

# Abstracts of Some Recent Papers

## SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: MARRIAGE

G. E. J. B. BRAUSCH, 'La famille dans la Haut Lukenie', *Bulletin des Juridictions indigènes et du Droit coutumier congolais*, Elisabethville; 15th year, No. 6, Nov.-Dec. 1947.<sup>1</sup> Among the Ankutshu and Ohindu 76 per cent. of the families are monogamous, 24 per cent. polygamous; it is rare to find men with three or four wives. Four periods may be distinguished in the life of a biological family: (1) the prenuptial preparatory period, called *mbutu*, or betrothal; (2) the nuptial preprogenitive period; (3) the nuptial progenitive period; (4) the nuptial postprogenitive period. The prenuptial period is to be distinguished from the prenuptial associations described by M. Brausch in a previous article (see *Africa*, Jan. 1948, pp. 58 ff.) since it leads to the setting up of new families. Among the Ohindu 37 per cent. and among the Ankutshu 33 per cent. of the males are unmarried; those of mature age being 10 per cent. of the Ohindu and 14 per cent. of the Ankutshu; figures for bachelors under 20 are 21 and 10. The divergence is due to the older age at which the Ohindu marry. Celibacy is more rare among women than among men.

Before the family of the bride is approached, the father of the prospective bridegroom brings the case before the kin-council which first inquires into questions of exogamy: marriage is forbidden with a girl of the unilateral group to which the man belongs or with a girl of any group with which kinship can be traced within living memory. A match with any member of a family reputed to be sorcerers or evil-doers would be refused without pity. If the kin-council refuse, the young man must either submit or try to gather the bridewealth by his own efforts. If they agree, his relations will provide the gifts he is to take to the girl's parents. He goes in person to the girl's father who summons the heads of related families, and one or more members of the Leopard fraternity, to hear him and then they consult the girl and her mother. The same questions are discussed as in the other kin-council. If there is opposition, the girl makes herself heard and may even threaten to elope with her lover. If consent is given the girl's father goes to the man's home and asks whether he will fulfil all obligations. This promise given, the representative of the Leopards claims the customary calabashes of palm-wine: one for himself, one each for the girl's father and mother. Then the young man hands the Leopard two lumps of salt: one is given whole to the girl's mother, the other is divided between the father and the Leopards. The father keeps part of his and distributes the rest to his kindred. Then the man gives the father a fowl and he passes it on to his wife. The girl's father, by sipping the wine in the presence of the other party, definitely consents to the betrothal of his daughter. From all this it is clear that the agreement of the parties is shown by the giving and accepting of small valueless articles in the presence of witnesses, including the representative of the powerful Leopard society. Henceforth the young man must busy himself in carrying out his obligations to the girl and her family—collecting or making the *mbutu* gifts, calabashes of palm-wine, fish-traps for his future mother-in-law, cloths for the girl, and so on. Then he must visit her home and work in the fields, and help in building. These occupations give the girl's kindred opportunity to judge his capacity. The girl, on her part, has to render services by way of kindness, not as obligations. If any child is born before the marriage, it belongs by right to the maternal kin, though after the wedding it may be given to the husband as a gesture of good-will. By acceptance of his gifts and services the girl's family oblige themselves to keep her for him and she cannot engage herself to two lovers at the same time. The

<sup>1</sup> For the first article on this subject, see *Africa*, vol. xviii, no. 1.

customary law provides sanctions against parents who accept pledges from two or more fiancés for the same daughter.

When the fiancé has acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the girl's father he gains consent to the marriage. A deputation consisting of his father, mother, and several kinsmen go to the girl's village where they meet the kin-council and several members of the Leopard society who play the part of notaries in the arrangements. These demand the reason for the visit and after ample discussion announce the kin-group's consent to the marriage and ask for the bridewealth, *djelo dja mbala*. At one time this consisted of one to three bows, say, 10–30 francs; now 15 bows valued at 450 francs. The girl gives her consent by placing the bridewealth before her father, and he takes it up as a sign that he too agrees. Then the Leopards announce that the girl is no longer free and that any man who has relations with her will render himself liable to punishment for adultery.

The parties separate after sealing the pact by means of palm-wine; and preparations are made for the final ceremony. When all is ready her father and mother take her to the groom's village together with her kitchen utensils, pots, calabashes, and baskets. That evening members of the two families fraternize over palm-wine and for the first time the bride is allowed to enter her husband's hut. In the morning he asks three of his friends to bring firewood into the house, and then invites an old kinswoman to light a fire in the presence of the parents of the couple: this act definitely consecrates the marriage.

The principal juridical effect of the marriage is the fidelity demanded of the wife. The husband is not bound in the same degree.

ANTOINE OMARI, 'Le mariage coutumier chez les Bakusu', Kongo-Overzee, Antwerp; vol. xiv, No. 1.<sup>1</sup> Custom demands that a man be free to make his own choice of a mate; but rich people sometimes marry their sons without consulting them, knowing that it will be easy for them to choose other wives later on. It is always the man that takes the initiative. Girls may be betrothed before birth. Custom admits a period of trial after the engagement; the fiancée goes to live with her fiancé for a month or so. If they are both satisfied marriage will follow; if not, the engagement is broken. The bridewealth is the indispensable element, without which there is no marriage, in spite of mutual consent. In principle the amount for an initial marriage is undetermined. If a woman gets a divorce in order to marry again and her parents cannot restore the bridewealth, it falls to the second man to provide at least as much as is due to the first. If he does not, she must go back to the latter. Rich people will therefore pay heavy bridewealth out of fear of being deprived by competition of a beautiful wife. Most families impose a limit in order to bridle the commercial tendency. In old times the bridewealth was composed of goats, sheep, dogs, fowls, arms, objects of art, and perhaps pots of salt and calabashes of oil; now it generally takes the form of money and European goods; a value of between 1,000 and 3,000 francs. The transfer of bridewealth must be done publicly before two or more witnesses who are not members of the family; the presence of the fiancée is indispensable. She receives the first goat, or the money, and passes it to her father, thus confirming her deliberate consent. After all has been handed over a witness of the fiancée's party counts them aloud. A witness of the other party does the same; and now the customary marriage is concluded. Since young Bakusu have learnt to write, a receipt in duplicate, giving names of the witnesses, is drawn up. A fee is paid of 5–10 francs to each witness and the secretary.

The bride provides the nuptial feast. After the formalities described above she spends several days at home and then, escorted by friends carrying baskets of food, she goes to the groom's village and prepares the feast. Before the end of the festivity a clan councillor speaks a congratulatory discourse, giving advice to the newly wed couple; in particular he dwells

<sup>1</sup> The author is a native African.

upon the husband's faults. He is followed by a speaker on the bride's side who points out her weaknesses and commends her to the groom's patience.

The virginity of the bride does not concern anybody during the festivity. Conjugal relations are considered a sacred secret between man and wife. After the wedding the parents-in-law hand the husband certain goods, which the author describes as *la dot en contre-partie*; there must be witnesses and receipts as with the bridewealth, for these goods will be deducted from the bridewealth in case of restitution. Everything that the bride provides belongs to her; while what is given by her parents to the husband is his.

The wife may be divorced for persistent adultery, sterility, disobedience, unjustified absence from home, intemperance, voluntary abortion, treachery (public witness against her husband), &c.; the man for sexual impotence, brutality to the wife, infidelity to the sexual secret, desertion, &c. The bridewealth must be reimbursed. But if a man sends his wife away without good reason, or because of illness or fracture of a limb, the bridewealth may be reduced by one-half or two-thirds. Sometimes the man gives up all claim to the goods—if his wife has borne children, if his father-in-law is dead or poor. In every case of divorce the children remain with the father.

#### DEMOGRAPHY

J. PARADIS, 'La situation démographique du district de l'Uele', Zaire, Brussels; Oct. 1947. The author was struck, when travelling through the Uele district of Belgian Congo in 1944 and 1945, by the scarcity of young people, and he was incited thereby to make a demographic study of the district. He found that the available documentation was quite inadequate, that statistical methods in use were superficial, and he evolved a new plan which he put into operation in 1946 and 1947. The most simple method for arriving at a summary opinion on the demographic situation of any group consists in analysing (*a*) the relation between the number of women and that of children; (*b*) the composition of the group in men, women, and children, by groups of 1,000 individuals; (*c*) the composition of the groupings according to four age-groups, viz. children under 3 years; children between 3 and 15; adults between 15 and 45; old people over 45. In 22 chiefdoms totalling 51,241 he found that in every 1,000 there were 349 men, 374 women, and 277 children. In the four age-groups there were 58, 219, 531, and 192 per 1,000. For a Bantu group to be considered not in regression there should, it is generally agreed, be a minimum of 130 children to 100 women; and for a group to be considered progressive it should have at least 150 children to 100 women. He secured some not very satisfactory figures for 1936, and on comparing them with those for 1946 he found: (*a*) that in all the territories of the Uele the proportion E/F (i.e. children/women) in 1946 was below the minimum necessary for stability; (*b*) that during the last decade that index has suffered a falling off of 9.62 per cent.; (*c*) that in three territories (which he names) the situation is particularly catastrophic, the indices E/F being from 53 to 58 per cent. instead of 130 per cent.: this presages the total disappearance of the groups in three generations.

The composition of a stable but not progressive Bantu community is shown in this formula: 292 men, 308 women, 400 children per 1,000. This represents: 95 men for 100 women; 130 children for 100 women; 136 children for 100 men; 67 children for 100 adults; 106 women for 100 men; 242 women and children for 100 men; 150 adults for 100 children. Already in 1936 the figures deviated considerably from this formula, in regard to the proportion of children. In 1946 the deficit of children per 1,000 was 277 against 96 in 1936. Passing on to analysis by age-groups he finds himself in difficulty because pre-war statistics do not distinguish children under 3 from those above 3; but he reckons that people over 45 in 1936 were 69 per 1,000, and in 1946, 192. So far his conclusion is: the situation in the Uele, very bad in 1936, is decidedly worse ten years later. The author goes on to consider

in detail the situation of nine groupings which are demographically stable or progressive. In regard to infant mortality he calculates that about 17 per cent. die in the first year, 6 per cent. in the second year, 4 per cent. in the third year. The figure for the first year is not exceptional for prolific populations. It is reckoned that the birth-rate per 1,000 inhabitants has decreased from 24.58 per cent. in 1936 to 20.80 per cent. in 1946. Of 19,172 women studied in 1946, 44.51 per cent. had never borne a child; 17.32 had borne one; 11.98, two; 7.88, three; 5.87, four; 5.03, five. Tables are given to show the degree of masculine and feminine sterility. In the 22 groupings, 15 show that from 50 to 60 per cent. of the men have not begotten; and four show from 60 to 70 per cent. Of 37,039 adults studied, it was found that 8.22 per cent. of the men and 8.49 per cent. of the women (including widows) were living immorally. A table comparing the number of children of monogamous and polygamous families shows a slight balance in favour of monogamy; but in three of the groupings, which are among the most prolific, the polygamists have a larger proportion of children to 100 married women: the figures are: (1) monogamist, 178; polygamist, 184; (2) 233-8; (3) 184-240.

#### EDUCATION

E. R. CHADWICK, 'Communal Development in Udi division', *Oversea Education*, London; vol. xix, No. 2 (Jan. 1948).<sup>1</sup> Describes an experiment that was started on a small scale in June 1944 in the Onitsha Province of Nigeria to see whether communal development was feasible by voluntary labour among the Ibo. The way had been paved by administrative and agricultural officers, the former through development of clan councils and the latter through instruction in better methods of farming. They created a lively interest in the possibility of material progress paid for from local funds. In June 1944 Mr. Chadwick received the booklet on Mass Education and secured volunteers among the African clerks for his experiment. Cheap local school materials were improvised and primers and booklets printed. When he informed the native authority of his proposals two or three family heads wished a trial to be made in their village. On visiting it he found the people had in two days built a hall in which to hold the classes. Four communities were selected for the first tests. At some hardly any women attended, whereas in others about 50 per cent. were women. At all villages a large proportion of the children of both sexes attended. At Ogowfia the experiment took a course of its own. About 600, or over 25 per cent. of the total population, turned out regularly for instruction in the village meeting-place on market afternoons. They raised a fund of £30 to buy reading and writing materials. They were helped to acquire a hand oil-press and a nut-cracking machine and the profit went into the village fund. A co-operative consumers' shop was suggested; assistance was given to buy iron for the roof, but the villagers bought other materials and did all the work free of charge, and in this way they erected the first co-operative consumers' shop in Nigeria. They set to work to build a village reading-room. The women then agitated for a maternity home and this was eventually put up, as well as a sub-dispensary. For the home each adult woman was required to contribute half a crown, which became the membership fee for the women's co-operative society that took over the running of the home. All the shop's profits were devoted to the same end. Grants of about £130 were made by the native administration. Many other projects followed. By the end of 1946 over thirty communities were copying Ogowfia. Development does not follow a set plan imposed by authority from above. It springs from the wishes of the people below. Some build bridges; another a water-supply; another a village for their lepers; another a market. Thus the only rule guiding a village in its choice of plans is: what do the people want most? By the end of 1946, 10 communities

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

had made motor-roads, varying from 3 to 10 miles in length; 6 co-operative shops had been built, 5 sub-dispensaries, 3 village reading-rooms, 2 maternity units, and others were under construction. The number nominally attending literacy classes was over 12,000. Certificated teachers with one or two exceptions were found to be the least public-spirited of all the people who were called upon to assist their illiterate brothers to learn to read and write.

## FOLK-LORE

PAUL-E. JOSET, 'Buda Efeba (Contes et légendes Pygmées)', *Zaire*, Brussels; vol. ii, Nos. 1 & 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1948). A collection of thirty-five tales made by the author during his sojourn in the Ituri forest where he came into contact with the Ati-Efe, the Efe pygmies, and found that they possessed a very extensive literature. He collected the tales by the help of a narrator named Mbene but he does not say whether he acquired the language or used an interpreter; some specimens of the original Efe text (if any) would have been welcome. The tales are divided thus: (1) illustrative of pygmy life; (2) about animals; (3) about the heavenly bodies; (4) psychological tales reflecting the state of mind of certain individuals. It is related that Alu (the word primarily means 'space above', 'sky', 'heaven', 'God') begat first the sun and then the moon and the stars. The stars begat men. Alu also begat the earth and planted maize there. The first maize burst before it was ripe, being dried by the sun. Then Alu planted other maize in the wet season and it ripened well. One day, seeing the men walking sadly on earth, Alu said to himself: 'Men cannot live alone. They need some one to prepare their field, cook their food and share their bed.' So he conceived woman. Humans multiplied to such a degree that the stars were astonished to have such an important succession. Moon married a daughter of Star and they lived long happy days. One day Star said to Moon: 'From now on your work will be to watch the eyes of my wives and to see that they shine brightly at night.' Some time afterwards Moon fell in love with one of Sun's daughters and demanded her in marriage. Sun accepted but asked for one of Moon's daughters in exchange. One morning when the Sun had gone on his usual circuit, Moon's daughter went off and in the evening when Sun returned one of his other wives told him of it and he hurried off to Moon's domicile. Moon had already departed on his nightly journey but his daughter was there and Sun seized her and carried her home. Afterwards Sun fell in love with the eldest daughter of Star and received her in marriage, much to the disgust of Moon's daughter, his other wife, who constantly quarrelled with her. Star's daughter declared: 'If you dare strike me my father will come at once.' Indeed, hearing his daughter's cries, he did come and took her away and said: 'From now on you will stay here at home. No other man shall marry you, they are all too bad.' The story goes on at great length to recount other marital adventures. According to another tale, at the beginning the sky was below and the earth above. When men went out to gather food the earth fell on them. Alu said: 'We must change all this. Earth shall be below and the sky above.' Then men planted things and they ripened well. Alu also gave men water and those who drank it got good understanding of things. Now, before this change, there were men above and men below. Those who were above descended and those who were below ascended. But the latter became bad—no one has seen them, but it is known that they are bad. The moon and the stars are all inhabited by men. We never see them but at night their eyes shine and look down upon us. The moon and the sun are married. The moon begat four children, the sun five. Sometimes the moon sends his children to walk the earth to see what is going on. They descend by means of a long thread and when they have had their walk they return above by the same path. 'Men, when you become able you will ascend above and you will see Alu; but as long as you live here you will never see him, for he is hidden from our eyes.'