts of Some Recent Papers

## SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: MARRIAGE

RUTH LEVIN, 'Marriage in Langa Native Location', *Communications from the School of African Studies*, Cape Town; New Series, no. 17, Sept. 1947. Langa, about eight miles from Cape Town, has a population of 7,925, housed (a) in 2-, 3-, or 4-roomed cottages, each with a small patch of ground, rented from 15s. to 32s. 6d. per month; occupied mainly by permanent, married town-dwellers; (b) in barracks for about 2,873 'single' men (who may have absent wives), mainly temporary workers, who pay 7s. a month, and in special quarters, of single or double rooms, for 544 men, who pay 10s. a month. Seventeen shops are run by Africans; there are 4 primary schools run by Missions, a Government secondary school, about 22 churches (16 belonging to separatist sects), a hospital with 24 beds, a civic centre, and playing-fields. The generalizations formulated on the nature of marriage must be regarded as tentative. Less emphasis on getting married obtains in the location than in rural areas: many men and women remain unmarried, and the parents participate to a less extent in the choice of a mate. Young men and women marry because they have fallen in love and companionship in a happy married life is eagerly anticipated. The rules of clan exogamy are rigorously adhered to. Many tribes (mainly Nguni) are represented in Langa; intertribal marriage is common. Class distinctions based on wealth, education, and Christianity operate in the choice of mates. Men and women marry later in life than in rural areas. The formal customary marriage negotiations are in many cases adhered to but there is a marked tendency for arrangements to be made by the parties most concerned rather than their parents. Most of the youths show preference along European lines for slim girls and the thin girls are extremely proud of their figures. A light complexion is regarded as particularly attractive. Both men and women use *ubulawu* to gain the favour of the opposite sex; cosmetics are disliked, but the girls, to the disgust of the older people, affect European styles of dress. Diviners are a powerful force at Langa and there are many herbalists who provide the love-medicines recommended by them. No systematic training in sexual matters is given, as is done in tribal conditions, and physical examination of girls has in general been given up. The ideal among all sections of the community is that a girl should be virgin at marriage; but in practice this is not usual. In spite of the knowledge and use of contraceptives premarital pregnancy is fairly widespread. Official statistics show that in 1943-4 the percentage of illegitimate births was 31.75—some of the mothers were 13 years old. The failure of the old tribal sanctions to operate under the new conditions is responsible for the general looseness of moral behaviour. Public opinion no longer enforces retribution for breaches of the moral code. Parental control is weakened; mothers are lenient, apathetic, or even encourage their daughters to prostitute themselves. The preponderance of men, overcrowding, lack of recreational facilities, the late marriage age, all foster sexual irregularity. The Churches do not generally take measures to enforce their rules. The great majority of marriages are monogamous. Those entered into under African law are few, and fewer still take place in Langa itself. 'Out of its tribal setting the native customary union loses its significance and intrinsic value. The ceremonial . . . is usually absent and even where it is present is but a poor imitation of the customary marriage. The *lobola* payment alone does not, as it did in the country, constitute the binding of marriage since money is paid and . . . the social value of the payment is lost.' Churches differ in their attitude; most of the separatist sects regard the customary marriage as proper, and do not require their members to undergo a marriage in church. Some people already

married according to the customary law are married again in church. The legal definition of 'marriage' specifically excludes native customary marriage; 'customary unions' are not registered. The majority are married under the Common Law by civil or Christian rites: the former becoming increasingly popular among younger folk because it can be performed without the parents' knowledge: it is also cheaper than marriage in church. It is said that court marriages are commonly unsuccessful, probably because the families of the parties are not concerned. The majority of couples are married by Christian rites, many with ostentatious display and extravagant expense. Protective medicines are surreptitiously used in the weeks preceding the marriage, after consultation with the diviners. The payment of *lobola* is considered by most Christians and heathens as the *sine qua non* of a proper marriage. But its function has altered; 'since the introduction of money as the medium of *lobola*, *lobola* is tending to be regarded as a purchase and sale, a fact demonstrated by the exorbitant demands made by some location fathers.' The man usually finds the money himself: amounts vary from £20 to £55; but a case is quoted of a father having received £40 and demanding another £40. 'In spite of the changes in the nature of *lobola*, it appears as if it is often precisely those marriages in which *lobola* is paid that are the most successful and of longest duration.' Some men and women live *ukushwashwa*, i.e. without having entered into any recognized form of marriage. The initiation of boys, the main feature of which is circumcision, continues; but often the operation is carried out in hospital, not in the veld school. Parents complain that children have lost respect for age; look upon their parents as old-fashioned and retrogressive, and consider themselves progressive and familiar with the ways of Europeans. Factors operating against stability of marriage are more potent and numerous than those making for it. Desertion by the husband, and to a lesser extent by the wife, occurs fairly frequently and more often than divorce. No instances of levirate marriage were noticed; the custom seems to be disliked by both men and women who regard it as un-civilized. Most widows do not remarry; some, instead of engaging in legitimate occupations, take to prostitution and beer-brewing. It appears that the property of the great majority is, after death, disposed of according to native law. Comparison with other African urban areas suggests that Langa is the most stable of the communities in regard to marriage.

M. GUILMIN, 'La Polygamie sous l'équateur', *Zaire*, Brussels; Nov. 1947. Treats of the tribes in Belgian Congo evangelized by the Apostolic Vicariat of Lisala. At the time of European penetration these could be classified as: (a) Ngbaka, Banza, and Pygmies, among whom monogamy was the general rule; they had no political chiefs; (b) Gombe, Doko, Bagenza, Budza, &c., who practised *la petite polygamie*; they had elected chiefs; (c) the riverine peoples, among whom every village was an independent community, the chiefs of which were feudal lords who monopolized the women, having from twenty to over 100 wives; a man might be given a woman in return for service and the children belonged to the chief. At present these great polygamists do not oppose their wives entering into Christian marriage, but refuse to accept bride or give up wealth privileges, particularly ownership of the children. Among the (a) tribes polygamy has become the normal thing, with the aim of augmenting the family, clan, and tribe. Among (b) polygamy is in progress, so that to be a clan-notable one must be a polygamist; at one time wealth in children was the object, now it is material wealth. Among (c) the proportion of polygamists is about the same as before, but harems have diminished because the population has decreased and it has become more difficult to buy women: in 1939 one chief was convicted of buying non-nubile girls, an ancient practice. As to causes of polygamy: (a) the intrinsic motive of fortifying the clan by a numerous progeny; (b) the mixing of tribes brought about by colonization has the effect of the less polygamist tribe imitating the more

polygamist, (c) the desire for enhanced prestige; (d) modification of ancient custom due to colonization: the ancient military nobility is replaced by a nobility founded on material wealth; now instead of electing a warrior to be chief the people elect a *nouveau riche*. 'It is in this evolution of ideas, the thirst for money and the consideration paid to its owners, that in my opinion is to be found the principal cause of the development of the mentality which I would call a polygamist mentality.' (e) Sterility, which breaks up many marriages. M. Guilmin reports what a Christian said to him: 'We were four brothers; the three older than I died without children; my legal wife has no child; so I must take a concubine to raise descendants for our family. I will be converted when this second wife has given me children.' (f) The inheritance of widows, compulsory among the Gombe-Doko and riverine people, implies polygamy. Among the Ngbaka the widow is at liberty to choose a new husband, according to their proverb: 'One does not point an old female parrot to the fork of a tree—she will choose her own nest.' Among the Budza men die off more rapidly than women; so there are many widows; and a woman with four or six young children readily accepts a man who, albeit a polygamist, will care for them. (g) The desire to leave a numerous progeny is the reason why many a Christian monogamist reverts to polygamy.'

Defenders of ancestral customs argue in favour of polygamy, but should recognize that it is responsible for much moral decadence and dissolution of custom. The little polygamy practised by some of the Ngbaka and others for the purpose of numerous offspring cannot from the point of view of natural law be stigmatized as immoral; and it is false to allege that it is a cause of denatality; but it is to be feared that polygamy is being made the basis of prestige and wealth. As practised by other tribes it is a cause of immorality, for a polygamist's wives have lovers, and if he is in debt he may pay it off by lending a wife to his creditor. Exchange of wives is not uncommon. Instability of marriage, lack of family sentiment, tolerated concubinage, and debauchery in towns flow from polygamy and lead to a lessened birth-rate. While the Budza have an average of three children to a family, the Mongo have one child for every two families. Inheritance of widows had its good points in the past but to-day produces a multitude of 'jolly widows'. In the two tribes where they are free to choose new husbands the women are most honest and family spirit most lively. Polygamy promotes mutual hatred among women, and hinders young men from getting wives.

In dealing with proposals for reforms the author argues in favour of *un statut chrétien*, but if this proves unacceptable there should be a statute adapted to the various categories of African: pagans, Christians, évolués, and intellectuals. He quotes with approval the French decree of June 1939 which was printed in this Journal, October 1947, pp. 258-9.

BISHOP NEWELL BOOTH, 'Mission Priorities in Africa', *International Review of Missions*, London; Jan. 1948, pp. 93 et seqq. Bases on Edwin W. Smith's *Knowing the African* a plea for re-evaluation of priorities: first, as to the relative place of Africa in the total outlay of missionary personnel and funds; second, as to the character of the programme. On the second point he writes: 'There is great danger that mission work may become another force breaking up the solidarity of African life as it emphasizes graded activities for children, young people's work, men's groups, women's societies. The horizontal groupings are certainly essential and they fit into many of the traditional aspects of African life—but the vertical group of the family is even more important. The programme should be tested at every point for its contribution to the formation of closely knit Christian families.' He proceeds: 'In connexion with research activity on African marriage and related factors, it might be well to point out that, in the reviewer's opinion, Dr. Smith greatly over-simplifies the problem of *Iobola*. One would gain the impression (p. 90) that

the freedom of the widow upon the death of the husband was the only change needed to take *lobola* into the Christian Church. Actually there are about a dozen other problems to be considered: (1) the instalment practice of payment—as Dr. Smith notes elsewhere—leads to constant dispute and litigation and a man is often hampered throughout his life by incessant demands. (2) Frequently the young husband falls into debt or impoverishment, which makes life very hard for a young couple. (3) The difficulty of securing the amount often demanded makes it practically impossible in some tribes for a young man to marry until he is quite old and the girls of his own age are no longer free. (4) There is a tendency for families to select husbands for their girls according to a man's material goods rather than his suitability. (5) There is a control of the girls of Christian parents by clan brothers, which makes it hard to develop the family ties spoken of above, for the parents cannot plan for the marriage of their own children. Often Christian girls have been forced into marriages that were not only outside the Christian group but highly unsuitable as well. (6) There has often been an increase in the demands because a girl has received Christian education. The result is that educated Christian young men—often teachers and ministers—have not the means required, and are obliged to marry uneducated girls. (7) Love and consideration become only secondary. It is significant that one African pastor is reported to have said that he was going to ask any prospective suitor for his daughter's hand how much he would love and cherish her and not what goods he could bring. (8) The question of the children of a deceased Christian father has caused many heartaches. Because of the *lobola* system it is often impossible for the mother to order their education and religious life as she would like, but must see them taken over by the relatives, who may well be far from Christian. (9) The same problem arises in the matter of inheritance, which is closely linked to the *lobola* arrangements. It is often impossible for a man to provide for his widow or to plan for the education of his children with any assurance that his wishes will be carried out. (10) There is also the question of remarriage. If the widow is to be free, what will happen if she marries again? Will the family receive *lobola* a second time? Plenty of problems arise in such cases. (11) Could the goods be contributed by both families and deposited with the new couple as a start to their house-keeping, while still furnishing the guarantee of the stability of the marriage and the protective interest of the clans?

‘These details are given not only in the hope that they may be considered in any research into the problem, but also to indicate the complexity of the problems to be faced by a Christian programme that would conserve the values of African life and yet build Christian home life. The same complexity is present when one faces polygamy, planned families, control of sex life, puberty rites. But the complexity only points up the necessity for mission forces to give first priority to the task of establishing Christian homes as the indispensable units for the construction of a new civilization.’

#### ECONOMICS

P. F. BRANDT,<sup>1</sup> ‘This Planning’, *Farm and Forest*, Ibadan; vol. viii, no. 1, 1947 (received 31 Oct.). Not a complete picture; ‘no more than a rough charcoal sketch of the outlines is attempted, together with some notes on the proposed colours and materials that are thought to be necessary if the work is to be physically possible of achievement’. A summary of the argument is provided. (1) A plan without an object is an impossible conception. (2) The object of government planning should be to secure the welfare of the people. (3) ‘The people’, interpreted in democratic terms, means all classes, and the axiom of the greatest good of the greatest number is accepted as the principle for dealing with all classes of the people. (4) There are many standards of material welfare, but there is a minimum material standard to which most people will agree. That standard can be described in the words

<sup>1</sup> The author is a Senior District Officer, Nigeria.

' a thoroughly healthy body '. (5) To maintain a material standard of *any* kind, material wealth is required. Government must therefore foster the production of wealth if any form of welfare is to be achieved. (6) Material wealth is postulated to consist of (a) capital, (b) natural resources, and (c) the members and efficiency of society. (7) In Nigeria capital is small but the British taxpayer is offering to make up deficiencies. That capital should be put into the development of natural resources. The investment should be as direct as possible, for example, prospecting a coal field is a direct investment. Making a road is indirect. Building a town hall is so indirect as to be classed as a way of spending money rather than as a way of investing it. (8) The principal natural resources of Nigeria are the products of farm, forest, and waters. Wealth must therefore depend principally on increased productivity from these sources. (9) To bring about increased productivity a system of specialization must be introduced, particularly in agriculture where a much greater degree of specialization must take the place of the present subsistence economy. (10) Industrialization as a royal road to wealth is a mirage. The wealth of industrialized countries is due less to the nature of manufactured articles than to the system of specialization which is applied to their production. The same principle applied and adapted to agriculture can be, and has been, equally capable of producing wealth. Compare Denmark. (11) The fruits of specialization can only be won if there is a rapid and efficient exchange of specialized products. This implies a need for efficiently planned physical means of communication, geographically well-sited exchange centres, and efficient exchange mechanisms. (12) A ' thoroughly healthy body ' requires a thoroughly adequate diet as a prime necessity. (13) Where, as in Nigeria, the principal natural resources are agricultural, the wealth secured by increasing agricultural productivity can and should be converted firstly and directly into welfare by supplying the thoroughly healthy diet. (14) To decide what is a thoroughly adequate diet, the expert advice of a dietician is required. (15) When the dietician has given his findings, agricultural researches and policy can assume a directional, as opposed to a general, aspect. The economic principles of specialization can be brought into play, concentrating primarily on those products most urgently required to improve diets; secondarily on those products which it is desired to exchange for, or convert into, manufactured articles or social services. (16) The efficiency of the population is an essential component of wealth. In Nigeria the general level of efficiency is low. (17) To increase efficiency education is required. Since natural resources are rural in character, it is the efficiency of the peasant which must be raised if wealth is to be secured. This makes education of the peasant a prime necessity. Nothing can go ahead until he begins to move. His education must combine practical instruction in what to do, with an attempt to explain the actual object for which it is done, and an attempt to rouse enthusiasm for doing it. At the same time education must provide for the training of the specialist technicians who will be required for general purposes and to give the practical tuition. The training of these men is the capital expenditure which is to be invested in increasing the efficiency of the peasant. The dividend is the increased wealth which it is hoped will result from his increased efficiency. Teaching of the arts at public expense must take a secondary place in the interim.

#### EDUCATION

J. A. COTTRELL, ' Compulsory African education in Broken Hill ' ; J. M. WINTERBOTTOM, ' An experiment in rural compulsory education ', *Overseas Education*, London; vol. xix, no. 1, Oct. 1947. There was, in the early years of the war, an abnormal influx of labourers into the mining town of Broken Hill, and families soon began to follow their men. Large numbers of urchins roamed the streets or found casual employment, often unsuitable. Ugly features of modern industry in Africa—child labour and delinquency and child marriage or temporary unions—began to appear, the latter in exaggerated form due to numerical

disproportion between the sexes. Repatriation schemes were of no avail. It was thought that compulsory education would force children without guardians to return to their homes in the rural areas, since they would not be able to support themselves if compelled to attend school. The regulations laid down in November 1942 that all African children between the apparent ages of twelve and sixteen years of age living within three miles of certain scheduled schools must attend school regularly. The scheme became effective at Broken Hill in January 1943; it was extended to Ndola (1943), Kitwe (1944), Livingstone (1944), and Chingola (1945). Some of the children avoided registration and returned to their homes; others who were in suitable employment were exempted and encouraged to join night-schools. The total roll for the quarter ended 31 March 1943 was 2,389, excluding 249 in the night-schools; it has remained steady at 2,500 to 2,600. The education officer had organized a 'building team' in 1941 to build four central schools in the Lenje area; they built necessary structures in Broken Hill, including seventy houses for the African staff, at an average cost of £50 per class-room or house. The work provided training for apprentices and schoolboys. It is hoped that the compulsory regulations will soon be extended to the 8-12 age group. 'The results of the Broken Hill experiment prove that, directly or indirectly, compulsory education in African urban areas tends to discourage the exodus of country-bred children from the reserves and so, ultimately, helps to increase the stability of the rural agricultural communities. . . . In spite of the initial handicaps imposed by lack of buildings and staff, the success or failure of the experiment was never in doubt for one moment.

Mr. Winterbottom tells of the first attempt (as far as he knows) to apply full compulsory education to a rural area in Africa, that is to say, to the Ila-speaking peoples, who have the reputation of being courageous, quarrelsome, jealous, conservative, able, and of independent mind. They were never enthusiastic about education; enrolments in the few Mission schools were small and the average attendance 'appalling'. The chiefs flatly refused to amend matters without legal backing. These obstinate fellows won the contest between themselves and Government officials. With considerable misgivings the D.O. and the education officer recommended Government approval of a law that all children within reach of a school be compelled to attend for four years. The law came into operation in January 1945. About the same time the Methodist mission withdrew from some of its schools and the Native Authority assumed direct responsibility for all schools north of the Kafue river—four in all. The effect of the new law was immediate; in 1942 enrollment in aided schools of Namwala district was only 523; in 1945, 1,309; in 1946, 1,415. The average attendance jumped from 69 to 82 per cent. The imposition of compulsion stimulated an interest in education among the people as a whole. In a number of cases, especially at the N.A. schools, children from villages many miles from the nearest school have come as weekly boarders, bringing their own food from home week by week. 'The Ila result suggests . . . that the African will appreciate and follow a strong lead from us . . . and that education can be stimulated by acts of local authorities even where such interest was invisible before.'

### *Binding Cases*

Binding cases for *Africa*, vol. xvii, are now available and may be ordered from the Secretary. Price 3s. 3d. post free.