

# **UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

"Understanding Social Change" is neither a manual for Community Development nor a textbook in Sociology. It is an introduction to many facets of the social sciences, which are pertinent to the community development officer, the agricultural extension officer, the health educator, or anyone who is interested in bringing about change.

The hope is that trainees and serving officers will, through this book, become interested in what the world of social science has to offer their profession. And that, from this introduction, they will find it beneficial to read further and enquire more of a world's experience in people and change.

Written by Dr. Gordon Wilson, out of his experience of thirteen years' research in East Africa, this book is unique in its description and example drawn from East Africa and, therefore, more meaningful to the reader from East Africa.

The writing of this book has been commissioned by the Agency for International Development, which administers United States technical assistance to other governments. This book has been commissioned as part of the Agency for International Development's assistance to training in general in East Africa and as a part of its assistance to the Community Development Training Centre in particular.

One of the purposes of community development is to place the knowledge and skills of scientific achievement within reach of isolated rural populations. There is no better place to start than putting the insights and tools of social science within the reach of Community Development Officers.

Community Development is a movement born of the learning of social scientists. The theme of Community Development is working from the "felt needs of people". This is not untried theory. It is a tenet born of educational psychology.

Continued overleaf

We were not the originators of the idea that in times of crashing social systems, it was basic to restore a sense of community. We had witnessed a drama predicted by the social psychologists.

The anthropologist and historian taught us that change has been going on for a long time. That even cultures and social institutions can change. Our optimism and our courage stems from that borrowed knowledge.

Like the teacher and the economist, we, too, wrestle with problems of motivation and communication. And who taught us what we know, but the sociologist and psychologist?

As Community Development has roots in the social sciences we should be moved to know our background better. The publication of this book is a step in that direction.

It is an introductory book to encourage the field worker to enquire into vast areas of supporting knowledge and experience which he can command.

Grace Langley

Nairobi,  
June, 1962.

Agency for International Development  
Community Development Training Adviser

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## Chapter One

### BACKGROUND

Kenya has an area of 225,000 square miles. The land area is divided into five major sections: the African land units or native areas, including the native settlement areas, of over 50,000 square miles; alienated land, commonly referred to as the settled areas, of 13,000 square miles; Crown forests of just over 5,000 square miles; unsurveyed Crown land of over 18,000 square miles, and the semi-desert Northern Frontier and Turkana areas of over 120,000 square miles. Moreover, there are over 5,000 square miles of open water. It can be seen, therefore, that nearly half the total area of Kenya is unsuitable for agriculture, which is the chief economic resource.

#### The Population of Kenya

The last official census in Kenya was in 1948. The population figures are reviewed from year to year, however, and the most recent estimate available is based on the 1948 census and bringing together other surveys made by anthropologists, sociologists and demographers, the estimate of the mid-1960 population was 6,500,000 Africans. Estimates of Europeans and other races at that time were 70,000 Europeans; 170,000 Asians; 40,000 Arabs; and other non-Africans 6,000. The estimated total population of all races was estimated at 6,786,000.

The main urban centres of Kenya are Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Thika and Kisumu. An estimate of the urban population at the same time as the above estimates was 400,000 Africans, 25,000 Europeans, 90,000 Asians, 23,000 Arabs and 3,600 other non-Africans.

The non-African population has had effective economic and political power in Kenya until recently. They have made the largest economic contribution to the welfare of the country. Political changes have come recently and internal self-Government will be realised in 1962 with full independence shortly after. The European community is made up of approximately one-third civil servants, one-third engaged in business, commerce and industry, and one-third farmers and plantation owners.

The Asian community has had major control of marketing and distribution services from its earliest settlement. An increasing number, however, are filling the gaps in the professional classes left by expatriate Europeans and a large percentage of the senior clerical workers in business, industry and Government are Asians. The latter is being rapidly replaced by Africans.

The Arab community is chiefly concentrated on the Coast of Kenya and traditionally has controlled the dhow trade from the Red Sea area and from India. Numbers participate in petty trading and until recently the Arabs provided the bulk of the semi-skilled labour in the ports of East Africa.

The African community is divided into four main linguistic groups. It has been traditional to use linguistic characteristics as classifications and it would appear that these are useful in this study. The smallest group is the Hamitic enclave which entered Kenya some two hundred years ago from the region of the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia. The Hamites today are the Somali, Ghalu, Rendile and Boran. The total population of the Hamitic group is not more than two hundred thousand. Moreover, they are widely scattered in the Northern Frontier Province and along the Eastern Coast of Kenya and have not had political or economic influences on Kenya in the past. A strong move exists today, however, for secession. The Nilo-Hamitic or Kalenjin peoples are the next linguistic group. The Nilo-Hamites do not speak a mutually intelligible language but culturally they have many affinities. The group includes the Masai, Nandi, Kipsigis, Suk and Turkana, and several minor tribes in the Marakwet area. The total population is approximately three hundred thousand and this group provides the strength for KADU. The next group is the Nilotic Luo, a comparatively recent immigration from the Sudan who now stretch through Kenya to Mwanza in Tanganyika, settling along the Lake shores. The Nilotic Luo are an anomaly in Kenya in that they do not circumcise. They have a very strong and effective family, clan and lineage system which has not yet changed noticeably. The Luo, however, have a very strong land tenure system; each clan is identified with the land and each Luo can claim land in his clan area regardless of how many years he has been absent from it. Consequently, the tribe remains a powerful unified force in Kenya politics.

The largest group in Kenya is the Bantu speaking peoples which include the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, who speak a very similar language and are often identified politically. The Meru, however, in recent years have shown considerable independence of the other two groups. The Kamba speak a language which is very similar to Kikuyu and this group has identified itself politically with the Kikuyu. Other important Bantu groups are the Kisii and Taita who have also identified themselves with KANU.

The Coast peoples are Bantu but have had close contact for many centuries with the Arabs and remain an anomaly in terms of social change and do not identify themselves with the Kikuyu but rather support the Kalenjin and KADU groups. Similarly, the Abaluhya peoples, a conglomerate of nineteen tribal entities which speak intelligible dialects of the same root language, identify themselves with the Kalenjin and Coast peoples through KADU. The Abaluhya group, while not a homogenous tribal entity as the Kikuyu, number over one million people and will remain a powerful influence in the politics of the future.

The Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, as a group, number one and a half million, the Luo very nearly one million, the Kamba one quarter million and the Kisii and Taita together, over one hundred thousand. It can be seen, therefore, that in the present tribal groupings the Kikuyu-Luo-Kamba complex account for over fifty per cent of the population.

European settlement came to Kenya with the building of the Railway which was completed to Kisumu in 1905. The motives for exploration were several, the most commonly given as the ending of the slave trade, the work of the Christian Missions, the international conflict with Germany and finally the need to develop and sustain the economy of Kenya, with the settlement of European farmers in what at that time appeared to be the empty Highland areas of Kenya. The settlement increased by both Asians and Europeans until about 1930 and again reached a second peak after the recent war in 1948. Since that time immigration has gradually decreased and in recent years the number of emigrants has exceeded the number of immigrants, both Asians and Europeans.

## Indigenous Political Systems

We will discuss the three major tribal groups in Kenya for the balance of this paper to illustrate the differences in the indigenous political systems and the changes which have occurred in the transition toward self-government. It is important to understand the system as the European found it and to note some of the historical causes which have effected changes in these areas which relate directly to the type of political organisation found today and the political groupings which are now apparent in modern Kenya.

The three groups we have chosen to describe are the Luo, the Abaluhya and the Kikuyu. Much of what will be said about the Kikuyu applies to the Embu, Meru and Kamba. The Luo are unique, whereas the Abaluhya pattern extends to the Kisii, which tribe has been divided from the Abaluhya stock by the Luo for many generations and now more closely approximates the Kikuyu pattern.

The Luo are recent emigrants from the Sudan and settlement in Kenya can be traced back 100 to 150 years. Professor Evans-Pritchard has described the migration patterns of the Luo in a single sentence which effectively describes their method of migration: "Luo expansion at the expense of the Bantu was like a line of shunting trucks, each tribe driving out the one in front of it to seek compensation from one yet further in front, generally a Bantu tribe." <sup>1</sup>

Shadrack Malo, President of the African Appeal Court, Central Nyanza, describes this process in his "Dhudi Mag Luo" published by the East African Literature Bureau. The literal translation is "the tribes of the Luo" and he has written in detail about the history of migration of the Luo clans, emphasising this process of extension at the expense of other Luo groups which in turn forced the Bantu to move.

<sup>1</sup> Evans-Pritchard - Luo Tribes: Rhodes Livingstone Journal No. VII, 1950.

Land tenure systems are still based on these historical migrations and "tribal areas" are today contiguous with locational boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

Where progress was impeded by war-like tribes the Luo swept around the difficult areas, and, therefore, some groups have become isolated from the main body of the Luo. For example, the South Nyanza tribes are separated from the Central Nyanza tribes by the Kisii. Advance to the East was blocked by the Masai, Nandi and Kipsigis and to the North-east by the Abaluhya tribes so the traditional migration was one to the South. It is interesting to note that the migration pattern has continued even after European ascendancy and today there are well-settled tribal groups of Luo in Lake Province of Tanganyika as far South as Bukoba. The Luo clans are patrilineages which trace their descent from a common ancestry which is usually the eponym of the clan or tribe. The lineage sections or segments of the Luo are most frequently identified when a Luo compares groups of others in juxtaposition when dealing with land claims, marriage or conflict situations. Southall has said that "When a man speaks of his Libamba he always means a segment other than his own but included in the same subordinate segment".<sup>3</sup>

The social structure of the Luo can therefore be said to be a series of parallel lineages which the Luo refer to as tribes, at the largest level, which today are locational groupings. Similar groupings can be identified through the tribe to the smallest segment, the children of a common mother or grandmother. The grandfather group JOKAKWARO is the "action" group of Luo society, maintaining control over land and acting as a unit for religious, ceremonial and political action. Each section of the clan has an area which it considers to be its land, just as each group of clans which make up a tribe has an area which it considers to be its ancestral land. The social organisation of the Luo is, therefore, a series of groups which own and maintain a geographical area identified as its hereditary right and for which it will take strong political action to protect and sustain.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Gordon - Luo Customary Law and Marriage Laws Customs: English Version, Government Printer, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Southall, A. - Lineage Formation Among The Luo, IAI Memo XXVI, 1952.

This system is reflected in the organisation of the family. The extended family group lives in a village surrounded by a high euphorbia hedge and the social arrangement of the living quarters within that area reflects the status and divisions of the family and the distribution of the gardens attached to that village further reflects the social groupings within the family which are identical to the larger social groupings within the lineage or clan. Every Luo has a strong attachment to the family through this system and through the family his loyalty is extended to the clan and tribe. Any Luo can migrate or emigrate from his ancestral land, remain away for one, two or more generations and his descendents can return and demand the land of the ancestor who cultivated it. The principle described here is not just an ideational pattern. I have sat through more than three hundred land cases in Luo and time and time again the decision has been given to grant land to a man of this type, even though there might be argument or conflicts about the size of the land given to him. The principle of his need and his right to acquire land has never been questioned.

Life in the extended family and the social organisation in its neat pattern of juxtaposed groups gives the average Luo a good deal more personal security than other systems elsewhere. Consequently, he learns techniques to manipulate groups and to work through groups and, therefore, has been able in other social areas to manipulate people and groups effectively. We find Luo filling prominent roles in trade unions, groups of voluntary organisations, and political groups and, more particularly, in the political parties which we find in Kenya today.

The Abaluhya groups do not have the same clear-cut identification of tribes, clans or land tenure system. The tribes which make up the Abaluhya lived in walled villages in pre-European days and this historical fact has caused the greater diversity and independence between them. The dialects spoken by the various groups which make up the Abaluhya, while mutually intelligible, are greatly different in form than the languages spoken by the various tribes of the Luo. The Luo have maintained a common language throughout their territory. The Abaluhya, on the other hand, until recently took pride in the dialectual differences in their language and the average Abaluhya five or ten years ago would claim that there was very little relationship between their tribal segments.

Land tenure has never been a problem. Historically, the Abaluhya left the fortified village to cultivate where they pleased. In recent years only the Maragoli and Bunyori have experienced land pressures and land has assumed a monetary value and is bought and sold freely. In Luo no man may sell land. It remains the heritage of his unborn children. In recent years the introduction of cash crops has brought about changes in attitudes towards the land and the introduction or superimposition of chiefs and headmen has further implemented a policy of closure of land for development. Conflict over land has, therefore, increased, but is still not a problem apart from the tribes mentioned earlier.

The family system of the Abaluhya is a segmentary system which does not extend beyond two generations for political purposes. A segmentary system means that each small unit is independent of other similar units for the production of food, cultivation and land tenure and for social action. It is not unusual to find within the extended family pattern controversy regarding land of a type which could not happen in Luo society where smaller units of this type are held together through common ancestry and common ownership of land. Present homesteads among the Abaluhya are small individual units - a man and his wife and children, or, if the man has more than one wife, a separate house for her close to his own house or those of the other wives. There is no formal pattern and recognition of a larger group which has common interests as among the Luo.

The chief work on the Abaluhya has been written by Gunther Wagner in two volumes of "The Bantu Kavirondo", the first of which was published in 1947 and the second posthumously in 1956. Wagner claims that the traditional system of land was essentially intact until the year 1926 when the political function of the clans and the authority of their leaders (Amagutu) were superseded and gradually abolished by the introduction of the system of paid headmen by the Government. The fact that there was no shortage of land among the Abaluhya, with the exceptions already mentioned, helped to make a smooth transition between the traditional and the new political structure. The division of the Abaluhya area by the Central Government into two African District Council Districts, North Nyanza and Elgon Nyanza, further resolved the problem of land by combining mutual interests under African District Councils which separated the groups which faced land pressure in the south from those who did not in the north.

Traditionally the attitude towards land was basically determined by the patrilineal clan organisation and by the fact that the clan communities, the old fortified villages, were essentially independent political units. These units based on clan were only loosely organised into tribal units and even in the past there was no firm system; the leader derived his authority from membership in the senior line of descent. Residential grouping was based on kinship but the fact that land was never a problem made the principle of kinship groupings a very loose and ineffectual aspect of the Abaluhya life.

The Kikuyu clan organisation was based traditionally on the extension of growth for expansion along the tops of hills. A brief look at the geography of Central Province will show how this was possible. The clans therefore extended from a common root like the fingers of one's hand running parallel along adjacent hilltops. The Kikuyu clans, therefore, were a series of parallel groups which co-operated in times of war and for socio-religious reasons.

Land pressure began in the early nineteen-thirties when the natural expansion along hilltops could no longer take place and the clans began to disperse to other areas of settlement. The dispersal of clans in this way made it possible for social interaction to take place across clan segments rather than through them as was the traditional pattern. The effect of land pressure and the dispersal of members of the clan throughout Central Province provided a nucleus of persons with common interest which later strengthened the development of groups of voluntary association which could also be identified with traditional patterns. Because their traditional method of expansion was blocked by land which had been settled by Europeans. The first conflict on the land issue came at that time and was settled in a White Paper after a Royal Commission. The Kikuyu clans, however, were not a political unit. They extend throughout the whole of Kikuyu society and the major unit for political action was the hilltop community described most effectively by H.E. Lambert in his book "Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions".

The Kikuyu had a regimental system which gave effective political action and while similar to that of the Masai was fundamentally different in its method of social action, political and war. The regimental system cut across the clan and lineage system; in other words, using the terminology which you will use later, it was a horizontal group in the society as against the traditional vertical groups, clan, lineage and kinship. These age grade groups were effectively organised until about 1928.

Education and other western innovations came to the Kikuyu earlier than to other tribal groupings and because of the tradition of horizontal groups in the society the Kikuyu were able to organise effective groups of voluntary associations such as churches, independent school systems, trading societies and so on, which rapidly gained power to the loss of power among traditional groups. In Kikuyu, as elsewhere, the Central Government superimposed a system of chiefs and headmen, a group of political leaders whose powers resided in the power of the Central Government. This system became highly developed in Kikuyu and Paramount Chiefs emerged who had a good deal more power than in other areas and who became confused in the minds of the administrators as having some traditionally inherited indigenous power which, of course, did not exist in fact.

The family system among the Kikuyu was based on their community organisation and these hilltop communities co-operated in economic, social and religio-political activities. The feature which emerges from the study of the Kikuyu family is its basic independence from any larger kinship grouping. In other words, the Kikuyu family was on its own and could not look to a larger grouping for economic or political orientation. Young men, therefore, looked to the age organisations for this larger orientation which included social and political activities as well as religious and ritual functions.

The age organisation provided for a series of effective institutions. There were the pre-initiation institutions, the warriors' institutions and the elders' institutions. These institutions dominated the family, clan or lineage organisations which were predominant in Abaluhya and Luo societies.

The complicated system of fees and payments were part and parcel of this method of social organisation. These were obligatory payments associated with status and power. The fees were expressed in terms of so many goats and each fee had its special name. H. E. Lambert gives a very definitive list of required payments which the individual was expected to make to function within the age organisation. The Embu and Meru had higher grades in the age organisation and in some ways the system was more highly defined among these societies.

This system of age organisations did not only affect the men but also the women, and there were important women's institutions, the women's lodge and the secret meetings of women, all of which indicate the Kikuyu's natural tendency to organise on lines which cut across traditional clan, lineage and kinship groupings.

With the Mau Mau, for example, and all the problems which it brought to Kenya, there was in the social sense a highly organised and effective means of political action. Moreover, the ability of the Kikuyu to function through groups of this type is reflected in their efficiency as traders through their co-operatives and general economic activities.

Leadership in Kikuyu was, therefore, centred on power within the groups which cut across the traditional groupings. His power resided in his ability to manipulate numbers of persons within these organisations rather than by his status within a clan, lineage or kinship system.

The age organisation had specific political functions normally found within clan and lineage groupings in Luo and Abaluhya. Some of these were the prevention of witchcraft, the prevention of theft, the prevention of famine, the reservation of land for public purposes, the enforcement of rules of marriage and the organisation of war.

We have described three very different types of social organisation with the modern political adaptations. The Luo remain a strong central system based on clans, lineage and kinship, the Abaluhya a loose affiliation of family groupings, and the Kikuyu, with a strong sense of wider groupings through the changes which derive from their early age organisation.

## Chapter Two

### UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

We do not intend to recognise the sources of the various definitions and descriptive material on social institutions in this chapter because they are so numerous and well-known. Briefly, we have drawn from the work of Hobhouse, Sumner, Becker-wiese, Maclver, Ginsberg, Allport, Parsons, Durkheim, Malinowski, Firth, Kardiner, Radcliffe-Brown and Nadel. The list of sources in itself underlines the importance which social anthropologists, sociologists and social philosophers give to the concept of social institution.

A critical study of the works of these social scientists reveals that while they are not in entire agreement on the approach which should be taken there is a central core of agreement among them all about a broad definition, which will suffice for this chapter.

#### Definition

The definition which we give is a paraphrase of that used by Gillan and Gillan which, in our opinion, is the most useful for our requirements:

"A social institution is a functional grouping of actions, ideas, attitudes and, frequently, cultural equipment, which together constitute cultural patterns, which possess a certain permanence and which are intended to satisfy felt social needs."

This definition includes all the elements in describing social institutions which are agreed by the authors listed above. An easier way to look at the social institution is from the point of view of Malinowski who, briefly, underlines the importance of regarding all social institutions from the human point of view or from its charter, i.e., its reason for being, legal or otherwise, and from the material or cultural attributes designed to sustain it in time.

All behaviour is tolerated, approved or disapproved by members of a society. Sanctions are actions taken by members of the society to indicate disapproval. Mild disapproval can be expressed by a verbal rebuff, a frown, anger and so on. If a society or member in it express strong disapproval then action may take the form of ostracism, a social sanction, or force may be used legally and the person imprisoned, a legal sanction.

## Characteristics of Institutions

### A Cluster of Social Usages

Social usages are behaviour patterns understood and accepted by the entire society. Members who follow these patterns are regarded as good members and those who do not are regarded as bad members. Marriage is a good example of a social institution in which the social usages are clearly defined. Those who go against the social usages will receive disapproval and, in many cases, social sanctions or ostracism by their fellows. An approved procedure to marry, giving legal recognition to the union, is a feature of all societies. Those who run against the norm of behaviour arouse automatic disapproval and frequently violent social reaction from other members. In Luo society, for example, the clan of a person's father and of his mother is the exogamous unit. Whether or not an individual can trace blood relations with another member of either of these clans may not marry, nor for that matter may they have sexual relations. The breaking of this "social usage" will bring automatic disapproval and frequently physical violence from members of either or both clans.

We can think of other social institutions where the clusters of social usages or the norms of behaviour are most important. For example, in the institution of formal education there is a fixed set of rules regarding the relationship between teacher and student, parent and teacher and student to teacher. These are accepted norms of behaviour or social usages which, when broken, bring automatic social sanctions or strong disapproval. The role of the teacher is one of father and, indeed, in some societies he is called "father", symbolising his relationship, and where a teacher has sexual relations with a student this invokes immediate social disapproval and often legal sanctions by the society - the teacher is dismissed and, in some societies, severely punished and put in prison. Social usages, therefore, mean norms of behaviour which are acceptable to the group and which will bring social sanctions if an individual behaves in ways which are different to these norms.

### Functions as a Unit

Social institutions function as a unit in the society as a whole. In other words, the institution has a unitary set of norms of behaviour.

within the whole society. The norms may vary from location to location in complex or large groupings as, for example, the U.S.S.R. or the United States of America, but basically, the institution has a common set of norms accepted by the people as a whole. The reaction to non-conformity may vary, again, even within a tribal society as in Kenya. In certain parts of Nyanza there are customs which bring social sanctions while in other parts the same behaviour may not be considered as serious and, therefore, merely bring disapproval. The social institution, however, is all-embracing.

### Degree of Permanence

It is not difficult to understand the degree of permanence of such social institutions as marriage, chieftainship, property, education and the like. We must, however, see each of these social institutions as the norm of behaviour for the actor in it - that is, the individual, and also look at it from the point of view of the society as a whole. Social institutions change like all facets of any society, but from the viewpoint of the individual within the institution change is imperceptible. Historically, we may study social institutions from the point of view of change if we regard the institution from the point of view of the society as a whole. The family, again, is a good example. In East Africa this institution has changed dramatically during the past sixty years. The large extended family group of the Luo has gradually changed to a smaller unit - still with some elements of the original extended family group, but these become less important as the need for protection against other societies lessens and as the modern economic adaptations are made. It is impossible, for example, for a member of the Luo society to maintain a large extended family group if he is the headmaster of a secondary school in Nairobi. Consequently, elements of change affect the family as an institution. On the other hand, these changes are almost imperceptible to the individual. To the social anthropologist from a study of the society as a whole in an historical context he is able to see these changes as being dramatic.

### Definite Objectives

A social institution has a set of definite objectives or goals, often referred to as functions. In other words, a social institution is a means to an end and not the end in itself. The definite objectives of the family as a social institution are obvious. We will discuss these

when we deal with the family as a "group" in a later chapter. It protects the child; it allows a group within which sexual relations are legalised and approved; it is an economic unit; it serves as a refuge to its members; it is concerned about their welfare, and so on. Behaviour which challenges the right of the family in its functions invokes immediate disapproval and frequently severe social sanctions. The social sanctions can be seen in the rules and laws which sustain the family in regard to bride wealth, divorce, adultery, adoption, bastardy, and so on.

### Cultural Objectives of Utilitarian Value

The most important cultural object of the family which has utilitarian value is its property. Property is used here in the broadest sense to mean its land and rights to it, its housing, furnishings, and the rights of the members to these - an inherited system which transmits from one generation to the next. These cultural objects often have a deeper symbolic meaning than mere utilitarianism. They identify cultural institutions. For example, a recent wedding in Nairobi had a mixture of the old and new customs. The symbol of the large water-holding vessel was fundamental to the success of the marriage in the eyes of traditional Luo. The wedding had all the symbols of a Christian wedding yet the water pot was presented by women in traditional dress to indicate the importance of it to the success of any marriage. Many East African societies see the three cooking-stones used as the hearth for the new bride as symbolising the importance of the mother and of food to the welfare of the family group. The Tatoga of Tanganyika are a society which has been little changed by Western influences and important elders are buried in a very elaborate cairn. At the final ceremony the elder is sent to the ancestors with his spears, his walking stick, with a pair of sandals, a cooking-pot and spoon, symbolising the two sides of the social institution of the family, the need to protect the family group and the need to succour it.

### Symbols - a Characteristic Feature

We have already mentioned some symbols which are characteristic of the family. All social institutions have symbolic characteristics which impress upon the individual the importance and permanence of the social institution. Symbolic representation

is most easily understood in terms of religion. Ancestral worship, which was the traditional religion of East African societies, was sustained through symbolic offerings of food to the ancestors, a process designed to invoke their benevolence, libations, and a cult of divination which was symbolic of the need for intermediaries between members of the group and the ancestors who could help the society in its everyday life supernaturally. Formal churches, like the Roman Catholic Church, have perfected symbolic characteristics but still these can be found in almost all. The cross, for example, is a symbolic characteristic of most Christian religions, symbolising the death of the Son of God, which is the keystone to the Christian religion.

### Oral or Written Tradition

All social institutions have an oral or written tradition. It is not difficult to understand this characteristic of social institutions when we study the family. The family traditions of most East African societies are complex permanent aspects of those societies. It is important to understand clan and lineage relationships and these are taught to the young members of the family by the elder folk. Written tradition is more commonplace in most social institutions. The Christian church has, for example, the bible as a fundamental element of its tradition.

### Examples of Social Institutions

| <u>Institutional Elements</u>               | <u>Institutions</u>                                       |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
|   | <u>Family</u>   | <u>State</u>   | <u>Church</u>                                     | <u>Industry</u>  |
| 1. Stated objectives and purposes.          | Procreation, social status, etc.                          | Protection of rights, security, etc.                   | Establishment of good relations with supernatural | Providing income, etc.                                 |
| 2. Behaviour patterns, including attitudes. | Love, affection, devotion, loyalty, parental respect etc. | Devotion, loyalty, respect, obedience, etc.            | Reverence, awe, fear, etc.                        | Fair play, thrift, workmanship, etc.                   |
| 3. Symbolic traits.                         | Wedding ring, crest, coat of arms, heirlooms, etc.        | Flag, seal, emblem, anthem, uniforms, etc.             | Cross, ikon, idol, shrine, altar, hymn, etc.      | Trademark, design, advertising emblem, etc.            |
| 4. Utilitarian traits.                      | House, furnishings, etc.                                  | Public buildings, public works, police equipment, etc. | Temple, pews, baptistry, etc.                     | Stores, factories, ships, railroads, machinery, etc.   |
| 5. Oral or written tradition.               | Marriage licence, genealogy, etc.                         | Constitution, treaties, laws, history, etc.            | Bible, catechism, etc.                            | Contracts, franchises, articles of incorporation, etc. |

## The Functions of Social Institutions

### Simplifies Action

The major function of any social institution is to act as a framework of social action within which the individual can function or behave, knowing that his behaviour is accepted and is acceptable. It is not difficult to understand this aspect of an institution if you have had the experience of being placed in a situation where you do not know the rules or expected behaviour patterns. For example, the first time a Protestant attends a Roman Catholic High Mass he is not aware of the rules of behaviour; he is embarrassed and afraid of acting in ways which would not be approved; he does not know when to stand or when to sit; when to cross himself, or what to do. In other words, he has not learned the institutional norm of behaviour in order to function satisfactorily within the group. Any Roman Catholic is unaware of these norms of behaviour because they become part of his automatic sub-conscious behaviour and action patterns. He performs automatically in the situation in a way which is approved by the group as a whole.

### Means for Social Control

All societies have methods of social control. Social control means that a society has norms of behaviour acceptable and approved by the members of that society, and defined lines of demarcation where types of behaviour are first disapproved, then strongly disapproved, and finally which will bring sanctions social or economic, by members of the group against the individual who does not conform. Social control, then, is a factor of all societies and social institutions provide a basis for social control within the areas of behaviour covered by the institution. For example, the family again: the father is expected to behave in certain ways. The ways in which he is expected to behave vary from society to society but within each society there is an expectation that the father will behave in certain normal patterns. When he does not, he first brings disapproval from the family group. If he persists or if this behaviour becomes more damaging to the institution then he brings disapproval from his neighbours and the community, and finally if his behaviour is so shocking it will invoke legal sanctions from the society as a whole and he will

be punished by legal means. An example in East Africa may be where a father deserts the family. First, his behaviour is disapproved by his wife and children. If the family becomes a burden to the neighbours in the community then the disapproval of his action extends to that group. If he persists in his behaviour then the wife can take legal action through the African courts or through Central Government, and divorce him or demand maintenance for herself and her children.

### Provides a Role and Status

Social institutions define social status within the society and provide the individual with a set of behaviour patterns acceptable to other members of the society which define his status and role in it. The father in the family, for example, has a definite role of dominance which commands respect from his wife and children. If he performs this role in a manner which is within the norms of the institution his behaviour is approved by his neighbours and the society as a whole. He is a "good" man. He has high status. If he does not he is a "bad" man and is condemned by the society. The role of motherhood is approved in all societies and gives high status to the woman who performs satisfactorily in it. Women who are barren, in many societies, are socially disapproved and, in fact, in many societies divorce can be obtained on these grounds. In political institutions, role and status are more clearly defined. The indigenous political systems of East African societies give high status to elder groups, providing the behaviour of the individuals is acceptable within the norms of the institution. The most highly developed in East Africa was the Royal family of the Baganda, where they have a complex system of status and roles from the Kabaka downwards. Modern societies define role and status by the occupation or profession of individuals in it. All societies evolve a class system where a higher status is given to those performing roles which are regarded as socially acceptable. A medical doctor has a higher status and acceptability in the society than, say, a 'bus driver, whereas a 'bus driver has a higher status than a common labourer, a teacher a higher status than a medical dresser, and so on. Class and status, therefore, are defined through social institutions.

## Controls Behaviour of Individuals

The behaviour of individuals is controlled through the rules and norms of social institutions. The vast majority in any society live, act and behave within the norms of the social institutions of that society. Transgressors bring social sanctions, automatic disapproval and often ostracism. The learned patterns of behaviour which individuals in all societies learn through social institutions set the norms of behaviour for that society. Blatant transgressors can fall into two categories: the criminal who defies the accepted norms of behaviour, and the genius at the other end of the scale who transcends the norms of behaviour and demands changes far beyond the limit acceptable. The young women in Britain in the early 'twenties who wore men's trousers brought social sanctions and strong disapproval. On the other hand, in 1960, this is an acceptable norm of behaviour. The suffragettes in the early 'twenties suffered for a cause strongly disapproved of by the majority of the society and yet votes for women today are acceptable in most countries of the world. The pattern of criminal behaviour also changes. In Britain men were hanged for stealing a sheep; today punishment is less as the society's attitude to that type of behaviour changes.

## Changing Patterns

The functions of all institutions change gradually over time. From the historical point of view these changes often appear drastic and dramatic. On the other hand, as the changes take place in the day-to-day behaviour patterns of members of the society these changes are hardly noticed. The family institution was described previously and the effect of change on it. Change, however, is a functional aspect of all social institutions and must be studied to understand the society as a whole. New functions are added to social institutions and old functions dropped. For example, education was a basic function of the family group in all societies before the introduction of formal education. That function has been taken over largely by the schools.

## Harmonising Agencies

Social institutions can be regarded as harmonious agencies in all societies. In other words, institutions interrelate and balance the forces of conflict, disassociation, in ways which bring equilibrium to the society as a whole. Social conflict in itself can be a unifying force if the social institutions in a society are able to adjust rapidly to changing social conditions.

Social conflict has been changed to competition, in some societies, and the incentive to become better than a neighbour or one group better than another has generally made for progress. In this sense it unifies the group and becomes a force for good.

The adaptability of social institutions has been studied in many parts of the world. Here in East Africa we can see examples on every hand of how indigenous societies have adapted social institutions to the requirements of a changing social environment. Disharmony can arise when the norms of any institution prevent desirable social changes. Consequently, to effect desirable social changes, old institutions acquire new functions or new institutions emerge with these new functions as their goals and objectives.

## Interrelationship of Institutions

### Classification of Social Institutions

The usual types of social institutions to be found in some form in all societies can be classified as follows:

Domestic Institutions, which can be sub-divided into courtship, marriage, divorce or separation, and the family.

Economic Institutions, which include banking, property, stock market, insurance, corporation, cartels, labour unions, and co-operatives.

Educational Institutions, which include informal or traditional, semi-informal or voluntary, and formal institutions.

Political Institutions,

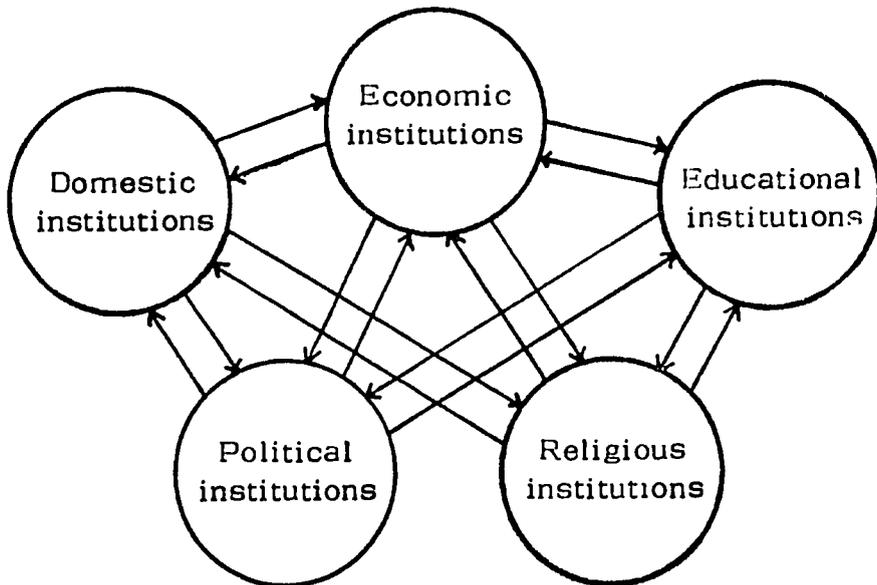
which include political parties, associations, administrative traditional authority structures of chiefs and headmen, local government and locational councils.

Religious Institutions,

which include traditional religions, formal religions, religious societies of voluntary association and religious education.

Interrelationships

The following diagram illustrates how institutions are inter-related, not only in terms of the action, belief and behaviour of individuals who are members of more than one institution, but also in function:-



It is impossible to clearly demarcate where the function of one institution begins and another ends. If we take, for example, property among East African societies we will understand more clearly how institutions overlap. In the first place, many East African societies regard land as having religious significance. Certain rituals are performed to placate ancestors in order to ensure fertility of crops, a good harvest, etc. This is commonplace in many societies throughout the world. Land also involves members of the family institution to act in certain relationships because of land usage rights and privileges, inheritance, etc. The family institution overlaps that of education when we consider that in most East African societies land is cultivated by women who teach their daughters by practical example and participation in cultivating crops on the land. In this way, also, it can be seen that the traditional economic institution is involved in the institutions of land, property and informal education. If we look at the institution of property of land for the time being we can see that almost every other institution infringes or comes together at this point to share in participation within this institution along patterns of behaviour which typify the function of other institutions.

The political institution of most East African societies is also involved in land. Moreover, in East Africa today this has become a major political issue in the larger and more political institutions of political parties and their competition for power. It is important, therefore, to appreciate when major changes are envisaged within the concept of the institution of property, that these changes will affect the family, the local political system, domestic institutions, formal education, the economic institutions of subsistent farming and, in some cases, the traditional institutions in that society's attitude to land.

Let us illustrate this point one step further as it is so important. Land tenure in Luo society is the basis of its social organisation. In other words, not only is the tribe, clan and sub-clan, identified with a specific portion of land, but each family is closely tied religiously and spiritually to the land of its ancestors. Drastic or radical changes, therefore, in the pattern of land tenure among the Luo affected a wide range of social institutions, and, therefore, one can expect - and, in fact, does find - a strong reaction when changes are suggested to the institution of property rights in Luo society.

Cattle among the Kalenjin and Masai is the basis not only of the economic institutions but also the family - inheritance-marriage - and the organisation for war.

Another example from the historical point of view is the parallel of development of economic and religious institutions. We mentioned in another context that certain types of institutions or aspects of culture could only emerge when there was an economic surplus in order that individuals could specialise. We explained that the earliest societies which developed what we regard as civilisation developed in the river valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia. These societies developed a high level civilisation because certain members of them were able to specialise as artists, craftsmen, soldiers, teachers, writers, church dignitaries and officials, and so on. We can see, therefore, that institutions of trading, banking, the army, the church and so on, could only develop when the economic institutions were so organised as to provide an economic surplus which was distributed or exchanged in such a way that the services and/or specialised articles could be provided or made by individuals who did not produce food. We stated at that time - and emphasise now - that a measure of any country's prosperity is the amount of economic surplus it can produce in order that a large number of its members can specialise to develop other institutions which increase the economic, social and political welfare of the society as a whole. We can see in East Africa, for example, that there can be no progress among the Bushmen society, as each member of that society spends his full time gathering sufficient food for physical survival. He cannot, therefore, develop social institutions of education or formal religion or higher economic institutions of banking and trading simply because he spends his full time caring for his basic, primary needs of food and shelter.

## Chapter Three

### THE UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL GROUPS

#### General Characteristics of Groups

Groups are the stuff of which society is made. Any society can be studied effectively and efficiently by an analysis of its group structure. Unfortunately, few social scientists have used this approach in the past, although a new book has recently been published in which some of the contributors have used this approach. It is entitled "Social Change in Modern Africa"<sup>1</sup>. Group analysis is an essential part of every social scientist's approach to a new society and a very effective one in studying a society with which he is already familiar. All interaction, social intercourse and social activities can be described in specific group terms; activities which can be described as completely individualistic simply do not exist. The work, for example, of a painter or a sculptor is still conditioned by the group within which he has learned and matured. The largest group in any society is the society itself. A simple definition of a society is one in which discrimination is apparent between members and non-members. In other words, members of the society regard themselves as "in-group" while non-members are "out-group". The "in-group" concept is the basis of tribalism in East Africa today. It can never be completely eradicated, only accommodated and turned to uses which will benefit the nation. Moreover, groups are formed by other characteristics: physical, racial, religious, economic and social. We can list the general characteristics of a group in the most broad, generalised terms as follows:

Members have an exact and complete expectation of the actions of the other members which is a guide to their own behaviour.

Social interaction between members and the individual's relationship to others defines his status within the group.

Members are able to act intelligently to each other because they are able to communicate effectively through language, signs, expressions and other stimuli.

<sup>1</sup>Southall, Aidan: "Social Change in Modern Africa"; International African Institute; Oxford University Press, London, 1961.

Members share common interests and common leadership, the welfare of each member is essential to the welfare of the group as a whole. Interaction between members can be measured objectively to indicate the strength, permanence and effectiveness of the group. The higher the degree of interaction the stronger and more effective the group.

On the basis of interaction, permanence and stability, groups are described sociologically as primary groups and secondary groups. The family is a primary group, a political party a secondary group.

In terms of rules of membership, groups are defined as open or closed groups. The political party is an open group while the family is a closed group.

In terms of the age of its members a group may be described as a horizontal or vertical group. An age set of the Masai is a horizontal group while the church is a vertical group.

In terms of duration, a group may be described as a permanent or temporary group. The family is a permanent group while an audience is a temporary group.

In terms of function and composition, a group may be described as a voluntary or involuntary group. Tribe, clan and family are involuntary groups; a trade union is a voluntary group. In terms of action a group may be described as a corporate or latent group. A corporate group is one which is expected to take action on behalf of its members - e.g. a family, a trade union and a co-operative society. A latent group is one which could take action if required or so organised but only in extreme circumstances - e.g. the Asians, people with the name Jones, etc.

## Specialised Groups which are Social Institutions

### The Family Group:

We can describe the family as a primary group when we consider the intimate day-to-day interaction of its members and it is a closed group in the sense that only those born into it can be considered members of it. Membership is therefore determined by biological factors, marriage or in some societies, adoption. The family is a vertical group when we consider that the age of its members may be from a few days old to a great-great-grandfather, in those societies where the extended family contains members of two or more generations. It is a permanent group in the sense that it remains and continues through the life of its members and, in some societies even after death. In many East African societies, ancestors remain important functionaries in the day-to-day activities of the family. Ancestral worship in some societies in East Africa illustrates this point. The family is an involuntary group in the sense that its members have no option to membership. Finally, we can describe the family as a corporate body in that it makes decisions for its members and takes action on these decisions as a group. Leadership in the family is the traditional role of the senior male member or, in some cases, the dominant male member when authority passes from an aged grandfather to his son. Leadership may, on the other hand, be vested in the mother as in certain Tanganyika tribes. The leadership role is often assumed by the mother in western society where broken homes and divorce are commonplace.

Each group has specific functions and we can define any group by its functions. When considering the family group we see that its prime function is to set a socially accepted pattern of action for the satisfaction of the sexual and economic needs and drives of its members in socially acceptable ways by defining the group within which these activities are legal and expected.

The family has a division of labour, usually by the sex and age of its members. Its function is to protect the young until they are capable of sustaining themselves and beginning a "family of their own" and to ensure that the cultural heritage of the society is transmitted to the children of the family.

Marriage is an essential part of the family institution but can also be described as a social institution in its own right. Marriage in all societies is an institution which gives legal status to the children born of the union. Societies have a form of marriage for this purpose, just as all societies cast a stigma on children born without the formal rules of the marriage institution having been observed. The family provides a blood relationship or bond which may be real or assumed but certainly invariably accepted by the group. The family gives protection and succour to its members economically by the provision and distribution of food in one way or another. The family is also the group which ensures rules for the transference of property through inheritance. Moreover, it defines the group into which its members will be placed, where social classes and caste are important. In all societies the family defines the group within which marriage between its members is regarded as incestuous and therefore prohibited. This is called the exogamous unit by social anthropologists.

We can also study the family from the point of view of the individual and this is a useful concept when conducting social surveys or studies of groups which are not entirely familiar to you. We take these functions for granted often but it is important to recognise the difference from the point of view of the individual, and in many societies, particularly in East Africa, this division in the concept of the family is not only most useful but often essential to understand other social institutions, such as land tenure, the local political structure, the patterns of authority and the processes of change.

First, we have the family of orientation. In other words, from the point of view of the individual, whom we shall call "ego". Ego's family of orientation is his father and mother, brothers and sisters. Among many East African societies it is a much larger group. For example, among the Joluo people you may have a group as large as one hundred individuals - a man, his wives, their married children and his grandchildren, who live in a common unit or homestead in which ego learns to adjust and orientate himself to the social unit - the family. This, then, is ego's family of orientation. The opposite is ego's family of procreation - in other words, his own wife and children. In many societies the family of procreation extends downwards to include other generations. What is for ego, in the example given above, the family of orientation, the large Luo family, is the family of procreation for his grandfather who is the elder of the group.

Social action and social processes, therefore, have different meanings, depending from which point of view you are studying the social institution. Ego has certain rights to land within his family of orientation, which are clearly defined, and other types of rights and privileges when dealing with land within his family of procreation

### Kinship Groupings:

In many East African societies kinship remains an important and fundamental concept to understand the institutions and culture of the society. Kinship is an extension of family groupings, usually on the principle of the descent from a common ancestor through what is called a line, or to use sociological terminology, a lineage. If this descent is traced through the father it is called patrilineage and if through the mother, a matrilineage. In most East African societies kinship is determined by the principle of patriarchal descent, that is, descent through the father. There are one or two exceptions, where descent is traced through the line of the mother.

Kinship is a most important concept because in many East African societies kinship determines certain rights, it defines rules, it enforces accepted principles of exogamy, it determines inheritance, it defines loyalties and it often becomes the only real political group which can take effective action in many East African societies. This ability of concerted action makes it a corporate group.

Within any kinship structure the family groups of which it is comprised may act or react through an infinite number of sub-groupings, depending on the action required in any given situation. These groupings within a system of groups make it possible to determine the social validity of the group as a whole, through the action patterns and sub-groupings of its component parts.

In some societies, kinship groups are territorial groups, as among the Luo. In others, kinship groups have more specific functions in terms of ritual or religious activities than economic ones, as among the Kikuyu of Central Province.

### Physical Groups:

In all societies there are groups formed on the basis of physical characteristics. We talk about schoolchildren or teenagers which are groups defined by age. We talk about a warrior set, an age set, a group based on sex and age - that is, young men of a certain age. We may talk about groups based on other physical characteristics such as racial groups: the "Asian", the "European" and the "African", stereotype definitions which demarcate membership in a group by physical characteristics. It must be remembered, however, that most groups of this type are potentially corporate groups in terms of function; in other words, latent groups which can take action if the group should be challenged on the basis of the characteristic which defines it. In other words, the "Asian" as a group may react violently to what the group considers has been an injustice to a member of the Asian community which was based on the fact that the member was an Asian.

### Spatial Temporary Groups:

We can define groups in terms of geographical factors or the group's formation in terms of area at a point in time. A few of these are the crowd, the mob, the herd and the audience. These are groups of individuals who come together for a period of time, usually of a short duration, to participate in some activity. The mob is bent on destruction, the crowd perhaps to see an important person or a football game and the audience to see a specific performance. On no other occasion may the same people ever form another group in exactly the same way. A study of this type of group is an essential part of any sociologist's training as these groups are important in understanding the broad culture patterns of the society as a whole. The ways in which spatial temporary groups come together is an important factor in every society.

### Spatial Permanent Groups:

Permanent groups also can be defined by geography and area. The community is a concept we use to mean the members of a group who live in a specific area. The neighbourhood is another example

and there are many more: the city, the village, the state, the location, the tribe and the nation. All of these concepts infer a geographical position. While all those living in any of these geographical areas may or may not be members of any or all of the other groups, it is assumed that there is a group which dominates a geographical area when these concepts are discussed.

#### Groups of Voluntary Association:

It is a factor of Western civilisation that the development of any society can be measured in direct ratio to the number of groups of voluntary association of which it is comprised. A group of voluntary association is a group which a member joins because he wants to join. There may be compulsive forces which encourage him to join or discourage him from joining. The fact remains, however, that he must make the decision on his own, unlike, for example, traditional groups which we have discussed, such as family, kinship groups, etc. Groups of voluntary association are trade unions, teachers' associations, employers' associations, co-operatives, political parties, churches, sports, recreational and other clubs, etc. In preliterate societies there were few, if any, groups of voluntary association.

## Chapter Four

### THE MEANING OF SOCIETY AND CULTURE

#### Society and Culture

We shall be using several terms which must be learned and understood in the context in which they are used. It is necessary, therefore, to give certain basic definitions as these terms will be used time and again and on each occasion the reader should be aware of the meaning intended by the author.

The first is society. Society in the sense which we will use in this book means a collection of human beings who identify themselves as having common interests; who through marriage and procreation ensure the continuity of the group over time; who have definite cultural patterns; who have a specific system for the organisation and function of individuals who are members of that society; who participate in activities designed to ensure the welfare of the group; and ensures an effective method of communicating between its members so that meaningful action is both possible and expected.

Culture is used to mean the way of life of a society. It includes all material and non-material aspects of the society.

Social system is used to mean the method by which members of a society manipulate elements of the culture of the society to achieve desired goals within that society. The social system refers to the recognised activities and roles of individuals as working to a systematic and ordered series of activities which are approved by the society.

Sociocultural life refers to the combination of these three concepts; that is, sociocultural life embraces the society, its culture and its social system. We may talk about the Luo culture and the Luo society in this context or the Kikuyu society and Kikuyu culture. We can compare one with the other and indicate the differences between them. We recognise that all the human species is one biologically and yet we must also recognise that the human species has developed an infinite number and variety of societies and, therefore, of cultures and finally of social systems to achieve recognised goals within its sociocultural life.

## Basic Conditions of Sociocultural Life

### Some types of social life

There are non-human societies which we must recognise because they have a social system - a definite set of rules and regulations of roles for particular specialised types of creatures within the society - and at once we think of the ants or termites. The humble bee is another insect which has a social life and a regulated social system. Social organisation through a recognised society has certain advantages. It provides, for example, group activities which are concerned with the preservation of the society and concerned with the definition of roles, functions, and the welfare of its members as a whole. These patterns can be seen in non-human type societies as well as human type societies. The ability of any society to survive and its strength of purpose to achieve the goals and expectations of its members depend on the maintenance of the numbers of its members. Increased efficiency of societies is due to the combined efforts of its members and this has shown that even in the insect world non-human societies are able to produce permanent structures or a culture, such as the beehive, the anthill, etc. Without adequate numbers these achievements could not have been accomplished.

Societies produce cultural heritage which provide the young with a set of rules and a method or system of organisation within which to work and from which to develop. Characteristics of social life in all societies, human or non-human, are: that its members live regularly in groups; that its members discriminate between members and non-members; that there is effective communication between members; that members achieve specific functions and roles within the society; and that all individual activities are so designed as to be less important than the welfare of the group as a whole. In other words, all activities within a society are so designed in the final analysis to ensure that the society as a whole continues and that its demands on the individual are more important than the individual's demands on the society. Individuals who object or who run counter to the demands of the society can expect the disapproval of other members of the society and, in cases where the individual is regarded as being a serious menace to the society, the society takes action to remove the individual or, in some cases, to kill him.

## Man, the Animal

Man has developed an infinite variety of societies and culture. Change is the most important concept in the study of human society. Man developed early in his existence a method of recording or transmitting by oral tradition cultural aspects of the society to younger members and, therefore, evolved a consistency of behaviour through formal patterns which remain, in spite of the 'inventor' or 'creator' leaving the group through death. In other words, all societies have some method of transmitting learned skills, group tradition, technological 'know-how', religion or religious beliefs, medicines, edible foods, such as plants and animals, etc., from one generation to the next. This recorded or oral tradition includes a knowledge of all the techniques of existence learned over time and is the sum total of the culture of that society. In summary, therefore, human society is able to transmit the totality of its cultural pattern from one generation to the next. Man's ability to adapt and change has become a fundamental concept of sociology, where the phrase: "the only constant in society is change", becomes meaningful.

It should also be remembered that not all members of a society are able to understand or to assimilate all aspects of culture even in the most primitive or preliterate cultures, such as the Bushmen of East Africa. Different members of that society are able to perform skills at different levels, have a greater or lesser knowledge of the language, its oral tradition, and other cultural features of the society. It is a mistake to assume that because an individual is a Bushman he is able to understand all aspects of Bushman society and culture. It is easier to understand the different levels of assimilation of culture when we deal with the more complex societies as the Luo or Kikuyu or Kamba. We find in these societies individuals who are specialists at certain levels and have a more complete understanding of certain aspects of the culture than others. We find individuals who are specialists in tribal law and custom, others who are specialist rainmakers or medicine men, and so on. The fact that a society is a preliterate society does not mean that it is any less complex than the one that has a written tradition.

## The Fundamental of Learned Behaviour

Human societies are complex structures. Unlike the non-human societies, individuals are not born with an inherent knowledge of their role or function. Moreover, human beings are not endowed by inheritance with specific physical attributes which predetermine the specialisation within the culture as, for example, with the queen bee. Humans, therefore, must learn how to behave within the society into which they are born. This learning process is called SOCIALISATION. We should pause to emphasise this point. An anthropologist studying a remote tribe of primitive hunters in Peru came across a week-old baby who was left by the camp fire when the small group of hunters was surprised by the anthropologist and his party. The party searched for weeks to find the family to return the young foundling. They were unsuccessful and, consequently, took the child with them when they returned to Europe. She had been born into one of the most primitive cultures which exists in the world today. Yet, because she was raised in a different environment, in a different culture and society, she learned how to perform successfully within this milieu and was able, later in life, to become a full professor of mathematics and atomic physics at a European university. Man therefore, does not inherit cultural traits. He must learn them. Learning these traits is the prime function of the basic institution of all human societies - the family. It is true that societies which we describe as preliterate - not necessarily primitive, as many have a very complex culture - depend, not only on oral tradition and objective instruction by the family, but often on other institutions, such as the age set system among certain East African societies, initiation rites, and so on, as well. Modern societies have a recorded tradition and, therefore, vest a great deal of responsibility in an institution called education, the school, to effect the major share of the socialisation process and to perpetuate the culture of the society.

## The Significance of Environmental Factors

The physical environment of climate, rainfall, temperature, vegetation and population frequently influence the type of society which evolves. Moreover, within most societies, these factors influence the type of culture which the society has found useful to adjust to these environmental changes.

One example is house types. The Masai house type is a unique adaptation to the open grasslands of East Africa. It would be impossible for the Masai to have developed, say, a two-storied house in an environment which depends on rapid movement to the grazing areas and where building materials simply do not exist.

The Coast beehive grass hut and the Swahili house of pounded coral and boriti poles are superb examples of effective adaptations to local conditions. Population pressures or conflict between societies within the same area frequently cause adaptation to house types. The Luo village is an adaptation forced upon the society by the raiding and marauding Nandi and Kipsigis. The underground houses of the Chagga and Iraqwi are other examples. These very complicated and complex structures were so built as to provide underground accommodation not only for the people but also for their animals.\* The high thorn fence or stockade which encircles Masai, Suk, Turkana and Tatoga homesteads is an essential adaptation to the marauding lion or human enemies. The flat-topped acacia makes a natural and convenient gate which is pulled in at night and can be pushed out in the morning.

The multitude of factors of the physical environment have influenced, but not determined, human adaptation.

An example of how the physical environment influenced human society can be found in the history of the first societies to advance rapidly and become more efficient and effective than others. The first societies to advance to a high civilised state were those located in areas where food crops could be produced in abundance to the point where a large surplus was available. It is obvious that where there is a surplus of food, or where food for all of the members of the society can be produced by a few members, then the rest are able to specialise in other ways. In other words, a standing army can be maintained, a formal religion can be

\* Clarke, P.H.C. - A Short History of Tanganyika; Longmans, 1960; p. 65.

developed, with individuals practising as professionals, supported by the fact that there is an economic surplus. It allows individuals to become masons, carpenters, writers, teachers, librarians, policemen, and so on, who can exchange their service or skill for food and other essentials. Specialisation within a society is a measure of its progress. Without specialisation little progress can be achieved and the degree of specialisation depends directly on the amount of economic surplus produced by the society. The point is as fundamental today as it was ten thousand years ago when the first high-level culture developed in the river basins of the Tigris and Euphrates. Conversely, there can be little or no specialisation and, therefore, little or no progress in societies which do not produce an economic surplus.

## **Chapter Five**

### **PERSONALITY AND SOCIETY**

#### **Universal Principles of Human Development**

Personality is the sum total of an individual's behaviour as reflected in his everyday actions, his values and his interaction with other persons and groups within the society in which he lives. Each individual has different types of behaviour to meet different type situations. In other words, the type of behaviour or personality which an individual assumes at church on the Sabbath is probably quite different from the one which the same individual assumes in his everyday dealings in business. Sociologists have sometimes called this phenomenon the "self" which an individual assumes given a particular situation. He may have a religious self, a business self, a family self, and so on. The self of any individual in any given situation is closely related to his role in that particular situation. It is not only in the Western societies that this phenomenon occurs, but also in East African societies. The family self of an important elder is entirely different from the self which he puts forward to his fellow elders during an important tribal council. In other words, his role in the family demands a set of behavioural patterns which reflect his "family self", while the demands of the tribal council require another set of behavioural patterns which could be called his "council self".

It can be argued that the consistency in which the personality of any individual follows a single dominant pattern throughout all the types of situations in which he finds himself is a measure of his social adjustment to the group and a measure of the maturity of his personality.

A universal principle of society is the transition through learning from childhood to adulthood which changes the personality of an individual from one which is completely dependent on others to a mature personality which should be completely independent of others within the demands of the society. The process by which an individual changes from complete dependence to mature independence is called the "socialisation process", which in turn depends on certain factors. A universal principle is that one of

these factors is "maturation", which means the physical changes of an individual from physical dependence on others to physical independence. It is obvious when a child is born it is completely and utterly dependent on its mother or others to sustain life. Every society demands of the individual that at some time he achieve a mature independence physically; in other words, that he functions physically as an independent member of that society.

Socialisation factors relate in much the same way in other spheres of personality development as maturation factors in physical development. Every society has a point at which the individual is expected to have achieved mature independence in various spheres of activities which we can call his philosophy, vocation, avocation and his familial and extra-familial relationships. The point at which a particular society expects that the individual will have achieved a mature independence in each of these factors varies from society to society but the fact that a point exists is a universal principle in each.

### Examples of Variations Between Societies

It has been shown conclusively in studies of infant behaviour that the children of African societies develop much more quickly in the first two years of life than the children of Western society. The reason that this is so is because African children have a good deal more freedom of movement than Western children. The former are frequently allowed to crawl at will throughout the homestead, are carried on their mothers' backs while mother cultivates the gardens or are carried throughout the day by a nursemaid, usually an older sibling, and therefore are constantly aware of the activities of others around them and mature much more quickly during this period than Western children who customarily are confined to a playpen, cot, crib or pram where their field of observation is restricted.

Western children develop more quickly, however, after two years of age than African children, because of the variety of cultural stimulants which enter their lives through the variety of toys and other objects which are given to the child to assist it in learning.

Moreover, the material possessions of the average Western family are more complicated and complex and greater in number than those of African families and the child learns to manipulate, through play and experimentation such things as a bicycle, a wagon, toy automobiles and even a vacuum cleaner or washing machine, etc. Consequently, the child's knowledge of mechanical things and cultural objects increases and his curiosity is satisfied by variety and, therefore, the learning process is much quicker than the African child at a similar age who remains confined to this early environment much longer than the Western child.

Children in East Africa achieve physical independence earlier than children in Western society through: the customary expectation by the average parent that the child should contribute to the economy of the family group by herding cattle, assisting with cultivation, acting as nursemaids, helping with family meals, etc., from about the age of seven onwards, whereas in Western society the average child is dependent on the school and the family, in most cases, until it reaches the age of fifteen or sixteen.

In Western society sexual taboos and inhibitions have been built into the values of the family and most children in their early 'teens are naive and uninformed about the biological basis of life, whereas from an early age most African children are aware of these facts and exposed to them as a natural and uninhibited part of their learning process.

Learning processes begin from an infant's earliest experience of being born. Certain inherited traits or characteristics are apparent in the first week of life. For example, the fear of falling, the felt need expressed in hunger and thirst and certain reflex actions such as the elimination of waste products, the blinking of an eye, and so on. These are about all that a child inherits from his parents apart from the hair colour, eye colour, skin colour and other superficial physical attributes.

The old-fashioned belief that a child inherited personality from his parents has been well and truly disproved. Personality is learned as part of his process of socialisation and an example is given elsewhere that if a child is taken from a particular culture at an early age and raised entirely in another culture he will assume the behavioural patterns of the new culture without any knowledge or reference to the culture into which he was born.

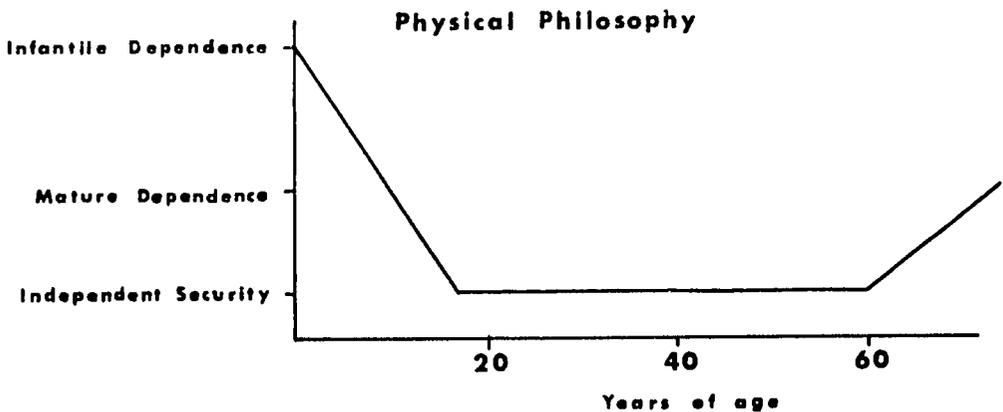
## Maturation

Maturation is the process whereby individuals mature physically to the point where the society in which they live expect them to become independent and to act as mature individuals in that society. We explained earlier that each society has its own socially accepted ideas about when this point should be reached and that individuals who are unable to meet these ideas as mature members of the society are socially disapproved of by the society. Coupled with the maturation factors is of course the process of learning. All members of all societies must learn not only behavioural patterns but the values of the society and to adjust their behaviour in such a way that they meet the expectations of that society in terms of the normal processes of maturation. Among the Kalenjin, for example, the behaviour of young men is governed by their age organisation. They may not marry, for example, until their late 'twenties, whereas women are expected to marry shortly after puberty. In other words, most societies have a dual standard - one for male members and another for female members. We can generalise, however, that there is a point at which all societies expect an individual to become a mature and independent person.

You can think about some of your friends and realise that some are confident, secure and well-adjusted personalities earlier than others of the same age. Maturation, therefore, depends frequently on other factors than sociological ones. Physical maturity depends on physical development as in the case of the Kalenjin peoples when a girl is expected to marry shortly after puberty. The age at which puberty occurs varies from individual to individual. The fact remains, however, that all societies have a point at which the individual is expected to become a mature and independent person and to act in a responsible way within the society. We mean by the term 'mature' that the individual is held personally responsible for all his actions. In the case of a child he is not. In most societies the child's parents are responsible for his behaviour up to a certain age. This principle also varies from society to society when in some the mother's brother assumes responsibility for a child's behaviour.

It is often convenient to look at this problem from an objective point of view in terms of classifications of factors which affect the individual's personality, factors which vary in the time taken by an individual to become a mature, independent personality. The factors which we shall use to describe these processes are philosophy, both spiritual and physical, social behaviour, avocational and vocational, and intimate behaviour, both familial and extra-familial. These terms will be described separately and in detail but let us now examine two of them to illustrate the point that there is a different age expectation by society on each of these factors when it expects that the individual will have achieved mature independence. A person's physical philosophy, for example, depends on physical maturation, and comes at an earlier age than, for example, his spiritual philosophy. In most societies, a child at the age of between twelve and sixteen is expected to have learned the rules of cleanliness and personal hygiene, and is expected to be able to perform the tasks demanded of it by the society. In other words, his physical development is expected to have reached a point whereby he is independent of the family and the society and to have adjusted to his own physical needs. The same individual's spiritual philosophy, however, will take a good deal longer in the learning process and most societies do not expect him to have achieved a mature spiritual adjustment until late in his 'thirties or early 'forties. It can be seen, therefore, that while the maturation process applies to all individuals there is considerable variation in the expectation of any society in the age at which its members should be competent to deal with any particular facet of life.

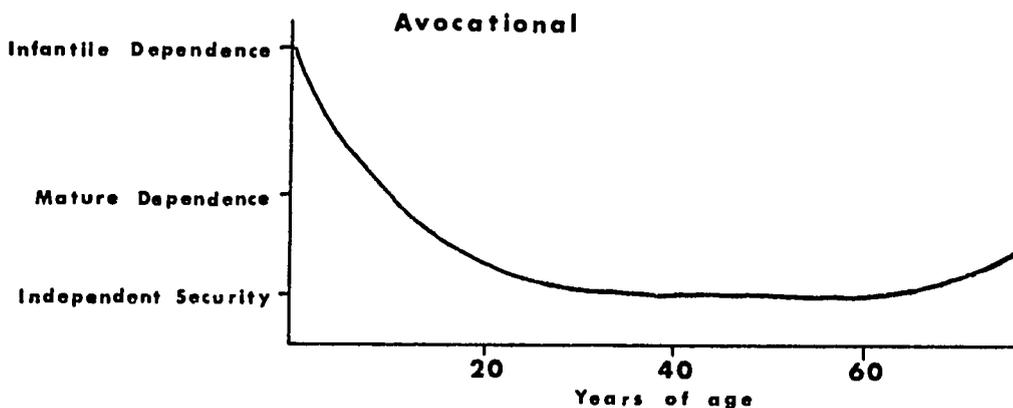
Classification of Maturation Factors



The above graph describes physical philosophy. The categories in the left-hand column are infantile dependence, mature dependence and independent security. The numerals along the bottom of the table represent the years of age of the individual.

All societies have a point at which they expect that the individual will have reached independent security. In this category of physical philosophy most societies expect that the individual will have reached mature dependence before he is twenty years of age. Conversely, at the other end of the scale, all societies appreciate that the individual will become less independent after he reaches the age of fifty or sixty. In this factor, therefore, the graph with which we have illustrated the problem has a rapid fall from infantile dependence to an age from fifteen to twenty. Independent security is expected until approximately sixty years of age, and then a rapid rise occurs toward infantile dependence. Old people in all societies have to be cared for in much the same way as an infant and become dependent physically once more on society.

The above graph is used to illustrate the expectation of most societies in terms of physical philosophy.



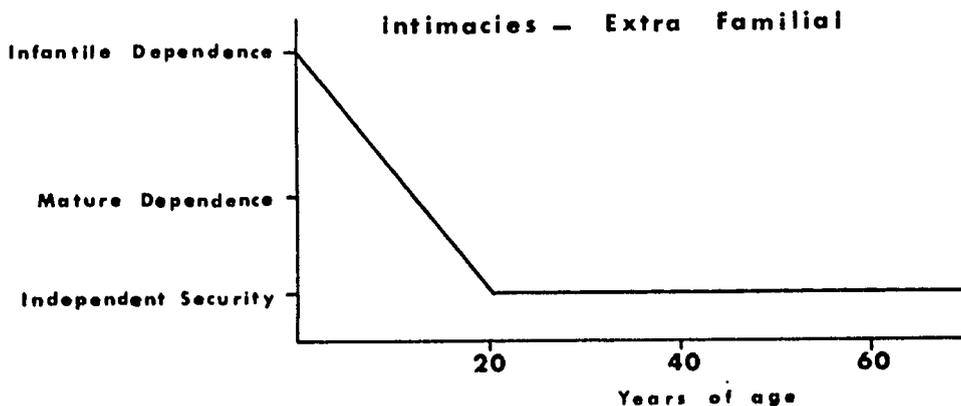
The classification "avocational" refers to the individual's adjustment socially to other members of his society in sports, entertainment, traditional groups, groups of voluntary association and everyday behavioural patterns which involve other persons within the society. Most individuals are expected to have made an

avocational adjustment early in their 'twenties and certainly to be independently secure by the age of thirty. The factor of avocational adjustment varies more between societies than that of physical philosophy, dependent on the time it will take for an individual to have learned acceptable behavioural patterns and values of the society in terms of this type of behaviour.

The process is not a complicated one. We are now referring to the normal behavioural pattern one expects in common courtesies and behavioural expectations in everyday activities. In Nairobi, for example, we expect and assume that the traffic will stop at a red traffic light, the traffic will continue when that same light is green. We expect that when a policeman on duty raises his hand to the traffic the traffic will stop. We assume that at a zebra crossing motorists will stop and allow pedestrians to cross. We assume a good deal of behavioural patterns from our fellows and these assumptions are based on the fact that we expect individuals to behave in a mature manner in common, ordinary, everyday, mundane behavioural patterns. It is not difficult to see how chaos would ensue if individual members of the society suddenly took it into their heads not to behave in these ways. In the same token we do not expect young children to understand these rules and, therefore, exercise caution when we see young children about to cross the busy intersection as we are not certain whether or not the child has learned the accepted behaviour for that situation.

The example given above is a simple one but there are more complex behavioural patterns which apply equally within this category. For example, when we play a game of football or hockey there are certain rules of behaviour we accept as having been learned by the opposite team and by members of ones own team. The fact that we have a referee who enforces the rules, or breaches of them, underlines the fact that there are accepted behavioural patterns in that situation, and we appeal to the referee as an arbitrator in borderline cases where behaviour may be in dispute. Similarly, in everyday life we have arbitrators to whom we can appeal. In tribal societies it is usually the elders and in everyday life in East Africa there are the African Courts as the first level of appeal, the Provincial Administration Courts and, finally, the East African Court of Review or in criminal cases the East African Court of Appeal.

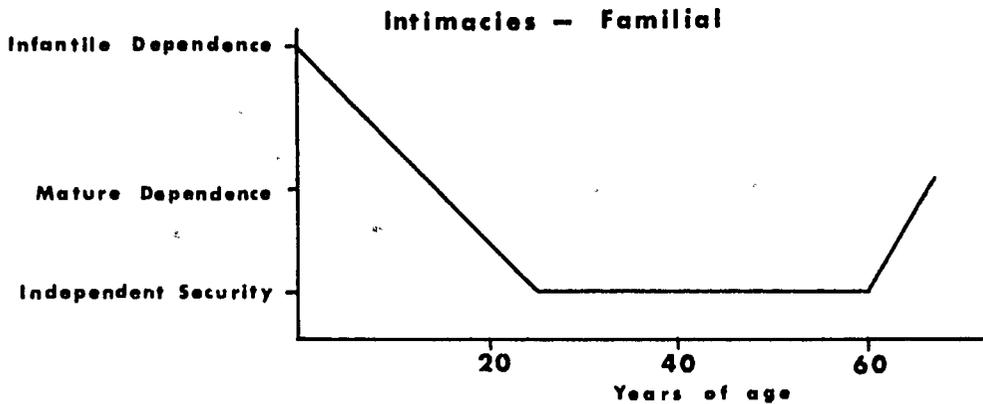
Similar institutions have been established by all societies in some form or other to arbitrate when behavioural patterns are in dispute. The vast majority of members of any society, however, never become involved with an arbitrator because the vast majority of members of any society learn to conform to the expected patterns of behaviour of that society and behave in a mature way which underlines and sustains the values of that society. The amount of litigation is an index of immaturity in a society. In certain parts of Kenya, for example, there is one land case for every one hundred families whereas in other parts of Kenya there is only one land case for every one thousand families. In the first example it is obvious that rules of behaviour in terms of land have not been learned or have changed or disintegrated to the point where the average member of that society behaves in ways unacceptable to other members and, therefore, appeal of litigation to the arbitrator to make decisions for them. In most societies, however, the majority of individuals in that society never become involved in litigation throughout their lifetime. The lack of litigation in ordinary behavioural patterns is an index of a mature society and one in which the values are clearly defined and obviously learned by the majority of its members.



Extra-familial intimacies describe the socio-sexual adjustment of an individual to other members of the society. A good deal of leniency is tolerated in most East African societies in the sexual play among young children. In some societies this leniency is extended towards teenagers where certain types of experimentation is not only accepted behaviour but expected behaviour. In all societies, however, there comes a point when an

individual is expected to have achieved sufficient knowledge of the values, customs and rules of that society to behave in ways which are acceptable to other members of the society in terms of these types of behaviour. In most societies a mature dependence is expected to have been reached at some time around puberty. Independent security or a mature adjustment is expected when the individual approaches twenty years of age. Independent security in this category remains constant for the rest of the individual's life and, therefore, there is no change in the graph as old age is approached as was the case with certain other factors.

More variations exist in this category between societies than with the other two categories already discussed. In Western society, for example, the adjustment comes much later than in East African societies. An adjustment in this category often involves a complex set of values, religious and social, in Western societies, whereas in East African societies the approach is one which is more normal and commonsense, unfettered by concepts developed through a long period of religious influences, education and so on. Education in itself creates problems in terms of this type of adjustment, particularly as advanced education is introduced in society when individuals are unable to support family or to contemplate marriage until much later than their physical maturity demands. The Kinsey Report is well-known as a study of the sexual behaviour of men and women in the United States of America and Dr. Kinsey points out in his reports that University students have a much more difficult adjustment to make in terms of extra-familial intimacy simply because of the demands of education which require a student to remain single and uninvolved until much later in life than the individual's physical maturity would demand. At this level extra-familial intimacies become involved with familial intimacies, which is the next classification.

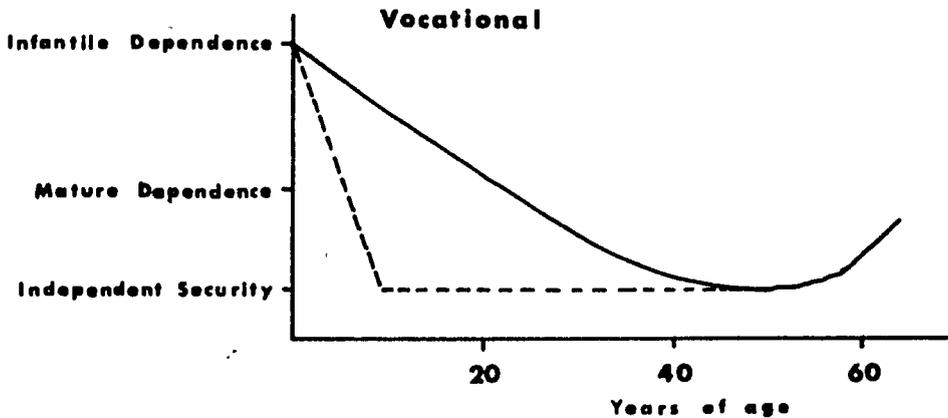


Familial intimacies describe the socio-sexual demands on the individual in terms of his relationships within the family and, after marriage, with the family. In East African societies marriage usually occurs for the male between the ages of eighteen and thirty and for the female shortly after puberty until about eighteen years of age. After that age a woman who is not married is unusual and the society regards this occurrence as being atypical of its values and demands. It can be seen, therefore, that the education of women in the emergent societies of East Africa involves a process which runs contrary to the accepted values of the society. Consequently, it is extremely difficult in East African societies for a young girl to remain in school beyond the age of puberty. In fact, many cases occur where young girls become pregnant at school simply because this new form of behaviour runs counter to the expected practice of marriage which is assumed in traditional East African values as being shortly after puberty. An adjustment obviously is made and will be made by many individuals to the new values of education and the familial and extra-familial demands of the society. It is a point, however, of conflict within the society and should be recognised as such when cases of this type occur.

In Western society the age difference between marriage acceptability is much less than in East African societies. Both men and women are expected to marry between the ages of twenty and thirty, although there remains a strong custom that a girl should marry younger than a man. Moreover, the partner chosen by most women in Western society is expected to be older by at least a few years than the woman. In East African societies this age differentiation is considerably greater. In several studies which we have conducted in various parts of Kenya the average woman marries between thirteen and eighteen, whereas the average man marries between twenty-four and thirty.

Polygamy is an expected pattern by most tribes in East Africa and while condemned by the Missions the custom persists because of other values which are considered to be more important. A large number of children is a basic value of most East African societies and, consequently, if a woman is barren or does not have more than a few children a man is expected to marry an additional wife to raise seed to his name. The custom is continued in the leviratic principle whereby the man's brother accepts the responsibility of raising seed to his name if he should die before his wife has produced what is considered to be an adequate number of children. The brother of the dead man does not inherit the wife as is commonly thought in European circles but merely raises seed to the name of the dead man by his wife. The leviratic principle is described in the Old Testament as being basic to Jewish religion. Another custom which illustrates the importance of these values is the custom among the Luo that when a wife reaches a stage when she no longer can have children, which is called 'pim', she is not expected to cohabit with her husband any longer and, therefore, he usually takes a younger wife. This custom has come into sharp conflict with many missionary groups as it is regarded as polygamy whereas, in fact, the woman is allowed to live with her married daughters or sons and is no longer, in fact, a wife in the accepted sense of that word. Consequently, many elders in Luo take a new wife when the senior wife has reached this stage of life.

The graph with which we illustrate this development makes allowances for some changes in old age. When one or other of the partners die the role of the individual then changes to that of grandmother or grandfather which carries a different set of relationships than that of father or mother. The example which we gave from the Luo, when a woman reaches the menopause, is an excellent example of a change in expectation in her behaviour. She has a new position in society because of her age and the behaviour of individuals toward her within the family and her behaviour towards other individuals becomes more dependent than it was previously.

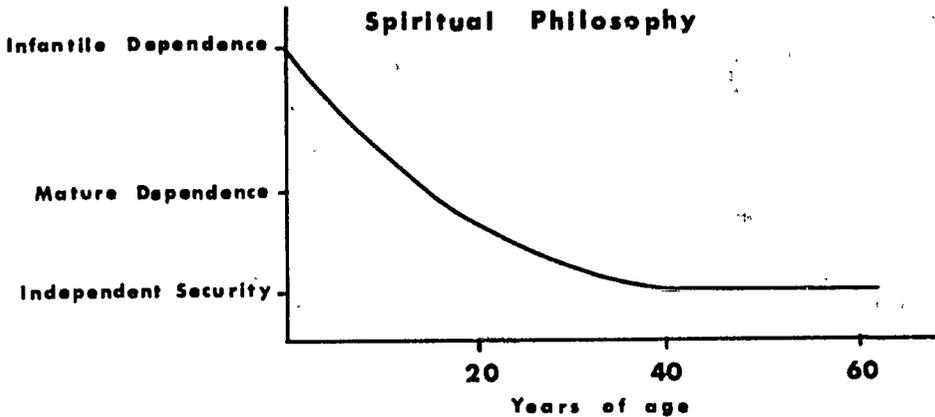


The above is the diagram for vocational adjustment. Traditionally, a vocational adjustment was expected early in a child's life. Today, however, young boys and girls are no longer expected to herd cattle or to help in the shamba but are expected to go to school. This means a much longer infantile dependence on the family. In the above diagram, it can be seen, therefore, that the dotted line represents a mature dependence in the old scheme of things while the solid line a mature dependence under new conditions.

Education is a factor, therefore, which has postponed a mature vocational adjustment in all Western societies. The secondary school graduate is between sixteen and eighteen years of age while the University graduate may be as old as twenty-four to twenty-six.

Again, it can be shown that as one approaches old age society expects less and less of the individual in terms of its vocational demands on him. We find, therefore, that the line, both solid and dotted, again rises after the age of about fifty onwards. In fact, at a very old age the individual reverts to an infantile dependence on other agents for his vocational adjustment.

Social security systems in Western culture are institutions designed by the societies to provide agents to give security to its members in their old age. In other words, retirement plans, old age pensions, and so on, are able to allow the individual to be independent of the family and to have security in his old age through these institutions.



The above represents the graph for spiritual philosophy. It can be seen that in this regard most societies do not expect individuals to achieve maturity until they approach their forties. The long delay in reaching a mature or independent security in ones spiritual philosophy was also typical of traditional societies in East Africa. Rituals, witchcraft, and magic belong to the older generation. Younger members only participated as they approached the "elder grade". On the other hand, most societies expected individuals in their early 'teens to have attained a mature, spiritual philosophy; in other words, to behave in ways which are consistent with the values of the society in which they live.

It can be seen, therefore, that in each of these aspects of maturity societies expect individuals to become maturely dependent or to have achieved independent security at various ages. The ages at which these expectations are manifest vary between societies but the principle which we are describing in this chapter is the fact that these exist in all societies and should be understood by those who work among people.

## **Chapter Six**

### UNDERSTANDING ROLE, STATUS AND SOCIAL CLASS

Traditional societies in Africa do not have a social class system, with the exception of one or two which have a monarchical type government as the Baganda. In all other tribal groupings each member of the society had equal standing in terms of social class. Equally, however, each tribal group had a very clear-cut traditional system of role and status. The role of an individual in the society is defined as meaning the type of behaviour or action which the society expects of that individual and his status is the respect and deference paid to him by that society because of a series of factors, some hereditary, some traditional and some learned, which clearly defines his position within the society in a hierarchy of positions.

All societies have a clearly defined set of rules and values which define the role and status of its members. Social class has become identified with societies which have a recorded history and a highly complex system of economics, religion and politics. Eastern societies have a very rigid system of social classes, some of which crystallized in past decades into a caste system. In India, for example, the caste system has been banned in theory but it is still very active in practice. It is therefore extremely difficult to eradicate social class once it has become established and, moreover, it is an inevitable concomitant of progress.

We can find, therefore, the nucleus of a social class system emerging in East Africa and very definite evidence of social class groupings in countries like Ghana and Nigeria.

Social class normally depends on the fact that certain members of a society are able to manipulate its rules and its rewards more effectively than others and, consequently, their children are able to benefit more directly because of these factors. Therefore, they begin life with a greater opportunity within that society than other members. Take, for example, the son of a teacher who has had the advantages of a University education. His son is born into a home of a high standard; he has adequate nutrition; he learns the language of education which is English; and consequently his potential of remaining in this class or moving even higher on the social ladder is infinitely better than that of a person of his own age who was born into a poor peasant family.

Social classes frequently become the basis of political parties. Russian communism and Chinese communism had their birth in the "class struggle" framed in the theories of Karl Marx and Engels. The fact that these theories have since proved to be fallacious from the historical point of view is irrelevant. The fact remains that the "class struggle" was the basis of the revolutions which put these parties into power and, consequently, we find continued emphasis and overcondemnation of an archaic system which no longer exists but which helps to maintain the present system.

Social class divides societies through trade union movements, business and management organisations, associations of professional people, such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, and so on, all of which are based on a social class, the membership into which is clearly defined by education, birth, social standing, etc., and which groups people of like interests into associations which make rules to prevent or to make it difficult for other members to join that social class.

Many studies have been made of the class system in Great Britain and other countries and it is not difficult for a social scientist when studying market conditions or political opinions to be able to classify the people he interviews by the social class to which they belong. In East Africa, however, it is impossible to use this as a factor when sampling the population on any question. It will, however, become a factor in the future as East Africa develops.

We discussed how an individual learns his role in society and we also discussed in other chapters how important the factor of status becomes when defined in these terms. In East African society, the role of any individual was usually defined by traditional factors which clearly set the type of behaviour which was expected of him and which clearly defined the status he should be accorded, depending on how well he functioned within the role as defined by that society. A social problem has arisen in East Africa by the fact that these roles and status factors become less clearly defined as conditions change and, consequently, conflict occurs between the traditional expectation and the modern expectation.

In Western societies studies are made on what is called "social mobility" or "social stratification". "Social mobility" means the degree to which an individual can move up or down in the class structure and, therefore, to assume new roles and status, depending on within which class he assumes membership. "Social mobility" hardly applies in East Africa and "social stratification" does not exist yet.

Social values are normally defined in terms of class differentials in those societies which have an easily identified class structure. In East African societies, social values were traditionally a tribal affair. Superimposed in the structure today are the social values of Christianity as taught through the Missions, churches, and learned within the educational system. We could vaguely talk, therefore, about the emerging "educated class" in East Africa when juxtaposed or compared to the "uneducated traditional peasant class". Different type roles and status factors are evident in each of these social classes. Moreover, there is some mobility between these two structures in that many parents of East African children can be defined as belonging to the latter while their children have emerged with high status and an exact role in the former.

There are many overt factors which can be used to define social classes. Some are material factors, such as the type of house, type of transportation, type of clothing, and other material goods owned by the individual - goods such as a bicycle, car, radio, television set, and so on. Jobs and occupations define social class and it is not difficult even in East Africa to have a sample of the population define which jobs have higher status than others. A recent survey of this type placed the medical doctor and the university teacher on the higher rungs of the ladder of social status and the common labourer at the lowest rung. School teachers came in the middle of the scale and politicians only slightly higher, with clerks, mechanics and farmers slightly lower, in that order. There is developing in the minds of the ordinary citizen of East Africa, therefore, a hierarchy of status positions based on jobs and occupations.

Role and status are sociological concepts which can be defined in traditional East African societies and which are present in all societies, attaining new meanings as the emerging educated classes of East Africa increase. Social class is not yet a factor of importance in East Africa but will become a factor in the near future as it has already become in such countries as Ghana and Nigeria. Persons who are expected to work with and through groups of people should be aware of these concepts and should understand their importance and meaning. It is necessary to be aware of what is happening, as a class system begins to solidify and develop within East African societies, to prevent possible conflict between classes which may happen if social class is not understood within the social context of the new society.

## Chapter Seven

### UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE

#### Background to Change

Social anthropologists and sociologists have studied the problem of social change for many years. It remains one of the most fascinating aspects of human society, and, as we have mentioned in a previous chapter, change is an element to be found in all societies. We pointed out that from the individual's point of view change is often imperceptible. It is when we regard the society from the historical point of view that we see patterns of rapid change most clearly.

Examples of what I mean are found in most East African societies. The average Jalu, for example, does not feel that his family institutions or his system of economics have changed very dramatically in his lifetime and, yet, if we read the books by Hobley or other early travellers in the area we can see astonishing changes in a matter of fifty years. The same applies to the Akikuyu, Akamba and many other societies.

Rapid social change of this type requires us to examine the theory of social change first and also to examine specific cases of change and the effect which these changes have had on the society and the culture as reflected in the behaviour of people. A recent publication on this problem is "Social Change in Modern Africa", edited by Aidan Southall. This book was published in 1961. It includes a series of studies presented and discussed at the first International African Seminar at Makerere College, Kampala, held in January, 1959. Eighteen of the foremost social anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, etc., presented papers on the society about which they were most familiar each outlining the problems of social change as it affected that society. Consequently, the book presents a very excellent cross-section of the problems of social change. Professor Southall gives a very brief but excellent summary in the introductory chapters.

## Understanding Change

It is necessary to deal again with a few sociological concepts which require definition. In all societies invention is a fundamental stimulus to change. Invention is used in its everyday meaning - that is, a new technique or method or the invention of a new material object, such as the motorcar, aeroplane, etc. We can see in America how the motorcar in a few short years changed the American way of life. Before the advent of the motorcar, the American family was a close-knit large group which depended on itself for entertainment, social activities, the production of most foods consumed by the family and even to a large extent the production of clothing and other articles used in the home. The motorcar changed all of this. Rural families were able to "commute" to the town to purchase these objects. Moreover, young people no longer courted at the home but preferred to use the motorcar to attend dances, picture houses, and so on, which would have been impossible without the motorcar. The family pattern, therefore, changed rapidly from a close-knit inlooking group to one which was less formal, which became smaller and which had less control of its members. It is easy to see how the invention of the aeroplane has changed international affairs, world trade and communications in general. It is a fascinating subject to see how invention has changed certain traditional aspects of society and even well-established social institutions. Take, for example, the invention of the typewriter, adding machine and business calculator. Men found these jobs boring and repetitive and, consequently, women were trained for them. The fact that women could obtain employment at wages which were sufficient to support them helped to emancipate the women of Western society and has made far-reaching changes in the family, marriage and economics.

Invention does not only mean material things. Invention can mean social ideas or philosophies. For example, the theory of communism as expounded by Karl Marx and Engels. The invention of this social theory has caused dramatic changes in many parts of the world.

Another factor which causes dramatic change is migration. The first definitive book on social change was written by a Polish sociologist about the adjustment of Polish peasants to American culture. Great numbers of people left Europe at the turn of the century to migrate to North America. The first generation found it extremely difficult to adjust to the new way of life because their families attempted to maintain the type of family tradition and culture from the homeland with which they were familiar and yet the youth were faced with the new American culture. The two cultures were often in extreme conflict and, consequently, the young people were faced with emotional problems which involved loyalty to the family on the one hand and the necessity to achieve status and a role in the new society on the other. Much the same problem faces young people in East Africa today. It is extremely difficult for an educated East African of whatever tribe, to live and work among the emerging culture in the urban areas and then to take up his place in his family group as an equal. He must change his personality, his attitudes, and his values, and his norms of behaviour may become radically different from those of his family. Consequently, many problems arise.

Population pressure brings social change. The Industrial Revolution in England is perhaps the best example of how a sudden burst of population and technological invention caused a society to change within a period of about fifty years in ways which would have appeared impossible. From a rural agricultural community Great Britain emerged as the most highly industrialised nation in the world. Population pressure was the prime reason. Labour was cheap and easily and readily available for the new mills and factories which emerged after the invention of the "spinning jenny". Britain became the world's producer of cotton and woollen cloths, the basis of its export for many years. Population pressure can also be seen as a factor of change in some East African societies. Among the people of Central Province, for example, many have been forced to migrate because of population pressures to places as far away as Kisumu, Dodoma, Korogwe and Moshi. In these places the new immigrant attempted to establish his old way of life which recently has brought conflict with the local people and some of these groups have been returned forceably to Central Province. Population pressure among many East African societies has encouraged the migration of young people to the towns in search of work.

A factor of social change which is obvious is force or aggression. Many societies have been obliged to change because of the advent of a superior power through invasion, colonialism, imperialism or communism. The Laps, Lithuanians and Estonians, for example, have been forced to abandon their traditional way of life because of Russian imperialism. The peoples of East Africa were forced to abandon many traditional activities with the advent of British colonialism. Tribal warfare was forced to stop; the custom of cattle raiding, raiding for wives and so on; slavery was abolished and so were the traditional authority patterns, with the imposition of administrative chiefs and headmen. Force, therefore, in its broadest sense, is a prime factor in social change. An example which should not be overlooked was the village-isation programme during Mau Mau insurrection in Central Province. Village-isation caused dramatic changes to many social institutions among the Kikuyu.

Gradual change through socialisation processes - or what we could call progress - is another factor of change. In other words, the society itself in its attempt to survive, and not only survive but to increase the comfort and welfare of its members, plans social change. Tanganyika has an excellent example of planned social change in its present development plans. An example could be the proposed hydro-irrigation schemes in the Rufiji valley. These schemes, if implemented, will change the whole way of life of the people there. Immigrants will be brought in from other areas where population pressures are felt and a new society will emerge in an area which at present is occupied by a few primitive agriculturalists. The advent of hydro-electric power will also cause changes in the way of life of the people of Tanganyika. Small industries will develop; sedentary agriculturalists will find themselves factory workers; small traders will turn themselves into larger industrialists who market the product or products of these industries.

### Analysis of Social Change

In analysing social change we must consider two aspects of change: the processes which are positive factors and the processes which can be regarded as negative factors. Positive factors are those which help to maintain the society on the road of gradual

change without undue disruption of its social values and customs, and negative factors are those which cause conflict, resistance and disequilibrium in the culture. Planned social change is based on positive factors implementing gradual change. Community development in its broadest sense is an agent for planned social change. The needs of the people are studied, problems which they feel are resolved and programmes implemented to improve the welfare and comfort of the group. Planning may be at the highest level as with the Tanganyika Government's ten-year plan, but also it can be at the lowest level of a village group planning a limited irrigation scheme, a new school, a secondary road which will help them market their crops, and so on. Planned social change of this type requires an intimate knowledge of the people and their cultures to effect change with the least disruption of traditional ways of life.

We talked earlier about the interrelation of social institutions. It must, therefore, always be remembered that a change in any one set of conditions in a society will disturb other aspects of the society. In other words, a change in the economy or the traditional method of food production will have certain ramifications and will require changes in the family system. For example, the growth of cash crops brings a new element into the family life in the distribution of the money earned from the cash crops. An example was the introduction of rice on the Kano Plains of Central Nyanza. Rice was a lucrative cash crop and, consequently, the women prepared the soil and when the crops were sold they were able to purchase consumer goods not normally available to them. In the families which had more than one wife the distribution of produce between wives and their children was a well-established principle, but what about the distribution of cash coming from cash crops? Should this follow the same pattern as the distribution of maize required as a basic food? It created many problems in the large Luo extended families - problems which had to be resolved and which therefore required social change.

Negative aspects of change are the resistance of traditional groups who fear the loss of authority or status if changes are made, particularly if the change is rapid. Land consolidation, for example, in Luo is a threat to the authority system of the elders; the values of the family in land holding, distribution and utilisation and, consequently, land consolidation is bitterly opposed in some

areas. An attempt by Government to enforce land consolidation caused riots in Mombasa, Nairobi and other parts of Kenya. On the other hand, land consolidation has taken place gradually and slowly in many parts of Luo so that specific neighbourhood or community groups, who usually are kinship groups, have, through their indigenous group structure organised land consolidation which was gradual and effective themselves.

Negative aspects of change include competition and conflict. When new groups emerge in a society they must find their level in the value system in terms of the status of their leaders in relation to the status of traditional groups and leaders. For example, in East Africa the emergence of political parties has created a whole range of new types of leaders, many of whom are in conflict with the traditional leaders, and it is difficult to adjust this conflict situation in any particular area. The values of the culture are at stake; does the local political representative have more status than the local chief?; who should the people follow if their views differ?; what action should be taken if the chief and elders say "consolidate your land", whereas the politician says, "do not consolidate your land"? These situations cause conflict in the society; they set family against family and often members of a particular family against other members. It takes time to resolve new status positions in emergent groups, particularly when these new groups have effective power. In Southern Tanganyika a few years ago the Administration enforced rules of terracing which cut across the indigenous values of the local people who traditionally regarded their plots as family holdings and, therefore, the new procedure was a threat to family authority and institutions. Consequently, as this policy was enforced by groups who had the power, local people felt they had no other alternative but to revolt. It is important, therefore, when studying new programmes for a society, particularly development programmes which involve changes of traditional modes of behaviour, that the ramifications of these changes be fully understood in terms of the social institutions traditionally involved in that activity.

## Planned Social Change

Methods of bringing about social changes vary with the society in which the change is to be made. The first and basic requirement is for the communicator, or the person who is to implement this change, to fully understand the existing pattern and to study carefully the effects the change will have on the institutions of that society. Approval is required by the effective leadership of the society before change can be successfully planned and implemented. Traditionally East African societies have long been ruled by consent and consensus. In other words, a meeting of elders may take four or five days on a particular issue and no action will be taken until there is a consensus of how the new policy should be implemented. It is a time-consuming and often disheartening process. On the other hand, no planned programme can be implemented without the consensus of indigenous authority.

Planned social change should take account of the felt social needs of the community. It should be so planned as to meet unsatisfied needs or to increase satisfaction in certain areas of life which the people feel to be necessary. Working with a few people is always more difficult than imposing one's will on a group. It is only possible, however, to impose one's will when there is force to back up the programme. Changes of this type are least stable. Changes which are effected through planning with and through the local social institutions of the people and the leaders of these groups and institutions are the most permanent.

## Chapter Eight

### UNDERSTANDING URBANISATION

#### The Meaning of Urbanisation

Urbanisation is a word which is often misused. It must be underlined and repeatedly emphasised that because a group of people live in an urban setting this does not mean that they are "urbanised". Urbanisation means the process by which an individual cuts most or all of the ties which he has with the rural areas and regards his urban home as his only home.\* It can be seen if we accept this definition that there are very few urbanised people, except for Asians and Europeans, living in the towns of Kenya. Historically, urbanisation was a factor of industrialisation, when large numbers of rural people came to the towns permanently to find employment in factories and made their homes in the urban area. Many bought property, houses, and the like, in the urban area and had no other security than urban property, material goods and so on. The process, however, affects all individuals who come to the urban area whether or not they become "urbanised" - in other words, urbanisation is an agent of social change.

#### Adjustment to Urban Conditions

Many sociologists and social anthropologists who have studied problems of urbanisation assumed wrongly that when a rural person arrived in an urban area that this presented him with a difficult problem of adjustment. It has been proved recently, however, that most people have an exact knowledge about the differences in conditions between the town and the country and arrive in the town fully prepared for the conditions they meet there and fully prepared to make the type of adjustment which is adequate for them to find a job, to live peacefully with their fellow workers, and to make the necessary family adjustments on a temporary basis as an expediency until their return to their homes in the rural areas.

\* Royal Commission Report on East Africa - 1954.  
"A man whose loyalties are directed towards his town rather than to his area of origin."

These urban dwellers rapidly adjust to the new conditions because they arrive in the towns with an expectation of what the town will demand of them in terms of behaviour and participation both at work and in the residential areas. They learn the norms of urban behaviour from listening to the experiences of their relatives and friends who have been to the towns. They form social groups and institutions which assist in this adjustment by developing functions which are designed specifically to care for the welfare of its members. Examples are found in every urban area in Kenya today. Most tribal societies have associations, clubs or unions to look after the welfare of their people in the towns. A recent social survey of Mombasa showed that there were over two hundred such groups registered. These groups do not function daily but come together as corporate groups when the need arises. The need is usually in terms of the crises of life - death, marriage, sustenance or conflict with the law. The best example is when, say, a Luo from Alego dies in an urban hospital. The Luo union or the Alego branch of the union, which is affiliated to and with the Luo union, finds this person's relatives and assists them to return the body to the family in the location. If no relative can be found the union will take this action on its own, paying for the cost, which is recovered, if possible, from the relatives; and in general assisting them in the formal and legal arrangements which are necessary within the rules of an urban environment when someone dies.

Another example, again from the Luo people, is that the Luo union will not tolerate their young women becoming prostitutes in the town and consequently take drastic action to return offenders to their families in Nyanza.

These associations or groups are formed around the fact that their members come from the same tribal areas or sub-tribal areas. It gives the individual a sense of security. He knows that there is a group which is concerned with his welfare in the town. This makes the changes which are required by the individual more acceptable and easier to assimilate. The individual soon learns to adjust by his knowledge of the social demands of the urban areas and to learn which aspects of his rural behaviour are not acceptable in the towns. Through this process he learns to manipulate the rules of both cultures, the rural culture of his family and homeland and the urban culture of his new environment. He acquires two "selves" - a new "urban self", while retaining his original "rural self".

Most rural people, when arriving in the town, already have friends and relatives there. The individual is able to obtain shelter and food and even clothing from his relatives until he finds a job and repays them for their hospitality. Repayment is rarely expected in kind but rather he then is obligated to attend to other relatives in the same way as he was treated. It has been shown in a recent survey that the average urban family has at least one adult male relative dependent on it at any given point in time.

### Breakdown of Family and Tribal Life

I have used the word "breakdown" in the sense that there is rapid social change when a family migrates from the rural area to the urban. Breakdown is perhaps too strong a word, although it is extremely difficult in the urban areas to maintain the values, the rules and the security of family life that the rural areas afford. The family as an institution adjusts in much the same way as the individual adjusts in learning the culture of the urban area and changes to fit in with it while at the same time readily re-adapting itself to the rural area when it returns as a unit. Few African families have settled permanently in the urban areas. We have some Somalis, Arabs, Afro-Arabs, Sudanese and Swahilis who could truly be called urbanised families; and another classification of African families where the mother who has been deserted, or whose husband has died or from whom she has run away, has children by one or more men without a formal marriage and these children grow up in the urban area without any knowledge of a rural environment. This type of family is completely different from one found in the rural areas and it is in fact the nucleus of the emerging urbanised family in Kenya.

### Authority Patterns and Administration

The newly-arrived is often in conflict with the well-established when he attempts to assert the expectation of status which he has brought with him from the rural areas. In the urban areas status depends more on material and economic factors than in the rural areas: a large house, good furniture, a motor car, a radio, bicycle, a sewing machine, electric light, the type of employment, etc. These are status factors in the urban area which give the

individual high recognition. Cultural factors of lineage, clan, family, have little or no meaning in the urban area. This anomaly frequently presents conflict situations for the individual. The group as a whole - when we talk about the urban group - has clearly defined rules regarding role and status just as the traditional group has its own set of rules in the rural areas.

Much has been written about the need for a stable urban class in Kenya. It is difficult, however, to make conditions in the urban areas more attractive when in the past, and in some ways even at present, there were pass laws, curfews, more stringent police methods, etc., which make life for the average citizen in the urban area difficult and frequently uncomfortable. Moreover, housing conditions in the urban areas must not only be better than those in the rural areas but must also compensate for other factors. The loss of close friendships, family, family ties, hospitality inexpensive foodstuffs and so on. The challenge to urban authority is to provide conditions which will attract the type of citizen from the rural areas who can make a contribution to the economy and the welfare of his group and the urban society as a whole. Unfortunately, in the past this has not been a conscious process in Kenya.

### Social Security in Urban Areas

The first step beyond establishing a strong and permanent urban class is to ensure that the individual will have social security while he is there and when he is unemployed or too old to work. So far in Kenya this has been entirely lacking. It is not only the fault of the employer or the urban authority but also the fault of the transient nature of labour in that permanent improvements cannot be implemented while migratory patterns persist. In other words, an employer hesitates to train individuals for higher posts or to provide these individuals with permanent high-level housing when he knows that in any one year his turnover in staff will be more than 30%. The problem, therefore, is like the "chicken and egg" argument. What comes first - social security and then permanence, or permanence and then social security? The larger firms are able to make a greater contribution because they can absorb the loss of income and efficiency through migration more effectively than medium or smaller firms. Many have, therefore, excellent housing sites, welfare facilities, medical facilities and so on, the best example of which is the East African Tobacco Company's "Tobacco Village".

It is extremely difficult to understand at what point in the urbanisation process social security becomes a dominant factor in the mind of the individual. The break-through, when it does come, accelerates urbanisation rapidly to the point where social change occurs dramatically and permanently. We can consider this problem more effectively if we examine the urban areas of West Africa. Prior to independence the social structure of many Nigerian and Ghanaian towns was very similar to that of Kenya towns. Most of the inhabitants were transient workers with one foot in the urban area and one foot in the rural area. With increased security of the economy and rapid social change, there was a mad scramble to purchase land in the urban areas in order to become permanent citizens and landlords and to reap the benefit of rapid development. In Lagos this process has created a very exclusive social class of entrepreneurs, land owners who are able to build office blocks, factories and private housing to rent to other persons. This will happen in Kenya. At what point in the process does social security become a factor? Social security does not only mean welfare benefits, unemployment benefits, etc., provided by Government, but also social security through investment and property ownership.

### Urban Welfare

Urban welfare presents problems which are unknown in the rural areas. The best example of this is housing. It is an interesting exercise to trace the change and type of housing provided for new arrivals in the urban areas of Kenya over the past twenty or thirty years. Thirty years ago one of the first housing estates was built in Nairobi and stands at Kariakor, which may have been demolished by the time of writing, but the reader will be familiar with that estate. It consisted of single rooms, eight by ten feet or ten by twelve feet, in each of which three single men were housed. It was assumed that a man would come to the urban area on his own. He would work for a few months and return to his home. Gradually, however, it became apparent that more and more men were bringing their wives and families to the urban areas and housing plans were developed which would provide for family accommodation. The Kariakor Lhandies or Gorofoni type housing estates soon became redundant and large employers, particularly Government, East African Railways and Harbours Administration, The East African Power and Lighting Company and

some private companies, developed estates which had two-room flats and a private kitchen; communal latrines were still the order of the day. Within the past five or ten years more and more three-roomed flats have been built and even four-roomed flats with private kitchens and indoor private sanitation. This tremendous change in the pattern of housing is a measure of the change which has taken place in Kenya as a whole.

A housing survey which was conducted in 1955-1956 shows that only one African in five had his wife with him. A similar survey in 1960, five years later, showed that nearly half had a wife or wives with him, while nearly 70% were visited by their wives and family during their stay in the urban area. These facts reveal the rapid changes which have occurred in urban life in Kenya.

Welfare among urban peoples was soon to become the concern of the municipal authorities and locational and ward councils were established to care for those living in particular areas. Moreover, it became apparent that administration would be required and urban chiefs, headmen and police were appointed to enforce bye-law rules and decisions of the urban African courts.

The municipality developed a section on welfare and housing which established creches, nursery schools, dispensaries and the like, with more and more local participation until today welfare conditions in the urban areas are more effective than those found in the rural areas. These changes, of course, have been very rapid and have taken place within the last ten years.

## Chapter Nine

### UNDERSTANDING RURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is most important for the reader to understand that rural development takes place at many levels. The highest level involves plans for rural development which can be implemented only by Central Government because such plans invariably involve large loans from International sources. Moreover, these loans require legislation to make the finance of the plans legally acceptable to the Government and the finances are negotiated not only here in Kenya but in London, Washington and other places. It can be seen, therefore, that at the highest level the ordinary community development assistant in the field is not involved in such large-scale planning. Government works out a system of priorities and these priorities frequently involve political decisions as well as social, welfare and development decisions, taking into account the total need of the country as a whole. Moreover, political decisions must also be taken regarding the source of the international funds or the source of the country from which the funds are accepted, the terms on which they are given and how these funds involve or may involve the Kenya Government in the future.

There are many examples of large-scale development projects planned from the centre. The Gezira scheme in the Sudan, the Volta River project in Ghana, the Rufiji River development scheme in Tanganyika and the Tana River development scheme in Kenya. All of these development plans involve national planning and international finance. The whole country will benefit directly or indirectly from them and, therefore, the liabilities of finance fall on the general tax-payers to repay the loans in part or in whole in the years ahead. It is possible that the ordinary man-in-the-street may not even be aware of what has been planned at this level. He is not aware of how he would benefit directly or to what extent his Government has committed him in borrowing the funds to finance the development.

Many such schemes have been outstandingly successful. The Gezira scheme in the Sudan is perhaps the "grandfather" of all successful major projects in agricultural development. Gezira, which was started in the nineteen-twenties will eventually put five-million acres of arid, desert waste into high productivity by the cultivation of cotton and other crops by irrigation. Today this

scheme provides over two-thirds of the national income of the Sudan. The social changes which have taken place in the culture of the people have been astonishingly effective. The people who were once semi-pastoral and poverty-stricken now enjoy one of the highest incomes of any people in Africa. A few such schemes have been less successful or even unsuccessful. The "groundnut scheme" in Tanganyika was a complete failure even though this provided employment for many people, it opened up many acres for agriculture and grazing and it stimulated the people to help themselves. The indirect benefits, therefore, of even the failures at this level are difficult to measure but have a positive effect on the economy of the country as a whole.

There are hundreds of other development projects at a lower level which are planned by sections of government for specific purposes and all of which benefit the country as a whole indirectly, while directly benefitting a section of the public. In Kenya, for example, the development plans of the East African Railways and Harbours Administration in the Port of Mombasa have generally stimulated the economy and provided more effective distribution and handling of imports and exports. The development of the East African Power and Lighting projects throughout East Africa has greatly benefitted the country as a whole. Central Government resettlement schemes are well advanced. Local government in many areas, and with financial assistance from central government and even international sources, has provided housing projects, new road development, water projects, sewer projects, etc., all of which increase the availability of services, and not only benefit those individuals who directly participate but provide employment and therefore benefit the economy as a whole. Such projects in the past have been: afforestation schemes, agricultural loans, development of local roads, water development, dam building, housing projects, drainage and sewers, etc. All such schemes are planned and financed in whole or in part by local government.

More directly, local government had been encouraged to participate more actively in small-scale development projects. The new legislation for local government makes provision for greater participation on the part of local government in development programmes and throws more emphasis on segments of local government - for example, locational councils - to raise income by direct taxation, to improve and to develop at a much lower level

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More directly, local government had been encouraged to participate more actively in small-scale development projects. The new legislation for local government makes provision for greater participation on the part of local government in development programmes and throws more emphasis on segments of local government - for example, locational councils - to raise income by direct taxation, to improve and to develop at a much lower level

than was anticipated in the past. It is my argument, however, that even at the locational council level, the unit for direct participation of the people in such development programmes is still too large and we must begin to look at rural development from the sub-locational level and even in some cases at the community or extended family level. It is only by direct participation at this, the lowest level - i.e., the lowest common denominator within a culture - that small-scale inexpensive development projects are not only possible but also practicable.

Rural development at the village level is well-organised in some countries but as yet is hardly understood in East Africa. In Mr. Nyerere's now famous speech at Mwanza shortly after his resignation as Prime Minister of Tanganyika, he made it abundantly clear that the solution of Tanganyika's problems lay in stimulating the economy through direct participation at the village or community level by a high percentage of the local population. He is aware that however well-intentioned or however large-scale the development programmes at the highest level may be, these cannot become entirely successful unless and until the peasant in the village or homestead not only understands what is happening but also is made aware of his role in a much fuller participation in the economy than at present. In essence this involves the problems of effective communications with the total population.

In Ghana, India, Israel and the Phillipines, the major share of their development plans depend to a very large extent on active participation at the level of the village unit. Village project work has long been the feature of community development programmes in Ghana and Nigeria. In these countries, however, social organisation of the people begins at the village level. Large groups live permanently in village communities and move out to their gardens by day and return at nightfall, not unlike the Kikuyu villages which were built during the Emergency in Kenya. The East African picture, however, is entirely different, for here the people live in clusters of homesteads which are family groupings and the people rarely move about at night and, consequently, evening meetings, visual aid programmes, and so on, are difficult to organise. In Kenya, therefore, we have a different problem than in other countries and we must understand more adequately the social structure of a community in order to work effectively through indigenous local leadership to stimulate the people to help

themselves. It is obvious, therefore, that the basic unit through which small-scale "self-help" projects can be worked in East Africa is not at the village, but rather at the extended family level, with their friends and neighbours.

In the past the African District Councils had made large scale loans for agricultural development on recommendations from the locational councils. Everywhere in Kenya these agricultural loans have proved to be unsuccessful due to the fact that there was no direct supervision on how the money was spent and a high percentage of these loans have not been repaid. Moreover, there was little, if any, social pressure on those who had received loans to repay the loans. Consequently, most African District Councils have ceased giving loans of this type and now depend on the Land Development Boards, Committees, etc., to initiate loans on their behalf. On the other hand, where registration of land has taken place as in parts of Kiambu, individual farmers are able to borrow directly from Banks for specific loans for labour, seed, fencing, etc., on deposit of their Land Title as security against these loans. It would appear to this observer that the direct participation of the individual farmer in this way should be highly encouraged and is perhaps the best form of development. Many areas in Kenya, however, have not yet registered land and, in fact, many areas have not yet consolidated their land, which is the first step to the registration of Land Title. Consequently, we must look for a dependable and reliable social unit within the culture which can guarantee on behalf of its members small-scale development loans particularly for labour, seed and transport. In some areas small scale co-operatives have been successful in providing this facilities to their members. On the other hand, many co-operatives have been unsuccessful due to the lack of business acumen and dishonesty or carelessness among its executive officers. A system must therefore be carefully planned whereby small-scale units working through the present local government institutions, such as the African District Councils and Locational Councils, are able to raise funds and to administer them to assist, at the very lowest level, individual members of the community to improve and to develop their "self-help" projects.

A fundamental essential in all community development work at the lowest level is to ensure that at least one project, however small, is planned and completed as early as possible in the experience of the people. A pride of achievement often leads to more ambitious undertakings once the people acquire confidence and are able to see what can be done by "self-help". Large-scale projects at this level should be avoided until the people have achieved specific goals at the very lowest level. Specific achievement at this level will not only give confidence to the group but also will give them the required experience to undertake projects at a higher level. The role of the community development worker is to encourage the initiation of at least one small-scale project in each of his natural community areas and to see it through to a final and successful conclusion. The pride in achievement is essential if the group is to proceed to more ambitious plans.

Many groups in Kenya have become disillusioned by attempting to undertake projects in the past which were either impracticable, poorly planned or which were "sold" to them by an over-enthusiastic leader, government official or specialist officer. It is necessary to repeat that the first project undertaken at this level must have the concensus of the majority, it must be simple and practical, and it must take relatively little effort in order that it be completed quickly to ensure that the group maintains the enthusiasm to plan and move on to more ambitious projects.

To understand rural development, therefore, you must first understand the levels at which rural development can take place and is taking place. The role of the community development assistant or officer is to begin to work with the lowest common denominator, which in East Africa is the extended family group or a cluster of extended family groups interrelated or who are neighbours within the same community. The confidence of this unit is essential to the success of any small-scale project. The success of such a project is directly dependent on its simplicity and the length of time taken for its successful completion.

## Chapter Ten

### UNDERSTANDING GROUP WORK

There are many books published on community organisation, its theory and principles, group work techniques, group discussion techniques, and so on. I feel that one of the best of these is entitled "Community Organisation" by Murray G. Ross, published by Harper Brothers, 1955, and, more particularly, the chapter on "The Role of the Professional Worker". This chapter should be required reading for all of those who are engaged professionally in any aspect of public administration or community development.

The role of the professional leader has many facets. At one level, he is a guide, which is his primary role, to counsel and to stimulate initiative through an objective approach and an objective identification with the community. The community must accept his role as a guide and his interpretation of this role depends not only on his objectivity but also on his professional training and knowledge of the principles of social organisation and human relations. Most professional leaders have had adequate theoretical training and it is only experience which transforms his theoretical training to a practical approach to the community.

The second and perhaps next important facet of his role is that of facilitating community progress. He must be aware of and to understand the conflicts between the traditional and modern roles of leadership. He must be able to focus discontent and to belay serious conflict through encouraging the organisation of groups at different community levels around specific interests and through the fostering of good inter-personal relations between indigenous and modern leaders and to emphasise the common objectives of the community as they apply to all persons in it. Professor Ross calls this the "enabler" role. It requires on the part of professional workers a good deal of understanding of their community and frequently this understanding is lacking due, in the past, to frequent postings and changes in community development professional leadership. It takes time to understand a community and the first prerequisite of any professional worker is to spend at least the first three months doing nothing but talking to the people and gaining an elementary knowledge of their problems, their social organisation, their family system, their approach to economic problems of cultivation and subsistence agriculture. Moreover, he should

gain a knowledge of their customs, religious attitudes, taboos, and traditional values as quickly as possible. Above all, he must have made at least a passing acquaintance with the local leaders of all types.

The next facet of the professional leader's approach to group work is his role as the expert. In other words, professional workers must be able to provide direct advice and information when requested and therefore they in turn must be kept informed by a central organisation or department which makes these materials available regularly. It does not mean that he must become a walking encyclopaedia but rather that he should be able to know from where or from whom the answer can be obtained.

In order to achieve success as the "expert" the professional worker must have some research skill and to be able to diagnose community needs as he will find inevitably that most communities have little understanding of their own social structure or social organisation. In other words, he must conduct a "social survey" of his area, not in the detailed way of a professional worker bent on obtaining his Doctor of Philosophy, but at a level which will systematically record basic facts about the community to assist him in advising community leaders as they themselves develop the initiative to undertake community projects. Moreover, these facts should be recorded in a way which makes them available and permanent. The more information he has about other communities and other development programmes the more able he will be in evaluating the needs of his particular parish. His knowledge should extend to methods which have been used in other parts of the world and he should discuss these with the local leaders to see whether or not these methods could be applied in their own community.

The final role of a professional worker has been called by Professor Ross the "social therapy" role and by this he means that the professional leader should be able to diagnose the problems of the community as a whole and be able to recommend methods of treating these problems. The professional training required to fill this role need not necessarily be high providing that the professional worker in the field is able to consult regularly with senior professional workers who have had this training and it is their role to assist him in this diagnosis and to be constantly aware of

**new techniques for handling everyday community problems. In this regard, frequent refresher courses are not only necessary but essential for the man in the field to retain his confidence and enthusiasm by discussing his particular problems with colleagues who are facing similar problems. The position of a professional worker in a rural area is often a very lonely one. There are few people who understand, as he does or should, the problems with which he is faced and, consequently, frequent contact with colleagues at his own level and at higher levels is essential to maintain his confidence and professional standard and, therefore, conferences or seminars should be arranged regularly for this purpose.**

**The professional worker should encourage and establish an advisory committee of local leaders with whom he can discuss his problems and ideas. The local committee can facilitate the communication of ideas and decisions. The professional worker and his committee should also arrange frequent visits to other areas where development programmes are taking place to see how ideas and plans are interpreted into action.**

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