SOTHO MARRIAGE PATTERNS: A STUDY IN CULTURE CHANGE

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Paulus M. Mohome

1964

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SOTHO MARRIAGE PATTERNS: A STUDY IN CULTURE CHANGE

By

Paulus M. Mohome

A THESIS

Submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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1964

IN MEMORY OF THE HONORABLE JOHN F. KENNEDY,

THE LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA FROM 1961-1963.

A man whom I deeply admired.

John F. Kennedy.

He was the greatest among the greatest;
He was the highest among the highest,
A leader par excellence,
A man of convictions.

He was the noblest of statesmen;
He was the truest of gentlemen,
A savior of nations,
A lover of peace.

Unto him I offer my humble respect;
Unto him I dedicate my broken heart -
President of the United States,
Fountain of my admiration.

Of him shall I utter words of silver;
Of him shall I sing for ever -
John Fitzgerald Kennedy,
A fortress of the needy.

P. M. Mohome

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Finally, my obligation to the writers, past and present, on whose works I have drawn, is also apparent from the citations in this thesis.

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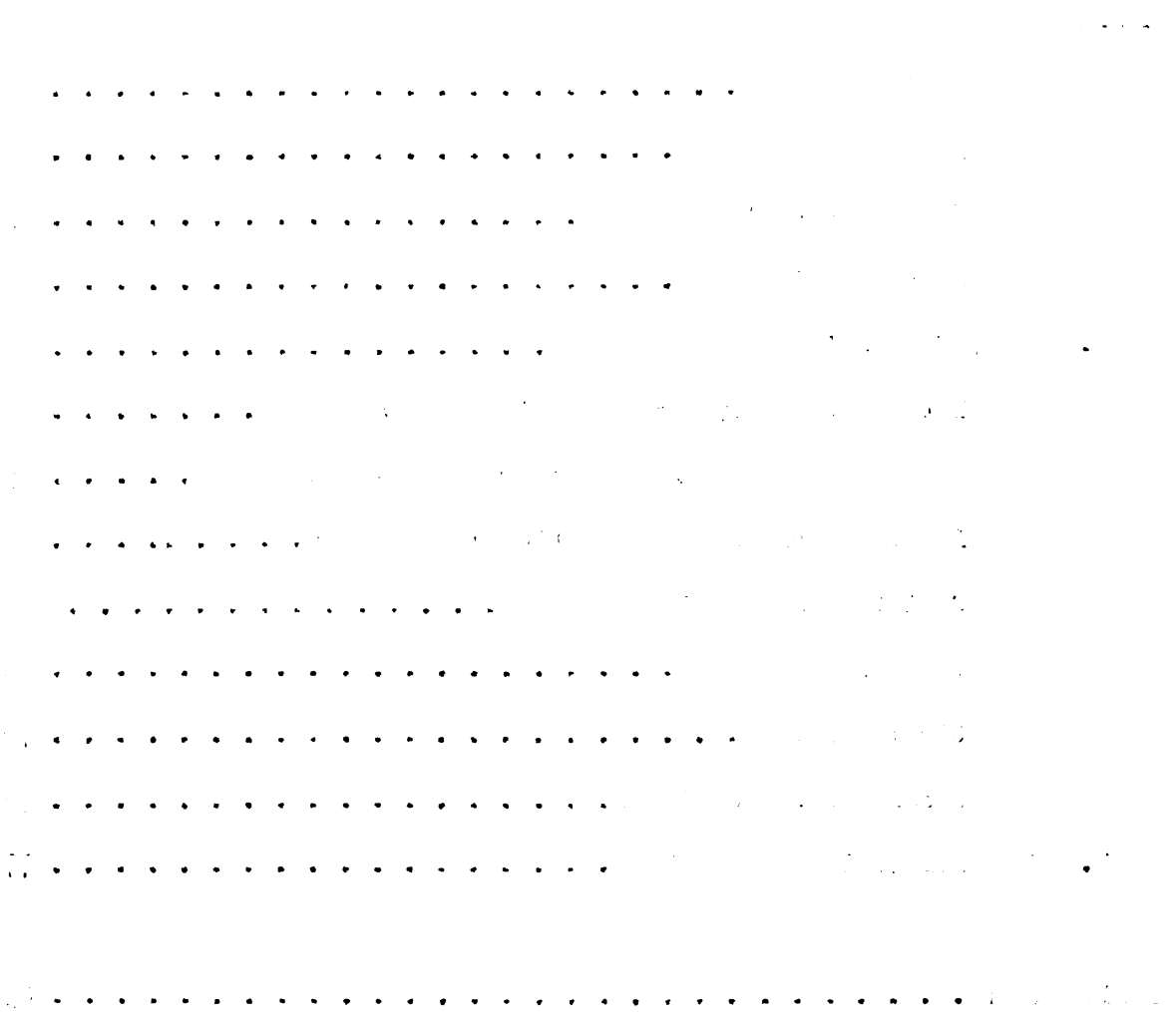


Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to give a descriptive account of culture change in the marriage patterns of the Sotho people of South Africa. The central focus will be on the effects of Christian rites and Western ideas on the customary marriage of the Sotho, and special attention will also be given to new forms of marriage that have developed out of the interaction of different cultural systems. The greater part of what will be said about the traditional Sotho marriage will be drawn on the present writer's personal experience as a member of this group, and this will be supplemented by information from the available literature on this topic.

SOME CURRENT THEORIES OF CULTURE CHANGE

In dealing with the theories and methods of culture change it will be advisable to confine ourselves to the works of only a few anthropologists whose views are pertinent to the subject-matter of this thesis. Perhaps the best way of presenting the theories of culture change is by starting with the works of the British anthropologists; and in doing so, we shall draw heavily on the work of Malinowski and his followers. To him the best way of studying culture change was by classifying the data into three typologies or orders as it is evident from the following citation:

> The study of culture change must take into account three orders of reality: the impact of the higher culture; the subsistence of Native life on which it is directed; and the phenomenon of autonomous change resulting from the reaction between the two cultures. Only by analysing each problem under these three headings and then confronting the column of European influences with that of Native responses, and of the resulting change, do we arrive at the most useful instruments of research. (Malinowski: 1945: 26).

Malinowski's feeling was that culture change is not a mechanical process in which the elements of two cultures simply merge without producing conflict or strain. He took this stand when criticizing of his followers, Monica Hunter,

for her advocacy for a historical approach which, among other things, aims at a reconstruction of the past culture, that is, the nature of the culture before the contact, and then using this as a base-line or starting-point, one should proceed to a sorting of the new elements in the culture. For, Monica Hunter is of the opinion that the existing institutions and cultural traits can not be understood without having a knowledge of the past. It seems reasonable to agree with Malinowski that culture change is not an ad hoc mixture of cultural elements; but it is a process of adoption, adaptation and rejection; however, the crux of the matter is how to distinguish the traditional culture from the new forms resulting from contact; for I take it, even in the remote areas of Africa - in villages that are far away from the cities, one can hardly speak of pure, unaffected culture. In these areas not only do we encounter foreign articles such as clothes, utensils and many other artifacts, but, to a great extent, even the values and attitudes of the inhabitants of these areas are affected; think of the impact of the missionary, the trader or the tax collector; to say nothing of the influence of villagers who have at one time or another been out of the village. And what is more, even the people who are more acculturated, still hold dear many customs that are found in the traditional villages.

One other method of studying culture change is the one advocated for by Dr. Lucy Mair (Mair 1938:2), also a British anthropologist of the Malinowskian persuasion. In essence, her method is that when culture has already undergone extensive change, the only way of assessing the extent of the change is by reconstructing the native culture to its pre-European condition. In other words, a kind of zero-point must be obtained, and only then can this past culture be compared with the existing one in order to assess the change. However, Malinowski rejects this method by contending that historical reconstruction is not a

reliable technique, more especially when an attempt is made to dig too deep into the past, for in the absence of any written documents, a dependence on the accounts and narratives of the old people in regard to the nature of their culture in the past, may mislead the investigator, because in most cases, these people tend to glorify the past and thus give a distortion of the facts. However, Malinowski does not reject historical reconstruction in toto; rather he argues that its validity is of limited scope, and must, therefore, be used only when reliable information can be obtained, and only when the past is still relevant to the present.

Still another approach in the study of culture change is the one suggested by I. S. Schapera (1934), also a British anthropologist who seems to be in direct conflict with the above ones. According to him, the missionaries, traders and government officials who are in close contact with the indigenous people should be considered as forming an integral part of the native community. They are, to use his expression, "the agents of contact", and thus the people from whom reliable information can be obtained. Schapera's approach seems to be useful for counter-checking information from the various informants, in fact, it is only an additional technique which is far from being self-sufficient method.

In the foregoing paragraphs, a somewhat sketchy account of some of the methods of studying culture change as propounded by the British anthropologists was presented, and we may now examine some of the theories and research methods of culture change as propounded by American anthropologists. But there is one important observation that should be made here. While most of the British anthropologists were studying culture change in the former British colonies with

the aim of advising the government in the administration of these colonies, American anthropologists engaged in these studies with somewhat a different orientation, i.e. with less emphasis on the use of their findings for administrative purposes. American anthropologists were not only interested in formulating the methods of studying culture change, but were also equally interested in formulating theory of culture change; thus to them theory and practice were compatible, and one could not exist without the other.

The first, and perhaps the classical work done in the United States in the field of culture change in the United States, is the one which was undertaken by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1937). Obviously, this being an exploratory work in the study of acculturation, not much can be expected from it, except for a preliminary statement on the process of acculturation and a useful definition of the concepts herein involved. For example, to these scholars, a clear insight into the process of acculturation could be realized by looking at how new cultural elements are accepted, and adapted while others are rejected.

One of the most exhaustive studies ever done in the field of acculturation is the one undertaken by Leonard Broom, H. G. Barnett, Bernard J. Siegel, Evon Z. Vogt and James B. Watson (1953). These scholars were called upon to examine the problem of acculturation in anthropology and to formulate methods, techniques and theory for this field. The outcome of their work was the result of the Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation held at Stanford University in 1953. The findings of this seminar were compiled and entitled "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation" and appeared in the American Anthropologist, Vol. 56 #6 of 1954; pages 973-995; here follows a summary of the important formulations of this study:

1) Cultures in the acculturation situation must be classified

according to their nature, i.e. simple-complex, folk-urban and so on.

2) Next should be the control of variables such as:

(a) boundary-maintaining mechanisms that are found in the culture, for instance, whether a culture is a closed or open system, i.e. allowing or disallowing alien traits.

(b) the relative rigidity or flexibility of the internal structure of the culture.

(c) the nature and functioning of the self-correcting mechanisms, for instance, a culture with relative equilibrium will off-set acceptance of new elements, while a culture which is less balanced will be more vulnerable to outside influence.

3) a study of the ecology of the contact situation is the next step, in short, this includes a study of the resources and the relation of the people to them as well as the technological equipment of the culture.

4) then demographical data of the members of each culture must be recorded, and furthermore, the interrelationships of the members of the two groups, their interaction and attitudes toward one another in labor and prestige are some of the things that must come under the observation of the investigator.

5) relations between the cultures themselves should also be examined, i.e. the intercultural networks will show which areas of the cultures are brought into more interplay. The groups of people who are most active in the interacting process must also be considered.

6) next to consider are the intercultural communication networks, the channels through which information is disseminated.

7) intercultural transmission of ideas, traits and objects is one of the things to be assessed, and also of importance are the value systems of the interacting cultures.

8) cultural disintegration occurs when change has caused unbearable consequences, i.e. when the cultural system can no longer sustain itself as an autonomous entity.

9) objects are much easier to transmit than ideas.

The foregoing are some of the phenomena involved in the process of culture change as seen by Broom and his associates; later in this thesis we plan to return to some of these ideas.

One other theory of culture change that needs our attention is the one propounded by Bruce Dohrenwend and Robert Smith (1962: 18-33). Although in many respects the work of these scholars is similar to some of those already mentioned above here, there are, however, a few important points that seem not to be well expounded in the other works. Thus, Dohrenwend and Smith see change as a phenomenon that may occur singly, simultaneously or sequentially. Accordingly then, culture change may take place as follows:

1) Change in one culture toward another, this process is called orientation.

2) Change in one culture away from the traditional behavior, but not necessarily toward any model; this is known as alienation.

3) Change in one culture in which a conscious, organized attempt on the part of the members of a society to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of that culture, This process is called reaffirmation.

It is important to note that according to Dohrenwend and Smith, the reaffirmation stage usually comes later in the acculturation process. In fact,

reaffirmation is a kind of nativistic movement which is a common occurrence in most contact situations, more especially when the members of the recipient culture are subjugated. Three types of nativistic movements are distinguished by Dohrenwend and Smith; they are:

1) Revitalistic movement in which members of the subordinated group attempt to revitalize some of the traditional aspects of their culture.

2) Passive movement in which members of the subordinated group neither accept nor reject the cultural aspects of the dominant group. (Many students of culture change seem to agree that this state of affairs leads to apathetic tendencies on the part of the members of the dominated group, and this may result in a total disappearance of such a group).

3) Reformative nativism is said to be a relatively conscious attempt on the part of the members of the conquered group to attain personal and social reintegration through selection, modification, rejection and synthesis of both traditional and alien cultural components.

There is another current and relatively influential hypothesis in certain social sciences, including anthropology of course, In essence, this hypothesis stresses the importance of communication networks as being a key to the understanding of the processes of culture change. The exponents of this theory in anthropology, John Donoghue, Iwao Ishino (1962) and their student, Daniel Whitney (1963), among others draw our attention to what they call <u>information flow</u>, and its importance in understanding as well as in bringing about change. In other words, these scholars see culture change as a process based on communication networks between the interacting cultures, thus the rate and extent

of change can be explained by looking at these interrelationships. It is interesting to note that this approach is reminiscent of that of Robert Redfield (1956) in his THE LITTLE COMMUNITY; and PEASANT SOCIETY AND CULTURE. In both of these works Redfield emphasizes the importance of the relations between the small community and the city on the one hand, and between the peasant society and the state on the other. These relations, according to him, are the mechanisms whereby culture change can be explained.

We need to mention one more approach to the study of culture change before we can make an abstraction of what we need from these theories. Most of the theories thus far mentioned do not give much prominence to the individual in culture change situations; the individual is not regarded as the agent of change. Now the question that may be raised is whether it is the culture that changes or the people that change their ways of doing things. It is probably this very problem that led some anthropologists to study culture change from the individual's standpoint. The main concern of people of this orientation is to look at the personalities of those persons who accept change more readily than the others; the aim is to find out whether their behavior is a result of personality differences. Along with this thinking there is also the notion of value systems; as cited above, Broom and his associates made mention of this fact. It is contended that acceptance of new cultural elements by a people is the result of change in their values; and persons who deliberately bring about change are variably known as innovators, deviants or reformers. Some of the anthropologists who concerned themselves with this type of work are: C. Hughes (1958), Wallace (1961), Caudill (1962), Inkeles (1960), Hallowell (1955), and Barnett (1953).

It is noteworthy to mention that all the studies on personality, value

systems, innovation, nativistic movements and so on, were aimed at finding out what the processes of change were; hence, deviants, innovators and so on were treated as the agents of change. It is still too early to assess the potential value of these studies, but it appears that there is a great deal of promise for future research.

With the foregoing as a starting-point, we may now attempt to make a unified abstraction from these relatively divergent views. It appears to me that the logical starting-point in the treatment of culture change is to classify and analyze the cultures in contact. As we may recall, this view is held by most, if not all, of the writers that we mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. The idea behind this school of thought is that no profound understanding of the process of change can be obtained without analyzing the contents of each culture, and only then, can we begin to look at the areas which have undergone change. The accepted way of analyzing a culture is by dividing it into aspects or institutions such as religion, political organizations, economic system, social organization and so on. Along with this idea there is also the view that cultures should be classified according to their nature; as may be recalled, it was Broom and his associates who made this suggestion of classifying the cultures into simple vs complex or folk vs urban dichotomies. The usefulness of this classification, we are told, is to give the investigator a clue as to which culture will be more susceptible to change because of its flexibility. Although the latter procedure may be useful, it is extremely difficult to apply in a situation such as the one obtaining in South Africa. The point is, in a country where there is a diversity of cultural forms, mechanical categories such as this cannot be fruitfully used. As already mentioned, the first thing to do is to divide the cultures into cultural aspects

rather than classify them according to their nature. This is not only useful as a theoretical referent, but also as an heuristic device. Thus, since we want to understand how the African system of marriage has been affected by Christian practices and Western ideas, we shall separate the marriage system from the other aspects of the culture, and then focus our investigation on it.

There is much merit in Malinowski's view that the study of culture change should be based on three focuses; namely, the impact of the superordinate culture on the subordinate one; the content of the recipient culture and the phenomena resulting from the reaction between the two cultures. Needless to say, we may have a better insight into the nature of change if we know the ideas and the things that affect the traditional institutions. This in turn, will place us in a better position to appreciate the results of the impact. For example, in our case, the attitudes of the Christian church toward customs such as polygyny and bride-price, will definitely help us to understand the changes that have taken place in these institutions. The only conspicuous flaw in Malinowski's theory of culture change is his reluctance to consider the historical back-ground of the recipient culture, a device which will enable one to assess the magnitude of the change. Lucy Mair, as already noted, is in favor of a historical reconstruction, the zero-point, to use her label. Malinowski rejects this as an unreliable device, especially when there are no records about the past. It is difficult to appreciate this position. True, to go too deep into the past may not yield reliable results, but a careful reconstruction based on the available records as well as on the verbal account of the elderly people of the culture may enable us to have a better perspective of the situation. Thus, in our case, we may comprehend the existing forms of marriage among the indigenous South Africans, if we have a notion

of their pre-contact marriage practices. The question may be raised: how are we going to get this information in a country such as South Africa, where mission work has been under way for almost two centuries? There are two ready answers to this question; the first one is that by consulting some of the early writings of the missionaries we may understand the traditional marriage of those days; the second answer is that the evangelizing mission has not yet succeeded in Christianizing the whole of South Africa. By tapping both of these sources of information, we may succeed in making a relatively true picture of the past.

One variable in culture change is the nature of the relationships between members of the interacting cultures. Certainly, to speak of cultures as being in contact, as though they were tangible entities, is a mental abstraction rather than an empirical phenomenon; we must never lose sight of the fact that it is people - the carriers of culture - who are interacting. Therefore the rate and nature of the change depend mostly on the relationships between the members of the cultures in contact. Their attitude toward one another as well as toward one another's culture, are factors that count much in culture change. In our case, we shall have to look at the relations between Africans and Europeans, this will include an examination of the social, political, economic and territorial or residential relations. By doing so we may be able to account for the rate of change, acceptance or rejection of new cultural traits by Africans. We may also know whether the contact is peaceful or hostile, whether the change is deliberate or spontaneous, and whether the members of the superordinate culture have sincere intentions or other ulterior motives in bringing about change. These factors and many others, will receive our special attention later in our treatment of culture change in South Africa.

Many students of culture change seem to agree that culture, like a biological organism, is a system which has to maintain a certain state of equilibrium in order to survive. The general view held by these scholars is that culture at all times strives to maintain a status quo, and that any disturbance to one of the parts of the system will affect the functioning of the whole system. This notion is based on the fact that a cultural system has defense mechanisms of its own whereby it resists change; as it might be recalled, according to Broom and his associates, the ability of the culture to maintain a status quo depends largely on its degree of integration. Thus, if the culture is not well integrated, it will be easily susceptible to outside influence.

This view is also held by many other anthropologists, especially those who have been influenced by the French sociologist, Durkheim, and later by the British anthropologist, Radcliffe-Brown. Among other things, scholars of this pursuasion maintain that culture or society which is undergoing change, is in a state of disequilibrium, and during this period, we are told, the cultural system is striving to reach a state of stability by a process of reorganization and adaptation. The new elements are transformed and reorganized so that they can fit into the accepted patterns. What we do not know, or at least what we are not told, is whether culture does really act of its own as though it were an entity. Nor do we know whether people behave consciously in trying to maintain the equilibrium of their culture. It does, however, seem true that, when a culture is undergoing change, its members are in a state of confusion, and find themselves torn between two cultural systems, the old and the new. They do not know which system to follow, and in consequence, try to adapt to both systems at the same time. This, in turn, leads to a modification of both cultural systems. This phenomenon seems to be universal in all contact

situations. It is of particular importance to us, for in the following chapters we will see how new cultural patterns developed out of the interaction of two cultures. We will illustrate this phenomenon by describing the marriage forms among the Sotho of South Africa, marriage patterns that emerged from the interacting of Africans and Europeans.

Conclusion:

Now that we have examined some of the current theories of culture change, we may extract from them what we need for this thesis. It is evident from the above paragraphs that no single theory of culture change is comprehensive enough to encompass all of the phenomena and processes that are involved in culture change; perhaps only a combination of some of them may best serve our purpose. The following postulates are what we are going to work with; an attempt will be made to relate them to the changes that have occurred in the Sotho customary marriage.

1) It appears to be true that in order to make a valid assessment of the extent to which one culture has been affected by the other, one has to analyze the cultures to see which aspects of them are interplaying. In our case we will examine the traditional Sotho marriage and see how much it has been affected by the Christian practices and Western ideas. The main thing to do here, is to categorize all the new forms that have been taken over and modified so that they fit into the traditional patterns.
2) In almost all contact situations, the culture which will be more changed or affected, is that of the subordinate group. This is true even if the subjugated people are in the majority.
3) Acculturation is a slow, selective and adaptive process, It is

true that people tend to select those things that are not in direct conflict with the already accepted ways of doing things; however, this does not mean that people do this consciously. What is in fact happening is that people choose those cultural traits that they think are good for them, in other words, things that they value. Later in this thesis we will attempt to show that the Sotho chose those foreign elements which fitted well into the accepted marriage patterns.

4) Acceptance of new cultural traits by people goes hand in hand with a corresponding change in their values. It seems that this is one of the crucial mechanisms of culture change, and we will pay some attention to it during the course of this thesis.

5) The process of acculturation tends to produce new cultural patterns that are identical with neither the traditional forms nor the alien ones. In the course of this essay, an attempt will be made to show that new marriage forms among the Sotho have emerged as a result of the influence of the Christian church and Western teachings.

6) The acceptance of new cultural elements by people is facilitated by two factors, namely, their level of education and their position in the economic system of the country. The role of these factors in determining the rate and course of change, will also be dealt with in the following chapters.

7) Culture change produces a state of confusion among its people; this confusion is what anthropologists are wont to call disintegration. In our essay we shall try to show that some kind of disintegration is prevalent in the Sotho social structure.

Chapter II

A Summary of Southern Sotho Culture

The Southern Sotho belong to one of the four main groups of the Bantu-speaking peoples of South Africa, namely, Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Shangana-Tsonga. Each of those can be sub-divided into smaller distinct sub-groups, but we shall concern ourselves only with the Sotho. In most linguistic works, the Sothe are divided into three groups; the Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho (Pedi) and Western Sotho (Tswana). In actual practice, this classification is not usually recognized by the people themselves; for example, only the first two groups call themselves Basotho, while the members of the last-named group prefer to be called Batswana. These three groups however, are culturally and linguistically very much alike, but we will only deal with the Southern Sotho.

The Southern Sotho, like many peoples of South Africa, are scattered all over the country. They are mainly concentrated in the British Protectorate of Basutoland, the Orange Free State, Cape Province and certain parts of Natal. The last three provinces form a part of what is now called the Republic of South Africa, formerly known as the Union of South Africa. Many Southern Sotho are also found around the Johannesburg area in the gold mines of the Transvaal, but most of them originally came to this place as laborers. It will be primarily the Sotho of the Orange Free State that will be used as our illustration in the next chapters when we deal with acculturation in Sotho customary marriage.

For practical purposes, we may further divide the Sotho according to place of residence; as a matter of fact, this division will help us understand why some Sotho are more acculturated than the others. In the Republic of South

Africa alone, there are three groups: those who are found dispersed on European farms, those who live in towns, i.e., in separate residential areas known as 'locations', and those who live in reservations.

The South African population estimates are very much confusing in the literature; in fact, the figures given in different books seem to disagree, but according to the latest census (1959-1961), there are about 1,021,571 Sotho in South Africa exclusive of Basutoland. Unfortunately there are no recent figures for Basutoland, the only available figures are those of 1952 (Warmelo 1952: 8) which give the figure of 656,183 for this territory. Distribution of the Sotho according to provinces, including Basutoland are as follows according to the same estimates:

Orange Free State	-	425,272
Transvaal	-	332,424
Cape Province	-	87,951
Natal	-	20,234
Basutoland	-	656,183
Total	-	1,422,064

It is clear from the above that the heaviest concentration of Sotho are in Basutoland, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. Earlier, it was remarked that the place of residence has a close correlation with the rate and extent of change, but most unfortunately, there are no accurate and recent figures showing the distribution of the Sotho according to the three areas mentioned above here. The following rough estimates of the Basutoland census of 1946 (Sheddick 1953: 10) may give a general idea:

(a)	Basutoland	-	562,000
	Absentees at Labor centers	-	70,000
(b)	Orange Free State. Dispersed	-	150,000 (est.)
	Reservations and locations	-	17,000 (est.)

(c) Cape Province	-	85,000 (est.)
(d) Natal	-	24,000 (est.)
Total	-	908,000

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Like many of the South African Bantu, The Sotho also have a political structure based on the institution of chieftaincy which is the personification of all the attributes of government in persons whose position in their respective groups is guaranteed by their position within the lineage hierarchy. Every sub-chief or headman is in full charge of the affairs of his hamlet or village, except for matters that fall directly under the jurisdiction of the national leader or paramount chief, such as criminal offenses of a serious nature, murder and theft. The chief's most important duties are the settling of disputes, control of the grazing grounds and natural resources, enforcement of local and national laws, allocation of land for residence and cultivation purposes, and acting as leader in all important ceremonies. Another important task of the Sotho Chief is to look after the welfare of his people, more especially the poor and the needy. In order to meet these obligations, he must have an adequate food supply. Of this phenomenon, Sheddick says:

> The chief's village is the center for indigent and needy persons. Married people deserted by the spouses, widows and widowers, men and women without the means of making their own houses all gather round the chief making themselves available for work and expecting to be fed. (Sheddick 1953: 48)

In return for these services, he enjoys the right to have free labor from his subjects; he is also entitled to contributions from his people in the form of building materials, fines from minor disputes and sometimes tax collections.

The Sotho chieftainship, as in many parts of Africa, is based on lineage

and family seniority; thus, at the top is the paramount chief - the senior male member of the senior lineage and family. He is assisted by sub-chiefs who are also senior male members in their respective families. This arrangement then, gives us a hierarchical order of chiefs as the central focus of the political and power structure of the Sotho.

The above is only a brief and general description of the Sotho traditional political structure; it is important to keep in mind that under the European government, much of what has been described above is no longer in existence. The chieftainship has been modified to fit in the European national government; many of the rights of the chief have been curtailed or modified. One other thing to bear in mind is that in towns and on the European farms, chieftainship no longer exists, the only places where it is still found, though very much modified and modernized, are Basutoland and the reservations in the Republic of South Africa.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In dealing with the social organization of the Sotho, the aspect of marriage will be omitted here, and since it is the major concern of this thesis, it will be dealt with in detail in the subsequent chapters. Here the main aim is to give the reader a general perspective of the other aspects of the Sotho culture; for, as we all know, it is unrealistic to treat one aspect of culture as though it were in a vacuum, in fact, they are so interrelated that the treatment of one calls for the consideration of the others as well. In short, then, the Sotho traditional social grouping may be treated under the following headings:

<u>Kin grouping</u>:

The basic kinship group is the primary family with monogamy as the

general rule nowadays, but formerly the polygynous family was quite common among the rich people; the majority of such unions consisted of two wives (Sheddick 1953: 27) to a man, while among the chiefly persons the number of wives could even exceed four. In these polygynous marriages each wife becomes the center of a simple family unit, residentially distinct from her co-wives, but they are united to form a single complex household by the dependence on the husband who is common to them all.

The heads of all the primary families in a village are linked by a common blood relationship, and this in turn, forms what is usually referred to as a lineage in anthropological literature. The solidarity of this group derives from recognition of common descent in the male line, thus forming a patrilineal lineage. Membership in such a lineage is determined by blood relationship in the male order of descent. There is a tendency for these lineages to split into smaller segments; this happens especially when the lineage has become too large. But this segmentation does not nullify the blood relationship solidarity, because there is another factor which facilitates unity, and this is the belief in a common totem. The Sotho, as many other Bantu groups, have an emblem which designates a particular group of people; in South Africa, most, if not all, of these emblems are animals. Every aggregate of lineages that have developed out of a single family, forms a large social grouping which is usually referred to as clan in anthropological literature. It is interesting to note that each of these animals becomes a symbol of praise (seboko) for each clan (Sheddick 1953: 28). Some of the major totem groupings are the Bakoena (koena - crocodile), Bafokeng (mutla - rabbit), Bataung (tau - lion) and Basia (sia - wild cat). Each of these clans is non-exogamous, this is very typical of the Sotho because they prefer marriages between parallel and cross cousins, with the latter being preferred.

From the above account the reader may get the impression that all the people that compose a patrilineal lineage are real blood relatives; this is not always the case. Some of them, though very few, are people who secured affiliation with the lineage by surrendering their original lineage identity. This is especially true of wanderers, former slaves or people born out of wedlock; the general rule is that they adopt the surname and totem of the family with which they identify themselves.

Associations (Ottenberg 1960: 36)

The second principle of social grouping among the Sotho, as in other groups, is the association; and in the case of the Sotho, this grouping is based on age and sex. Separate age-groups (mephato) for males and females are formed, but those of the men are more important than the women's, for, before the coming of the whites, age-groups among men formed distinct regiments known as mabotho. Apart from this function, they were also influential social units. Members of each age-group form a social unit with a designating name; they are the people who were initiated at the same time and thus are of the same age. In the course of every-day life, they tend to cluster together to help one another in the every-day business of life, and they also visit one another frequently. They claim a common code of language which they developed at the circumcision school. In former days members of an age-group used to sleep together in a common house known as khotla for the boys, and thakaneng for the girls. But nowadays these customs are fast disappearing.

It is worth mentioning that among the South African Bantu secret societies similar to those found in other parts of Africa, were unknown. The only division between men and women in these societies is that of social distance; as a rule, men in the normal course of life, keep away from the company of women.

In fact, it is a sign of defective "manliness" to keep company with women, and any such behavior calls for strong social disapproval or ostracism. The same is true of boys and girls. The result of this behavior is that men spend most of their time away from their womenfolk; except for the planting or harvesting period, they spend the greater part of the day at the court place where they are engaged in all kinds of leisure activities such as discussing local or national politics, settling disputes, playing games, tanning skins or cleaning their weapons or implements.

The other types of associations that are found among the Sotho, are mainly the result of contact with the Europeans and are beyond the scope of this chapter.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Agriculture:

The Sotho, like all the southern Bantu in general, are a pastoral-agricultural people. They have a mixed economy which includes husbandry, agriculture and horticulture. In the past the chief crops were sorghum, water melons, pumpkins, beans and sweet reed (ntsoe), while today they have also acquired wheat, peas, oats, barley and vegetables from the Europeans. Maize (corn) was introduced to them before the nineteenth century (Sheddick 1953: 18), but it is not known who introduced it. Maize is nowadays the staple food of the Sotho.

In traditional Sotho society, every family was entitled to a piece of land for cultivation, and in most cases, this land consisted of two or three separate plots of about two acres each. Before the introduction of the plow, the hoe was the most important implement for tilling the soil. Seeds were usually planted at the beginning of spring, in August or September. The nursing of the young plants involved tremendous work; for instance, during

the growing season, weeding and mulching constituted one of the most painstaking tasks as a rule, this was mostly done by women. Again during the ripening season much labor was needed in keeping the birds from destroying the sorghum. Along with rational methods of keeping the birds away from the sorghum, magical rituals were also performed in trying to protect the crops from hail and birds, and for this purpose, a specialist called moupelli was engaged by the members of a village. Harvesting was also women's work, although men were not debarred from helping their women-folk. After threshing, the grain was stored in "grain elevators" known as lisiu - made of grass or straw. In former days men's chief job was to herd their flocks, while hunting also constituted one of the honorific jobs.

Gardening:

Each household was entitled to a small garden (serapa) usually at the back of the house - used mostly for the cultivation of tobacco and pumpkins, but since the advent of the Europeans, vegetables and fruit trees are also grown.

Animal Husbandry:

Animal husbandry forms the major economic enterprise of the East and South African Bantu. The so-called "East African Cattle Complex" is known to every anthropologist. It is in these societies that cattle play a very important part in the economy of the people; ownership of many cattle enhances one's prestige, and, as we shall see later, cattle play a significant role in the contracting of marriages; formerly, without them, marriage was almost impossible. The Sotho, too, value cattle like any other Southern Bantu people. The only sign of wealth which was culturally valued, was possession of cattle. Great care was taken to secure and insure the fecundity and good

health of the cattle, and this involved the performance of certain rituals. Herding was thus the most important task of men, and every man would go out of his way to secure good pastures for his herd. Along with cattle, the Sotho also kept small stock such as pigs, goats, chickens and dogs which were useful in hunting, while the former were kept mostly for slaughtering. Cattle were slaughtered only on important occasions such as marriage ceremonies, thanksgiving feasts and funeral ceremonies. Poor people who had no cattle, were helped to secure them by a system known as farming-out (mafisa): a man who has many cattle gives a cow to a poor man who is entitled to use it as he pleases, except slaughtering or selling it. When it has multiplied itself by several calves, the owner would demand its return, in which case, the increase was divided equally between the two. The same thing is done with small stock. Nowadays the horse and the donkey occupy an important position in the economy of the Sotho; these animals are primarily used for transportation in the mountainous areas of Basutoland and the south-eastern corner of the Orange Free State.

Under European influence, money, trade, professions and labor are increasingly supplementing or even replacing the traditional means of livelihood.

BELIEF SYSTEMS

The Sotho believe in the spirits of their ancestors (balimo); the ancestor-worship involves reverence to the spirits of the dead, sacrificial offerings for the appeasement of the spirits when offended in one or the other way, as well as inducing them to protect the living from vagaries of nature, misfortune and disease.

The Sotho have a vague notion of the supernatural being, in their lan-

guage, the word Molimo, is used to refer to the creator of all things, but as to his abode, there seems to be no clear conception. Moreover, there is no direct relation between the living and Molimo, and only the ancestral spirits can communicate with him on behalf of the living. The Sotho also believe in a life after death in a place known as mosima, (Sheddick 1953: 70).

The help and protection of the dead are sought in all matters that are beyond the control and understanding of the Sotho, for example, their help is called in in times of disaster, famine, disease, drought, lightning as well as during the planting season. The seed is prepared by magic rites in order to invoke the good will and protection of the ancestral spirits. Thanksgiving feasts (pha-balimo) are held after every harvest in honor of the dead.

Magic also plays a significant role in the belief system of the Sotho, for instance, it is held that certain persons command the power of controlling certain natural forces such as hail, lightning, misfortune and rain. These people are also said to be in control of ill-luck and good-luck; they can cause misfortune to befall a person against whom they have a grudge. Sorcery and witch-craft are also known among the Sotho, with the former being more passive in character than the latter, and in the words of Sheddick (1953: 65), " its dogma and ritual are concerned not with the agent but with the victim". Mishaps, sudden death and unexpected misfortune are usually attributed to sorcery. The victim's first reaction is to secure the advice of a diviner who is required to find out the cause of the misfortune or death, and if the indications are that the victim has violated certain customs or procedures, having thereby offended the spirits of the forefathers or living elders, he will have to perform certain rituals to appease them and at the same time cleanse him of the sin he has committed. If the cause of his misfortune or disease is be-

lieved to be the work of a sorcerer, he will ask the diviner to give him protective medicines. The Sotho also believe that there are certain persons that possess familiars (thokolosi); such witches are believed to possess the power of flight, and their typical behavior is that of entering houses at night whilst people are asleep. It is said that these witches go naked, and when entering a house they make nuisance of themselves by upsetting pots, disturbing the occupants and so on, (Sheddick 1953: 71). The thokolosi is widely known in South Africa. It is held to be a short man of about 24 inches in height, with a well developed penis, he is usually sent about at night by a witch to go and cause trouble to persons, especially to strangle or seduce women, but he can also be used in performing useful jobs such as herding cattle or collecting firewood.

The above brief account was only intended to give the reader a general knowledge of the culture of the Sotho before they came in contact with the missionaries and the Europeans in general. When we speak of any change of these people, it should be kept in mind that it was from this state that the change took place; moreover, this notion will serve as a point of departure for the phenomena which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

It will be recalled that in the first chapter mention was made of the fact that culture change can be best understood when the past condition of the culture is known; this was the aim of the present chapter. In the next chapter the traditional Sotho marriage will be discussed in detail so that the changes that have taken place in this institution may be better understood.

Chapter III

THE TRADITIONAL FORMS OF SOUTHERN SOTHO MARRIAGE

The following is a brief and yet concise account of the customary marraige of the Sotho. The intention is to touch briefly on those aspects of marriage which are prominent in the day to day life experience; and the greater part of what will be mentioned in this chapter, will be drawn on the writer's personal experience, and, of course, use will also be made of whatever supplementary information may be obtained from the available literature. For practical purpose, this topic may be treated under a number of sub-headings which follow:

Preferential Marriage Age:

Although there is no minimum age limit for marriage, the preferred age for boys is between the ages of twenty-five and thirty years. In the former days a boy could be allowed to marry only when he had gone through all the age-grades, and it took boys twenty-five years to complete this life-cycle so to speak. Often a boy's marriage would be delayed by lack of cattle for the bride-price, and people who fell under this category usually got married much later, in their twenties or early thirties. The initiation school was a passport to adulthood, but this did not mean that a person could marry immediately after being initiated; he still had to spend from two to four years fefore he could do so. Therefore, in traditional Sotho society marriage at a tender age was unusual; moreover, it was discouraged, for it was held that marriage demands for a lot of responsibility on the part of the spouses, and thus only matured husband and wife could stand the hard tests of wedlock.

As a rule, girls married at a relatively early age, the reason being that

their fecundity must be exploited to the full, for, in this society, as in other African societies, children are thought to be an asset rather than a liability; not only are they thought to be a potential labor force in a subsistence economy, but also a source of wealth. A few years after puberty, girls go to the initiation school, a stage which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood; and usually after a few months they are ready to enter into marriage. In most cases, this was done between the ages of seventeen and twenty, and unlike boys, girls are discouraged from marrying at a late age.

Choice of Marriage Partner:

The choice of a marriage partner was the business of the parents or relatives. Usually when a boy became of age, and thus wished to marry, he would one day get up early in the morning whilst everybody was still asleep, and drive the cows together with their calves to the grazing pastures; this he did without first milking the cows as he was supposed to do; in consequence, people would do without milk for that day. This was the customary way of showing one's desire to marry, but there were also other methods, for example, the father's sister, father's younger brother or even one's mother could be approached on this matter; the latter in turn, would notify the boy's father. It must be remembered that the Sotho are both a patriarchal and patrilineal people, and in such a society where kinship ties play an important role, every close relative must be informed about the boy's plans; his father's brothers and sisters; his elder brothers and sisters; his mother's brother. All must be consulted before a suitor for the boy can be chosen; they are the people who will give guidance in the choice of the right bride, and usually the father's sister plays a prominent part in this connection, her suggestions and advice carry a lot of weight.

When all the close relatives are briefed on the boy's marriage plans, they usually suggest the names of two or three girls whom they consider potential mates. What is important in this matter is not only the girl's conduct but her parent' as well; they must be of good social standing and reputation. When the final choice is made, frequently, but not always, three names are suggested to the boy, and he is asked to make a choice. Afterwards, the father's younger brother or any other close relative will be sent to the home of the girl to inform her parents that his brother's son is interested in their daughter; if they have no objection, they will than inform their daughter about the mission of the guest. If she is interested in the suggestion, arrangements will be made for the boy to visit her at her home. The custom is known as "ho qela sebaka", literally, "to ask for permission for courting". Its function is to allow the boy to meet with the girl without any interference from her parents. It must be pointed out that, in the majority of cases, the boy and the girl already know each other, for, as mentioned earlier, the Sotho lineage is non-exogamous, and consequently, most of the marriages take place between persons of the same village.

It is important to note that, although the parents assume the leading role in selecting a life-partner for their son, they nevertheless respect his views; and more often than not, his willingness to accept the choice must be sought for, otherwise the whole matter may all fall through. There are, however, cases where the boy is simply persuaded to accept the parents' choice, but such instances are rare. In like manner, the girl also has the right to refuse to marry someone she does not like, no matter how powerful the persuasion from her relatives may be.

Customarily, it is unbecoming for a Sotho girl to fall in love with a

boy at the first proposal; she must pretend not to be interested in him even if at the bottom of her heart she may be madly falling for him. Two reasons are usually advanced for this kind of behavior; first, the girl must test the sincerity and seriousness of the boy; second, it is against custom for a girl to fall in love with a boy at their first meeting. Usually, after several visits, extending over a period of several months, the girl would eventually accept the boy's proposal if she is interested.

The boy rarely goes alone to the girl's home, usually he is accompanied by one of his friends who will be his decoy; this is done to make it impossible for non-relatives to know who the real lover is, for, in Sotho society, all moves toward marriage at this stage, are held secret and no outsiders may be informed for fear that they may thwart the negotiations which are still delicate and uncertain. But when the boy has already entrenched himself, he may visit the girl without a scapegoat. The same is also true with the girl; she must invite one of her closest friends to come and keep her company and also to assist in entertaining the guests.

Preferred Unions:

Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are preferred among the Sotho, and the latter are more frequent than the former. It is believed that such unions do not disturb the wealth of the families, and besides, marital disputes are easier to resolve among relatives than is the case with non-relatives.

Marriage Negotiations and Betrothal:

When the boy and the girl have agreed to marry, then a chain of negotiations is set off between the two families. The relatives of the boy, usually his father's younger brother and mother's brother, and sometimes the groom's elder brother, would, on an appointed day, be sent to the bride's home to ask

her parents formally for her hand in marriage with their boy; this custom is known as "ho qela mosadi", literally, "to ask for a woman in marriage".

For this occasion the bride's relatives prepare enough food to entertain the guests; a goat is slaughtered and beer is brewed in abundance. Only close relatives are allowed to participate in the discussions; non-relatives are only invited to the feast, but not to take part in the real issue. On this occasion, the bride, who normally avoids coming in contact with her prospective in-laws, will be called in for an inspection by her future in-laws; but as the custom has it, she must conceal her body from the head to the heels, leaving only an apperture for her face. It must, however, be mentioned that it is only after a lengthy persuasion that she may agree to come close to her future in-laws; cases are not uncommon where girls refuse flatly to appear in front of their prospective in-laws.

Here again, the girl's consent must be obtained before the two families can agree on the marriage of their children. During these negotiations, the chief spokesman on both sides is the mother's brother; he is the person who leads the discussion, who makes the necessary inquiries, but the final word is always from the groom's father and the bride's father or their representatives.

Among the Sotho, as among other South Africans, the paternal aunt, i.e. the father's sister and the maternal uncle, i.e. the mother's brother, play an important part in the affairs of their brother's and sister's children respectively, not only in matters of marriage, but also in many other respects. In the case of marriage negotiations as outlined in the preceding paragraphs, it is the father's sister who advises the bride. She is the person who usually

persuades her to accept the marriage offer; she is also influential in the assessment of the bride-price. The brother's brother, as already noted, is the chief spokesman and, if he is on the bride's side, he will press for the maximum bride-price, but if he is on the groom's side, he will advocate a reduction of the bride-price; for in this case, he is also supposed to contribute to the bride-price of his sister's son, while on the bride's side he is entitled to a portion of the bride-price. This is usually two head of cattle, but he cannot enjoy this right if the bride-price is not sufficient.

Radcliffe-Brown (1924:511), speaking of the importance of the father's sister and mother's brother in South Africa, says:

> And I wish to call attention to a correlation that seems to exist between customs relating to the mother's brother and the father's sister. So far as present information goes, where we find the mother's brother important we also find that the father's sister is equally important, though in a different way.

Of the importance of the father's sister among the Tsonga of South Africa, he had the following to say:

> A man's father's sister is one relative above all others whom he must respect and obey. If she selects a wife for him, he must marry her without even venturing to demur or to voice any objection; and so throughout his life. His father's sister is sacred to him: her word is his law; and one of the greatest offenses of which he could be guilty would be to show himself lacking in respect to her. (Radcliffe-Brown 1924: 511).

Among the Sotho, while the opinions of the mother's brother and the father's sister are highly respected, they do not have the force of legal precepts. In the case of the Sotho, we have pointed out that the function of the father's sister is only to persuade, but never, as it were, to force. It is unthinkable to concede such unlimited powers to a woman in a society which is not only patrilineal, but patripotestal as well; so Radcliffe-Brown's statement may be true for the Tsonga, but certainly not for the Sotho.

The first phase of the betrothel, as already alluded to, is conducted with due regard for the wishes of the girl; even after this stage, she still has the right to break the promise without her action giving rise to any complications, since the agreement is not yet finalized by presenting the customary two head of cattle. The presentation of the two head of cattle to the bride's family marks the final phase of the betrothel, and both families are legally bound by this agreement. The ceremony is usually held in public where all the people present can be witnesses. In Sotho these cattle are known as "dikgomo tsa selelekela", which may be translated as "cattle for the prelude to marriage". One of the cattle must be a cow and the other an ox; the cow is presented to the mother of the bride to thank her for having nursed the bride, and it is known as "kgomo ya letswele", literally, "beast for the breast". The ox is given to the father of the bride to thank him for having been the genitor of the bride; this one is known as "kgomo ya letheka", literally beast for the waist". All these negotiations are handled by the same persons who were first charged with this job.

The Bride-price:

Like many other translations, the label 'bride-price' is also erroneous in that it does not convey the exact meaning of the custom as practiced in South Africa. The label 'bride-price' or 'bride wealth' may give the outsider the impression that a notion of sale is involved in African marriages; this is a most unfortunate illusion. Perhaps the word 'dowry', though it carries a slightly different connotation, could be more precise than the others.

In South Africa it is customary to use the term 'lobola' for this custom, but for the purpose of this thesis, the Sotho word 'bohadi' will be used throughout in the following chapters.

As to the function of bohadi, we can do no more than citing Radcliffe-Brown's (1924: 555) most striking account:

> One of the chief functions of lobola is to fix the social position of the children of a marriage. If the proper payment is made by a family, then the children of a woman who comes to them in exchange for the cattle belong to that family, and its gods are their gods. The natives consider that the strongest of all social bonds is that between a child and its mother, and therefore by the extension that inevitably takes place there is a very strong bond between the child and its mother's family. The function of the lobola payment is, not to destroy, but to modify this bond, and to place the children definitely in the father's family and group for all matters concerning not only the social but the religious life of the tribe. If no lobola is paid the child inevitably belongs to the mother's family, though its position is somewhat irregular. But the woman for whom the lobola is paid does not become a member of the husband's family; their gods are not her gods: and that is the final test.

Speaking of the same phenomenon, one source had the following to say:

> The origin of the bride-price is linked with the social pattern of the extended family and the principle of mutual responsibility and support among its members. Marriage establishes a bond not only between a man and woman but between the families to which they belong. Bride-price or bride-wealth, was made over by the family of the man to the family of the woman.
>
> This bride-price, it is generally agreed, was initially a token of solemnity of the undertaking and of the closeness of the link established between the two families. The giving and the receiving of the token sealed the contract. (Report 1963: 16).

Among the Sotho, as among other South Africans, bohadi is given in the form of cattle; animals that are highly valued. Usually the transfer of bohadi is done some months - sometimes even two or three years - after the betrothel. There is no culturally prescribed time limit for this event, for in the majority of cases, it is determined by the availability of the required cattle. In traditional Sotho society the number of cattle required for a marriage of a commoner is twenty; in addition, ten goats or sheep and one horse are given. Before the introduction of the horse in South Africa, an additional ox was furnished, "pelesa ya moqhobi" i.e., the ox on which the

man who will drive the bohadi cattle will ride. Nowadays the horse has taken its place. Among the chiefly families there is no fixed number of bohadi cattle, however, the common practice is to give as many as possible, from fifty to one hundred.

Before the actual delivery of bohadi, members of both families must meet on an appointed day at the home of the bride to negotiate on the number of bohadi cattle. This is quite a festive occasion where the villagers are entertained with food and beer. Several goats may be slaughtered for this occasion, but the actual number depends on the wealth of the bride's people. All the close relatives must be present, especially the men; they meet in a house behind closed doors while the guests are entertained in other huts, or even outside. After the bride's relatives have formally mentioned how many cattle they require for their daughter's bohadi, the groom's relatives would plead for a reduction. Usually, this sets off heated and protracted arguments which may occupy the whole day, or even more, depending on how soon an agreement is reached.

Although the number of cattle for bohadi is placed at twenty, in most cases this is the ideal rather than the actual number, since very few people ever comply with this requirement. In fact, it is not wrong to say that even if people are in position to afford the required number, the tendency is to try by all means not to agree to the maximum. What actually happens is that only half of the maximum cattle for bohadi is agreed upon; this is culturally accepted as the minimum. As a result of this provision, many people always try not to exceed it; and when the parties have agreed on the minimum of ten head of cattle it is said that "the cattle are enough to make up the bride's head", and both parties agree that the remaining cattle will be transferred

when the spouses already live together. Children born out of unions of which the minimum bohadi is delivered to the bride's family belong legally to the lineage of their father, whereas if the bohadi is below the accepted minimum, the children will be regarded as belonging to their mother's group until the remaining bohadi has been delivered. The bride's parents can also refuse to allow their daughter to return to her husband; this may happen when she has visited her home. The custom of transferring only a part of the bohadi cattle is used to avoid too great losses in the event of any mishap in the marriage, especially barrenness.

If the parties should fail to reach an agreement, the negotiations are usually adjourned to a later date, and several meetings may be necessary before an agreement is reached. There are, however, instances where the groom's people are unable to raise the required number of cattle; in such a case, the two families may agree that the remaining cattle will be delivered when the spouses are already living together, but one important condition is that the children will belong to their mother's family until the outstanding portion of bohadi is delivered. Speaking of bohadi and related customs, Sheddick (1953: 33) makes the following statement:

> There is no absolute scale for the bohadi required for marriage and individual cases show a wide range of variation. There is, however, a popularly accepted ideal scale in terms of which most marriage negotiations are initiated. Twenty head of cattle, 10 sheep, and a horse are regarded as a reasonable bohadi for normal marriages with first wives. .....
>
> An important feature of the bohadi payment is that, while it is formally agreed upon by both parties to the marriage, it is not necessarily handed over. Its actual transfer from group to group is only insisted upon when it is necessary to forestall possible dispute or if the assumed friendly relations between the two groups break down.

How the Bohadi cattle are secured:

According to custom, all the brothers of the grooms father, the mother's elder brother and the groom's elder brothers, if there are any, are each expected to contribute one or two head of cattle to the bohadi, while the groom's father is simply bound to contribute the lion's share. A special note must be made about the mother's brother's contribution which is slightly different from those of the paternal uncles in that it involves certain obligations and rights. For instance, if he does not contribute to the bohadi of his sister's sons, he foregoes the right to claim any cattle from the bohadi of his sister's daughters. Radcliffe-Brown (1924: 551) gives a very interesting description of this phenomenon:

> Amongst the BaSotho a larger portion of the cattle received for a girl on her marriage is paid to her mother's brother, this payment being known as ditsoa. Now the natives state that the ditsoa cattle received by the mother's brother are really held by him on behalf of his sister's children. If one of his sister's children is ill he may by required to offer a sacrifice to his ancestral spirits, and he then takes a beast from the ditsoa herd. Also when the sister's son wishes to obtain a wife, he may go to his mother's brother to help him find the necessary cattle and his uncle will give him some of the ditsoa cattle received at the marriage of his sister, or may even give him cattle from his own herd, trusting to being repaid from ditsoa cattle to be received in the future from the marriage of a niece.

Transfer of bohadi cattle and the Marriage Ceremony:

When bohadi negotiations are concluded, and when the bohadi cattle have been raised, the groom's family will transfer the cattle on an appointed day. As said earlier, this event marks the climax of the Sotho marriage. The same persons who initiated the marriage negotiations are charged with the duty of handing over the bohadi to the bride's family, usually they are assisted by two or three additional men. According to custom the cattle must be driven in such a way that the on-lookers or outsiders will not be able to count them;

this means that they should be driven in a crowded group to off-set counting.

The transfer of bohadi cattle is usually done early in the morning, the reason being that if the cattle are few, i.e. below the minimum, the people will mock the groom's people, whereas when the cattle are sufficient, the people may be jealous of the groom's people, and this may disturb good relations, with fellow villagers.

At the bride's home, the receiving of bohadi is marked by festive moods. Beer, meat and other delicacies are abundant. The arrival of the bohadi cattle is marked by shouts and cheers (melilietsane) from the women. The cattle are hurriedly driven into the pen. Members of both families meet behind closed doors to conclude the final delivery of the cattle. The sealing of the agreement is symbolized by the slaughtering of one of the beasts of the betrothal by the bride's family, but if the bohadi is not sufficient, this is usually omitted.

The acceptance of the bohadi cattle by the family of the bride is the most important step in the Sotho marriage, and this in itself is the marriage ceremony which formally completes the marriage contract.

Transfer of the bride to her in-laws:

After the delivery of bohadi, the next step is transfer the bride to the home of her husband. This is usually done several weeks after the transfer of bohadi. Before she goes, she must be given some presents by members of her family, "ho phahlela ngoetsi"; the dowry articles consist of household equipment such as utensils, pots and mats. Apart from the parents, the chief donors are the father's sister and the wife of the mother's brother.

On the afternoon of the appointed day, all the female relatives of the bride, including women married into the family, gather at the bride's home to brief her on the proper conduct, duties and obligations to her husband and her in-laws; in Sotho this custom is known as "ho laea ngoetsi", literally, to "instruct the bride". The women go in turns, each tells her about the difficulties of married life, things such as false accusations, gossip and ill-treatment on the part of her in-laws, and all of them emphasize the importance of patience, honesty, diligence and obedience. She is also told to represent their family well by making herself a good wife.

Normally a goat or sheep is slaughtered on this occasion. The carcas is divided into two halves (makgakgetho) of which one is left behind for the consumption of the people present, while the other one is taken to the bride's in-laws wrapped in the skin. At sunset or at dusk, as the custom has it, the party that is to transfer the bride (ho felehetsa ngoetsi) will leave for the bride's future home. The party is composed of the bride and one or two elderly women; one of them being the father's sister, and a couple of young women of the same age as the bride as well as one or two men who will act as the bodyguard of the party

Upon arrival at the groom's home, the party will be entertained in a separate house where all the formalities will be completed. Once more, in the presence of her in-laws and husband, the bride is given the last instructions of how to behave as a married woman. This is done to free her family from any blame resulting from her unbecoming conduct later. In like manner, the groom's relatives, men and women, give the groom instructions of how a husband should behave toward his wife. After this procedure, the guests will be entertained by beer and food, except the bride who, according to custom, is not supposed

to eat at her in-laws before she is formally and ceremoniously presented with the food. After the meal, the guests will be shown where to sleep.

The following day the groom's family slaughter a goat or sheep whereby the bride is formally and ceremoniously presented with food. This custom is ironically known as "ho tsubisa ngoetsi koae", i.e. "to let the daughter-in-law snuff tobacco". Customarily she would refuse to eat despite persuasion by her relatives, for during this time she is crying bitterly as the time approaches when her relatives will leave her in the hands of strangers. The party returns on the evening of the same day and with them they take half of the goat which was slaughtered for the induction of the bride.

Proper Conduct for a Daughter-in-law:

According to Sotho custom, and as well as among other Bantu-speaking peoples of South Africa, the bride has to treat her in-laws with the utmost respect, she must be obedient to everyone; she must obey the instructions of her husband and in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, the person with whom she will be in close contact most of the time. She must take care of all the relatives of her husband, and above all, she must avoid close or intimate contact with all male relatives who are older than her husband, especially the father of her husband whom she is not allowed even to shake hands with, nor to touch his clothes, nor even to enter in the house in which he is sleeping.

As to manner of dressing, she must at all times, when in the presence of her father-in-law, cover her shoulders and breasts, she must also wear long clothes to conceal her legs.

According to custom she is expected to get up early in the morning to prepare food for her husband and in-laws; usually her mother-in-law will from

time to time remind her of her duties if she shows some negligence. She is also expected to use what is usually referred to as the "hlonepha language" in South Africa. This is the custom whereby the daughter-in-law is expected to use a circumlocutory language in which unusual synonyms are used in the place of the common words; for example, she is not expected to say manyabolo, (water), nyalssi (dog), kepa (cow), instead of the usual words metsi, ntja, and kgomo, respectively. She is also expected not to address male relatives older than her husband by their names; this manner of speaking is reminiscent of what is known as teknonymy in anthropology, i.e. addressing certain relatives as the father of ..... or the mother of ..... .

The same type of behavior is expected of a man towards his wife's relatives, especially the wife's mother. He, too, must avoid coming too close to her, or to engage in intimate conversation with her; he is not allowed to touch her, nor come in the room in which she is sleeping. As son-in-law (mokgonyana), he must show great respect and avoidance. His mother-in-law (mohoehadi) too, is not expected to expose her legs or breasts in his presence, she must always have something over her shoulders.

In short, these are the manifestations of the custom of mother-in-law, father-in-law avoidance among the Sotho. Needless to say, these customs are practiced in order to avoid intimate feelings or relations between the son-in-law and mother-in-law on the one hand, and between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law on the other hand. But it is important to add that the rigidity of these taboos becomes less stringent as the people involved advance in age.

Residence Rules:

The Sotho society may be described as patriarchal because descent is

patrilineal, i.e. children belong to the father's lineage; succession and inheritance are also in the male line; residence is patrilocal, i.e. the bride moves to the groom's village, and the family is patripotestal, i.e. the authority over the members of the family is in the hands of the father or his relatives.

Traditionally, for the first month or so, the bride was not allowed to sleep with her husband; instead, she slept in the same room as her mother-in-law. This was done to make sure that she did not come to her in-laws' village already pregnant; if, during this period, she did not menstruate, she was asked to give an explanation, and if pregnancy was the cause, she would be returned to her home.

In traditional Sotho society the new couple is expected to live with the groom's parents for the first few years, usually from two to three years. This was done to enable the new couple to establish themselves as a family, and the most important thing being to guide them in family matters, especially how to live together as husband and wife, how to raise children; in short, they were taught all the customs and rituals pertaining to married life. When it was thought that they could stand on their own feet, they would move to a house not very far from the parental household. They would be given cattle and some household articles by the parents of the husband. The chief would give them land for cultivation. But the new couple does not break away from the parent household, instead, they form as integral part thereof, this results in a complex extended family where the parents still have authority over their married children; they have to be consulted in every major decision, and their consent to their children's plans ensures continued support and protection.

Polygynous Unions:

In traditional Sotho society polygynous marriages were quite common among the well-to-do people and chiefly families. Three reasons are usually advanced for the desirability of these unions: first, they are believed to insure ample labor which is so crucial in a subsistence economy. Second, they are believed to make provision for continued sexual relations when the other wife is still nursing a baby, often for two or three years. This was believed to be a measure that would discourage extra-marital sexual intercourse. Third, the possession of many children was not only viewed as a labor reservoir, but as an economic asset in terms of the bohadi cattle that will come from the daughters' marriages.

All the other wives of a man, other than the first one, were obtained by himself without the help of his relatives. He was responsible for their bohadi; the relatives had no obligations to assist him in securing them. He builds a sepatate hut for each wife, and as mentioned earlier, each wife forms an independent family unit with its own cattle and fields, however, they were all united under one husband who was common to them all. Needless to say, jealousies and rivalries are rife in such unions.

An aberrant form of polygamy was also found among the chiefly families. This was the custom whereby the chief could secure young girls and then attach them to each of his senior wives. They are considered as aids or servants, but the chief could cohabit with them. In Sotho they are known as "lirethe".

Other Customs pertaining to the Sotho Marriage:

(a) Pre-marital Sexual Intercourse: The Sotho, unlike the Xhosa and Zulu, do not allow pre-marital sexual intercourse; in fact, any intimate association between boys and girls was frowned upon. Girls were not allowed to stay away from

their homes after sunset, nor were they permitted to mingle freely with boys.

(b) Extra-marital Sexual Intercourse: Sexual intercourse between persons who were not husband and wife was culturally sanctioned, i.e. in monogamous unions, men could have concubines (linyatsi) of which the wives might have knowledge. In some cases the wife may even help the husband in securing a suitable concubine among her friends, but this was the exception rather than the rule. The normal way is that the wife condones her husband's relation with other women as long as it does not infringe upon her conjugal rights. The husband must be careful not to give to a concubine what belongs to his wife. Free service was the only thing he could do for his concubine.

(c) Levirate and Sororate Customs: Upon the death of a man, his eldest surviving brother is traditionally charged with the responsibility of looking after the wife of the deceased. He must support the family in every respect; however, he does not cohabit with the widow, provided both parties agree to it. According to custom they are permitted to do so if they are both in favor of it; in such cases, the children from this union are considered to belong to the deceased. In Sotho the levirate custom is known as "ho kenela".

If a married woman dies without children, her husband has no claim to the return of the bohadi cattle. But if his wife has a sister, he may take her to wife in return for a further nominal bohadi of half the number of cattle previously contributed for the deceased. The sororate custom (sea-ntlo) is also used to serve as a corrective to barrenness in a wife; in this case, the man is allowed to contract a subordinate union with the wife's sister, and the first child born of this union is said to belong to the "house" of the barren wife, while the subsequent ones belong to the house of their biological mother.

(d) Extra-marital pregnancy: Although great care was taken to prevent pre-marital

sexual intercourse, illegitimate births did nonetheless crop up from time to time; because, unlike the Xhosa and Zulu, the Sotho did not have any traditional contraceptial devices. There are two measures of dealing with out of wedlock pregnancy; one is by letting the boy responsible for the pregnancy marry the girl. In this case, six head of cattle must be paid by his family as compensation for loss of virginity by the girl; these cattle, it must be remembered, are paid over and above the usual bohadi cattle. The second way of dealing with illicit pregnancy is by paying the six cattle of compensation without the boy marrying the girl. This is usually the last resort, when the boy or girl flatly refused to enter into marriage with the person concerned.

Dissolution of Marriage:

In Sotho society marriage is a contract between families rather than between two persons. This makes it extremely difficult for the couple to dissolve their marriage, because all the close relatives have each a stake in the marriage. If there are misunderstandings between spouses, relatives on both sides have the right to intervene and to try to reconcile the spouses. Generally speaking then, ordinary marital disputes in Sotho society do not lead to the dissolution of marriage; instead, they are nipped in the bud. But there are extreme circumstances that may force the spouses to separate, and the following are some of them:

1) Adulterous behavior by one of the spouses.

2) Persistent deliberate cruelty on the part of the man.

3) Suspicion of witchcraft on the part of the wife.

A man may claim a return of the bohadi cattle if he can prove beyond doubt that his wife's conduct was the cause of their divorce, in this case, he is also entitled to the children of the marriage. But if the divorce is the result

of the man's conduct the bohadi cattle are not refundable, and the wife may also lay claim on the children. After the settlement of divorce, either of the pair may marry again. A breach of promise by the boy after the betrothel disqualifies him from any claim to the bohadi cattle, moreover, he must also pay one head of cattle for having wasted the girl's time as well as for incurring her emotional damages. The girl is also believed to have been impure or unlucky by this act; hence, she must be cleansed of this stigma. If the breach of promise is by the girl, the bohadi cattle are usually returned if they have been transferred already; in addition, one head of cattle must be paid by the girl's family to cleanse the boy of the stigma.

The above is then what the Sotho marriage customs were before they were affected by the teachings and practices of Christianity and the Western way of living; and in the next chapter we will try to point at specific factors that have been responsible for changing or modifying certain marriage practices of the Sotho.

Chapter IV

CAUSES OF CHANGE

Complete control by the Europeans over what is now called the Republic of South Africa was not gained until the turn of the century (Marquard 1948: 1), when all the indigenous peoples fell under the regime of the white man. To the Bantu this meant not only loss of control over the land, but also loss of the right to settle wherever they wished. The result was that they were gradually forced back into small areas of the country which later became known as Reserves. There was no extensive contact between black and white until the latter started to settle permanently in the country, and when farming and the rush to the gold and diamond mines began, the two groups started to come closer to one another. Ever since that time, the contact has been on the increase rather than on the decrease.

It is this very contact that brought about changes in the traditional cultures of the Africans, and in this chapter we will examine in some detail the causes or factors that brought the European and the African closer to one another, since it is this very interaction that affects the culture of the African. Although it is, of course, the whole culture that is affected in any contact situation, the emphasis here will only be on those factors that directly or indirectly influence the Sotho marriage customs; we may best treat this subject under a number of sub-headings which follow:

ECONOMIC FACTORS

(a) Labor Recruitment: No sooner had Europeans taken to settled life in South Africa, than the need for labor arose; labor was not only needed for herding livestock, but also for work in the fields as well as domestic work. At first the Sotho, who were concentrated mostly in the Orange Free State and Basutoland,

were, like all the Bantu peoples of South Africa, reluctant to work for the Europeans. Most of those who eventually went to the farms were attracted by the conditions that prevailed then; for example, they could live on the farms by cultivating crops which they shared with the farmer. In other words, they were not compelled to be laborers, but they could live as farm squatters; however, this arrangement was abolished by the Natives Land Act No. 27 of 1913. The result was that some of the people went back to the Reserves, and others to Basutoland, while the rest remained dispersed on the European farms as paid farm laborers.

Of greater significance is the recruitment of the Sotho to the gold and diamond mines. There are two types of recruitment; one is by contract which binds the employee to remain in the job from four to twelve months, and the other one is on a voluntary basis. It is in the mines that the Sotho are exposed to new experiences, new ways of life and new foodstuffs and clothes. Most of the miners are temporary sojourners in the mine centers, and after completion of their contracts most, if not all, return to their homes in the Reserves. They take along with them money in cash and some European articles and clothes for their people.

Several factors forced the Sotho to take up employment on the farms, mines and in the cities, and we may summarize them as follows:

(i) Insufficient means of livelihood on the Reserves: When land could no longer yield enough crops to maintain the people - partly as a result of poor methods of cultivating the soil, and partly as a result of the fact that the Reserves became over-crowded - many of the people were required to go and seek employment for cash in order to supplement their subsistence economy. This was the beginning of the migrant labor which is still in vogue in South Africa;

in fact, as we shall see later, it has become a way of life for many people. As a result of the migratory labor, many men are away from their families for the best part of the year, except for occasional visits.

(ii) Land Scarcity: The scarcity of the land on the Reserves is in itself a cause of the migration to centers of employment, because as the population increases, the land for cultivation is no longer available. The result is that the younger people who have no land to cultivate go to the cities and industrial areas where they eventually make their permanent homes. In these areas they work for the Europeans, and in consequence, they begin to imitate their masters in many respects, i.e. in dress, food habits and in style of life.

(iii) More Needs: As the Sotho begin to use more and more of the European articles such as clothes, foodstuffs, furniture and so on, the need for cash becomes even greater. Consequently, seeking employment in urban areas is no longer a matter of supplementing the subsistence economy only, but a means of acquiring money for buying other necessities.

(iv) Education: Education requires money; therefore, in order to get money for paying for their children's education, Sotho parents are forced to go to areas where they can exchange their labor for cash. Since education is an expensive and long-term project, many of the parents have bo be employed most of the time in order to keep their children in school.

SOCIAL FACTORS

There are many social factors that contribute to the changes that are found in the Sotho culture as a whole, this is especially true in urban areas. The most outstanding ones are the following:

(i) Urban Life: Life in cities and towns is far different from life in rural

areas, especially in traditional villages where people adhere to their customs to a great extent. But urban life to the Sotho has meant a departure from the customary way of life; it has insulated him from kin affiliations and the attendant obligations. No longer does he have to consult his kin in making decisions about his life plans. He has become an independent individual rather than a member of a group to whose solidarity he must contribute by conforming and surrendering his individual interests and wishes.

Not only has he freed himself from the bondage of tribal subjugation, but he has also transferred his way of life to a considerable extent. As an employee of the Europeans, he has learned to shape his style of life according to the European model. In clothing, interests and values he is striving to imitate his European counter-part, in short, the European way of life has become to him not only something to crave, but also to strive for, Writing about this subject as early as 1937, Ellen Hellmann made the following statements:

> Two characteristics of urban Native life stand out in clear relief: the extent to which European material culture has been and is being adopted, and the individualism obtaining in the urban as contrasted with the tribal environment. European culture has made sweeping inroads on Bantu culture throughout South Africa, but the dominance of European goods is most marked in the towns, where the stimulus towards their acquisition is keenest. This process of material change is permanent and cumulative. (Shapera 1937: 406).

(ii) Population Heterogeneity: In urban areas people of different tribal affiliations work together and live in the same environments. This is in contrast with the tribal grouping in Reserves where people who belong to the same group live together and thus perpetuate the same traditions without many external influences. In towns the Sotho finds himself in an environment where there is very little support for the perpetuation of his traditional customs, and the result is that he loses touch with the way of doing things according to his

culture. As time goes on, he begins to discard many of his customs, for, in the absence of pressure from his kinsmen, he finds it easier to rid himself of them.

(iii) Inter-tribal Marriages: In urban centers marriages between persons belonging to the same group are fast decreasing. The very fact that there is no rigid tribal solidarity in towns, makes it easier for the young Sotho man to choose for himself his future life-partner. Only love and common interests, and not tribal or family considerations, guide him in making his choice; his kinsmen, no longer decide who his mate should be.

POLITICAL FACTORS

In South Africa political factors as reflected in government policy, also play a significant part in transferring the Sotho culture; the following factors are most pertinent to the subject of this thesis:

(i) Taxation: In South Africa every male from the age of 18 to 60 has to pay an annual head tax or general poll tax as it is called of R3.50 ($4.90) before 1959 the amount was R2.00 ($2.80). This tax which is payable by every African male does not include other forms of taxation such as hospital tax, hut tax in the Reserves, income-tax and other regional or local taxes.

The relevance of taxation to culture change lies in the fact that in order to obtain cash to pay taxes, many young Sotho men in the Reserves leave their homes to go and work in the cities where they can sell their labor for money. As mentioned earlier, while they are in the city they become exposed to a way of life that is quite different from the village life; when they return to their homes they take along with them things of European origin, and

these articles in turn influence the traditional life in the villages.

(ii) Development Projects: Apart from private and church welfare organizations that work among the Africans, there are also the government development projects which are aimed at developing the Reserves in the fields of agriculture, livestock raising, road construction, housing, soil conservation, irrigation and health services. In recent years these programs have been intensified. The significance of such schemes in culture change can not be over-emphasized, for the introduction of new articles and farming implements does not only change the material culture of the Africans, but the social organization as well.

INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH

In South Africa, as in other parts of Africa, the mission church has been one of the most important agents of change in the indigenous cultures. Christianization of the peoples of Africa not only meant preaching the Gospel, but also educating and westernizing the masses of Africa. Missionary work in South Africa has been under way for a considerable length of time. It was in 1560 when Father Gonzalo da Silveira landed at Sofala as the first missionary in southern Africa (Marquard 1948: 70), and almost 200 years later, in 1737, Georg Schmidt of the Moravian Mission Society landed at Cape Town to establish a mission station on behalf of his society. Immediately after the coming of Georg Schmidt, missionaries of different societies began to pour into South Africa. In Basutoland missionary work began in 1833 under the auspices of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society; this coincided with the coming of the Wesleyan missionaries to Thaba Nchu in the Orange Free State.

There are three major areas in which the church has been most effective in changing the culture of the Sotho.

(i) Destruction of Indigenous Customs: Many of the Sotho customs such as polygamy, initiation, bohadi, ancestor-worship, witch-craft and many others run counter to Christian principles; hence, missionaries aimed at abolishing these customs and substituting Christian practices for them. This aim, however, to the disgust of many missionaries, was never fully accomplished.

It is important to note that it was in respect of the Sotho family and marriage where the church was especially effective. I recall an instance in Morija, Basutoland, where the Paris Evangelical Mission Society at one time almost did succeed in abolishing bohadi among its adherents: for some time many of these people did not offer nor accept bohadi cattle in marriage, but it was not long before this practice caused bitter conflicts between the people. The result was that many of the people returned secretly to the old practice; this had to be concealed from the missionary. Some were perpetuating the custom under the disguise of gifts (mpho), while others were keeping it between the families concerned only.

(ii) Education: The main purpose of the mission church was to preach the Gospel of God, but to many missionaries Christianity and Western civilization are one thing; therefore, people could not be christianized without being westernized. The inculcation of western ideas and Christian principles require education as a basis, and thus the missionaries were also educators. Mission schools were built in various parts of the country. If there is anything for which the Christian mission churches must be credited, then it should be for educating the Africans. Education did not only enable the people to understand the Christian teachings, but it also improved their standard of living. They were taught basic principles of cleanliness, soil cultivation, carpentry, brick-

laying, shoe-repairing and other skills. It is also probably accurate to say that the mission education represented a war against superstition.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The imposition of the western legal system on the Sotho is also a crucial factor in changing their culture, especially their social organization. In South Africa there are several laws that affect Sotho marriage directly, e.g. the Native Administration Act No. 38 of 1927 (Marquard 1948: 69), which among other things makes provision for the recognition of the traditional marriages and also regulates inheritance, divorce and other related matters. Of importance is the Native Appeal Court which was set up by the same Act to deal with cases arising out of marital disputes in traditional unions as well as marriages contracted after the European legal system was introduced.

Apart from the state laws, there are also many regulations enacted by City or Town Councils, and some of them have a direct bearing on the marital status of Location residents. For example, in many towns every married man who desires a house in the location, must be in possession of valid marriage certificate; the effects of this procedure, as we shall see later, have been tremendous on Sotho traditional marriage.

In the next chapter it will be shown how the above-mentioned factors have affected the Sotho customary marriage, and the new marriage forms that resulted from the interaction of the Sotho culture and European culture will also be analyzed.

Chapter V

NEW PATTERNS IN SOTHO MARRIAGE

In the preceding chapter we listed several factors that are responsible for changes in Sotho customary marriage. It must be understood, however, that no single factor can be related to any particular change; rather, it is the combination of several of them that give result to a particular change. In the light of this, we shall now attempt to show how the Sotho traditional marriage has been affected by these factors.

THE CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL SOTHO MARRIAGE

Before we can begin to look at the new forms in traditional Sotho marriage, it is important to mention at the very outset that only non-Christians still adhere to the traditional marriage customs. However, as Christianity is fast becoming a way of life for many people, customary marriages are also fast disappearing. But as of now, many Sotho people are still practicing the old marriage customs though in modified forms. Let us now examine in detail the new patterns in the old forms.

Preferred Age: The question of age is no longer important as it used to be because the initiation school which was used for marking the transition from childhood to adulthood is no longer popular. The decisive factor is now the availability of bohadi cattle, and in most cases, a boy must go and work before he can get married. This is necessitated by the scarcity of cattle for bohadi; thus the economic factor has become more important than age.

Choice of Marriage Partner: It was mentioned in chapter III that, in traditional Sotho society, one's parents and relatives had a strong influence in the choice of a marriage partner. Today this custom has been greatly modified.

The choice of a suitor rests solely on the boy; he will, however, inform his parents about his choice when he wants to marry. But it must be pointed out that it is not in all cases that parents readily accept their son's choice; for example, if for some reason or other they feel that his choice is not a wise one, they will express their dislike of the girl and will try to dissuade him from going ahead with his plans. If they should try to force him to give up the idea of marrying a girl for whom he has a strong affection, he may run away from his home and go to the nearest town where he would later ask the girl to join him.

Writing about the Kgatla as early as 1941, Schapera (1941:55) says the following about this kind of behavior:

> The freedom now permitted to young people does not necessarily mean that their choice always meets with parental approval. If the girl is a relative or a daughter of a friend, the boy's parents are usually pleased, and do what they can to further his suit. But if they regard her family as unsuitable, or feel that her own manners leave much to be desired, they will object to the marriage he proposes.

And furthermore:

> Should the boy's people dislike his choice, they may press him to give up the idea of marrying her. If they are sufficiently persistent they may succeed in gaining their wish. But if he is really attached to the girl, and her own parents favor him, he will not yield so readily, and many a painful conflict has resulted from such a situation. (Schapera 1941: 55).

Several factors may be related to this change, such as the weakening of the influence of kin solidarity and the relative independence of children from parental control and support. For instance, nowadays children can afford their own bohadi, because they are economically independent from their parents. In many families children have become the bread-winners.

The common practice nowadays is for the boy to make his own choice and

then inform his parents about his plans when he wishes to marry. The custom of preferred unions is also losing its significance, but by no means is it altogether discarded.

We must however, not lose sight of the fact that the freedom which young people enjoy in the choice of their mates is not only the result of the weakening of the traditional customs, but to a large extent it is also the result of the legal system of the country, i.e., Europeanized Native law. As we shall see later, according to this law, parents are prohibited from forcing their children into marriages with people they (the children) do not like, and should the parents be persistent in their wish, the child has the right of asking the courts to intervene.

Marriage Negotiations and Betrothel: In rural areas such as Reserves, European farms and Basutoland, most of the procedures in marriage negotiations are still followed, but, as mentioned earlier, this is particularly so among non-Christians and uneducated people.

Many changes in marriage negotiations have taken place. For example, participation by relatives in one's marriage negotiations is decreasing, more especially when the relatives are not living in the same locality. The weakening of kin ties is another one of the causes. Individual families nowadays prefer to handle their domestic affairs with the least interference from outside.

Nowadays the father's sister and mother's brother no longer have the same influence as in traditional Sotho society. What is usually done today is only to inform them about their nephew's and nieces' marriages. Not much is expected of them, except in very rare cases where they still have great influence.

One other significant change is in the betrothel custom. The two betrothel cattle mentioned in chapter III are no longer presented to the family of the bride; in fact, the custom has almost disappeared. The main cause for this change is the fact that nowadays cattle are scarce, and people are no longer willing or able to follow the customs to the letter. Economic factors are therefore decisive in changing the traditional marriage customs.

Transfer of Bohadi: The most important change in the bohadi custom is that money has become the medium. Scarcity of cattle caused by inadequate land is one of the underlying factors for this change. But also of importance is the fact that with the introduction of better breeds, cattle nowadays fetch very high prices at European auctions, thus it is more economical to give bohadi in money than in the form of cattle. It has become a general practice among many people to sell some of their cattle in order to raise money for bohadi. Nowadays almost every young man has to contribute to his bohadi with the money he has earned himself.

The change from cattle to money in the payment of bohadi has given rise to a host of problems. Now that a money economy has become part of the Sotho culture, many people tend to misuse the bohadi custom. One of the commonest difficulties is that there is no uniform scale to guide people in fixing the amount of Bohadi. What makes the assessment of bohadi in money even more difficult is that the value of cattle is not determined according to the prevailing market prices; that is, while a beast may fetch a high price at a stock-sale, the same beast in bohadi is of less value, or at least, its value is decreased. This discrepancy is the cause of many a painful conflict, because people wonder why cattle in bohadi matters should be made less valuable.

Currently the general practice among the Sotho is that for bohadi purposes, the value of one head of cattle should be R10 ($14), but, as already noted, not all the people conform to this scale. I know of cases where the amount is as high as R16 ($22.40) per ox, while in the case of marriages between relatives or friends, the amount may be as low as R3 ($8.40) for an ox. In some cases the bohadi is made up of cattle as well as money.

In the light of the foregoing, it is evident how profoundly money has affected the bohadi custom, and one can hardly make a general statement of the standard value of bohadi in money, since no uniformity has as yet been developed. But one interesting fact about this change is that the bohadi, even when made up entirely of money, is still referred to as cattle.

As to the other customs and procedures pertaining to the transfer of bohadi, there have been no significant changes; the traditional elaborate and protracted ceremonies are still a common feature in rural areas.

The Kenela (levirate) and Se-ea-ntlo (sorcate) Customs: These customs have fallen into disuse even among people who, to a great extent, still adhere to the traditional marriage customs. The main cause of their disappearance is the relative freedom accorded to young people in choosing their marriage partners. The laws of the country also protect widows from being forced into marriage with brothers of their deceased husbands..

Writing about the changes in Bantu customary marriage, H. J. Simons (1958: 83) makes the following observation about the kenela custom:

> Nowadays, for example, ukungena tends to fall into disrepute, partly because missionaries and their converts think it is immoral, and partly because of the shortage of the land. Heirs are eager to take possession of the plot occupied by the widow and daughters and often neglect and harm them so as to drive them off the land and take occupation themselves.

Polygynous Unions: Needless to say, polygamy is nowadays a thing of the past for most of the Sotho people. Because of economic and legal pressures, polygamy is dreaded, and women are no longer willing to enter into such unions. Only in very rare cases is it still found among non-Christians and chiefs in remote parts of Basutoland.

The impression, however, that these non-Christians and uneducated people live in a world of their own, isolated from the rest of the world is a false one. They live side by side with Christians and enlightened people. The significant thing about this point is that the marriage practices of the Christians affect the traditional practices of the people in the same locality. Some of the changes mentioned in the above paragraphs are, as it were, the results of the influence of the Christians on the non-Christians. The general tendency is that the traditionalists imitate the progressives in many ways.

INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

It has already been mentioned that the Sotho traditional marriage is practiced by those people who are non-Christians and also by the uneducated. The attitude of the church toward customary unions has been one of rejection and disapproval. Every student of anthropology is well aware of the attitude of the church toward African customs. We have already mentioned elsewhere that one of the aims of the mission church was to destroy all customs that were thought to be un-Christian and thus unacceptable. In the case of Africa, most of such customs were those connected with marriage.

The influence of the church on traditional marriage comes in when people married according to this custom want to join the church. Serious problems usually arise because of the attitude of the church toward this type of marriage.

The prospective converts are not allowed to become full members of the church before they solemnize their marriage in accordance with Christian rites, and their children may not be baptized. The result is that many people have to comply with this requirement if they want to be Christians, and in South Africa the church has been amazingly successful in this connection. It is therefore not uncommon among the Sotho to find that many customary marriages end up as Christian marriages, and this procedure brings about a situation where one single marriage is consummated in two different ways - traditional and Christian.

THE INFLUENCE OF LAW ON TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

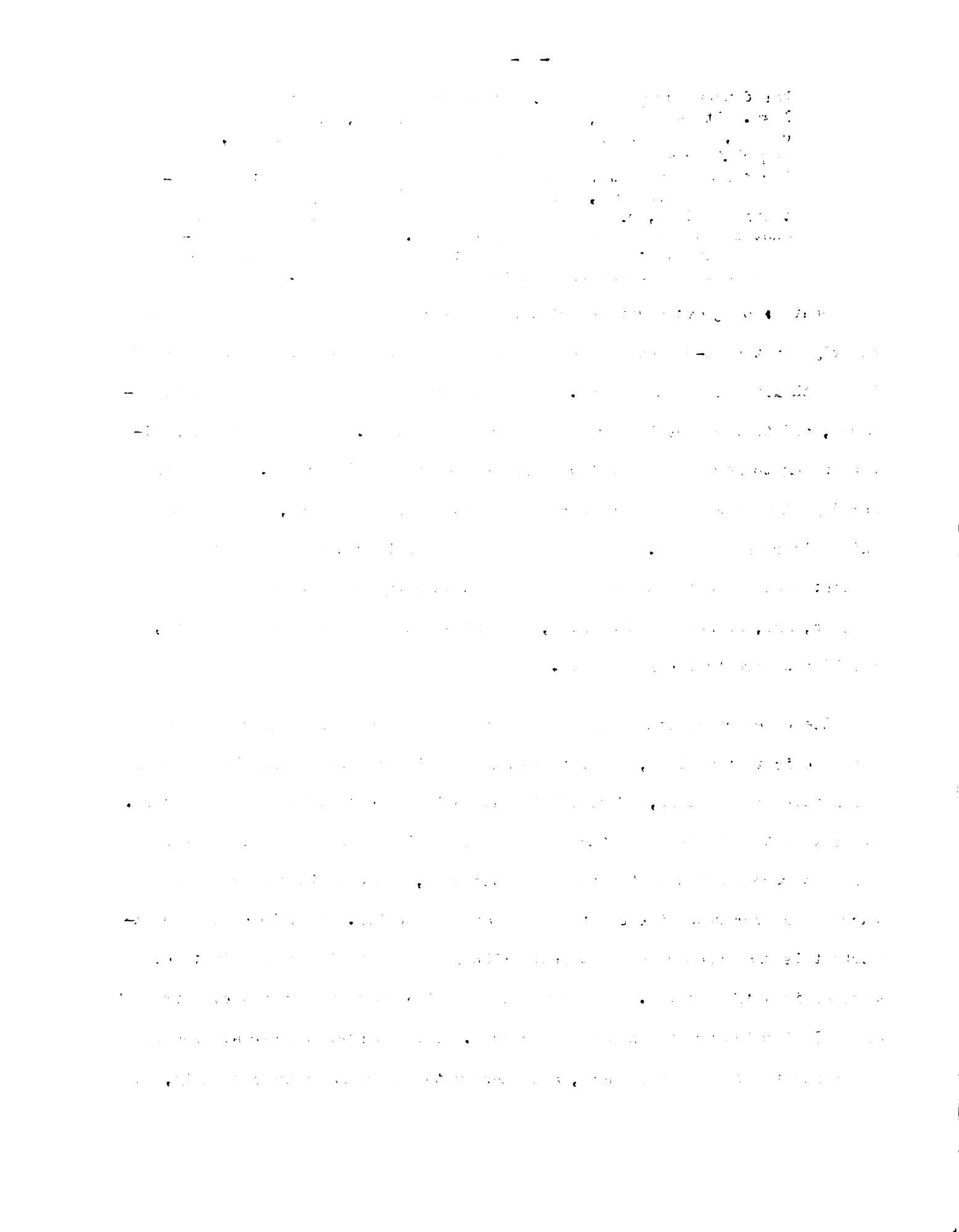
In the previous chapter it was mentioned that the imposition of European law on the Africans has forced certain modifications in their marriage customs. In South Africa, African marriages are regulated by two different legal systems, namely, Europeanized Native Law and European Law derived from the Roman-Dutch law. As might be recalled, the Natives Administration Act of 1927 made provision for several modifications in the traditional marriage customs, inheritance and divorce. According to this Act, customary unions were to be regarded as valid marriages, and furthermore, Native Commissioners, now Bantu Commissioners, and magistrates were empowered to preside over cases arising from African customs, including marital disputes. Although the jurists of these courts are expected to handle these cases according to Native Law, i.e. Europeanized African law, they are nevertheless influenced by the European legal system in their judgments. Moreover, Native Law as it exists in South Africa, is in many respects different from the African legal system. A citation from H. J. Simons (1958: 81) work may elucidate this matter further,

> The second system known here (South Africa) as Native law, is

> based upon European interpretations and amendments to tribal laws. It is applied, exclusively to Africans, by the Native courts, which are presided over by European administrators. Legislature and courts have set themselves the aim of freeing the tribal law from what in European eyes are blemishes: the punishment of sorcerers, marriages arranged by family heads for their children, or the transfer of children from one family to another in settlement of marriage debts. Both bride and bridegroom must now consent to marriage; widows cannot be forced to bear children in the name of their deceased husband.

What is of great significance about this quotation is that it demonstrates clearly how the so-called Native Law has affected certain marriage customs of the South African Bantu peoples. According to this law widows are free to remarry, and they cannot be forced into levirate unions. The children of a widow belong to her and not to the family of her deceased husband. Women can nowadays drag their husbands to court for conjugal negligence, lack of support and adulterous behavior. The same is true with children born of customary unions; their parents can no longer force them into marriage with persons they dislike, and, as mentioned earlier, the child can take the matter to court, should the parents insist upon it.

One other significant influence of the legal system on the traditional marriage is that marital, inheritance and bohadi disputes can now be taken to the Native Appeal Court, if no settlement could be reached in the lower court. It is important to remember that in Sotho traditional society most marital disputes were handled by the families concerned, and only in rare cases did such cases ever reach the court of the paramount chief. What is even more important is that such cases were dealt with according to indigenous law; not europeanized African law. The result of this law is that nowadays even trivial marital disputes are taken to these courts. The old system whose aim was to reconcile the disputing spouses, and thereby to ensure marriage stability, has



been replaced by a system which does not succeed well in maintaining marriage stability.

Divorce and Extra-marital Pregnancy: The europeanized legal system has also brought about far-reaching changes in the treatment of divorce and out of wedlock pregnancy. For example, in regards to a divorce suit initiated by a husband on the grounds of his wife's improper conduct, the court may grant him a divorce and may further place in his custody all or some of the children born of that marriage.

In the case of a divorce suit initiated by a wife on grounds that her husband is maltreating her or for failure of support or conjugal negligence or adulterous conduct, the court may grant the divorce in her favor. It may further order him to support the children until everyone of them is over the age of eighteen. All these procedures are alien to traditional Sotho civil law.

The old system of dealing with extra-marital pregnancy has also been modified. For instance, if a man denies responsibility for an illegetimate pregnancy, the woman can take the matter to court; if he is found guilty, the court will order him to maintain the child until it is eighteen years old. Again, this is quite different from the traditional procedure which was described in chapter III.

Apart from the above mentioned laws, the traditional Sotho marriage is also subjected to a host of other laws and regulations in various aspects of life. There are, for example, the various location regulations in certain urban areas. Some of them prohibit residence in the location of couples married according to traditional custom. When a couple of this type wants to reside in the location, they are required to validate their marriage either by civil or Christian rites. These regulations are more strictly implemented

in the new towns of the Orange Free State Goldfields, e.g. Welkom, Odendaalsrust, St. Helena, and Virginia. In Bloemfontein where the renting of rooms in private homes is still a common practice, the prospective tenants must prove that they are properly married, i. e., either by civil or Christian rites. All these examples are intended to show how the legal system affects traditional marriage.

Similar pressures are also exerted by certain government departments, and prominent in this connection is the Department of Railways and Harbors, the biggest employer in South Africa. This department once introduced a wage scale for its African employees whereby a wage distinction was made between married and unmarried employees. Those who were married under civil or Christian rites received a marriage allowance, while no wage distinction was made between the unmarried and those married under the traditional custom. The result was that people married according to tradition hurriedly contracted their marriages according to civil rites.

It is evident from the above that many people who are married according to tradition are compelled by legal and economic factors to validate their marriages according to the officially approved ways. It may also be noticed that the modern traditional marriage of the Sotho differs in many respects from the one of the past. One other striking point about this phenomenon is the application of two different legal systems to one and the same institution.

THE CHRISTIAN AND CIVIL MARRIAGES

Generally speaking, these marriage forms are more common among the Christians and the educated. It is, however, important to point out that civil marriages are more popular in towns than in rural areas, where Christian marriages

are more prevalent. For a better understanding we will treat each form separately.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: Needless to say, the majority of Christian marriages are between Christians. In South Africa, as elsewhere, the policy of the mission church has been to discourage its adherents to enter into customary unions and civil marriages. Thus for the Christians the only form of marriage open to them is the Christian marriage. Among the Sotho, the Christian marriage has adopted a peculiar form which, in essence, is neither purely European nor purely African, in fact, it is a good example of cultural pattern that has developed out of the interaction of two cultures, for it consists of a mixture of European and Sotho marriage customs. Let us now examine it in more detail.

Choice of a Mate: Among most Christians and enlightened Sotho people, parents no longer decide when their children have to marry; the question of preferred age is no longer important. Young people also make their own choice as to their future mates. Parents may still express their dislike of a particular girl, but this seldom leads to the abandonment of the choice by the boy. Among more sophisticated people, especially those who are educationally or economically well-off, serious problems do, however, arise when the choice is made from among people who are educationally or economically underprivileged. This problem becomes even more serious among people who are beginning to be class conscious and also among certain Christian families who prefer marriages with people who belong to their church. But on the whole, young people have abundant freedom in choosing their future spouses, for the church and court are on their side.

The freedom of the young people in choosing their future mates is further

illustrated by the increase of intertribal marriages mostly in urban areas, but also found in rural areas. The interesting fact about intertribal marriages is that, because of the different cultural backgrounds of the spouses, the logical thing to do is to compromise, and during this process many marriage customs peculiar to each spouse are omitted. Perhaps it is the reason many couples of intertribal unions prefer to contract their marriages according to civil rites in order to avoid the conflict of different marriage customs.

Marriage Negotiations and Betrothel: Marriage negotiations in Christian marriages show a great departure from the traditional custom. For example, in most cases the negotiations are between the two families only, and not all relatives as in the past. Some families,,especially those who are far apart, go to the extent of carrying on negotiations by letter. Nowadays all marriage negotiations must be consented to by the children concerned.

Far-reaching changes are also noticeable in the custom of courtship. Nowadays young people are left undisturbed in their love-affairs; no longer is a young man chased away by the girl's parents because he has not been formally permitted to visit the girl. The custom of making arrangements for courtship has been discarded among many Sotho people. Ellen Hellmann's observation in this respect is striking:

> Courtship under urban conditions consists largely of going out together to cinemas, dances, beer-drinks and in paying visits. Very frequently the man and the woman, who usually meet at some social gathering, first become lovers and then decide to regularize their union by marriage. (Shapera 1937: 421).

Similar changes are also found in the betrothel custom. This is no longer the business of the parents; only the two lovers make the betrothel. The

common procedure is that the boy buys the girl an engagement ring or, as among the more sophisticated, a wrist-watch, ear-rings or a necklace. This is presented formally to her at an engagement party attended by the friends of both lovers. This is usually done at the girl's home. However, many people do without this formality.

Transfer of Bohadi: It has already been noted elsewhere what the attitude of the church toward bohadi and related customs is; we also cited the extreme case where the church in Morija, Basutoland, temporarily succeeded in stamping out the practice among its communicants. However, the bohadi custom, though with modified forms, is still a general practice among the South African Bantu peoples. In fact, it is one of the customs most resistant to change. Let it be said that indications are that, as the Sotho become more and more acculturated and economic pressures continue to weigh heavily on them, the chances are that the custom will gain momentum as a commercialized enterprise. Ellen Hellmann makes the following comment:

> Small wonder,....., that the concept of lobola as payment for women, of which the European has so painfully been forced to disabuse himself, is now gaining currency among urban Natives. (Shapera 1937: 421).

Nowadays the medium of bohadi is money, and in urban areas this is the only means. It was mentioned earlier that there exists no uniformity in the scale of bohadi paid in money, and this more true among educated people who usually push the amounts quite high. It is true that bohadi among these people has lost its original meaning and has thus become a commercial transaction. The more a woman is educated, the higher the bohadi becomes. Amounts ranging between R180 ($252) and R240 ($336), or even more, are a common feature among educated people. In defense of these high amounts, the argument is usually

advanced that the parents of an educated woman must be compensated for all the money they spent in educating her. Besides, she is going to be an asset to her husband in that she is a potential money-earner. One other reason usually given for raising the bohadi amount is that a Christian wedding is very expensive because of the extensive ceremonies and festivities that are usually indulged in. Another excuse for the high amounts is that in modern Sotho marriage the girl's people spend a lot of money on the gifts that they will give to her when she goes to her in-laws, and nowadays gifts that do not include a set of furniture are said to be below the required standard.

It is also important to mention that the bohadi is often reduced when the marriage is between relatives, or when the groom's family is paying for the wedding dress; however, if they are not willing to do it, then provision will be made for it in the bohadi amount. Just as with the traditional marriage, Bohadi is seldom transferred in full, even in modern Sotho marriages. But whether paid in full or not, bohadi is fast becoming a commercial transaction. The report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life (1963: 16) already cited in the previous chapter, makes a similar observation:

> The price tends to rise when an educated young woman, with a well-paid job, contributes to family budget, and undertakes, for example, the cost of educating the younger brothers and sisters. Then her father, loath to lose her value to another family, raises the bride-price; and the woman becomes a bargaining factor in negotiations, thus losing some of her intrinsic independence.

Marriage Ceremonies: Among the Sotho, as among other indigenous South Africans, the Christian marriage has added new ceremonies which are alien to the traditional marriage. After the transfer of bohadi the next step is to have the marriage banns announced for the three consecutive Sundays in the respective churches of

the groom and bride. Meanwhile, during the course of these three weeks, representatives of the two families, mostly women and of course one man from the groom's family, together with the bride will go to buy the complete wedding outfit. The bride and her relatives are the people who make the choice, and the general practice is to choose very exorbitant clothes. This custom is said to be a way of testing the financial strength of the groom's people. This is why many people would rather prefer to have the wedding dress cost included in the bohadi amount, because, frequently, the actual cost of the wedding dress usually exceeds the extra amount that is added to the bohadi amount for this purpose. Sometimes it happens that the buying party reaches a dead-lock, especially when the groom's people are not willing or financially able to pay for the dress that the bride has chosen. In such a case the party is forced to return home so as to consult with the other relatives on both sides, and usually a solution is worked out after some extensive consultations between the two families.

Immediately the banns are made public, the bride and groom each chooses four boys and four girls from friends and relatives. They are the best men and brides maids (baetsana). Every evening each group meets at the bride's and groom's homes respectively, and assisted by other volunteers, they practice the songs that will be sung on the wedding day. One striking thing about these songs is that every time there is a wedding, new ones are composed; of course, some of the old hits are retained, New songs are composed for every wedding because these songs are peculiar to a particular wedding, since they describe something about the groom, the bride or their relatives. Some of them are about certain events that have a bearing on the wedding.

Other preparations for the wedding include the buying of food, baking of cakes, and cleaning of the houses wherein the ceremonies will be held. Since these preparations require a lot of labor, relatives, friends and neighbors are usually invited to help. In the Reserves and on the farms, where most of the dwellings are made of mud, the walls are usually smeared afresh in order to have them clean for the occasion.

On the day preceding the wedding, usually on Friday, the groom's people go to the home of the bride where they will be accommodated in a house not very far from the bride's home. They take along with them food, utensils, clothes and all other things they will require for the wedding. In towns trucks and cars are used for transportation, while on the Reserves ox-wagons are used if the distance is not too long. On the European farms people use the farmer's tractors or trucks for conveying the groom's people to the bride's home. On the afternoon of the same day, each family slaughters a beast and a couple of sheep, but in towns people usually buy the carcasses from the butchers.

This day is called the 'meeting day' because both the groom's and bride's parties meet formally on the eve of the wedding to practice each other's songs together. All-night long singing and feasting mark the eve of the wedding day. Among less sophisticated people, on this evening, all the members of the two families, the groom, the bride as well as all the groom's best men and bride's maids are treated with protective medicine by a diviner who is specially hired for this job. It is believed that this treatment will prevent accidents and quarrels during the wedding.

On the next day the parties go to the church where the marriage is to be performed by the minister. Usually they are conveyed in a convoy of decorated

automobiles. On the farms and Reserves, where people cannot afford hiring of automobiles, horse-drawn carts are used.

In South Africa a clergyman, in keeping with the laws of the country, must have a government license whereby he is authorized to officiate as a marriage officer. Ministers of churches which are not recognized by the government are not entitled to have such licenses. The groom and the bride advise the officiating minister on the type of contract by which they wish to marry. There are two types of contracts in South Africa: one whereby the spouses jointly own the property of their household, known as marriage in community of property in the South African legal jargon, the other is the anti-neptual contract, whereby each spouse owns his or her property individually. Mission churches always encourage their communicants to adopt the former contract, and thus the majority of the Sotho Christian marriages are of this type. The anti-neptual contract is preferred by those people who own immovable property such as land; obviously such unions are in the minority.

After the solemnization of the marriage, the wedding party returns to the bride's home amidst deafening cheers and jubilations. At the bride's home the wedding group is entertained with all kinds of choice delicacies. After this all guests will also be fed. There are two kinds of guests; the invited and the uninvited. The normal procedure is to entertain the invited people first, for, according to custom, they are the people who have helped in boosting the marriage feast by their food contributions. In the Reserves and on the farms contributions are usually made in the form of beer. In the urban areas gifts of various kinds are the standard form of marriage presents. Each family, as it were, takes care of its guests.

After eating, the wedding group goes outside for singing and dancing, and all the best men and bride's maids form a double line behind the groom and the bride; other young people may also join. In the front is the conductor of the singing and dancing. The procession moves up and down in front of the bride's home, and all the songs are sung one after the other. After every couple of songs, the procession comes to a stand-still to listen to the praises and instructions given to the newly-weds by the prominent members of each family. After a while, the procession moves to the place where the groom's people are accommodated to repeat exactly what was done at the bride's home; in the meantime, beer-drinking continues without a stop.

On the following day, Sunday, the groom and the bride change their clothes and dress in what is known as 'change clothes'. These are ordinary clothes different from those of the wedding. About noon time the feasting and dancing are resumed.

In urban areas the normal procedure is to hold a reception in honor of the new-weds; this is usually held in the location hall or in a church hall if there is no recreation hall. Saturday evening is the normal time for holding marriage receptions. There are short speeches by selected persons, reading of well-wishing messages and presentation of gifts.

In the slack hours of the late Sunday afternoon, close relatives from both sides meet privately to enjoy together a special meal which is intended to finalize the solemnization of the marriage as well as the sealing of bonds between the two families. After this, the groom and bride will again be given final instructions by members of both families; this is a very solemn moment. All the participating persons, usually close relatives and friends, are ex-

pected to express the dignity and solemnity of this occasion which marks the completion of the marriage. After this people return to their homes.

Transfer of the Bride: The old custom of transferring the bride several days after the marriage is still a common practice even in Sotho Christian marriages, but many people nowadays, because of economic pressures, prefer to let the bride join her in-laws in their home after the wedding. In cases where the bride is delayed for some time the reason is to give her relatives a chance to buy the gifts that will be given to her. When the required gifts are secured, the bride will be transferred by a select group on the appointed day. Nowadays trucks, automobiles and horse-drawn carts are used for this purpose.

In the Reserves and farms the old tradition of presenting the daughter-in-law with food is still practiced, though with slight modifications. In urban areas this custom is rarely followed. The old Sotho custom of separating the new-weds for some time before they can cohabit has been entirely abandoned. But the custom of letting the new couple live with the parents of the groom is still widely practiced, though the length of the time is considerably shortened.

CIVIL MARRIAGE

Although the Christian marriage enjoys a higher status among most people, in recent years the civil marriage has gained tremendous popularity among the members of the younger generations in both urban and rural areas. There are many reasons for this change. First, the civil marriage is cheaper than the Christian marriage which is becoming more and more expensive as new luxurious items are added to it. Second, the civil marriage is quicker in that many of the time-consuming procedures are omitted. Third, the civil marriage is a good way of escaping the payment of bohadi. Fourth, a civil marriage is always

resorted to when there is a disagreement about the choice of a mate between the parents and the child. Fifth, a civil marriage is also resorted to when the bride is already pregnant before the marriage.

Although the normal procedure in marriage negotiations is still followed in many civil marriages, the general practice is that the marriage ceremony is omitted, while in a few instances people usually mark this occasion by a tea-party attended by friends of the spouses. Economic considerations are the reason for this change. Most of these marriages are contracted before a civil officer, who, in the case of South Africa, is a Bantu Commissioner or a magistrate acting in the capacity of the former. The banns are published at the office of the Bantu Commissioner for the usual period of three weeks, after which the marriage is contracted at a nominal fee of R2 ($2.80) for the license and duty charges. However, the spouses must each be over the age of sixteen, and each must have a witness who will counter-sign the contract. In the case of a minor, the parents' consent to the marriage must be obtained.

This marriage is looked upon by many conservatives and Christians as a social evil which encourages young people to disobey their parents for many of these marriages are entered into without the knowledge of the parents on either side.

UNSANCTIONED MARRIAGES

Most of these unions are temporary, and more prevalent in urban areas, though not absent in rural areas. The main cause of these marriages is migrant labor. For example, in urban areas where many men who have left behind their families work for long periods, the tendency has been to live with other women while they are in these areas. In South Africa every European family

keeps at least two African domestic servants, normally a male and a female. Most of these domestic servants are either from the farms or Reserves. The employer provides for accommodation in the back-yard. The result of this situation is that eventually the servants are tempted to enter into a kind of loose marriage, ironically known as "vat-en-sit", i. e., 'take and sit'. This union is based primarily on the satisfaction of the sexual urge, and it may last for years so long as the couple is still in the same place. The reader must not get the impression that these unions are only between people who work for the same employer; in fact, most of them are between persons that work for different employers.

The striking thing about these loose unions is that the employers may not object to them even if they know that the union is illegal, because objections usually cause resentment among the servants. Such resentment may eventually separate the employer and the employee.

The social evils caused by these unions cannot be overemphasized. Many young Sotho boys and girls from the farms and Reserves fall prey to this menace, and illegitimate children born of such unions are a concern for many a parent. Besides, these unions are the cause of many a broken family. The government has tried to eradicate this evil by passing laws that reduce the number of domestic servants per employer; these measures have failed, because the source of the trouble, migrant labor, has been left untouched.

Summary of the Major Changes:

Here now follows a summary of the major changes in the Sotho marriage:

1) The choice of a marriage partner is now becoming an individual affair, and a new pattern of courtship has developed. Parents and relatives

no longer have control over the love-affairs of their children. This trend is evident in all forms of marriage, i. e. modern traditional, civil and Christian marriage. Because of urban life, education and the weakening of parental control, intertribal marriages are also fast increasing.

2) Participation by relatives in marriage negotiations has been reduced to a minimum. In fact, in many civil marriages the parents are also excluded. Marriage is no longer a contract between families, or at least, the bonds between the families are drastically weakened.

3) The traditional betrothel custom has undergone drastical changes, for example, in the case of modern traditional marriage, the presentation of the two head of cattle to parents of the bride as a sealing of the betrothel, has been discontinued. In the case of the Christian marriage a new pattern has been adopted, i. e. the presentation of an engagement ring.

4) The bohadi custom, though still widely practiced, has adopted new forms and meaning. Nowadays money has become the medium, and, in turn, has changed the original function of bohadi. Instead of being a stabilizing factor in marriage, it has come to be used as a commercial transaction. The result is that Sotho marriages are now less stable.

5) The marriage ceremonies have also taken a different form; this is particularly so with the Christian marriage where the elaborate ceremonies have replaced the traditional ones which were less elaborate. We have also noticed that the Christian marriage is becoming more and more expensive because people keep on adding new items to it.

6) Civil marriage has come in not only as a force against bohadi, but

also as a substitute for the Christian marriage which is becoming financially burdensome. With this type of marriage young people have also gained freedom from parental domination.

7) Economic factors, migratory labor, the weakening of parental control, urban life and faster means of travelling have all contributed to the emergence of irregular marriages,

Chapter VI

THEORITICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In the first chapter we gave a general review of some of the current theories of culture change, and we extracted from them some ideas which we thought will best serve the purpose of this thesis. We are now going to relate these statements to the nature and process of culture change in the Sotho marriage forms.

1) Historical Reconstruction and Analysis of Culture: As will be recalled, we supported the view that a better understanding of the rate and extent of culture change may be gained, if the nature of the culture before the contact is known. In this thesis we presented the traditional Sotho marriage forms. By the use of the historical approach we presented a historical reconstruction of the Sotho culture before the contact period. Written records, and the personal experience of the writer served as source material. We also made an analysis of Sotho culture, particularly the marriage forms. Without this analysis we would not be in position to appreciate the changes that have taken place; moreover, we would not be able to pinpoint those aspects of the Sotho marriage that have undergone change more than the others.

Furthermore, we applied most of the techniques suggested by Broom and his associates in their work cited in the first chapter. For example, in chapter two we presented brief ecological and demographical data about the Sotho people, their culture and relationships with the Europeans. We explored in somewhat general terms the interrelationships between the two cultures as well as the attitudes of members of the two groups to one another. It became clear that the Sotho occupy a subservient position in

relation to the Europeans. The territorial, residential, social and economic relationships between the two groups were also reflected elsewhere in this essay, and we saw how these in turn relate to the process of acculturation. These relations, as we may recall, are variably known as intercultural communication networks, information channels or simply relations. For the Sotho, the most important relationships between them and the Europeans are educational, economic and administrative.

Through these relationships come the agents of change, and where they are more extensive, the change is also extensive. For instance, in the Reserves and on the farms where the relationships between the Sotho and the Europeans are less extensive, the traditional marriage customs are more widely practiced than in urban areas. We observed that in urban areas civil and Christian marriages are becoming the standard forms of marriage.

2) Acculturation tends to be toward the Dominant Culture: Another point brought out in chapter one is that, in every contact situation, the culture that will be more affected is that of the subjected group. This fact, too, became evident as we described the changes in the Sotho marriage customs. We saw how Christianity and Western ideas have affected the traditional marriage of the Sotho. Generally speaking, the trend of change is toward the European forms; in other words, we have here a kind of change which Dohrenwend and Smith appropiately call 'orientation', i.e. change of one culture toward another. This trend is well illustrated by civil marriages among the Sotho. The fact that in this type of marriage, most of the ceremonies, procedures and formalities of traditional marriage are discarded, supports this contention.

3) Acculturation is a slow, selective and adaptive process: The notion that acculturation is a slow process was also noted. It is a well known fact that people never take over alien cultural traits indiscriminately; this also became evident in our treatment of the marriage forms of the Sotho. For instance, in the contemporary traditional marriage we can see acculturation at its incipient stage. Here we see a slow and limited acceptance of foreign elements such as the use of money in bohadi, the use of the europeanized courts in the event of marital disputes, the use of foreign concepts and procedures in marriage affairs and the freedom accorded to young people in choosing their marriage partners. All these elements are foreign. But what is even more of importance in this connection is the fact that these new elements are modified so that they can fit well into the existing patterns. The use of money in bohadi is an example. The Sotho still think of this money as actual cattle, and that is why the whole amount is divided into units that represent cattle. The acceptance and adaptation of alien traits also bring about some changes in the existing patterns. For example the use of money in bohadi has freed young men from dependence on their parents and relatives for bohadi. Nowadays almost every young man is expected to be responsible for the greater part of his bohadi; in fact, this has become the accepted procedure for many people. Parents are increasingly shirking the responsibility of providing bohadi for their sons.

The freedom of the young people has also affected the social organization of the Sotho: less participation by relatives in one's marriage affairs is a case in point. Families tend to become more individual entities loosely related to one another. Parental supervision and guidance in domestic affairs of their married children are also disappearing. Kin

ties are solidarity are weakening as evident in the levirate and sororate customs. The relationship between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law on the one hand and between the mother-in-law and the son-in-law on the other hand are also undergoing change. The strict rules of avoidance described in chapter three are fast being replaced by friendly or strained relations.

It seems that the process of acculturation tends to follow a definite pattern of development. The point I am trying to make here is that the acceptance of new marriage forms by the Sotho shows three phases of acculturation. First is the modified traditional marriage which is but a slight departure from the traditional one. This form, then, represents the first stage in acculturation. Second is the Christian marriage which contains roughly fifty - fifty mixture of Sotho and European cultural characteristics. This can be safely called the second phase of acculturation. The third phase is represented by the civil marriage which in many respects resembles that of the Europeans.

Acculturation, as we all know, apart from being a gradual and adaptive process, is also a selective process. In this case we noticed that most of the new elements adopted are such that they do not cause a radical change in Sotho marriage practices. The use of money in payment of bohadi, for instance, has not broken down the custom of bohadi, nor has it decreased the practice thereof. A selective process is also noticeable in respect of the relative ease with which material objects pertaining to marriage are accepted. The use of European gifts, dress and foodstuffs in weddings is a case in point. These material objects are readily accepted because they do not cause radical changes in the existing marriage patterns. But foreign ideas such as limiting the size of the family, function and purpose of marriage and equal status of the spouses, are not readily accepted

by the Sotho; in fact, they resent such ideas.

The preceding view brings us also to the notion that a cultural system has to maintain a certain degree of stability in order to continue its existence; outside influences that threaten its proper functioning are resisted. In the present case, the resistance and tenacity of the bohadi customs may be illustrative of this phenomenon. The idea of culture being able to retain equilibrium even in the face of change reminds us of what Broom and his associates call the 'boundary-maintaining mechisms' of culture. As we may recall, these scholars distinguish three types of mechanisms, namely, the rigidity or flexibility of culture, the degree of integration of a culture, and the openness or closeness of a culture. In the case of the Sotho culture all these mechanisms seem to be operative. For instance, the Sotho culture is more rigid in marriage customs, especially the bohadi custom, and yet it is flexible in its economic system, as exemplified by the relatively easy acceptance of European material articles. Again, the Sotho culture is well integrated in its social organization, e.g. kin solidarity, and yet it is less integrated in its economic system. Finally, the Sotho culture is open in its economic system in that it allows more readily foreign economic articles such as money and consumer goods, and yet it is closed in its ideology, e.g. transmission of Western ideas is slow. In short, Sotho culture adopts objects more readily than ideas.

4) Importance of Values in Culture Change: It was stated in chapter one that one of the crucial factors in the process of acculturation is the value system. Studies in this area suggest that acceptance of alien elements by a people is facilitated by a corresponding change in their values. In re-

gard to the Sotho, we noticed that the people who accept the alien marriage customs more readily are the Christians and the enlightened people whose values are oriented towards those of the Europeans. In urban areas where traditionalism and tribalism are fast disappearing, the values of the Sotho in respect to bohadi, marriage ceremonies and formalities differ from those of the people in the traditional environments. It seems that, when there is less interaction between urban and rural people, the latter tend to perpetuate a set of values that is different from that of the people in urban areas. The homogeneous nature of rural societies tends to make them more resistant to change. This point is illustrated by the frequency of traditional marriages in rural areas where traditional values are still powerful.

5) Acculturation Produces New Cultural Patterns: In chapter one we also noted that, when two cultures interact with one another, new cultural elements develop, previously non-existent in either culture. In the case of the Sotho marriage forms, the Christian marriage offers a classical example of this phenomenon. The new ceremonies that form the core of this marriage are neither European nor African. We have seen that a normal Sotho Christian marriage lasts for three days, a thing which is not done in the traditional marriage. Again, the wedding procession consisting of dancers and singers is quite a new development. What is even more striking are the wedding songs that now form an integral part of this marriage. It is interesting to note that these songs are composed by the young people who act as best men and bride's maids. Another new cultural development in respect to the Sotho Christian marriage is the engagement of a diviner who is required to protect the wedding participants from possible accidents

during the feast. He is also expected to prevent quarreling or fighting among the people. This is an entirely new function of the diviner.

Migratory labor is also a new development in the Sotho culture. The flow of people to areas of employment has become a way of life for the Sotho in the Reserves. It was mentioned earlier that a young Sotho man does not think of marriage before he has worked in these areas. In fact, in many respects, migrant labor has come to be used as a substitute for the initiation school. A young man who has never been to the mines or any other place of employment is usually ridiculed or despised. Working in the mines or industrial areas has become an integral part of the Sotho way of life. It is therefore evident that migrant labor is no longer only a means of supplementing the subsistence economy, but also serves as a transition to adulthood. That migrant labor has become an integral part of Sotho way of life, is evident from the fact that even if a man is financially in a position to provide for the bohadi of his son, the latter must still go and work before he can marry. True, the rigorous nature of work underground, the harshness of the mine officials and the ever-looming dangers of mine work are, in the mind of the Sotho, similar to the beatings, tortures and hardships of the initiation school. Thus working in the mines offers almost the same training which young men were expected to receive before they could be promoted to adulthood. For married men too, migrant labor has become an accepted way of life. In the Reserves it has become a common practice for men to leave their families after the plowing period. Some of them return during the harvesting season, but a great majority of them have become regular workers, visiting their homes at the end of the month. Fast and adequate transportation makes it possible for some workers

to spend week-ends with their families; this is particularly true for workers who are not employed in the mines.

The prolonged absence of men from their families has given rise to a new phenomenon of matrifocality. For instance, many of the duties and powers of men as heads of families have been transferred to women. Nowadays women's activities are no longer confined to domestic work, weeding and harvesting only, but they must also supervise duties that are traditionally defined as belonging to men only. For example, they supervise plowing, attend the chief's meetings on behalf of their husbands, take charge of the household budget, enter into contracts with other people or traders, open credits with traders and so on. In this way many households are run by women, a thing which is without precedent in Sotho culture. Others again, have adopted the practice of hiring other men to look after the livestock and cultivate the fields, whilst the wives do the supervisory work. Keeping servants and placing a man under the supervision of a woman is also foreign to the Sotho society; the latter usually results in serious conflicts because it is against all tradition to take orders from a woman.

6) Importance of Economic Factors in Culture Change: Other crucial factors in acculturation are education and economy. Without adequate educational and economic facilities, acceptance of new cultural elements is retarded. This became evident when we dealt with the new marriage customs of the Sotho. It was mentioned that Christian and civil marriages are more common among the educated people who are economically better off. To value and to desire foreign cultural traits are not the only requirements in acculturation, the financial ability to acquire them must also be there.

One of the reasons why many Sotho people still cling to some of their marriage customs is because they cannot afford the other forms of marriage, even if they envy them. Among the Sotho, as among other groups, there are many people who are desirous of emulating the European way of life, but fail because of unfavorable economic conditions. Therefore, it seems that the position of the Sotho in the economic structure of South Africa has much to do with the rate and extent of their acculturation; one is tempted to make the assumption that this is true in all contemporary contact situations. Studies of culture change should therefore, in conjunction with other factors, consider economic factors as determinants of acculturation.

7) Acculturation causes Disintegration in culture: Finally, let us turn to the disruptive effects of culture contact. It was mentioned in chapter one that the introduction of alien elements into a culture may cause disintegration of the culture. The people whose culture is undergoing changes are often in a state of confusion. This state of affairs is also present in the Sotho culture. Acceptance of foreign marriage practices has given rise to a host of disruptive effects. Let us list some of the outstanding signs of disintegration.

(i) Marriage Instability: One of the social evils in contemporary Sotho society is the instability of marriage. Many marriages are characterized by frequent disputes between the spouses. Cases arising from marital disputes are common in the courts of chiefs and Bantu Commissioners. Divorce, though still frowned upon, is increasing in frequency. Some of the common causes of marriage instability are the prolonged absence of men from their families, lack of adequate support of their families by some men, irregular unions, temptation on

the part of wives to have affairs with other men while the husbands are absent from home, bearing of children by other men, loss of control by parents over their married children and weakening of kin ties. Relatives no longer perform the useful function of nipping marital disputes in the bud.

(ii) Weakening of Parental Control: Acculturation has caused the weakening of the authority of parents over their children, and this in turn has made children disobedient and less respectful. Many of them even go to the extent of ignoring well-meant advice and counsel of the parents. Parents find it difficult to discourage them from mischievous conduct. Many children become delinquents because of laxity of parental control.

(iii) Irregular Marriages: In the previous chapter we pointed out that many of the migrant laborers are tempted to enter into loose unions with other women. These unions usually lead to the breaking up of legal marriages. Many wives and children suffer from hunger, ill-health, inadequate clothing and education because men spend money on women other than their wives.

(iv) Misuse of Bohadi: We have already noted in the previous chapter that the bohadi custom is increasingly becoming disfunctional. Its original function of stabilizing marriage and fixing the position of children is no longer effective. For many people it has become a commercial transaction. The use of money in bohadi, lack of a uniform bohadi scale and the pressures exerted by the money economy have tempted many people to raise the bohadi price. The better educated

a woman is, the higher the bohadi becomes.

(v) Neglected Families: Nowadays it is common to find families in which one of the spouses is missing. Some men or women who are attracted by better conditions of life in urban areas desert their families. The practice of irregular unions is also one of the causes of neglected homes. Children born of such families end up as professional criminals, because, in the absence of one of the parents, proper upbringing is non-existent.

(vi) Increase of Illegitimate Births: With the relaxation of parental control, and the subsequent freedom of the young people, morality has descended to the lowest ebb. In traditional Sotho society constant parental vigilance helped a great deal to keep illegitimate births to a minimum, but nowadays unmarried mothers are increasing.

(vii) Weakening of the in-law Avoidance Custom: Some of the marital disputes stem from the frequent quarrels between a woman and her husband's parents. With the decay of the custom of showing respect and avoidance to one's parents-in-law, serious quarrels often crop up between a daughter-in-law and her parents-in-law. Young women are no longer prepared to subject themselves to the strict discipline of their parents-in-law. Men often quarrel with their wives because they (wives) do not get along with their husbands' parents.

(viii) Weakening of Kin Ties: With the acculturation of the Sotho has come the weakening of kinship ties which are so important in African societies. The sense of blood relationship and mutual interdependence

among relatives is fast dying out. Money economy, a sense of individualism and the breaking down of group solidarity often set brother against brother. Jealousies among relatives are replacing the feeling of interdependence, obligation and mutual help.

(ix) Confusion: It is true that members of a changing culture are in a state of confusion. Confronted with two ways of doing one and the same thing, serious conflicts within the individual himself and between him and other members of his society are bound to arise. The half-baked young Sotho, whose manner of living and thinking is neither African nor European, finds himself torn between two different ways of living. His interests often clash with those of his parents or older members of his society who are less acculturated than he. He wants to go it alone in his marriage affairs; he wants to make his own decisions and follow his own desires, but, to his disgust, he often has to reconcile his wishes with those of his relatives or else face the danger of being ostracised. He faces life with no definite goals in mind, nor does he have the right motivation to go ahead in life, for he lives in two worlds far apart from each other.

In conclusion, we may state that, although the Sotho show a relatively rapid acceptance of new cultural elements, many traditional customs are still being practiced. On the other hand, it is also true that the rate of their acculturation is seriously hampered by the restrictions imposed on the Sotho. Their exclusion from full participation in economic and political systems of South Africa have very adverse effects on their development.

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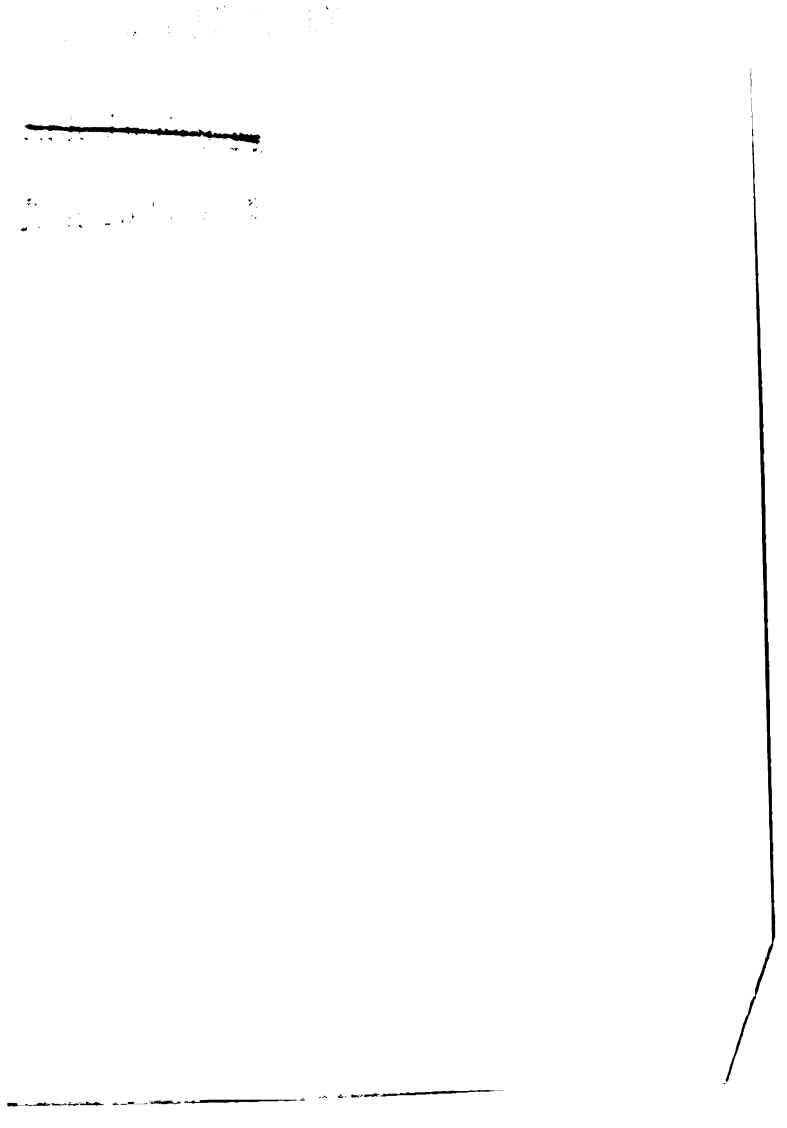

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