

Abstracts of Some Recent Papers

ANTHROPOLOGY

J. SPORNDLI, C.S.Sp., 'Marriage Customs among the Ibos', *Anthropos*, Freiburg; vol. xxxvii-xl, 1-3, pp. 113-21. Marriage is holy as the source of increasing tribal force, conserving the old stream of life, physically and spiritually. A man joins the line of ancestors through his legitimate fatherhood. The cult of ancestors is an essential background for the marriage customs: the head of a family becomes its priest. The symbol of his duty and power is the *oyo*, a horse-tail fan; nowadays the bestowal of the *oyo* is practically the only ceremony among the marriage customs on the side of the husband. Most of the customs centre around the economic importance of the woman. Marriage according to native law and custom is a costly and long-lasting business. A girl is chosen by a boy's family (she is 6-10 and he 10-14 years old): a member of it approaches her tutors and if they approve will ask them to influence her according to their wishes. Inquiries are made about her manners; if these are satisfactory the boy's uncle visits her family; if the girl's parents agree to an engagement they call together the family council and if no objection is made a day is fixed for *nsala*, 'the salutation'. The boy's father, uncle, and brothers come with lots of palm-wine and meet the assembled girl's family. The girl is asked if she is willing to be engaged and signifies consent by sipping a cup of palm-wine. A long time later, perhaps years, the girl goes to live with, and work for, her future mother-in-law: this is the first trial; a second follows after an interval and lasts for months or years. If she emerges approved from these tests, negotiations are opened for the bridewealth; this averages at least £20, of which the father receives one-half, the mother one-fourth, and the balance is spent on the festivities. The girl's father has to provide trousseau, the mother household utensils, so not much is left to them of their shares. This business done, the bride is celebrated in dance and song. The bridegroom hands over to her a portion of his farm land to be her personal property. As soon as an instalment of the bridewealth has been transferred, sexual relations may begin as a trial of the bride's fertility. (Father Spornkli says that Christians have complained because they are not allowed similar liberty and assurance.) Children born of this intercourse belong to the girl's family because they have not received the full bridewealth. When some of it has been transferred the bride's mother visits the man's home, where she is offered a sum of money called 'washing of feet', and by partaking of a meal she signifies her good will. When the bridewealth is nearly complete the bride is sent to *uno ndi abuba*, 'the fattening house', for special treatment as a preparation for the marriage festival proper. 'I think it is meant to put her at her ease for the first pregnancy, in so far as they realize that good physical conditions on the part of the mother are favourable to the development of the child. Moreover, a full figure seems to be more attractive for the Ibo, more voluptuous and inviting for the husband.' Mothers of Christian girls, forbidden to observe this custom, complain that if a woman should die in childbirth without being tattooed on the back with the figure of a snake (which is done in the house) she would have to be buried face downwards—the greatest calamity which could befall any woman. After one or perhaps two years of treatment the bride comes out and the final feast (*olili*) and 'taking home' (*ihari obi*) follow. In the presence of the guests the eldest of the bride's family adjures her and the bridegroom to follow the old traditions and ever to be faithful to law and custom. The bridegroom is presented with an *oyo* by the eldest of his family and exhorted to pay due respect to the ancestors. A ritual dance, bride and bridegroom performing separately, follows; and after all the company has joined in, the bride is conducted in procession to her home where the feast is held. The

bride is now *mwunye*, 'wife', and is welcomed as such by the women. Finally her girl friends accompany her to her husband's home where the festival continues for a day or two.

J. P. MOFFETT, 'The Need for Anthropological Research', *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, no. 20, Dec. 1945 (received Aug. 1946). It will be generally admitted that our knowledge of the African is woefully insufficient and that an increase in knowledge is not only desirable but imperative. Nothing less than the success or failure of all 'development' proposals is at stake. How is the fuller and more exact knowledge to be acquired? Administrative officers have in recent years, through force of circumstances, had less and less time to devote to understanding the people and to enlisting their *voluntary* co-operation in the various schemes now afoot for their betterment. The necessary degree of knowledge is not easily obtainable by officers who can devote only a portion of their time to the problems, who are seldom long enough in one place and perhaps cannot speak the language, and in any case are not qualified to engage in the research involved. Any scheme to be successful must be intelligible and acceptable by African standards. Without real understanding of the atmosphere in which the African has grown up the imposition of any scheme of betterment may produce friction, opposition, and resentment. Here is a task for the specialist, for the social anthropologist. 'I suggest that if Government has not already done so, it should consider the posting of a qualified anthropologist to each of the proposed new and enlarged provinces. Provision has been made for the posting of an anthropologist to Usukuma to assist in the development schemes proposed for that area. But one anthropologist in a country the size of Tanganyika is not enough. . . . Their terms of employment should be such as to attract the best men available. Amateurs are not required. While they should be Government servants they should be as free and unfettered in their work as any scientist or research worker ought to be. They should *not* wear uniform and should be connected with the machinery of Government as unostentatiously as possible. . . . They should have *no* executive functions. They should not be employed for terms of years but permanently. . . . The European trained as a social anthropologist can be of inestimable benefit to those whose duty it is to understand the African. But may not the African, similarly trained, be of equal use in explaining to the European the ways in which his people think? . . . So I would suggest that selected Africans should be sent home to undergo a course of anthropological training to enable them to assist Government to understand their people.'

ECONOMICS

MAX GLUCKMAN, 'African Land Tenure', *Human Problems in British Central Africa, The Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*; Livingstone, no. 3, June 1945.¹ In describing systems of African land tenure it is necessary to ascertain the right which each social group, or social personality, has in land. The use of blanket-terms such as 'communal-holding', or even 'ownership', 'possession', or 'usufruct', can only obscure the real pattern. 'Communal ownership' is resolved into a right of every member of the tribe to a certain minimum use of the tribe's territory. He has the right as a subject of the chief; and conversely anyone wishing to use the land must give allegiance to the chief. The chief is 'owner' in the sense of being a trustee for the tribe; his chief obligation is to see that every member of his tribe has sufficient land for gardens. Dr. Gluckman outlines the 'hierarchy of estates of holding' which is found among certain highly organized tribes who have a more or less fixed system of cultivation—Lozi, Tswana, Zulu. The paramount Chief allots certain areas to heads of smaller groups within the tribe; these heads allot portions of the 'estate of holding' to heads of smaller groups, and these heads again to their people. Each holding involves similar rights and obligations. Dr. Gluckman thinks that his framework of a

¹ Received July 1946.

hierarchy of estates of holding is likely to cover most systems of African land-tenure; it will be least clear and of least importance in systems of shifting cultivation, while land is plentiful.

The working of the land and the appropriation of its products are highly individualistic. In order to understand land-holding fully it is necessary to analyse 'ownership' of the produce. The pattern of every type of land-tenure in African tribes is reducible to the ownership of specific rights by individuals within a pattern that varies from tribe to tribe, but which through all has certain common features. Most important is the right of every man, by virtue of his membership of the groups within the tribe, to use the tribe's land. Certain rights once granted are securely held and worked by individuals; in land which is not divided for allotment, products are appropriated as taken by the individual. Some land or waters may be allotted for individual use for some purposes or period, but not for other purposes or at other times, as with the pans of Loziland. However, in the Native economy one individual did not have unfettered use of his products; he was bound to recognize the rights of others, standing in certain social relationships to himself, in those products. As far as these individually held lands are concerned (arable gardens and certain fishing-sites) there is a series of holdings in any piece of land which is tied to the social hierarchy. The superior holdings in the series are held often by heads of groups, but each holding vests in an individual. Junior holders have security against their seniors, but where juniors abandon holdings these revert through the series of holders before returning to the Paramount. One dominant point is clear. It is essential in recording any system of African land-tenure to describe the rights held by individuals in the various types of land and their produce.

The induction of Africa into the modern world economy potentially changed the value of land, since goods were now available to enable individuals to raise their standards of living. Nevertheless, the chiefs and holders of superior estates have not increased their own workings in the land to the detriment of their dependants. Generally the tendency has been to emphasize the right of every subject of the tribe, or member of a smaller group, to some arable land. In effect the chiefs and superior holders look for their income to gifts of money or goods from their subordinates, and in return grant them estates within their holdings. As pressure on the land increases, with increase of population, lessening of tribal territory through the creation of reserves, introduction of the plough, &c., chiefs tend to take over unused land already allotted in order to fulfil their obligations to the landless, and even to take over fallows which are not worked. At this stage land is becoming short under the system of cultivation prevailing. The ultimate end of the process is found in Basutoland where each married man is entitled to only three small fields. Germs of this development are found even in Northern Rhodesia. Nowhere has there been a spontaneous development to our type of tenure in which lease and sale of land are allowed. All developments stress the individual basis of land-holding. In certain areas, as among the Northern Rhodesian Tonga, it has been possible for individuals to increase their holdings under tribal law, and to raise their standard of living above that of their fellows. In no tribe has there been a general evolution to collective working.

DEMOGRAPHY

GEORGES OLIVIER and LOUIS AUJOLAT, 'L'Obstétrique en pays Yaounde', *Bulletin de la société d'études camerounaises*, no. 12, Dec. 1945. The two doctors set out some of the results of their observations in the maternity homes of Yaunde, Duala, and Efoke and of inquiries outside. The people observed belong to several tribes of Fang stock—Ewondo, Eton, Bane, Mvele, &c.—in all about 300,000. Of two tribes the demographic report is 'stationary', of a third 'regressive'. In 1932 the birth-rate of five tribes was 2.23 per cent. Regression was attributed by the chiefs to lowered birth-rate during five years owing to a

greatly increased bridewealth. One chief reported that among his 14,000 subjects no more than 20 marriages took place in three months. Two hundred women observed at Yaunde had had 721 pregnancies, i.e. 3.65 per woman; at Efoke 1,984 had had 2,950, i.e. 1.4 per woman. These were still of child-bearing age; older women had averaged from 4.3 to 4.29 pregnancies. The authors were struck by the great number who had had no more than one pregnancy and after five years were sterile; of 810 women 21.1 per cent. were in that condition. Many of these had been married too young; in some cases the sterility was due to uterine trouble caused by getting about too soon after confinement. It is not that the women do not desire children: to be called 'sterile woman' is a great insult. The doctors were often consulted by young men about their fiancées' ability to bear children. Wives, even of trained medical assistants, do not hesitate to consult native doctors if they fail to conceive after a few months. Out of 1,984 women who consulted the authors, 446 did so on account of sterility. In 1944, out of 10,000 women interrogated, 16-45 years of age, 34.1 per cent. had never been pregnant; the average in the age-group 20-45 was 30.9 per cent. 'Parmi les maladies vénériennes, c'est la gonococcie qui nous paraît la cause la plus fréquente et la plus redoutable de la stérilité.' Blennorrhagia is terribly widespread. The effect of syphilis on sterility the authors believe has been exaggerated. Intestinal parasites play an indirect part through the anaemia and debility which they produce. They think that bilharzia may be a direct cause. Some authorities regard malaria as mainly responsible, but these doctors are not so sure. Trypanosomiasis certainly has an effect on procreative power; women who were cured speedily gave birth to healthy children. Among other causes, alcoholism and tabagism have a place. Malnutrition and bridewealth are economic causes. The latter contributes by prolonging the celibacy of a certain number of women to an age at which the chances of procreation are diminished. They may, no doubt, enter into casual unions, 'but this system is apparently more favourable to the spread of V.D. than to the multiplication of the species'. In one tribe 45.6 of the adult men and 27.2 per cent. of the adult women were found to be unmarried. The authors have much to say about moral and social causes. Licence has followed the decay of customs which controlled sex relations. 'Les Européens ont manifesté le peu d'importance qu'ils attachaient à la prostitution.' 'One can affirm in all truth that continual portage, from a young age, is not made for increasing the productive capacity of women: whether it be for the transport of cocoa and palm-products or for carrying food on the march, the corvée is reserved preferably for the feminine element, including young girls; these are often obliged to spend a night on the way; they come back precociously deflowered, sometimes contaminated. Is it astonishing that subsequently one has to treat for pyosalpinx little girls hardly puberal?' In discussing the effect of polygamy on the birth-rate the authors distinguish between *la grande* and *la petite polygamie*. An instance of the former is that of a great chief who left 1,170 widows but not more than 150 children. Such an old man monopolizes many girls who do not bear and hinders so many young men from marriage. The number of nulliparous women increases in direct ratio with polygamy. In Yaunde large-scale polygamy has nearly disappeared but the *petite* tends to increase. In 1932 2.49 per cent. of the men had more than five wives; monogamists were 79 per cent. Figures given by the authors show slightly in favour of monogamy: 1.44 infants per monogamous marriage; 1.35 per wife among polygamists. They conclude: large-scale polygamy is disastrous for the birth-rate but is on the way to extinction; moderate and small polygamy, without diminishing natality in large proportions, is less favourable to it than monogamy. It was the custom that the husband did not resume relations with his wife until the new-born infant was able to touch the tip of his left ear by passing his right hand over his head. Births were spaced 30 or 36 months; now the old custom begins to lose its force and one can see households where the interval between pregnancies is no more than a year or 18 months.