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BRIDEWEALTH REVISITED: SOCIALIZATION  
AND THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOR  
IN A DOMESTIC AFRICAN ECONOMY

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Abstract: This essay suggests, on the basis of information from Barma in Chad and a number of other societies, that marriage ceremonial, of which bridewealth forms a part, may under certain conditions partially socialize younger men into their mature economic roles. Further, insofar as bridewealth performs this function, it contributes to the reproduction, in a Marxist sense, of labor in these economies.

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## BRIDEWEALTH REVISITED: SOCIALIZATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOR IN A DOMESTIC AFRICAN ECONOMY

It has long been known that initiation rituals, often a part of marriage ceremonials, have socialization functions. (Williams reviews this literature in 1983:286-289.) One classic study of an African society explicitly indicates that marriage ceremonials "teach" women to farm, thereby contributing to their socialization into adult economic roles (Richards 1982:122). There is, however, no body of literature explicitly analyzing the role of bridewealth in socialization. This essay argues that marriage ceremonial, of which bridewealth forms a part, may under certain conditions partially socialize younger men into their mature economic roles. Further, insofar as bridewealth performs this function, it contributes to the reproduction, in a Marxist sense, of labor in these economies.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

In the late 1920s, missionaries and administrators insisted that women were chattel in societies with bridewealth, because "...a girl...is knocked down to the highest bidder in the marriage market" (Driberg 1929:180). Two anthropological responses arose to challenge this view. Structural-functional interpretations, which have dominated the literature, argued that while marriage prestations may operate as payments, they have more "...important social functions" (Evans-Pritchard 1931:38), including the jural creation of statuses and the structuring of unilineal descent group relations.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Evans-Pritchard proposed that transfers of marriage prestations be termed bridewealth to express the fact that they performed largely non-payment functions (Ibid.). Economic views re-emerged following Gray's (1960) and Goody's (1973) articles which argued that "wives" were acquired "...like other commodities..." (Gray 1960:56) and that bridewealth payments operated as parts of circulating credit funds (Goody op. cit.:30).

Symbolic and economic views dominate contemporary understanding of bridewealth. Comaroff has edited a volume (1980) whose articles explore the relationship between the meaning of bridewealth and the structural features of the societies in which it is found. Papp (1983) has developed a price theory model of marriage prestations. Meillassoux has originated a Marxist position, recently published in English (1981), which maintains that bridewealth functions "...to reproduce the relations of production..." in domestic economies, at least partially by providing elders a means to control their juniors (1981:67).<sup>3</sup> These different interpretations have yielded valuable insights. This paper's purpose is not to critique existing approaches but to formulate a novel one.

Bridewealth is transmitted in a process that involves the alienation of prestations (Comaroff 1980b:33). This usually occurs as part of a prescribed ceremonial cycle that requires individuals to participate in certain activities so that they can participate in the cycle. Termination

of the cycle in marriage is often contingent upon at least partial disbursement of bridewealth. Alienation occurs in two phases: mobilization and distribution. Mobilization involves the collection of objects to transfer as bridewealth. Distribution concerns the reception of transferred objects. This essay provides evidence suggesting that the mobilization of bridewealth among the Barma of Chad can help socialize young men into their adult economic roles.

The mobilization of bridewealth contributes to the socialization process in two ways. First, a requirement that young men mobilize bridewealth to participate in marriage ceremonies postpones their marriages. This creates a time when socialization may occur. Then, during this time, the conventions regulating marriage ceremonial produce a state of sexual and social deprivation which is terminated by marriage. Marriage, however, only occurs following completion of marriage ceremonies which are structures of sanctions that reward the performance and punish the non-performance of adult economic roles.

The concept of structure of sanctions needs to be clarified to show how this process of socialization occurs. A structure of sanctions is the application of reward or punishment to individuals consequent to their activities. Reduction of sexual and social deprivation is rewarding, while their increase is punishing. The "structure" in a structure of sanctions is the temporal association of, first, certain behaviors with, next, certain sanctions. Socialization occurs because rewarded activities increase at the expense of non-rewarded and punished behaviors. Evidence is presented showing that, for the Barma of Chad, postponement of men's marriage because of difficulties mobilizing bridewealth creates sexual and social frustration. Marriage ceremonies are demonstrated to be a structure of sanctions which reward adult male economic behavior by reducing frustration and punish non-adult male economic behavior by maintaining or increasing this frustration.<sup>4</sup>

## BACKGROUND

Barma (population estimated at 39,500 in 1976) reside in a "sahelo-sudanic" bioclimatic zone near the Chari and Bahr Erguig Rivers. They controlled the kingdom of Bagirmi, which was incorporated into French Equatorial Africa in 1912. Villages (ranging in size from 50 to over 1000 individuals) are the major residential groups beyond the household. These are segmented into wards. Although villages and wards consist largely of kin and there is a tendency for these kin to be agnatically related, unilineal descent is not an organizing principle. The Barma economy is dominated by food production performed by households; the major foods produced are millet and fish. Household productive forces resemble those in Meillassoux's domestic economy (1981): i.e., the labor force is small (about 3.6 workers/household) though it is supplemented by intra-village work parties; it is differentiated by sex (men fish and grow grains; women cultivate okra and perform domestic chores); and tools are rudimentary (hoes, axes, dugout canoes, fishing spears, etc.). Transport and market

conditions constrain commercialization of agriculture (Reyna 1976), though most households sell a portion of their produce.

The following section presents evidence relevant to the socialization interpretation of Barma bridewealth. A succeeding section explores whether this approach is applicable to other societies. It is noted that the socialization approach has an implication for Marxist interpretations.

## ANALYSIS

### 1. Bridewealth, Postponement of Marriage, and Socio-Coital Deprivation

At one time Barma bridewealth involved cloth and metal prestations. For at least 400 years, however, the Barma have participated in Sahelian and trans-Sahelian trade networks that use money. This resulted in a gradual substitution of money for various prestations. Money became a medium of exchange and an indicator of wealth. The arrival of the French intensified these trends, and, as a result, bridewealth became monetized.

Barma men today must complete a cycle of ceremonies to marry. When participating in these, they are said to ui ne, "to follow woman". The Barma perceive different suitors' roughly simultaneous performances of marriage ceremonials aimed at securing the same bride as competitions with the suitor providing the handsomest bridewealth being the one who will secure a bride. Marriage ceremonial appears to have become competitive when money became the measure of wealth because the offering of a high bridewealth validates a man's status as wealthy.<sup>5</sup>

A conjuncture of pre- and post-colonial trends has gradually altered the major actors in the marriage ceremonials from elders to juniors. In the past the Barma had descent groups which gradually disappeared as the state became a more pervasive institution. When descent groups were a significant organizational feature of Barma society, Barma elders arranged their sons' marriages into lineages with which they sought alliance; this alliance of lineages is no longer important. Further, there is a high frequency of divorce which makes it difficult for marriage to be used to establish bonds between affines. Marriage can be used to create client relations with important persons, but, men usually do this by marrying off a daughter to an important man. These changes mean that controlling a son's marriage confers relatively little political advantage to a father. Along with the monetization of bridewealth have come increased opportunities for young men to acquire money (Reyna 1979). These two trends--fathers' reduced incentive to control their sons' marriage and the sons' increased ability to acquire money for bridewealth--result in a situation in which the young males often choose whom they wish to court and then mobilize the resources necessary to do so. Some of these resources might come from elder kin. Others may be secured by entering the market to sell one's labor or to produce cash crops. The more the resources are donated by elder kin, the greater their potential influence over bride selection, but it is now generally the suitor

who mobilizes the resources necessary to marry and decides whose opinions to accept concerning courtable women. Hence, suitors and not their elders are major players in the Barma marriage game.

The bride's family acts as arbiter in marriage preliminaries. They decide, in conformity with convention, which suitor will marry their daughter. The bride, especially if she is young and it is her first marriage, accepts her family's decision. Should she be older, or if it is not her first marriage, she herself may play the arbiter role.

Convention controls suitors' actions by specifying the behaviors that are preconditions for a ceremonial that must occur before the ceremonial cycle can end in a marriage. The following paragraphs describe these conventions and the attendant ceremonial.

The Barma do not have prescriptive marriage rules. A ceremony called lumotar (lumo = ask; tar = lips) must occur before a woman may be courted. In this ceremony, a group of the suitor's male agnates or friends travels to the woman's household. They present gifts, often in kind, and ask permission for their kinsman or friend to court the girl. If the girl's father is satisfied with the gifts and there are no grave objections to the boy or his family, permission to court will be granted and the suitor is entered into competition.

Permission for a man to court a woman by no means establishes that he will marry her. Her family grants courting permission to as many men as are promising. The number of suitors a woman has depends on two factors. The "prettier" she is considered to be, the more suitors she is likely to have. Equally important is her family's status. High-status families are successful at trade, have produced respected mallums (religious specialists), and have ties with the old Bagirmi polity or the present Chadian government. The more of these three attributes a family commands, the higher its status, and the higher its status, the more its daughters will attract followers.

It might seem sensible for families with eligible daughters to prolong courting in hopes of larger bridewealths. My impression is that to some extent they did. They certainly tried to attract as many suitors as possible. This was countered, however, by a strong belief that young women should be bearing children as soon as possible. Further, it was fairly clear, given a woman's status and beauty, what levels of bridewealth she might realistically command. This meant that generally women were quickly married after a suitor had offered the largest amount she was likely to command.

A suitor is not formally forbidden from "following" more than one woman at a time; however, I know of no case in which this occurred. The distances that would have to be travelled plus the expenses that would be incurred in gifts and services tends to discourage casual courting. In addition, the

gifts and services a man gives during his courting are believed to signal his considerable regard to the prospective bride and the family. If he were known to be signalling this regard elsewhere, he would be seen as tal eli (not straight). This would jeopardize the signal his gifts and services were supposed to be sending and, thus, his desirability as a suitor. Furthermore, suitors do not appear to work together to drive marriage costs down. This is partly because the men courting at any given time do not form a cohesive group. They are of different ages and from different areas, and men of different ages and places are not seen as being committed to common goals.

At intervals, a suitor's agnates meet with the woman's family to discuss how the "following" is progressing. During such meetings, the endeavors of competing suitors are reported and the sizes of the bridewealth considered. If the woman's father (or male guardian) agrees to his daughter's marriage, he formally asks his wife for approval. There follows a meeting, termed kendar nja (kendar = to put; nja = day), which has two purposes: the giving of gifts and the setting of a time for the wedding. The groom's representatives should provide gifts for the bride's kin. These gifts are much the same as those of the "following" stage, but there should be more of them specifically earmarked for the bride, the bride's mother, and the bride's father. Another gift, the rubidinar or "childprice" is also given at this time. If it is omitted, children born of the marriage are not considered the husband's. Following the gift exchange, the marriage date is set--usually a general time of year and not a specific day. The marriage date may be set soon after the kendar nja, but it is more common to wait a considerable period, so that the preparations can be made. The day of the wedding, nja tapada (nja = day; tapada = Barma pronunciation of the Arabic al fatia), closes the marriage preliminaries.

In summary, the round of marriage ceremonies:

- 1) opens a period of competition for a suitor (following the lumotar ceremony);
- 2) defines the time when the competition is occurring (between the first lumotar and the kendar nja ceremonies);
- 3) announces the winner of the contest (at the kendar nja ceremony);
- 4) presents a reward (at the marriage).

Convention dictates to Barma men: compete or perish in the marriage "game."

These young men must develop strategies to compete successfully. Three factors are relevant to the strategy formulation: the type of woman to be "followed;" suitors' ages and their wealth; and how payments are made. Two types of women may be distinguished by "price." "Beauty," status, ethnic origin, and previous marital history of women contribute to "price." Beautiful, high-status, never-married Barma or Kanuri women are most

valued. Men must decide whether to "follow" more or less expensive women. Generally, men's wealth is positively related to their age because younger men (under age 25) are more likely to work at productive activities which yield no cash (Reyna 1977:82-84). Hence, younger men possess less wealth with which to make marriage payments than do older men. Payments can be made in service, in gifts (normally purchased for cash), or in cash. Types of payments can be distinguished in terms of whether they rely more on service or more on cash. Hence, two general types of marriage competition strategies are open. "Service" ones de-emphasize all payment except for services. "Cash" ones provide few services and emphasize gifts and high brideprices.

Assuming that the players in the marriage game are usually of different ages, and given that younger men possess less wealth than older men, what are the strategies for older and younger males? Players may compete for "expensive" or "inexpensive" women, emphasizing either "cash" or "service" strategies. Likely rewards in the case of either type of woman would be:

- 1) When an older and younger male both follow the cash strategy, the result would be a wife for the older man. (Reason: the older man's greater wealth.)
- 2) Should the older man continue with the cash strategy and the younger man attempt the service one, the result would be a wife for the older man. (Reason: the younger man's lesser ability to make gifts and bridewealth payments, plus the older man's greater wealth.)
- 3) When the older and younger males both try the service strategy, the expected result would be a wife for the older man. (Reason: the older man's greater wealth plus his "service" would give him the ability to offer more gifts and higher bridewealth.)
- 4) Should the older rest content with his service strategy, and the younger respond with a cash strategy, the result might be a wife for the younger man. (Reason: the older man's greater wealth might be offset by the extra gifts and brideprice the younger man could offer because of his strategy selection.)

One conclusion is inescapable. The odds are against younger men.

Elsewhere it is reported that young Barma males (those 25 and younger) have a very low probability of marriage; that husbands were on the average 10.8 years older than their wives; and that female mean age at first marriage was 14.6 years, while that of their husbands on their wives' first marriage was 26.5 years (Reyna 1972:75). There are four possible explanations of this postponement of male marriage: male sibling order, scarcity of potential brides, presence or absence of living fathers, and the need to mobilize bridewealth. It should be observed that the need to mobilize bridewealth does postpone male marriage. Bridewealth transfers are the largest single money transactions ordinary Barma will make during the

course of their lives. The average marriage cost to a groom was 12,000 F CFA in 1969 (in 1969, \$1.00 = 277 F CFA). These costs of bridewealth exceeded three years of the gross money value of most farmers' total cereal harvests. This implies that if a farmer stopped eating for three years and sold his entire millet crop, he still would not have acquired enough money to meet the average bridewealth prevailing at that time. Thus, what needs to be established is not whether or not bridewealth delays male marriage, but how much the other three factors have the same consequences.

Generally, older brothers are married before younger brothers (Reyna 1972:204). This does not mean that male sibling order has a significant effect on the age of male marriage, it merely is an indicator of which brothers have had more time to mobilize bridewealth. Thus, the fact that older brothers tend to marry before younger ones is a consequence of the fact that it takes considerable time to collect bridewealth. Structural scarcity of marriageable women can be induced by marriage rules which prohibit marriage with large categories of persons, or by practices such as polygyny. Barma marry anyone except parallel cousins and nuclear family members. Hence, there are no restrictions preventing marriage with large categories of people, such as are found among the Dassanetch where such restrictions are believed to affect age of marriage (Almagor 1978:153). Barma practice polygyny, with its highest incidence among men in the 55-59 age group (Reyna 1972:175). But polygyny is not a cause of young men's delayed marriage. Rather it and the postponed age of marriage are consequences of bridewealth mobilization requirements. Older men can more easily mobilize bridewealth than younger men; therefore, they marry more frequently than younger men. Statistical evidence concerning the effect of having a living father on a man's marriage is unavailable. My impression was that the poorest households were those which lacked fathers. Thus, it is possible that sons with dead fathers would marry later than those with living fathers because they would need to divert resources from bridewealth accumulation into the household's subsistence. Such households, however, were infrequent, which suggests that presence or absence of a living father may affect age of marriage but not for very many men. It would seem, then, that the postponement of young men's marriages in large measure results from their need to mobilize bridewealth.

During the period of delayed marriage, young men experience sexual and social deprivation. The following paragraphs describe this deprivation. I tended to socialize with young men roughly my own age after formal data-gathering forays. We would gossip in the shade of a convenient tree. Women were a topic of conversation. I was 25 and married. They were generally unmarried. I was frequently informed that for me life was easy because I could sleep with my wife any time I wanted, while that for them, it was very difficult because it was hard to find somebody to sleep with. Barma are strongly pro-natal, and married men are exhorted to mate regularly with their wives. A man who does not is gada--an impotent white-beard, too old to be taken seriously. Unmarried males have only prostitutes or friends as potential mates. Prostitutes are expensive and far away in urban areas.<sup>6</sup> Friends are scarce because most nubile women are married (Reyna 1972:42).



Adultery with a married woman is regarded as a splendid adventure, but tricky, requiring tact to create assignations and bravado should these go awry. There is every change of being beaten by an outraged husband and then taken to court and fined by him. Experience counts because of such risks. My unmarried friends considered the "champion" adulterer to be a fast-talking, wily, middle-aged, married man. Homosexuality is a release for some, but of interest to relatively few. Masturbation is equally a possibility, but one considered wrong: you don't "waste" yourself; you make children. This meant that masturbation was practiced furtively, which made one feel "bad". In sum, unmarried Barma men tended to experience sexual frustration because of lack of coital opportunity.

Social deprivation was experienced as reduced deference. Barma lack formal age institutions for males and females. There is, however, a classification of males into different age categories which goes roughly from young boy (less than 10) to young adolescent (age 10-14) to mature adolescent (15 to marriage) to young married man (age of marriage to 44) to mature married man (about 44-65) and finally to aged man (usually above 66). Different conceptions of judgemental ability are assigned to the occupants of different age categories. Men who are mature adolescents or younger are seen as children whose judgements are suspect. Married men are conceived of as adults whose experience, and hence judgement, grows as they age. The most respected age is that of a mature, married man. An older, unmarried man in his 40's can always be censured as still basically a child. Married men cannot be chided in this way. Younger married men may not be treated very seriously, but they at least have the right to be heard.

Perhaps because of these notions of judgement, older men are treated deferentially. When farming, they may be expected to work less. When out of doors and not working, they are accorded the shadiest, coolest spots in which to repose--a considerable privilege in an area where temperatures over 110° are regularly recorded during the dry season. During meals, the oldest men eat first, of the choicest foods, and as much as they want. They will be brought water to drink. After meals, they are brought water to wash themselves with. There are gatherings of men that convene in each ward every day. Though informal, these sessions play a vital role in communicating information and formulating opinions about affairs that touch village and ward. Mature, married men sit on cushions or stools in the center of large mats laid out beneath trees. Younger, married men sit on these mats, but on the edges and without stools or cushions. Young, unmarried men sit in the dirt beside the mat. In the discussions, older men are listened to even if what they say is eccentric. It is good form to praise them politely. Thus, Barma notions concerning male age distinguish two major age categories defined in terms of marital status, judgemental skills, and deference. "Juniors" are unmarried men who formulate immature judgements to whom deference is not owed. "Elders" are married men who increasingly make mature judgements and to whom deference is accorded.

The deference accorded married men is in the form of food, water, cool temperature, and praise. Women, regardless of age, owe some deference to

married men. Younger men owe deference to older men. This means that as a married man ages, he acquires a greater number of younger males who should exhibit deference. Hence, increased age results in increased number of rewarders, which leads to increased rewards. There are, of course, exceptions. A wise gentleman of 50 or so will be treated more deferentially than a blundering twit of the same age. But the crucial point is that the spoils of deference cannot begin to accrue to a man until he has married.

In the late afternoon during ward gossip sessions, juniors sit in the dirt at the edge of mats respectfully deferring to elders. Bony chickens and dogs nose about in the dirt around them searching for tidbits of garbage thrown by elders. At dusk, elders return to preside over their compounds, to be waited upon by their wives, and, perhaps, to indulge in some niknik (sex). Juniors said the life of an older is lel (sweet), while theirs was onyo ojo (very trying). The socio-coital deprivation juniors experience is onyo ojo because they are deprived of the rewards of sex and deference received by their elders.

## 2. The Marriage Ceremonial as Structures of Sanctions

Barma marriage ceremonials administer certain sanctions, including sexual reward and punishment, to suitors. Courting is not a neutral question for the Barma. Teenage boys find themselves facing peer and adult pressures to enter marriage competitions. Boys who talk about or actually enter a marriage competition are considered resourceful and good. Their peers like them and their kin are proud of them. The boy who expresses little interest in such competitions may be called malabili (master-of-laziness) or huwan pu (nothing, nothing). He is less popular among his age mates. His adult kin fret over his silliness. The Barma male teenager's situation resembles that of his public school American counterpart (cf. Coleman 1961)--both are under pressure to be 'sportsmen'. The events vary, but contingencies are the same. If "unathletic", they are presented the punishment of censure; if "athletic", they receive the reward of praise. Thus, for young men, reward is contingent upon entering marriage competitions and punishment follows from avoiding such competitions.

Throughout the competition, age mates, adult kin, and neighbors of a suitor praise and censure him as he performs the tasks that compose his strategy. Consider, for example, Hadji, part of whose strategy included service in his prospective father-in-law's sorghum field. The older man would inspect Hadji's work, and, as he did so, encourage him. Sometimes the encouragement was only a broad smile and a taunt: "You work well for a small person." Other times it was direct and simple: "Well done." The reward (praise) is contingent upon horticultural work. Once, after the father-in-law left the field, Hadji's age mates fell to teasing him, but even their taunts delivered approval: "Ah, serious Hadji, hard-working Hadji, soon Hadidja will be yours."

Examples of behaviors inappropriate to the marriage game receiving punishment occurred as well. Hadji, for example, was a mediocre fisherman.

During his time of courting, he would be scolded by his brothers when he came in with a poor catch: "Fine man you are, "following" Hadidja against Iba and Musa, and you can't even catch fish." During the marriage game, inappropriate or inept farming behavior also brings punishment (scorn).

The marriage ceremonies administer sanctions after the contest is finished. To the winners, kendar nja and nja tapada are primarily times when friends, kin, neighbors, even enemies, sometimes exuberantly, at others calmly, congratulate the winner. Younger men begin to defer to them. Nja tapada, following a mock struggle on the part of the bride, culminates in the provision of sexual release. For losers, kendar nja and nja tapada are times of punishment. Losers are unlikely to attend kendar nja ceremonies which are restricted to representatives of the woman and of the winner. They are likely to know about the ceremonies, however, and news of the ceremony publically advertises their failure. Losers, if they live in the immediate neighborhood of the winner, are quite likely to attend at least part of the nja tapada because these tend to be open to the entire community. Attendance puts one in the presence of one's vanquisher, to whom it is now appropriate to show deference, while he receives his prize and attendant praise. Kendar nja opens the wounds; nja tapada rubs in the salt.

### 3. The Evidence for Socialization

Evidence that socialization actually occurs as a consequence of participation in marriage ceremonial comes from chi square analysis of the relationship between men's experience mobilizing bridewealth and their performance of adult farming roles as well as from a number of case histories. Barma say that men work more independently of each other when they are confident of their skills. Inexperienced farmers pool their labor with experienced ones in a practice called tadchita kede ("work one") so that the inexperienced person can learn from the other and reduce his chance of spoiling a harvest through ignorance. Thus, when men farm alone on their own fields, it indicates they have acquired mature farming skills.

Table 1 examines the relationship in two Barma villages between the experience men have in mobilizing bridewealth and whether or not they farm independently. Young men who were aged 29 or less had, on the average, participated in less than two marriage competitions. This meant that they had had to work to mobilize bridewealth fewer than two times. Those older than 20 had, on the average, participated in well over two marriage competitions, and thus had considerably greater experience working to mobilize bridewealth. Hence, those aged 29 and under were classified as "inexperienced" and those 30 and over as "experienced" bridewealth mobilizers. Then it was observed whether bridewealth mobilizers farmed their fields alone or had entered into a tadchita kede arrangement. The chi square analysis suggests that there is a non-chance relationship between the experience men have mobilizing bridewealth and farming their own fields. This finding suggests that the more times men participate in marriage

ceremonials and mobilize bridewealth, the more times they farm, and that the more they farm, the better they get at it--increasing their confidence so they dispense with tadchita kede arrangements.

Three case histories provide evidence illustrating the operation of structures of sanctions during the mobilization of bridewealth. The first is that of Iba and Ahmet.

Mandina was a teenage woman of Bey Ngollo. She had been a childhood playmate of Iba and Ahmet--late teenagers--who were from economically average households. Mandina was an extremely desirable potential wife. She was considered a great belle and was from an important family.

Iba and Ahmet courted her because they were keenly attracted to her. Age mates and family urged them on, if for no other reason than they were the village's own. They worked to acquire bridewealth, but because they lacked their own fields and did not know how to fish well or to cut and market wood, they simply could not mobilize very much money. Mandina was also courted by an important religious specialist and by a Chef de Canton, both of whom derived high, by Barma standards, incomes from their occupations. Competition terminated when the religious specialist offered a bridewealth of 90,000 F CFA--slightly over eight times the 1969-70 average--which was immediately topped by the Chef de Canton. Iba and Ahmet went to this latter's wedding--the year's most splendid Bey Ngollo life-cycle event--muttering sardonic jokes about life being onyo ojo. Watching Mandina sequestered into someone else's compound, either Iba or Ahmet said "It wasn't fair." In 1978 Iba had left Bey Ngollo to acquire carpentry skills in the capital so that he could earn money to marry. Iba and Ahmet worked, but they didn't know how to work well enough, so they were punished by Mandina's wedding, which exacerbated the socio-coital deprivation. But by 1978 Iba had left to learn a money-earning skill.

Gongaba was well into his 30's, a strapping and helpful giant. But he was deaf and could only communicate with the grunts and whines of an infant. It may have been that because of his disability he was not taught to work and was considered a child; or it may have been that he was considered a child because of his disability and not taught to work. Whatever the case, Gongaba was a willing worker but a childish one. He eagerly did lifting, tugging and pulling chores, but invariably under the direction of someone else. He did no farming on his own during the research period, nor did he appear to have done so in the past. Consequently, he could not mobilize bridewealth, and because of this, he remained an aging junior. Gongaba was not unmarried because he had a disability. There were other men with equally severe impairments who had married. But these men had acquired their disabilities after they learned to work. Gongaba's peculiar status was recognized in his name, which means "male child." The crucial point is: Gongaba worked, but not like an adult, and so socio-coital deprivation dragged on. I recall his acute discomfiture at once being teased by some teenage girls.

Musa was a young man (age 27 in 1969) from an economically average household. His father was alive but too old to make a real subsistence contribution. Musa was the oldest of the remaining children in the family and was married to the sister of a ward head. She was considered belle and was married as a virgin. Musa realized that in order to marry, he would have to do something that yielded gurus noko ojo (lots and lots of money). There were Hausa fishermen living near Musa's village who fished commercially and were very successful. Musa adopted their fishing and marketing practices. This meant that for two years, instead of fishing in local waters and selling in neighboring markets, he followed the Hausa pattern of moving to the best fishing grounds and the best markets at different times of the year. In the process, he became the best fisherman in Bey Ngollo. The cash he made from his fishing was sufficient to allow him to court his present wife successfully against three other suitors. The three cases illustrate the essentials of the structure of sanctions prevailing in Barma marriage ceremonies. If you cannot work like an adult, you are punished (Iba, Ahmet, Gongaba); if you can, you are rewarded (Musa).

The accumulation of sufficient bridewealth to marry takes a young man several years. This period--occurring between the ages of 15 and 25 for most men--is a period of socialization when these young men learn adult male economic behavior. The socio-coital deprivation that young men experience in these years is part of the structure of sanctions in which adequate performance of adult economic roles is rewarded by the acquiring of a wife and the consequent reduction of deprivation. Inadequate performance is punished by the maintaining or exacerbating of this deprivation. Evidence from two villages and case histories indicates that economic role socialization does occur when young men mobilize bridewealth. The criteria used to evaluate the empirical status of arguments include representativeness, control for alternative explanations, and fit of the data (Zetterberg 1965: 100-113). It is not known whether the observations reported in the preceding analysis are representative. Nor is there control for rival hypotheses. But the existing observations do "fit" in that what has been observed is what would be expected if the structure of sanctions helps young men to learn adult economic roles.

## DISCUSSION

Several ethnographers have made asides in the discussion of other issues that suggest that bridewealth helps socialize males into their mature economic tasks in other societies. These asides often include observations that young men must work to mobilize bridewealth helps socialize males into their mature economic tasks in other societies. For example, one Dodoth father said that his son "...is like a porter here. If he does his work well, I will give him enough cattle to marry" (Thomas 1965:98). A Giriama man said, "...I sell palms to get a wife..." (Parkin 1972:68). Thus, among Dodoth, East African cattle pastoralists, juniors appear to work for their elders to secure bridewealth cattle--and while they work, they learn to work better. Similarly, among cash-cropping Giriama of the Kenya coast, a man is constrained to sell his palm products to secure bridewealth, but before he can sell these, he must learn to produce them.

Nuer evidence is supportive of a male socialization hypothesis. In Evans-Pritchard's time, bridewealth usually involved 20 to 30 head of cattle (1951:83), most of which had to be disbursed prior to the final marriage ceremonies (*Ibid.*:84). These animals came largely from the groom's household's herd, over which the groom's father enjoyed "...full rights of disposal..." (Evans-Pritchard 1940:17). So extensive were these rights that a father could continue to direct the use of animals even after they had been given to a son (Evans-Pritchard 1951:129). Nuer boys are described as working for their fathers unless these were "selfish" or "extravagant" in their use of household herds, thereby threatening their sons' ability to acquire bridewealth (*Ibid.*:138). Thus, if their fathers could make bridewealth transactions, Nuer boys apparently worked for their fathers and, through this labor, acquired adult pastoral and horticultural skills.

There is some evidence that marriage ceremonials can socialize males even in the absence of bridewealth. Ilongots, Philippine upland rice horticulturalists noted for their headhunting, termed unmarried teenage males "...'anxious seekers' as opposed to those satisfied...with a bride," who "...find their bodies 'lose their tension' (*yated*)..." (M. Rosaldo 1980:154). *Yated* would appear to be an Ilongot term for the discomforts of coital deprivation. Teenage men can terminate their "tension" through participation in marriage preliminaries, which include provision of brideservice during which the potential bridegroom demonstrates "...his prowess in labor..." (R. Rosaldo 1980:182). Rosaldo has provided information strongly suggesting that proficient work during brideservice is rewarded while incompetence is punished (*Ibid.*:180-183).

It is unclear whether a potential groom's participation in marriage preliminaries is or was contingent upon his taking a head. There is a widespread attitude that an unmarried man should "...'reach' a human victim before 'sitting with' a wife" (M. Rosaldo 1980:169). Head-hunting is an activity with considerable socialization potential because Ilongot men's roles emphasize hunting which "...involves movement and uncertain action, situational diversity and distant rewards..." (*Ibid.*:123), precisely what head-hunting involves. To participate in marriage preliminaries and terminate the "tension" associated with coital deprivation, Ilongot participated in head-hunting, which presumably taught them about hunting less wily species. Thus, Ilongot marriage ceremonial involved brideservice and head-hunting, both of which appear to have been effective socialization activities.

Four anecdotal observations do not confirm an hypothesis cross-culturally. The following statements bear upon the possible occurrence in other societies of the three propositions that compose the socialization hypothesis proposed for Barma:

1. There is considerable African cross-cultural evidence that bridewealth postpones the male age of marriage (Brass 1968:200; Mair 1953:56; Goody 1973).
2. There is no systematic evidence that the postponement of marriage results in sexual and social deprivation. Ethnographic accounts, especially of sexual matters, tend to be sketchy. Dyson-Hudson, for example, implies that the need to mobilize bridewealth among the Karamajong postpones marriage; but he also says that pre-marital sexual activity is frequent (1966:169). Tait, describing Konkomba, also suggests that bridewealth mobilization requirements postpone male marriage, and observes that from adolescence "...onwards...'men'...carry on love affairs" (1961:96). Thus the Konkomba would seem to be like the Karamajong with pre-marital sexual activity reducing coital deprivation. Tait estimated, as Dyson-Hudson did not, the frequency of coitus during these affairs, noting that men "...may have to wait up to three months" between trysts (*Ibid.*:96). Ethnographic accounts seem clearer concerning social deprivation. Throughout Africa, never-married men remain in the status of juniors and are denied the deference that is conventionally accorded elders.
3. There is no systematic evidence that socio-coital deprivation operates during marriage ceremonial as part of a structure of sanctions which appears to be the case among the Barma.

This situation suggests the fruitfulness of further research.

Ethnographic differences between the Barma and other societies with bridewealth suggest three situations in which initial inspection reveals that bridewealth does not appear able to socialize male economic behaviors. Closer analysis, however, shows the socialization hypothesis may still apply. We begin with the observation that elders in many societies were responsible for the mobilization of bridewealth which might mean that the need to transmit bridewealth in these societies could have been an incentive for fathers--but not for sons--to work. African ethnography clearly shows, however, that unmarried men generally work for their elders--most frequently sons work for their fathers. This might be partially because if a son withheld work, his father could withhold bridewealth. This made it possible for elders to make the provision of sexual reinforcers and the other rewards associated with adult status contingent upon juniors' work for them. Thus, the fact that elders, and not juniors, frequently disbursed bridewealth does not alter the reality that having sufficient bridewealth to marry was contingent on work.

Pastoral societies might pose a problem for a socialization approach to bridewealth because a major male role, herding, is learned long before there is any need to mobilize bridewealth. My fieldwork among the semi-sedentary, cattle-raising Abu Krider immediately south of Lake Chad indicated that herding was not an adult activity. Boys had acquired herding skills by the age of 10; mature, married men herded only on rare occasions. Men's work

was herd management. If men were not proficient at herd management, they usually lacked enough animals to mobilize bridewealth. This meant that men who had learned to manage a herd had an advantage in acquiring the animals needed to marry. I suspect that herding is child's play and herd management men's work in most other pastoral societies.

It is possible that bridewealth cannot socialize males into adult economic roles when it is largely transferred after marriage as is generally the case among the Tswana (Comaroff 1980b:161-194) and the Dassanetch (Almagor 1980). In the Barma case, bridewealth mobilization requirements ( $BW_m$ ) postpone marriage for a man, resulting in a socio-coital deprivation ( $DEP_{s-c}$ ) which is reduced following work mobilizing bridewealth ( $W_{bw}$ ) that permits marriage (M). The temporal sequence of events is thus:

$$BW_m \rightarrow DEP_{s-c} \rightarrow W_{bw} \rightarrow M.$$

Among the Tswana and Dassanetch, the temporal relationship between marriage and bridewealth appears to be the reverse of that among the Barma, or:

$$M \rightarrow BW.$$

This means that bridewealth cannot motivate men to work for the reward of marriage because they are already married when they transfer bridewealth. Even under these conditions, however, bridewealth can still play a role in male economic socialization, and the case of the Dassanetch suggests how. Dassanetch men appear to marry at roughly the same age as do the Barma men (*Ibid.*:153) and, also like the Barma men, "...a man pays his own bridewealth...and thus demonstrates his independence from his father and his brothers" (*Ibid.*:194). Unlike the situation among the Barma, however, much bridewealth is transferred for years after a marriage has begun. A significant observation "...is that most married men are under constant pressure to make payments..." (*Ibid.*:181) (emphasis added). This pressure is from the wife givers and is for the appropriate bridewealth animals. If, indeed, Dassanetch men are hounded by affines to hand over bridewealth, they must manage their herds well enough to produce the required animals, which suggests they have learned adult herd management skills. Thus, the "constant pressure" to meet bridewealth responsibilities suggests the following structure of sanctions: 1) manage herd well, meet bridewealth obligations, and relieve the "constant pressure;" or 2) manage herd poorly, face difficulties meeting bridewealth obligations, and intensify the "constant pressure." Thus, it would appear the bridewealth is part of a structure of sanctions that is quite different from that among the Barma but nevertheless has the same function as that operating among the Barma.

#### CONCLUSION

Finally, if bridewealth can help men acquire their adult economic roles, then this has implications for its reproductive, in the Marxist sense, functions. Marx's notions of the reproduction of people and objects were



sketched in Grundrisse and then applied in Capital. I use the term in the sense of Balibar's reading of these works as those processes whose operation "...ensures the successive continuity of production itself..." (1970:258-259). Meillassoux argued that bridewealth had a hand in the reproduction of production relations in domestic economies. The present analysis suggests that it could have had, in addition, a part in the reproduction of productive forces. Land in domestic economies, under the conditions of low population density, was abundant. Means of production were simple and widely available. Thus, processes reproducing productive forces in domestic economies were largely concerned with labor. Three reproductive processes were crucial: the supply of labor to the domestic production unit; the training of labor for effective operation in these units; and the attachment of labor to these units once they have been supplied so that production could exhibit a "successive continuity." Bridewealth is involved in the second of the three reproductive activities because, as the evidence in this essay has suggested, it is a way of obliging young men to acquire "job" training. Thus, bridewealth has been "revisited" in two ways. First, it was argued that bridewealth helped socialize males into their adult economic roles, and, second, that in doing so, it could reproduce the productive force--labor--in domestic economies.

NOTES

1. Data used in this paper were collected between July, 1969 and November, 1970 and in December, 1978. Participant observation techniques were used in the towns, given the pseudonyms Bey Ngollo and Bey Mbassa. Survey procedures described in Reyna (1972:8-16) were applied to a sample of Northwestern Barma.
2. References to the 1920s and 1930s literature can be found in Gray (1960). A useful review of the marriage prestation literature is in Comaroff 1980a:1-49). Classic formulations of the structural-functional views of bridewealth came in Radcliffe-Brown and Jorde (1950), Fortes (1962), and Mitcnell (1963).
3. Some difficulties of Papp's position are aired in Sansom (1976) and Reyna and Gratton (1983). A valuable critique of Meillassoux's position has been presented in Clammer (1977).
4. A structure of sanctions is, in learning theory terms, any social and cultural situation that performs operant or respondent conditioning. Social reward or punishment is any reinforcer or aversive stimuli provided by one human to another (cf. Skinner 1953, 1969).
5. Though the Barma tended to view marriage ceremonies as a "game," it should be clear that in no formal sense is the analysis in this paper that of mathematical game theory.

Barma marry Kanuri, Hausa, and Chadian Arabs. My anecdotal knowledge of these people suggests that among them: 1) grooms are increasingly major players in marriage ceremonies; 2) suitors offering the finest bridewealth are normally awarded the bride; and 3) younger men are less wealthy than older men. Hopen reports competition between suitors over bridewealth among certain Chad Basin Fulani (1958:84).

Marriage involving payments from the suitor is not always the only Barma marriage form. There is also sataga marriage in which the suitor is given a wife by her family. To qualify for this type of marriage, the groom must be a religious specialist (mallum). Sataga marriage occurs infrequently (in 1% of the extant Northwest Barma marriages in 1969-1970).

6. Unmarried men normally found prostitutes in N'Djamena, the capital, where there was a "dual" system of prostitution. According to one informant, Europeans generally frequented women called Congo, while Africans visited les traditionelles. The former sported European clothing, charged considerable sums, did not perform conventional rituals of intercourse, and would often rob their clients. Congo were too expensive for young Barma men. There was a considerable French

military presence in the capital from 1960 to 1978 whose personnel on off-duty hours roamed the city seeking women. The French military establishment constructed a spacious bordello next to the refrigerated slaughterhouse in an attempt to cope with this demand, but my impression was that it was unable to do so. This high demand made it easier for traditionelle women to become Congo, which made it harder for unmarried Barma to find prostitutes. Women were lost to older men with money in the villages. They went to Europeans with more money in the capital. The message was clear: access to women is based on money.

TABLE 1: The Relationship Between Men's Experience Mobilizing Bridewealth and Their Performance of Adult Economic Roles\*

Experience Mobilizing Bridewealth	More Adult Economic Role (farm own field alone)	Less Adult Economic Role (farm field with another)	Totals
Lesser	6 (11)	19 (14)	25
Greater	15 (10)	9 (14)	24
	21	28	49

$\chi^2 = 7.5$   
 $p = 0.025$

\*Data is derived from the villages of Bey Ngollo and Bey Mbassa. The figures in parentheses are expected frequencies.

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