

## *Letter to the editor*

Dear Sir

Dr Barbara Harris's review of my *Dry Grain Farming Families* contains so many errors of fact that I ask your permission to correct, as an example, a single instance. She says that in Karnataka I did not use the village land records but obtained all my figures from interviews. But such records indeed formed the *basis* of the statistics I published relating to land-holdings, although they were amended to some small extent where this was possible – e.g. where a father had redistributed his land to his sons though this was unrecorded in the records. There is no alternative but to use official records or to prepare one's own figures, using aerial photographs, as I did in Hausaland. In neither West Africa nor in south India is it possible to rely on farmers' estimates of acreages which, experience has shown, are invariably very inaccurate – a fact which has greatly hampered the study of rural poverty. Had the Karnataka land records not existed my book could not have been written.

Yours etc.

Polly Hill

## *Obituaries*

PROFESSOR MEYER FORTES 1906–83

Professor Meyer Fortes, F.B.A., former William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge, died in Cambridge on 27 January 1983 at the age of 76. He was actively engaged in writing and in scholarly discussion right up to his short, final illness, and his death constitutes an immense loss to social anthropology and to African studies.

Fortes was one of a number of important scholars who came to Britain from South Africa, and he played an important role in setting the course of development in many areas of social anthropology. He had originally come to Britain to work for a post-graduate degree in psychology, and he did pioneer work in this field on a range of topics including the relation between culture and the measurement of intelligence, and also on social factors related to juvenile delinquency. He himself has described how a chance meeting with Malinowski at the home of the psychoanalyst J. C. Flugel in 1931 resulted in an invitation to attend the Malinowski seminar at the London School of Economics. This was a major turning point in his career.

In his shift towards the field of social anthropology, Fortes was quite early on associated closely with the International African Institute and he was later to publish