

ASPECTS OF SISALA MARRIAGE PRESTATION¹

by

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Introduction

Some anthropologists have treated marriage prestations as if they were a single payment variously called bride-price or bride-wealth. While most writers have elaborated to point out that there are usually several items to the marriage prestations, these prestations have often been, nevertheless, treated as if they all served the same function. In this article I hope to show that among the Sisala of Northern Ghana such prestations are a complex series of payments, services, sacrifices and gifts which cannot be analyzed effectively as a single payment with a single name, but rather must be broken down into constituent parts. Once this is done it can be seen that each part of the total payment serves as a functional cluster of episode, although the total series of prestations can be viewed as a "single fund of value" (Fortes 1962:3) which is given in exchange for certain rights over the bride. Each functional unit has its own norms and concomitant sanctions and each forms an episode in the total process of exchange which occurs between descent groups.

In the Introduction to *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* Radcliffe-Brown (1950) mentioned five possible functions of marriage prestations: (1) They establish the legality of marriage, (2) they, in part, are a compensation for the loss of a daughter as a productive worker and group member, (3) the giving of them is a form of "gift-exchange" which serves to create an inter-group alliance of amity, (4) they establish

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the legitimacy of the children, and (5) when cattle are a symbolic link with the ancestors and are used in marriage payments, a ritually significant link is established between the two groups. Subsequent research has normally dealt with one or a combination of these functions.

In the Introduction to *Marriage in Tribal Societies* Fortes (1962: 9-10) suggested that marriage prestations were comprised of two main divisions; the Prime Prestation and the Contingent Prestation and he elaborated the characteristics of each. The Prime Prestation is "stipulated by the marriage laws", it is normally fixed in amount and kind, and is limited to the marriage situation viz., some restrictions are placed on the further use of this payment and it normally is used for a like payment. Bargaining does not occur with regard to this payment and it is the essential payment made in exchange for the rights in *genetricem* over the woman. Of the other payments, Fortes says:

The Contingent Prestations have a different meaning, even when they are made up of the same kinds of goods and services as the Prime Prestations. They are often open to bargaining and may be partly or wholly counter-balanced by reciprocal gifts or services from the recipients. This is understandable, for they are not a jural instrument for the transfer of rights but a means of winning and preserving the good will of those with the power to transfer marital rights. There is an element of barter in them. In other words, they are the medium through which affinal relations are established and maintained. That is why they are often, if not normally, spread out over time and may be linked with the fortunes of family.

In this article I wish to analyze Sisala marriage prestations in light of Fortes' paradigm and try to explicate each functional unit in relation to Radcliffe-Brown's outline.

Sisala Marriage

Among the Sisala, as among other tribes of Northern Ghana (cf. Goody 1969), marriage ceremonies are not elaborate but rituals of birth are. Between the two main divisions of marriage prestations, the Contingent Prestations (*haalakiaa*) and the Prime Prestations (*hajarikiaa*), there is a similar stress in that custom (*kisinga*) explicitly dictates norms and sanctions concerning the latter payments. Since the Prime Prestations deal with genetricial rights, it appears that descent is more important to the Sisala than affinity, which is established and maintained by the contingent prestations which are not so strictly outlined by custom. Completion of the *haalakiaa* payments allows the groom to collect his bride to his natal village. The payment of the *hajarikiaa* establishes legitimate descent ties for the offspring of the union. Thus, rituals of birth and payment of the Prime Prestations take precedence and are emphasized by Sisala culture over actual marriage ceremonies and exchanges which establish affinal links between groups.

In this paper I am primarily interested in the rearrangements of social structure brought on by marriage (cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1950:43) and not in marriage as an event in the life cycle of the individual (cf. Portes 1962). With regard to marriage prestations, it is necessary to view marriage not as an event, but as a developing process (Radcliffe-Brown 1950:49) because these prestations transpire over a long period of time and serve a variety of functions. Their payment provides a rigidly defined means of symbolizing and institutionalizing the changes in social structure, that is, relationships and the distribution of rights and duties which are brought on by marriage. These changes take place in stages over time and hence so do the marriage prestations.

Marriage is ideally polygamous and residence is patrilocal in most cases. When a man sees a girl who is attractive to him he approaches her with a small "love gift," (*helating*). It is necessary for him to

pay for this himself and hence it is usually a small monetary payment or gift of between a few pesewas to a few cedis, depending on the desirability of the girl. Once the girl accepts the "love gift" and reciprocates with a similar gift the couple become lovers (*helaa*). Normally a man gives out many such gifts and a girl may accept multiple "love gifts" until a union is formed which is sufficiently stable to induce the man to approach her father with the first instalment of the *haalakiaa*. After paying the *haalakiaa* the man travels to the girl's village with a part of agnates and collects his new wife.² The Prime Prestation (*hajarikiaa*) is not paid until after the birth of one or more children and is normally not called for by the father of the girl until he has a similar claim placed on him. Sometimes exigencies such as funeral expenses or a crop failure may also force a father to call for the *hajarikiaa* sooner, but never before the birth of offspring, however.

Marriage prestations are paid and received by the jural guardian of the groom and bride respectively. In a segmentary lineage system, as exists among the Sisala, the duty to pay and the right to receive such prestations does not lie with the lineage head (*jechikintina*), but with the immediate jural elder subject to the authority of the *jechikintina*, who is the supreme lineage authority (cf. Fortes 1970:104). In fact sometimes the *jechikintina* performs the ceremony of transfer while the immediate jural guardian, the father if he is alive, provides or receives the actual wealth.

Residential propinquity is a strong determinant of marital choice. While clan exogamy rules prohibit a man from taking a bride from one of the clan villages, there are no prescribed marriage patterns. In such an open or proscriptive system one tends to marry a spouse from a geographically and socially close group. This may be at the base of the fact that although it is ideally improper for a man to take a wife from the clan of his mother or his mother's mother, such practices do occur. This is partly due to the frequency and facility of meeting persons from such groups but it also serves the function of facilitating the performance of the rights and duties inherent in the affinal relationship (cf. Fortes 1962:5-6).

According to Fortes (1962:2) there is an anti-thesis between affinal and kinship bonds but both are created by marriage. Both, then derive from a necessarily non-kinship situation. The Sisala say, *La jaa la lul biring ne, la ne ti la biring we la si ti la ne jaa ba ba naang ba*, meaning, "We marry to give birth to children, and we own the children because we have married their mothers." The important question becomes, "What is a legal marriage among the Sisala?" The answer is that it is one which involves the transfer of both *haalakiaa* and *hajarikiaa* from the lineage of the groom to the lineage of the bride.³ The *haalakiaa* payments are necessary for the establishment of the affinal tie between the two descent groups and the *hajarikiaa* payment, which is delayed until after the birth of children, reinforces and maintains that tie and establishes that the children are the jurally recognized offspring of the pater, that is, that they have socially recognized claims of descent. An illegitimate child (*mengmouribie*) is one which has no such claim because no jurial relation has been established between the descent group of his mother and that of his genitor.

Sisala marriage, then, largely concerns the payment of certain prestations by the groom's lineage (*jehiking*) to the bride's lineage. These prestations serve to establish a relationship of affinity as well as creating legitimate union from which legitimate children may result. The different parts of the total series of marriage payments serve different functions in that some initiate, establish and reinforce the affinal tie while allowing for the transfer of uxorial rights, and other parts establish the legitimacy of the marriage and hence the descent claims of the offspring. It is therefore important to precisely delineate which structural elements in the marriage institution perform these various functions.

The Contingent Prestations

Once a man has decided that he wishes to marry a certain girl, or a marriage has been arranged for him, and his jurial guardian has consented to supply

the *haalakiaa* (lit. "wife-things"), he sends a *sipatoro* (go-between) to inform the girl's father or jural guardian that he wishes to begin making the *haalakiaa* payments. These are normally spread out over a year, but may be completed sooner or take up to two years time to complete. However, a father that causes such protracted negotiations is considered "greedy".

Once the time is set for the first instalment, the young and a group of his agnates, including the *sipatoro* to his future wife's village, set out for a meeting with the girl's father and the other *sipatoro*.⁴ When the party arrives at the girl's lineage settlement (*jehiking*) they are given water and food and they present the *haalakiaa* instalment to the proper lineage representative, normally one of the girl's brothers. The father avoids receiving any of the payments directly in order to avoid the appearance of selling (*yalle*) daughter.

The actual amount of each instalment varies, as does the total number of instalments and each is open to bargaining. Although such bargaining is allowed, it is not of the order of market bargaining and the father must avoid the appearance of a sale. The following is an accounting of the fifth and final instalment of *haalakiaa*: Fifty kola nuts, one bottle of (*akpeteshi*) (native gin), and a large container of tobacco. These items were distributed among the males of the girl's lineage and none of the payments passed outside of the bounds of the lineage (*jehiking*).

On the following day the groom's party is required to perform brideservice by journeying to the father's farm to perform tasks of weeding, hoeing etc. This is repeated the following day as well and normally on the third day the groom begs his leave and returns home.

In addition to the payment of the *haalakiaa* instalment and the performance of brideservice, the groom is required to provide fowls to be sacrificed to the girl's ancestors. The meat of these sacrifices is shared by the members of the girl's lineage but the groom's party

is expressly forbidden to partake of it. The sacrifices are said to be necessary in order to inform the girl's ancestors of her betrothal and impending marriage. Similar sacrifices are required of the husband all throughout the marriage and they serve as a ritual link, not only between the living members of the two descent groups, but with the ancestors as well. Similarly, the ancestors must be informed upon the death of the wife as to whether the *hajarikisa* has been paid. This must be done before the ancestors will consent to allowing the funeral to be performed in the husband's village.

Once the girl's father has consented to receive the final payment of *haalakisa*, the groom's party is allowed to take the bride. After the normal mock battle and show of hostility between descent groups, the groom's party retreats paying each of the girl's clansmen they meet along the way with cowries and kola nuts. Any clansman has the right to extract such a payment and failure to produce it could cause interference with the marriage. In actual practice, this event is cause for much joking and joviality.

After the bride has been with her husband for about a year, her father has the right to call for the last formal part of the Contingent prestations, the *haaljasung* (beverage for marrying a woman.)⁵ This customary placation payment includes pito beer (*sinang*) or sometimes native gin (*akpeteshi*), a normal instalment of *haalakisa*, cowries, bride-service and ancestral sacrifices. The beverage, kola, tobacco, cowries, and sacrificial meat is distributed to all male members of the girl's lineage who serve as living witnesses to the success of the marriage.⁶

The Contingent Prestations, comprised of the *haalakisa* and *haaljasung* payments, establish and maintain affinal relations throughout the betrothal period and until the marriage has survived the first year. During this time the *Sisala* are well aware that young wives have a tendency to run away (*fa viri*) and quarrels are more likely to result in permanent separation early in the marriage than later. The *haaljasung* payment is symbolic of a successful first year.

Before payment of the Contingent Prestations no relationship exists, ideally, between the descent groups involved. The appointment of two sipatoro and the payment of the haalakiaa establish an affinal relationship. The payment in instalment ending with the haaljasung payment a year after the marriage, ensures that the link will be established well enough to stand the test of time. In fact, some suitors begin to pay the haalakiaa with all good intentions, but are unable to complete them and the relationship of affinity between the two lineages is not finalized. Payment of the haalakiaa symbolizes the transfer of sexual and domestic rights over the bride. Payment of the haaljasung signifies a successful completion of the first phase in the process of establishing a legal marriage. The next phase comes after the union has produced offspring and the father-in-law exercises his right to call for the hajarikiaa.

The Prime Prestation

Whereas the Contingent Prestations are paid during betrothal and the initial stages of marriage, the Prime Prestations (*hajarikiaa* or *jaraang*) are paid after the birth of at least one child. In this sense they could be regarded as "progeny-price" since they explicitly represent the transfer of generational rights. In another sense, *hajarikiaa* are additional marriage prestations which maintain the affinal relationship established by previous instalments.

When a young man begins to search for a wife he is, especially in the case of a first wife, dependent on his father or jural guardian to pay the haalakiaa. All payments are the collective responsibility of the lineage (*jehiking*), but if the individual has attained personal wealth or independence, he pays the *hajarikiaa* himself. Most often he does so "through" the lineage elder (*jehikintina*). However, if a man is unable to pay the *hajarikiaa* himself it remains the responsibility of

the *jehiking* to produce the payment, lest their reputation be besmirched. Most lineages maintain a "pool of wealth", in the form of a cattle herd (*nadaara*), for such payments and the *jehikintina* draws on this "pool" when needed. Lineage members are required to replenish this herd when necessary. If the lineage herd has been depleted to zero, the *jehikintina* has the responsibility to find a cow, or the equivalent in money, and most frequently he calls for an outstanding payment due for one of their lineage daughters, in fact one demand for *hajarikiaa* often sets off a chain of reaction rippling across a series of affinal links. The *Sisala* themselves are quite aware that to have many sons depletes this herd and to have many daughters increases its size. They always hope for a position somewhere in the middle. In any case, the obligation never passes outside the lineage (*jehiking*) although the *jehikintina* may borrow a cow from another *vaidongo* lineage in his burial group, but this cow has to be eventually paid back.⁷ Within the *jehiking*, no such payment is necessary.

Clearly one of the most important reasons why the *hajarikiaa* must be paid is because failure to do so is thought to affect subsequent marriages of village members. Marriage creates a bond of affinal alliance between villages. If a village, that is any *jehiking* within a village, is once deficient in the payment of *hajarikiaa*, prospective affines may take notice. It is feared that this might lead to a bad reputation causing fathers to discourage their daughters from marrying into that village. On the other hand, once the *hajarikiaa* is paid it is bad form to ask for its return. Failure to pay *hajarikiaa* and seeking the return of *hajarikiaa* already paid are both actions that affect the reputation of lineage and village involved. The village members put pressure on the lineage members who, in turn, put pressure on the individuals involved to conform to the norms. Once a father-in-law has called for the *hajarikiaa* payment, a lineage cannot enter into further marriages or pay another marriage

prestation until that obligation has been cleared. If a problem over the payment of marriage prestations develops to the point of an inter-village palaver, the entire village of the deficient lineage becomes involved, being as it is an extension of the lineage. One informant put it this way:

In the Sisala area it rarely happens that the return of *hajarikiasa* is asked for, and if it ever does it is where the girl is the only wife from that particular village married there. When daughters are there in large numbers you do not even dream of doing it (seeking the return of *hajarikiasa*). To do such a thing is to break the friendship between both villages, and this means that it will be difficult for future marriages. Also all girls in the offending village would be called back by their parents, and if steps were not taken they may even marry them off to friendly villages.

The power of the ancestors to cause affliction is the ultimate sanction behind this rule. Lineage members are under two kinds of sanction then; one from the living village community which expects a man and his lineage to live up to their obligations, and the other from the lineage ancestors who expect the living members of the lineage to protect its reputation by adhering to the moral orders of things or the "path of truth" (*wenbing titi*). These obligations are clearly pointed out in the following palaver concerning the payment of *hajarikiasa*: Haluri was a daughter of the lineage of Kpejang in the village of Bujan who, many years ago, had married into the village of Dolbizan. After her husband's death she claimed that her husband's brother did not take proper care of her and so she left Dolbizan and returned to Bujan to live in her natal lineage. After a period of about ten years she died while temporarily living at the nearby village of Naveriwie with a group of Bujan villagers who had gone there to farm. Her *hajarikiasa* had not been paid, although negotiations were under way to do so at the time of her death. Even though she was divorced, she had

born children to her husband's lineage so they had the right to seek her *hajarikiaa*. A meeting was held to determine what was to be done about the funeral, since the initial death divination had shown that the funeral would not be a cool (*fiela*) one because of the matter of the outstanding marriage prestations. The Dolbizan people were sent for and when they arrived they sat with the elders of the village of Bujan and some of their clansmen from the village of Tafiassi, near Bujan. The Tafiassi people sat apart from the main palaver, but their advice was asked for from time to time. Presiding at the meeting was Kajia-Ben, the senior elder of the dead woman's *vaidongo* group, the "down-people" (*bubuongniaa*). He spoke:

Good morning. One says that so as not to deceive. Things should not be mixed. If there is anything that we want, we will get it whether they like it or not. Luri, we said that we will now finish with our sister's funeral. I have sent someone to inform the chief (of Bujan). Now Natii has come (from Dolbizan) and says the dead woman is his grandmother (*nahama*). Siafu is her son and is the father of Natii. As he is sitting here like this, if something were to happen and he died, we would bring his funeral here to mourn (this is due to the fact that the *hajarikiaa* had not been paid for his mother and therefore the lineage of Kpejang had claim to all offspring of the dead woman, including Siafu and Natii, son and grandson respectively.)

If we should mourn, we do not know. If you (Dolbizan people) will pay the things and say we should mourn here, I don't know. Or if you will pay the things and say we should walk to Dolbizan, I don't know. The only thing I know is that the *hajarikiaa* must be paid for a wife, but if you give a daughter to someone it is not for the *hajarikiaa*. Tayriri (the *sipatoro*), have you now heard all? Go and inform the chief. Siafu should pay his mother's

hajarikiasa. If he cannot, then the Dolbizan people should honour their agreement. If you cannot pay it is not a good thing. The mother's brother (*niera*) cannot pay it for him (*Kajia-Ben* is *Siafu's* mother's brother). If he does not pay the *hajarikiasa* for his wives and his mother, he will not be able to pay later *hajarikiasa* for his wives and his son's wives. The first obligation makes all others black (*Kwabeni* i.e., "bad"). If this woman had died in Dolbizan, then we (elders) would have come with the *sipatoro* to her funeral to collect the *hajarikiasa*. It is only proper to do this. If we were to go to Dolbizan and were given water to drink and were able to collect the *hajarikiasa*, we would leave without mourning. Or, if the Dolbizan people were to pay the *hajarikiasa*, they could tell us to leave. But if they have not paid it, they have no rights.

After this opening speech, three distinct groups of people formed, sitting apart, talking in quite tones. They were the Dolbizan people, the Bujan people, and the Tafiasi people. This situation lasted a few minutes and then *Natii* announced that he would pay his grandmother's *hajarikiasa* because his father had no money or cows at that time. *Natii* reasoned that since he and his brother were going to pay the *hajarikiasa* and did not actually live in Dolbizan (they live on their farm at *Naver-wise*), it would be all right to hold the funeral in Bujan rather than "carry" it all the way to Dolbizan (about 10 miles from Bujan). To this *Kajia-Ben* then replied that it was *Natii's* decision to make. The only important thing, he said, was that the proper thing be done. *Kajia-Ben* then turned to the Tafiasi people and informed them that *Natii* had promised to pay the *hajarikiasa* and that since they were clan brothers they should take note of the fact. He emphasized that all the Crocodile Clan (*Nyivara*) are one people and that the most important thing was that the *hajarikiasa* be paid. He then called for comments from the Tafiasi people, but they replied that they had nothing to say.

Badina, an elder of Bujan, then rose and said that Natii should not have to pay the *hajarikiaa* because he was only a classificatory son to Siafu (of the same *jehiking*). Badina said that Wenbi was the real son and that he should pay if his father (Siafu) could not. He noted the fact that Wenbi was not even present at the palaver and said this was a bad thing. He also added that the *hajarikiaa* should be one cow in any case.

Natii then rose and said that Siafu is a father (*nyimma*) to him and that he had therefore decided to pay the *hajarikiaa*. He said that he would inform Siafu of the payment and went on to say that since he (Natii) was paying his father's *hajarikiaa*, his father (Siafu) would become a son (*nanuala*) to him. He said the real reason he was paying the *hajarikiaa* instead of Wenbi, was because it was not paid and one of his wives or his brother's wives fathers decided to collect their daughter's things (*tokokiaa*), it would be taboo (*kising*) to make that payment with one outstanding.

Badinia then said that if he (Natii) said he was going to pay the *hajarikiaa*, he should do so and not return to tell Wenbi to pay it, because this would lead to complications. He said that when Kowie (the *jehikintina* of Kpejang) went to Dolbizan the previous year he had told them that he would be coming the following year for the *hajarikiaa*, but then the woman had died.

Natii then turned to Kowie and asked him why he had not come. Kowie replied that it was not because he (Natii) had refused to pay the *hajarikiaa*, but that he (Kowie) had not come as he had said he would. Kajia-Ben then interrupted and said that the man who is to receive the *hajarikiaa* can collect it at any time. It is his prerogative. "He can do with it what he wants. He can even climb a tree with it. It is no affair of the person who pays it when it is collected or what is done with." He went on to stress that only after the *hajarikiaa* was paid would the Dolbizan people have the right to collect the funeral to their village. He then summarized all that had

been said:

The Tafiasi people have come because I have informed them that we were about to mourn for our sister. They have heard that Natii says he will pay the *hajarikiasa* for his grandmother. Natii and his elder brother are living in Naveriwie which is on the land of the Crocodile people and so if any trouble comes to them, it also comes to us. If either of them dies, we can bring the funeral here to Bujan and mourn. Natii says he can tell the Bujan people not to mourn but we should know before we mourn if he is prepared to pay the *hajarikiasa*. I am telling you, the people of Tafiasi, because we are all one. If you have something to say, say it.

A Tafiasi elder rose and said:

What you say is true. When Natii said he would pay the *hajarikiasa* the first time, all the elders did not hear it and so it is only right that he should come here and repeat it. They should know all the facts of when and where the *hajarikiasa* will be paid, whether now during the funeral or after it. Will it be paid at Bujan or will the Bujan people have to travel to Dolbizan to collect it? If they (the elders) don't know they should find out.

Natii rose to speak saying that the people of Bujan should come after the funeral to collect the *hajarikiasa* and that they should come to Dolbizan. Kajia-Ben said that he did not care how it was paid. The important thing was that it be paid.

Then Natii produced two bottles of native gin (*akpeteshi*) which he gave to the Bujan elders and the tension of the palaver was broken. Everyone began to drink in preparation for the funeral which began that night and lasted only two days because

it was held during harvest-time

About four months later, a party of men from the lineages of Kpejang and Yeliwiejang of Bujan set out for Naveriwie to collect the hajarikiasa. They went to Naveriwie rather than to Dolbizan because Natii was still living there on his farm-land. Upon arriving, the Bujan people were given water mixed with flour and honey to drink. One calabash was given to the men and another to the women of the Bujan party. They were also given tobacco and pito beer in the same fashion. Food was brought out for them and a cock was killed for the men and a guinea-fowl for the women. On the second day, beer was served and then Natii brought a goat and showed it to the women for their inspection. The women said it was too small and that the Dolbizan people should get a larger one, which they did, and it was sacrificed on the ground. Its meat and the back thigh of an antelope were used in preparing soup for the guests. While this was being done, the hajarikiasa, in the form of a female sheep, was brought out for inspection. Normally the hajarikiasa consists of one cow, but if the wife dies before it is paid, it is reduced to one sheep. There was some discussion about the sheep being too small, so a goat and a chicken were added and these animals were collected to be taken back to be sacrificed on the Iele (ancestor) shrine of the dead woman's natal lineage.⁸

After the presentation of the hajarikiasa, money distributed by the Dolbizan people was seen in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1PAYMENTS RECEIVED BY BUJAN PARTY BY SEX:

<u>MALES</u>		<u>FEMALES*</u>	
Eldest Male	50p	Eldest Bujan woman	50p
Second eldest	30	Second eldest	30
Third eldest	30	Third eldest	20
Fourth eldest	30	Eldest unmarried girl	20
Fifth eldest	20	Unmarried girl	10
Sixth eldest	20	Unmarried girl	10
A Crocodile clansman	10	Bujan woman	10
A Crocodile clansman	10	Bujan woman	10
A Bujan man of Naveriwie ..	20		
Three small boys @ 5p	15		
One Unmarried male	10		
One Kpejang male	10		
A Head-teacher (friend) ..	5		
Senior male child	10		
Junior male child	5		
Dead woman's house owner ..	10**		
Male Total	42.85		41.60
Total Expenditure			44.45

*In addition to the money the women were presented with a medium-sized basket of millet.

**The dead woman's house-owner was also given some tobacco and a hen.

When the presentation of the money was completed, the final transaction called *purung* (bag) was performed. *Natii* brought out a skin-bag filled with *pesewas* and cowries which was tied with a string at the top. He handed it to the senior male of the *Bujan* party who opened it and mentioned to the dead woman's eldest son to put his hand inside and draw out a handful of money.⁹ The rest of the money was divided among the men of the dead woman's natal lineage. This marked the end of all marriage prestations. It was performed, as is required by custom, in the presence of both *sipatoro*. Once they have observed this transaction, no further claims can be made by the woman's people.

Hajarikias which is paid before the death of the wife must be paid with a cow. If the wife's father desires a cash payment it is usually about \$40.00¹⁰ This is why the *Sisala* keep cattle, not for meat or milk, but primarily as a source of wealth with which to secure wives. Not only does the *jehikintina* (lineage elder) have the duty to pay out *hajarikias* from the lineage herd, but he formally receives the cows for a daughter. In actual fact, the immediate jural guardian has the duty to pay. He gives it to the *jehikintina* who "pays" it to the girl's *jehikintina*. In this way the herd swells or shrinks, depending on the sex composition of the generation of marriage-age.

Once the *jehikintina* receives a cow, two mandatory sacrifices and one optional one are performed. First, the cow is bred, and when the first offspring is fully grown, it is sacrificed on the lineage *lele* (ancestor) shrine to the grandfather (*nabalma*) of the girl. The cow is then bred again and the second offspring, when fully grown, is sacrificed on the *lele* shrine to the father of the girl, if he is deceased, which is most likely. These two sacrifices must be performed or it is thought that the ancestors will afflict the lineage in some way. A third, optional, sacrifice may be performed to the girl's father's mother as well.

The meat of all the sacrifices is shared by the living lineage members, so that all share in the receipt of the *hajarikias* even though the actual cow received cannot be sacrificed, according to custom. It remains in the "pool of wealth" to be used for the payment of the lineage's *hajarikias* obligations.

The important point is that the obligation to pay, or the right to receive the prime prestations, lies with the jural guardian of the woman, even though the *jochikintina* may make the formal presentation. This is reflected in the case of an illegitimate child (*mengmuoribie*). When a daughter bears a child out of wedlock, it becomes an offspring of her father. Even if she was to marry later, the child stays in her father's compound. If the child is taken to be reared by the mother's husband, it often returns at a later date, since it is the mother's father who holds jural authority over the child. If the child is a boy, the *haalakias* and *hajarikias* for his marriage must be paid by the mother's father. In turn, if it is a girl, the mother's father has the right to receive all marriage payments. The mother's father retains jural authority over the child because the child was born in his house while he still held the geneirical rights over this daughter. This can be changed if the girl marries before the child is born, that is, if the payment of *haalakias* creates a proper relationship of affinity which "set the stage," so to speak, for the later payment of the *hajarikias*. Payment of the *haalakias* for a *mengmuoribie* legitimizes the child and person who so pays becomes the child's social father. However, the legitimate claim to descent links with this "father" is not complete until the full sequence of marriage prestations have been made in proper order. Without the payment of these customary prestations, a bastard has no rights in any house except his mother's father's house, not even if his mother subsequently marries. The *Sisala* say that a bastard's ancestors remain in his mother's father's house. If he lives with his mother's subsequent husband "even until he is as tall as a

tree" (*u khuo u wa u maka tia*), he will never be allowed to sacrifice at his foster father's ancestral shrines. One informant said, "Even if the mother's husband's real son (*nanuala titi*) is just a small child, he has the right to sit with his father before the ancestral shrines. No matter how large the *mengmuoribie* becomes he can never do that because he has no ancestors there."

The same is true of a slave-child (*yomobie*). A slave (*yomo*) has no ancestors and cannot own an ancestral shrine, therefore, his son cannot inherit one or succeed to the ritual roles connected with such shrines. The jural guardian of *yomo* and his children is the slave-owner (*yomotina*). If a slave-child wants to marry, he must secure the marriage payment from the slave-owner rather than his father, who is merely the genitor. The slave-owner is the jural guardian, and therefore, entitled to pay and receive the marriage prestations of his slave-children. The slave-child remains a jural minor all his life and passes this inferior position on to his children. This hereditary inferiority lasts forever because a slave is "one who lacks kinsmen or ancestors," and cannot (ideally) acquire them. In reality, however, slave origins are forgotten in time. Even if remembered, they are not openly discussed and only become a matter of importance when inheritance of succession questions arise. A slave or his child cannot succeed to a kinship status or become the owner (*-tina*) of an ancestral shrine.¹¹

The kind and amount of the prime prestations have apparently changed over the past sixty or seventy years, Rattray (1932:501) claims that before the Colonial Era the *hajarikiaa* was 10,000 cowries and a sheep, but he recorded payments as high as 30,000 cowries and a sheep. Tauxier (1912:238) says that before the slave-raiding, the payment was 20,000 cowries plus a basket (20 kilos) of millet and some salt for the girl's mother. After the inflation caused by the introduction of large quantities of cowries by the slavers, the payment rose to 50,000 cowries plus 3,000 cowries

worth of goods for the girl's mother. He estimates, however, that the former payment of 20,000 cowries would have been worth about 120,000 cowries by post-slaving exchange rates. He shows that the amount actually lowered during this time. Formerly a cow was worth 10,000 cowries, thus, the price actually dropped from two cows to one. Cowries are no longer used in marriage payments except as tokens, but the *hajarikiaa* remains one cow or its money equivalent of about forty cedis, plus the sacrifice of a goat and small amounts of money and gifts in kind.

Normally when the wife's people come to get the cow, the husband's people kill a goat for meat and brew pito beer. Several chickens are also killed to be eaten with millet porridge. These expenses are variables which depend on the generosity or financial condition of the husband's lineage. The amount of the *hajarikiaa*, however, is not a variable, being fixed by custom at one cow. Once the girl's people have taken the *hajarikiaa* it cannot be reclaimed for any reason.

Informants said that in former times the *hajarikiaa* was paid directly after the birth of the first child, but that today it is paid after the birth of several children. Often it is not paid until the woman is past the age of child-bearing, or even after her death. The wife's parents may decide to collect their "daughter's things" (*tolokiaa*) after consulting a diviner since in the diviner's assemblage of code-objects, several relate to the collection of *hajarikiaa*. Or, they may be faced with a similar payment themselves without the funds to cover it. One also hears references and stories all the time about greedy fathers who rush to their daughter's husband shortly after the birth of the first child to seek the *hajarikiaa*, while the woman is pregnant.

Theoretically, if the wife dies before the payment of the *hajarikiaa*, her spirit (*nedima*) will return to her father's village to be incorporated

into her natal group of ancestors, but in actual fact, this is not allowed to happen.¹² The practice is that the wife's patrikinsmen come after her death, but before her funeral, to collect the *hajarikiaa* (e.g., the case of Haluri cited before). When it is paid after her death, the *hajarikiaa* is reduced to one sheep and the appropriate sacrifices, food and gifts. In fact, as the case of Haluri pointed out, the funeral cannot be performed until the *hajarikiaa* has been paid or a firm promise of payment has been made in the presence of both the *sipatoro*. The offspring of a woman whose *hajarikiaa* is unpaid are affected by this fact. Such a woman's daughter's *hajarikiaa* cannot be collected before her mother's. To do so will bring certain death to the daughter.

Until the *hajarikiaa* has been paid the couple is not "completely" married since the husband's lineage cannot bury the wife's body or incorporate her spirit into their collectivity of ancestors.

The question arises as to whether the *hajarikiaa* payment is returnable or not. Jack and Esther Goody (1967; in 1969: 209) postulate that the Sisala are a Type I. society like the Tallensi or LoWiili who have "patrilineal descent groups, high (returnable) bridewealth, low fostering, 'social' paternity, increasingly stable marriage, high ratio of conjugal residence, and widow inheritance." They are correct, I feel, in placing the Sisala in Type I rather in Type II, which has the mirror reverse of these criteria. However, two things are happening which may be transforming the nature of marriage payments; later payment of the *hajarikiaa* and the feeling, apparently not held in the past (cf. Tauxier below), that *hajarikiaa* cannot be returned for any reason, even sterility.

One informant put it like this:

Generally, women bear children, ranging from one to any number, before, the *hajarikiaa* is paid. But there are instances where the

hajarikiaa is paid even before the girl is of age, let alone called a wife. This may happen when your in-laws are poor, or also need the *hajarikiaa* to pay for another of their wives, or the cow involved in the *hajarikiaa* needs to be used in the funeral of one of the girl's parents.

Apart from some of these cases, *hajarikiaa* is not paid out when the woman is sterile, gives still-births, or is divorced for being sterile.

Nowadays many prestations are not made until after the child-bearing functions have ceased, or until the wife's death, and therefore, the returnable vs. non-returnable distinction does not apply. Informants said that in former times one could ask for the *hajarikiaa* as soon as the wife had given birth to her first child. Tauxier (1912:344-5) says:

We note a case of the return of the woman by the husband, but we have not noted with regard to the other Grunshi: It is when they take the leaves of the *donkola* or *n'taba* trees which are sacred. The Sisala women, it appears, in their spitefulness purposely take off these leaves (use for public coverings) when they wish to be returned. Or the husband may put them at the door (as a sign for his wife to leave), and in this case, if the woman has been sterile, does not reclaim the bridewealth himself, but reclaims it through his sister's son, who returns it or on the other hand, may retain it for himself. When the woman has been returned for something else the husband reclaims the bridewealth himself, always under the pretext that the woman has been sterile. In other places (Zamouna, Nadion) when a husband returns his wife, he does not reclaim it in any case, whether his wife has been fruitful or not (my translation).

It appears, then, that some Sisala reclaim the *hajarikiaa* while others do not. Since early payment is infrequent nowadays, it has become highly

unlikely that its return would be involved in a case of divorce.¹³ Since the Sisala have increasingly stable marriage, most divorces tend to occur in the period prior to the birth of the first child. Therefore, most divorce is a simple matter of the woman being returned to her parents, or more commonly, the woman running away from her husband. Normally, at this point, only the *haalakiaa* has been paid, and in no case can that ever be returned, involving as it does, perishable and consumer goods. The Sisala explicitly state that *haalakiaa* can never be reclaimed once it is given. One informant expressed it like this:

The *haalakiaa* are not given back because it may make later marriages difficult. They may refuse to give you their daughters when next any suitor does. It will be a stain, and as such, it is hardly done. So it is with the *hajarikiaa*, not even in part, except on very, very rare occasions. In most cases both villages may have girls from the other village and as such you can imagine the discord caused. Once the woman has children in the husband's house you cannot even think of doing it (asking for the return of the prestations) because it is not done.

When children are born to the union, the *hajarikiaa* payment becomes mandatory. This is clearly seen in the case of a wife who bears children in one lineage and then, upon the death of her husband, chooses to marry into a different lineage. The first lineage must pay the *hajarikiaa* because they have received children. One informant put it in this way:

It is a rule that the first husband (be he dead or alive) poses as the genuine husband. If he dies and the woman is married to lineage "B" and even bears more children there than she did in lineage "A", the first

husband pays the *hajariktaa* always.

This is only true, however, if the woman marries into a different lineage (*janbale*) within the original village. Further *hajariktaa* will only have to be paid if she marries into a different village.

When I asked informants what would happen if a man refused to pay the *hajariktaa* for a wife who had born children, they always said that he could not refuse. After being prompted to answer this hypothetical question, most informants said that his wife and children should be taken away from him. I asked, "How can you take away a man's children like that?" One informant replied, "They are not his children; the *hajariktaa* is unpaid." This link between *hajariktaa* and legitimacy can be seen too in the following "true story" (*Namaka*)¹⁴ told me:

There lived a man from the village of Pulima called Balu who went to Kong and married a wife. In about three years' time the woman's people came to collect the *hajariktaa* and the husband told them that they should go and come another time because he had not had time to collect all the necessary things for the payment. So they returned to Kong.

The next time they came the husband informed them that his wife was pregnant and, by custom, he could not pay the *hajariktaa*.

When the woman had brought forth the party from Kong returned a third time to collect their daughter's things. Still the husband refused to pay and the Kong people grew annoyed with him. They collected their daughter and her children and took them back to Kong. They did this because by not paying the *hajariktaa* the husband had shown that he did not want his wife and children.

However, the husband went to Kong in search of them, but his wife's parents refused to give them up. He demanded the children, at least, but they refused saying that he had no right to them until

he paid the *hajarikiaa*.

He was furious and went to the police with the matter. The affair resulted in a court case and all parties had to appear before the magistrate and explained the situation. After all was heard, the magistrate informed the husband that he must pay the *hajarikiaa* before collecting his children. In the end the man was instructed by the court to pay twice the normal amount of *hajarikiaa*.¹⁵

Summary and Conclusions

It can be seen that Sisala marriage prestations fit well into Fortes' paradigm of Prime prestations and Contingent prestations. Whereas the latter, the *hajarikiaa* prestations, comprised consumable goods and services beginning with the "love gift" to a *hela* (lover) and ending with the *haaljasung* prestations, the prime prestations (*hajarikiaa*) consists mainly of a payment in cattle. These cattle are exclusively raised to constitute a "pool of wealth" for marriage purposes. Further, the cow used in marriage transaction has restrictions placed upon its use. It must not be used for any other purpose than a future marriage payment and must be bred to produce offspring to be used to ritually inform the ancestors of their "daughter's" fertility within the bounds of a legal marriage. Whereas the *hajarikiaa* prestations are fixed in amount, kind and use by customary law (*kising*), the *haalakiaa* payments and services are variables and are open to bargaining. Rich men (*kiaabina*) are well aware that they have the advantage of being able to woo girls with expensive "love gifts" and with many large *haalakiaa* payments. Whereas the kola nuts, beer, and drink used in the Contingent prestations are normally used in many contexts of exchange, cattle (*nesing*) are exchanged only for purposes of marriage or used in ancestral sacrifices.¹⁶ Whatever the other uses of cattle, the actual cow which is used in a *hajarikiaa* payment has customary limitations placed upon its

further use. No bargaining takes place in *haja-rikiaa* prestations but a shrewd father may hold out for many *haalakiaa* payments if he thinks the potential son-in-law is good for it. Lastly, the *haalakiaa* is seen by the Sisala as being symbolic of a man's right to the sexual and domestic services of a wife. Great ceremony is given to two necessary acts after the last payment of the *haalakiaa* is delivered; the sexual act and the act of boiling water for the husband. In the former, the new wife is often formally delivered to her husband's bedroom by the *sipatoro* to her village whereupon the marriage is consummated even though the man may have had pre-marital access to her by virtue of the "love gift". In the latter act of boiling water, the new wife is expected to cook a fine meal for the groom, but "boiling water" symbolizes the assumption of her domestic responsibilities.¹⁷ Taken as a whole, the *haalakiaa* prestations establish a relationship between the two descent groups which is maintained during the betrothal period and in the initial phase of marriage by the requirement that the contingent prestations be presented over a long period of time. The payment of *haalakiaa* establishes the duty of the son-in-law with farming or housebuilding chores and the like. The girl's father, in turn, has duties as well e.g., providing his son-in-law with the customary "fairy medicine" (*kantong lurung*) which is necessary for the survival and continued health of the couple's firstborn. The completion of the *haalakiaa* payments, culminating in the *haaljasung* payment and sacrifice, marks the establishment of the affinal tie between the two lineages involved.

When one attempts to make an accounting of Sisala marriage prestations and to match them with the five functions listed by Radcliffe-Brown, with regard to prestations, it becomes apparent that there are functional clusters or episodes in the entire marriage process. However, the boundaries of these functional clusters are not sharply drawn by the people concerned. While most informants do not distinguish between, say for example, the *haalakiaa*

and the *haaljasung*, in terms of the different functions performed by each, some insightful informants are able to do so.

There are five distinct "clusters" or "episodes" in the pattern of exchange between affinal groups; the *helating*, *haalakiaa*, *haaljasung*, *hajarikiaa*, and the *purung* ceremony. These are episodes in both a nominal and temporal sense in the emic model. Also in this paper I wish to show that they can be viewed etically as being functionally distinct.

The first exchange of valuables takes place when the man gives the *helating* (love gift) and receives a reciprocal gift from the girl. This establishes an inter-personal relationship between the pair but in no way commits the two descent groups to an alliance.

If the "lover" (*hela*) relationship blooms the man may decide to approach the girl's father with the initial instalment of the second functional clusters of the marriage prestations; the *haalakiaa*. This payment initiates the process of establishing a legal marriage, but its primary function is the establishment of a relationship of affinity. The formal transfer of goods and services from the descent group of the male to the descent group of the female in exchange for uxorial rights, establishes a relationship of amity. This is a formal amity between affines, not amity which grows naturally out of kinship.

The third functional episode in the transfer of marriage prestations is the *haaljasung* payment which takes place approximately one year after the bride has gone to live with her husband. While the Sisala scrupulously avoids the appearance of the father seeking compensation for the loss of his daughter, the *haaljasung* is a symbolic representation of compensation and could rightly be called a "placation gift". More importantly, however, it finalizes the relationship of affinity established by prior exchanges. While divorce can take place at any time during the marriage, by bringing the *haaljasung*, the husband indicates his willingness to continue with the marriage

beyond the initial year. Acceptance on the part of the father-in-law indicates his willingness to accept the arrangement and fulfil his affinal obligations.

The fourth, and prime prestation, is the *hajari-kiāa*. It, more than any other single episode, completes the legality of the marriage thereby insuring the legitimate claims to paternal descent by the offspring of that marriage. In other words, it is given in exchange for generitrial rights which are necessary to complete the establishment of the patrilineal descent of the children. At the same time, it serves to reinforce the affinal relationship established by previous exchanges. Also as Radcliffe-Brown pointed out, the specification of cattle in this prestation establishes a symbolic link between the ancestor of the two groups. The creation of this ritual link is significant because nothing is real (*titi*) in Sisala society unless it is somehow tied to the earth (*tinteing*) and the ancestors who reside therein. Ancestral shrines (*vens*) are the material connection with the occult world (*fa fa*) (cf. Mendonsa, in press). The requirement to prolong the ritual link by breeding the marriage cow and sacrificing its offspring further protracts the affinal tie and ties it securely to the traditional past (*fa fa*).

The final payment, *purung*, marks the end of the formal exchange of marriage prestations and finalizes the relationship of affinity. Included in the ceremony is an element of "compensation" as well, but this is compensation to the wife for her child-bearing over the years. This final exchange must take place in the presence of the two *sipatoro* so that the entire exchange process can be terminated in the presence of legal witnesses from both descent groups.

In summation then, the exchange of goods and services between the descent groups of spouses among the Sisala, can be broken down into a number of functional parts. While the entire quantity of goods and services exchanged can be viewed as a total fund of

wealth which is exchanged for certain rights over the woman's capacities, it is enlightening to further break down the exchanges into functional episodes which also have nominal and temporal separation.

NOTES

1. The author carried out 10 months fieldwork in Northern Ghana in 1971-72 while a research student at the University of Cambridge. He wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the British Universities Student Travel Association; the Ling Roth Fund and the Anthony Wilkin Fund of the Faculty of Archaeology-Anthropology, University of Cambridge; and the Smuts Memorial Fund, University of Cambridge. I also wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Meyer Fortes and also Professor Jack Goody and Dr. Esther Goody for their encouragement and support.
2. One should not go alone to collect the *hajarikiaa*. The Sisala custom is to always take along a party of lineage members and anybody else that wants to make the journey for excitement, refreshment and gifts. It is said that a man who goes alone to collect the *hajarikiaa* will suffer an affliction or die. Since the collection of *hajarikiaa* requires the gathering of a number of kinsmen and friends, it is often postponed till dry season when there is not so much work in the farms. It is not uncommon for a lineage to fail to collect their *tolikiaa* until the funeral of their daughter because of difficulties in gathering a party to collect the *hajarikiaa*.
3. The Sisala have a segmentary lineage system similar to other African systems. Beginning with the largest group, the sub-divisions are as follows: Clan (*-vɪara*), village (*ɟang*), reciprocal burial group (either *vaidongo* or *nyinniaa*), lineage (*ɟehiking*), compound (*kaala*), house (*diasung*) and room (*dia*). The *ɟehiking*, which means "a walled compound", is the most important kin group. It is the normal corporate group acting in economic and ritual affairs as one body with the *ɟehikintina* as the leader.
4. Both *sɪpatoro* (lit. "front-follower") must be present at all marriage prestations and transactions. They serve as legal witnesses, one from each village, to the marriage. They normally have matrilineal

links with the other villages in question.

5. Manoukian (1951: 39-40) says that this placation gift is divided into two parts: the *hal-gya-san* (beer for seeking woman) and the *hal-gya-morwie* (cowries for seeking woman). While cowries are a customary part of the *haljasung* payment, I found no such division among the Crocodile people (*nyivlara*).
6. During the one *haljasung* payment I saw delivered in Bujan, the girl's father made use of the occasion to lecture the girl on the virtue of being a good and faithful wife. These values were reinforced by others of her natal lineage who voiced similar advice.
7. Each village is normally divided into two reciprocal burial groups. A burial group is made up of several lineages with genealogical links. A man calls his own group *vaidongo* and the opposite group *nylaniaa*. These groups are often simply referred to as the "up-people" (*nyungniaa*) and the "down-people" (*bubuongniaa*).
8. This is always done to inform the woman's paternal ancestors that their daughter's *hajarikiaa* has been in accordance with custom (*kisinga*). In this particular case, the animal parts were distributed in the following manner: one front thigh went to the *sipatoro* from Bujan and the other went to the *sipatoro* from Dolbizan. One back thigh went to the *jeohikintina* of Kpejang and the other back thigh went to the woman's son's wife. If the woman is alive when this sacrifice is made, she receives this part. The chest went to the wives of the men who fetched the *hajarikiaa* and the neck went to the sister's sons (*tolo biring*) i.e., sons of women married into Bujan from Dolbizan. The head and the skin went to the men of Kpejang.

9. If the woman is alive at the time of the *puwano* payment, she takes a handful of cowries in payment for "her pain and suffering in bearing children." In this case, the eldest son acts in his mother's behalf.
10. At the time of fieldwork, a cow was approximately worth \$40.00. One cedi = about 75c. There are 100 pesewas to a cedi. A day's labor at making the mud brick brought a man 60 pesewas per 100 bricks, which amount he could make in one day.
11. A slave is only allowed to have *daluno* (medicine) shrines which can be purchased. They are shrines which are thought to have magical or medicinal qualities and are not initially ancestral shrines. They often become ancestral shrines, for non-slaves, when they are passed on from generation to generation, but a slave-child cannot inherit from his biological father.
12. Thus, until the *hajarikiaa* is paid, the couple are not "completely" married because the husband's lineage cannot bury the wife's body or incorporate her spirit into their collectivity of ancestors. While conducting a marriage interview schedule, I encountered many times a case where a man would not list all of his wives. Upon further probing he would reveal additional ones and when asked why he had not mentioned them, he would inevitably state that they were not "really" wives since their *hajarikiaa* had not been paid.
13. A marriage schedule reveals the trend towards late payment of *hajarikiaa*. Out of 486 women interviewed only 54 (11.1%) had had their *hajarikiaa* paid.
14. Grindal (1973:173) makes the distinction between *namaka* or "true tales" and *sinsoling* or "folktales"... The former is "any statement of absolute or sacred moral truth" while the latter "consists of fanciful stories involving animal and human characters."

"*Namaka* include myths, legends, proverbs and statements concerning ancestral precedent.

15. I suspect that this last statement is an embellishment added by a storyteller to emphasize that the party in the wrong received his just deserts.
16. If a family reaches dire poverty a cow may be sold to feed the lineage members. It also happens that cows are sometimes killed by farmers while trampling their crops and the owner sells the meat for cash. Of course, some men break the norms too and sell cows to purchase European goods such as a shot-gun or motorcycle.
17. The Sisala practise the levirate and when a widow wants to show which of her dead husband's brothers she desires to marry, she boils a pot of water and presents it to him. This act is sufficient and they are considered married, that is, the brother receives exclusive rights *in uxorem* over the woman.

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