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THE EFFECTS OF CONTACT WITH EUROPEANS
ON THE STATUS OF PONDO WOMEN

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THE AmaMpondo are a Bantu tribe of the south-eastern group, living in a native reserve on the southern border of Zululand, and speaking a dialect of Xosa. They depend for their subsistence upon cattle farming and hoe culture. They have a typical Bantu 'cattle complex', cattle not only being of economic importance, but being a centre of men's interests and emotions and playing a large part in religion and marriage. They live in patrilineal kinship groups *imizi* (sing. *umzi*) which are scattered about the country at distances varying from some hundreds of yards to two or three miles. The average *umzi* now contains four to five adults, but formerly, when danger from man and beast made concentration necessary for defence, it is said that it was common for twenty married men, together with their wives and children, to live together in one *umzi*. Both chiefs and commoners practise polygyny, and a union is legalized by the passage of cattle from the groom's group to the bride's (*ukulobola*). Administration was organized on a territorial basis. There was a powerful paramount chief with district chiefs and sub-chiefs under him. Each sub-chief had a court, from which there was the right of appeal to his immediate superior and finally to the paramount. Cutting across the territorial groupings (*amabandla*) are patrilineal clans, *iziduko* (sing. *isiduko*). *Iziduko* are strictly exogamous, and the sense of difference between them, and oneness within them, is marked by the taboo on drinking milk, or eating sacrificial meat, of a strange *isiduko*, but the acceptance of either from a member of the same *isiduko*. Great emphasis is laid on the respect for elders, living and dead. Deceased ancestors, *amatongo*, are believed to have the power of blessing, or of sending sickness and poverty, and sacrifices of meat and beer are made to them. Besides being sent by ancestral spirits, sickness is thought to be caused by sorcerers, *abatakati*. Murder by sorcery is regarded as the worst possible crime, and was punished with torture and death. The fear of sorcery is ever present in the

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minds of AmaMpondo. The most powerful specialists in the society are the diviners, *amaggira*, who discover sorcery and who also treat sick persons.

Such in brief outline is the structure of the society which has come in contact with European culture, and in which the changing status of women is to be discussed. The study of status under tribal conditions is based purely on Pondo material. In towns AmaMpondo are mixed with AmaXosa and AmaFengu, but such tribal distinctions as exist between them do not affect the line of argument in this paper.

I. STATUS OF WOMEN UNDER TRIBAL CONDITIONS

Economic status. Women of the AmaMpondo were economically self-supporting, and their status was in no way servile. Grain, maize, and millet was the staple food of the people, and the women were the chief producers of grain. A woman while she was able-bodied was never in danger of becoming a tax on the community to which she belonged, and was welcomed as an economic asset by any group with which she elected to live. The bargaining power gained by women by this fact does not seem to have been realized by earlier European observers whose own women were in economic subjection, but who were self-righteously shocked at what they thought to be an unfair division of labour between the sexes in native tribes.

The status of native women has frequently been judged by the amount and nature of the work they do, so a detailed analysis of the division of labour between the sexes is necessary. Formerly in Pondoland the ground was cleared by men and women working together, men felling trees, women cutting shrub and grass. Men might also assist their wives in hoeing for planting and weeding and in reaping, but in each of these processes the women were responsible for accomplishing the work, and theirs was the blame if it were not done. Women carried crops from fields to granaries and did any other transport work. They were responsible also for collecting firewood, grinding, cooking, gathering wild plants for food, caring for children, mudding, thatching, and repairing huts, pottery, and some basket-work. The business of men was defence, raiding, care of cattle, hunting, the building of the framework of huts, and kraals, construction and repair of granaries, leather-work, iron-smelting, and some basket-

work. It is difficult to estimate now what time and energy was taken up in defence, raiding, and hunting; the women's work was more continuous, and more monotonous, but on the whole the division of labour seems to have been fairly equal. As Mr. Driberg so well points out in his article in the October number of *Africa*, the nature of the division was conditioned by physical necessities, women of child-bearing age being obliged to work within easy reach of their homes, that they might feed and care for their children. Further, that it is only the convention of the community that makes any particular form of work degrading in itself or to one or other of the sexes. In South Africa many Europeans think it degrading to carry parcels,—a poor white once refused a gift of half a dozen oranges, for to carry them home was 'niggers' work'. With the Pondo carrying burdens is not in itself degrading, but it would be undignified for a man to do it. An Englishman would think it undignified to make his sister's clothes: a Pondo thinks it right and proper.

Women might own and transmit property, but they could not inherit, nor could property be inherited through them. In parts of Pondoland it was usual for a father to give his daughter on or after her marriage a heifer, *inkomo yobulunga*, which she kept at her married home as a link with her own ancestral spirits. To a mother was due a beast, *inkomo yesipipo*, from the *ikazi* (bride price) of her eldest daughter, and in some parts another beast, *inkomo yengutu*, if her daughter was a virgin when married. A woman might also acquire stock by practising as a doctor. These cattle were the private property of a wife, of which her husband had no right to dispose, and they were inherited by her youngest son, while the father's property went to the eldest son.

It was customary for a man having more than one wife to allot certain stock to each *indlu* (household consisting of a wife and her children) and it was obligatory for him to consult his wife before disposing of property belonging to her *indlu*. I heard at Ntibane of a case involving this question, which came before the chief's court. Malinde, a drunkard and a spendthrift, was selling recklessly cattle allotted to an *indlu*, to get money for beer and women. The wife and son of the *indlu* protested and finally took the matter to the court, which forbade Malinde to sell any more cattle of that *indlu*. In

Rights of property.

considering this right of consultation, however, it must be remembered that the Pondo conception of ownership differs from the European, and before disposing of property a man must consult not only his wife, but other members of the kinship group.

Individuals did not own land, but they owned the prescriptive right to the use of certain arable areas. Each married woman had fields which were known by her name, and which it was her duty to cultivate, and the crops from these belonged wholly to her *indlu*. The right to cultivate them was inherited by her youngest son. But grain, although it belonged to her *indlu*, could not be disposed of without her husband's consent. Grain pits were usually dug within the cattle kraal, from which women were excluded, and a wife could not brew a quantity of beer without consulting her husband. One day I was sitting in a trader's store, watching customers and helping to buy grain. A woman came in and sold a small quantity of peculiar red mealies which were thrown on the pile of grain. Presently a man came in, stared at the grain pile, and asked, 'Who sold those red mealies? They are mine, I know them.' The lady of the store fenced, and explained to me as the man went out that the seller was his wife. The man went into the next room and found his wife buying braid. He dragged her back laughing and protesting.

Husband: 'Whose are these red mealies? Who sold them here?'

Wife: 'Oh, they are mealies from our garden, but I did not sell them, I just gave a few to the woman who helped me reap, and she must have sold them here this morning.'

Husband: 'Then where did you get the money to buy that braid?'

Status and ukulobola. It was quite a friendly quarrel. The woman was attractive, and the man not really angry, but she was quite obviously caught out.

An unmarried girl never had land of her own, only helping in that of her mother, but a widow, divorcee, or unmarried mother might have her own field, which she worked for herself and her children. Thus a woman returning to her own people was self-supporting, and a father or brother suffered no economic disadvantage by giving her the protection he was obliged to give after having received her *ikazi* (bride price).

There is no space here to go over the old controversy on the effect

of the payment of bride price (verb, *ukulobola*) on the status of women, and the general aspects of the question have been adequately dealt with by Mr. Driberg in his recent article.¹ In Pondoland the women themselves regard it as no degradation to be *lobola*, while to live with a man without the passage of cattle is degrading. 'You have brought yourself, you are a cat, for whom nothing is ever given, you are no *umfazi* (wife), but an *ishweshwe* (woman not *lobola*)' are the taunts flung at her, and if a quarrel were to arise in the *umzi*, the fact that she has not been *lobola* would always be brought up against her. Passage of cattle are the mark and evidence of a legal union, and the woman who is not *lobola* is in the position of an unmarried mother.

Natives find it most difficult to imagine a society in which *ukulobola* does not exist. I remember the comment of a school-mate, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, when as a child I attended a native school: 'You say that you do not *lobola*, but of course we all know that something passes.' The girl in question was the daughter of a woman who had worked all her life for Europeans, who spoke English well, and was in close contact with the mission. In Pondoland also there was much scepticism on this point, and again and again the comment of the women was, 'Well, if you are not *lobola*, what do you do when your husband misuses you, since you have no home (*ikaya*) to run to?' Any home that has benefited from a woman's *ikazi* is bound to give her support and protection, and women frequently take advantage of this right by running back to their own people. How great a weapon this is in the hands of the women is explained below.

The fact that *ukulobola* does not preclude free choice in marriage is proved by the high percentage of matches not pre-arranged by parents. Of twenty-three cases examined in conservative districts of Pondoland only three, or thirteen per cent., were arranged matches. In the other cases the young people had gone off together, leaving the question of *ikazi* to be discussed later by their parents. Many of the arranged matches would also be of choice. Frequently a young man seeing a girl whom he likes, asks his parents to arrange the matter for him. Formerly, when parental authority was stronger, there may have been less freedom of choice—there are well-authenticated cases of girls committing suicide rather than marry a man forced on them

¹ *Africa*, vol. v, no. 4, pp. 404-21.

by their father—but the best informants are clear that elopement was common even in the old days.

The levirate was practised, but a man could not be forced upon a widow. Those eligible, the deceased's younger brothers, real and classificatory (of whom there might be many) solicited the woman's affections, and she had the right to choose between them. She might even refuse them all and take a stranger, though if she did so the legal position of her future children was affected, since other members of the family would not admit their right to inherit when they were not of the blood.

Position of
woman at own
and married
home.

Ukulobola is not in itself degrading, but marriage is patrilocal, and there is a vast difference in the position of a woman at her own home, *ekaya*, and at her married home, *emzi wake*. A bride when married is taken to the hut of her mother-in-law (or woman in the position of her mother-in-law) and there she spends a year, or more, 'cooking for her mother-in-law'. She is expected to be very humble and *kutele* (diligent, cf. Ger. *eifrig*), rising before any one else, clearing the ashes, cooking, and generally acting as a servant in the household. 'She cannot even hit a dog when she first comes.' Her speech is hampered by the avoidance of words similar to the names of senior male relations of her husband (*ukuhlonipa*) and her movements by the avoidance of parts of the *umzi* (kinship group, and dwellings occupied by it) frequented by men (*ukuceza*). She must show respect and obedience to her mother, and other senior in-laws, in all things, and is not expected to go to many social gatherings during the first years of her married life. Many brides have to work extremely hard and often become thin and old-looking soon after marriage.

But all this is conditioned by the fact that a woman is living with her in-laws, and is determined by her age and social standing, not primarily by her sex. When with her own people a woman does not *hlonipa*, only *ceza* when she is ritually impure, and is at liberty to go to what social functions she chooses. There also she is not obliged to work, but may be waited on by her sisters-in-law. When visiting a strange *umzi* one can quickly pick out which are wives and which daughters of the *umzi*, just by watching their behaviour. At her married home, however, a wife's position improves greatly as she grows older. As the wife or mother of the head of the *umzi* she is

responsible to no one save her husband or son, she has younger co-wives or daughters-in-law to work for her, and need only *ceza* when ritually impure. This fact in the change in status of a woman with age and place of domicile (a married woman still behaves as a daughter in her own home) is very apt to be overlooked in discussions on the status of women, and many of the contradictions in material are attributable to a confusion between the status of a daughter (*intombi*), a young wife (*umtshakazi*), and the mistress of an *umzi* (*inkosikazi*).

Even, however, when a woman becomes the *inkosikazi* of an *umzi*, she is still subject to her husband. Wife-beating is common, and in certain circumstances considered quite justifiable. If a woman does not have food properly prepared for her husband when he comes home in the evenings, or if she returns late, or drunk from beer-drinks, or gives her husband cause for sexual jealousy, and is beaten, her neighbours will think that she only got her deserts. If, however, the beating is unduly severe or without just cause, the woman will run away to her own people and not return to her husband until he comes to fetch her. Fetching a wife who has run away is a dreaded task; when visiting his wife's people it is the man who must be polite and submissive, and if the woman's people think that she has been really misused, they will demand a beast, *uswazi*, as fine. At the best they will scold the man for being rough with their daughter. If he is obdurate the beast may be sued for in court. Hence the advantage to a woman of having a home bound to give her protection and support. Running home is common, and under tribal conditions it was not considered degrading for a woman to do this. If she left with just cause, public opinion would be with her. While I was at Ntibane a husband came home drunk one night, stormed at his wife for having left the beer-drink without him, accused her of having gone home with another man, and finally tied her up to the hut-pole and thrashed her. She ran away to her own people the next morning. Neighbours knew that the accusation was unjustified, and that she had come straight from the beer-drink alone to prepare food for her children. The only other woman on the *umzi* was an old crone beyond work. The husband found himself in difficulties for water, firewood, and food, and begged assistance from neighbours. The

Relations of
husband and
wife.

women refused. 'And now', they said to me with satisfaction, 'he is living alone, just like a wild animal, cooking for himself.'

There is a double standard of sexual morality, and most of the quarrels between husband and wife turn on this. Premarital conception is forbidden by custom, and a married woman is forbidden relations with any except her own husband. A man may have as many wives and *amadikazi* (loose women) as he chooses or can afford. In practice many of the married women have lovers, but adultery is not condoned by their husbands, who make every effort to catch and prosecute the adulterer. Many husbands therefore keep a jealous watch over their wives, although some allow them much freedom. Gedsha's husband was a genial old man, and she used to go about to beer-drinks and dances as she chose, 'just telling him where she was going'. She was about forty and the *inkosikazi* of her *umzi*. Makori, a woman of the same age and status, had to get permission. I was at Basket's one night discussing a forthcoming *umgquzo* (girl's initiation dance). Makori, who was visiting, said to me, 'Don't you want me to take you to it?' I said that I should be very happy, and waited for an explanation. Then she told me that she had already borrowed ornaments for the dance and had hidden them in her store-hut, but she was afraid that her husband would not give her permission to go, but if I requested her to take me that might solve the problem. She called a child and sent him to her husband to say that I wanted her, Makori, to accompany me to the *umgquzo*. Her husband was out, but, nothing daunted, Makori told him on his return that I myself had called to ask her to take me to the *umgquzo*. Her husband replied, 'Why does she not get Gedsha who took her before?'

Makori. 'Oh, *inkosazana* is tired of Gedsha.'

Husband. 'But are you not reaping?'

Makori. 'One day won't matter.'

Then she came to tell us that she could go. Basket's wife had also borrowed ornaments to go to the *umgquzo*, and she thought to use the same excuse. Basket had been out during our plotting. On his return his wife winked and whispered, 'Go on, ask him.' I did so. Basket replied, 'Oh, that is for my wife to answer; I do not know if she has clothes for these affairs.' Both women accompanied me.

When strangers come to an *umzi* it is expected that they should address themselves to the men, particularly the head of the *umzi*, and the women remain in the background. Once when I was explaining myself and my business in a hut in which there were both men and women, an elderly woman asked a question, but apologized as she did so, 'Forgive me, a woman, asking a question, but I am an old wife here, and we are so curious.' Women will never give information to strangers until the head of the *umzi* has given permission for them to do so. Only when the *inkosikazi* of the *umzi* is the mother of the head of the *umzi* this custom may not be observed. Once when I was working with an old councillor of the Nyandeni, a middle-aged man who had stopped to listen to the conversation asked a question of his own. 'There is a matter which we have been discussing, my father, on which people have contradictory opinions. If a young married man is living in a kraal with his mother, and strangers come, to whom should they address themselves?' The councillor replied that if the son was not middle-aged the strangers should apply to the mother, 'but both could talk'. This illustrates how age partly supersedes sex in determining status.

The real difficulty in the position of married women is that they are never fully absorbed into their husband's clan, but are always partly strangers and therefore dangerous. A woman, some months or years after her marriage, is sacrificed for and given the milk of her husband's cows. After that she ceases to drink the milk of her own clan's cattle. From the time of her marriage she may be made sick by her husband's ancestral spirits, but she never becomes a full member of his clan. A large percentage of the accusations of witchcraft are against women, but very rarely is the accused a daughter of the *umzi*; almost always she is a wife or a mother. When an *umzi* is dying out through consumption the normal diagnosis is that an *ishologu* (an evil spirit) has come in with one of the wives.

In spite of their difficult position between two clans women may, when old, take part in the religious ceremonial and they become ancestral spirits (*amatongo*). At one sacrifice (*idini*) for a sick child, which I attended, an elderly woman, paternal aunt to the head of the *umzi*, washed the patient with the ritual medicines (*iyeza lasekaya*) and called upon the *amatongo* to make the child better, while her

Women in religion.

nephew *nqula* (prayed to the ancestors) at the kraal gate, and killed the beast. When a married woman is ill, and the illness is diagnosed as due to the fact that the ritual killing enabling her to drink the milk of her husband's cattle (*ukudlisa amasi*) has not been made, the illness is often said to have been sent by the paternal aunts and sisters of her husband. Or, again, a child may be made sick by its dead mother. Informants are emphatic that it is only an old woman of the *umzi*, who before her death would already have had authority as an *inkosikazi*, who could thus become an *itongo* to her child.

Women in public life.

Women may also communicate with their ancestral spirits through dreams, just as men do. The doctor diviner, *iggira*, is one who is specially called by the ancestral spirits, and is in particularly close communication with them, through dreams. A high percentage of *amaggira* in any district are women. At Ntontela I knew only two men initiated as *amaggira* and eleven women; at Mbotyi, of three men and seven women, and there was as good opportunity of hearing of the men as of the women. The most famous rain-doctor in Pondoland at present is a woman. Women as diviners may have great authority, smelling out wizards and witches, ordering sacrifices, healing sick persons. When they are about their professional duties their sex is ignored; they disregard the ordinary women's taboos about approaching the cattle kraal, etc., and I have heard them giving most dictatorial orders to men concerning patients. They may demand beer and meat, and are generally treated with great respect. It is entertaining for one holding a Cambridge titular degree to attend the elaborate 'graduation ceremony' which a female doctor goes through along with the men among the barbarous Pondo. Among herbalists there are also as many women as men. But although professionally women doctors command great respect, they are still under the control of their husbands when married, and occasionally a husband forbids a wife, who has been initiated, to practise.

As diviners women may indirectly have great influence in politics—the two diviners whose visions were the ostensible ground for the cattle-killing among the AmaXosa in 1857 were girls—but otherwise women play little part in Pondo tribal life. There is no tradition of a woman ever having been chief among the Pondo (though with their relatives the Swazi a woman, the late Ndlovukazi, ruled for

thirty-seven years), and the influence of the chief's mother is purely personal, depending on her character and personal influence over her son. Women do not sit in the chief's court, the *ikundla*, although there is the record of one chief's wife, Mancapayi, mother of Bokleni, former paramount chief of the Nyandeni, being consulted on knotty points of law, because she was so acute. Women can bring cases in their own name, and are called as witnesses. In one such case I heard, the woman brought an accusation against her husband's younger brother for beating her, a right which was the exclusive privilege of her husband. Women, beyond those of the royal *imizis*, talk little about tribal affairs and do not seem greatly interested in them.

Women can, and do, go about with safety within their own neighbourhood, perhaps a radius of five to ten miles, and in cases of necessity may take journeys alone. I knew one who travelled forty miles alone.

Personal freedom.

II. THE EFFECTS OF CONTACT ON STATUS

Having outlined the position of women under the old tribal conditions, it is now possible to discuss the effect on their status of contact with European civilization, which revolutionizes their economic life, disrupts their social organization, and brings what at least the Europeans consider to be a totally different conception of the position of women in society.

Effect on economic status.

With contact comes an adjustment in the division of labour, owing to the changes in the methods of earning a livelihood. Men no longer raid or hunt, but spend periods at labour centres. Where the ox-drawn plough is used men do the first cultivation of the fields, and they cart grain from the fields in sledges. Men do the new type of thatching, learned from Europeans, while now that skins are no longer worn, women do the sewing. Ideas of what is right and proper to each sex are tenacious. Travelling in a Transkei train, one notices most of the men returning from the mines being met by girls to carry their luggage, but European ideas are gaining ground. Within the last two or three years it has become usual, when boys and girls are arriving back at boarding-school together, for the boys to carry the girls' bundles. Here one sees adjustment, but no fundamental effect on the status of women. Economically women remain self-supporting. In the remote reserves they still perform a large part of the agricultural

work, and near and in towns many girls and women work for Europeans. In towns there is developing a class of business women—women running green-groceries and cafes and hotels, as well as those organizing the illicit beer-trade. The possibility of earning a living has greatly increased the independence of unmarried girls who formerly had no lands of their own and were in economic subjection to their parents. The marriage age is going up, and the unmarried daughter fills a much more important position than she did formerly, when she was married shortly after puberty. Girls share with men in the general emancipation of youth.

On property
rights.

With the introduction of Christian marriage came the Roman-Dutch law of community of property between man and wife. This works side by side with the native law of inheritance by the eldest son of property to be administered in consultation with his mother. The Roman-Dutch law is often not clearly understood by those who contract a civil marriage, and has been much criticized by leading native men in the Bunga (Transkeian and Pondoland General Council) and elsewhere, who advocate the retention of the native law of inheritance even when a civil marriage is contracted. At a debate recently held in Grahamstown location practically all the men speakers were in favour of the general use of the native law, but a number of women attended especially to speak and vote in favour of the adoption of the Roman-Dutch law. Where land is surveyed it is usually registered in the name of a man and inherited by his eldest son, although the widow has the usufructuary rights during her lifetime. However, the fact that land is now scarce and is registered in the name of the husband means that a woman who goes back to her own people cannot, in a congested district, be self-supporting on the land.

The question of the rights of a husband over his wife's earnings, and her rights over his earnings, has become more acute where the *indlu* is no longer a self-contained economic unit. Among the more conservative people of the reserves it is usual for a man to hand over his earnings to his wife to keep, 'because he will waste the money if he keeps it himself', but the woman has no right to use any part of it without his consent. Among the 'school' people in the reserves this custom is decreasing, 'because the women are tempted to spend the money on tea and sugar and things like that, and then it is all finished'.

In East London location, in some cases where the man alone was working, he bought supplies himself. In others he gave his wife a weekly housekeeping allowance. Not infrequently wives did not know what their husbands were earning. Where the woman was earning she usually spent a great part of her wages on general household expenses, but did not hand the money over to her husband. Sometimes the wife entirely kept the household, and frequently she worked to pay for a child's education. The tension over pin-money is new and often acute. Among the Pondo a married woman was clothed by the people who had benefited from her *ikazi*; any clothes or ornaments she got from her husband were of grace, not of right. Now, partly influenced by the Xosa and Fingo, who had not this custom, the school people expect a wife to be dressed by her husband. To the extent to which the man is the sole wage-earner, and the family is living on things bought, not home-produced, contact here lowers the status of women, but the balance is to some extent redressed by the fact that in towns nearly every girl works before her marriage and many continue to do so after marriage. The possibility of working for Europeans also to some extent replaces the opportunity a woman, having left her husband, had, and has now lost, of supporting herself on the land while living with her own people.

In considering the effect of contact on *ukulobola* the most striking feature is the tenacity with which the custom has been retained in the face of all attacks. Sir Harry Smith, when he took over Kaffraria, proposed to abolish 'the sin of buying wives', many missions have been active in trying to suppress it, and the introduced money economy and individualist philosophy have attacked it at its roots, but *ukulobola* still flourishes. In practically all church marriages and in the marriages of the most civilized teachers and pastors *ikazi* still passes. And this although the matter of *ikazi* has changed greatly. Goats, sheep, horses, saddles, guns, and money are all used as substitutes for cattle, but they are still called cattle. Ten sheep, or five pounds sterling, to a beast, is so much the standardized value that when inquiring what *ikazi* was given one was invariably told so many cattle, and had to proceed to ask how many were 'tall' and how many 'short' and how many went on their own legs. This fiction tends to retain the old significance of the transaction, but even a

Contact and
ukulobola.

determined fiction cannot prevent a change in the essence of *ukulobola* when money replaces cattle. With the decay of ancestor worship and the substitution of money the religious significance of *ukulobola* goes. Everywhere the natives themselves remark the change towards a more materialistic and commercial attitude towards life—'the one thing people are aiming at nowadays is to get more money', complained the old men to me—and this general tendency, together with the substitution of money for cattle in *ikazi*, and the decay of other aspects of *ukulobola* does tend to emphasize the economic aspect and commercialize *ukulobola*. Frequently one is told that 'fathers are greedy nowadays, and only think of themselves, they demand extortionate *ikazi*, they do not consider as they used to do what the man is able to give'. But the possibility of extracting extortionate *ikazi* is limited by the opportunity young people have of marrying by civil law, and so contracting a legal union in which the man will have the right to the children, without the passage of cattle.

Although *ukulobola* is normally retained in the country and in towns by all the better-class people, quite frequently in East London location there proved to have been a civil marriage without the passage of cattle. Very often this was a *mariage de convenance* which had taken place after the girl had been rendered pregnant, and always it was told of rather shamefacedly. By the vast majority the passage of cattle is still regarded as the *sine qua non* of a legal union. The position of a woman where *ikazi* has not been given is definitely worse than where it has. The sanctions of the union by European civil rites are still much less strong than the sanctions of a native customary union. A man who married with *ikazi* and then deserted his wife, lost his cattle, whereas a man who married according to European law, without cattle, deserts, and loses nothing. For lack of knowledge, expense, and the difficulty of finding a native who has once disappeared into one of the large towns make it very difficult for a woman to sue a deserting husband for maintenance. Further, the woman for whom no *ikazi* has been given has no claim on her own people for shelter and support, and so loses what we saw to be a useful weapon in the right of running back to her own people when ill used. In the old society children were an economic asset and greatly desired—daughters were potential *ikazi*, sons were man-power—they assisted

in the work of the *umzi*, and at an early age were self-supporting. Now it is otherwise. In towns children are costly in food, shelter, clothing, schooling. The woman who held the trump card in the fact that men wanted children, and could not get legal possession of them without the passage of cattle, has lost this advantage, and again and again in towns one finds women left with children and no support. Legal proceedings to secure maintenance are not effective. This loosening of the marriage tie and the vast increase in illegitimacy (in East London location the illegitimacy rate is over fifty per cent, civil marriage and native customary union being considered legal unions) must necessarily affect the status of women adversely.

Within marriage also there is a fundamental change due to the change in the make-up of the social unit, the *umzi*. Long ago, I am told, the *umzi* was a group consisting of anything up to twenty married men with their wives and children, and a bride might have six or seven children before she ceased to 'cook for her mother-in-law'. Now the tendency in the reserves is towards the breaking up of *imizi*, and in towns it is normal for individual families to live separately. 'Cooking for your mother-in-law' is still considered the proper thing to do—even in towns a bride is frequently sent to her husband's people for a month or two, and while there she will *hlonipa*, and *ceza* to a modified extent—but the age at which a woman gets her own *umzi* is now much lower, and as soon as she gets it she is *inkosikazi* there, and acts as such. In towns one finds young wives going out to tennis parties in a way in which they never went to beer-drinks. But even in the country, when still living with their mothers-in-law, young married women have more freedom than formerly. Old women held forth to me for hours on how things were not as they were in their young days, when a young wife hardly went out at all, and if she did she came home early to see to her household duties. 'Now it is the grandmothers who come home to cook for the children, and the daughters-in-law stay to dance at the beer-drinks all night. *Qauk!*'

With the change in the social group and the break-down of ancestor worship there is a gradual tendency towards the break-down of the old family solidarity which laid such emphasis on the bride being a stranger in the family. Scientific and Christian teaching, although by no means killing the belief in witchcraft, is increasing the belief

*Changes
within the
family.*

in the number of natural causes of disease, and so comes a restriction in the number of accusations of witchcraft, which although themselves symptoms of tension and antagonism, increased that antagonism. Daughters-in-law were accused of witchcraft partly because they were felt to be strangers, but the belief that they could commit witchcraft increased the feeling that they were dangerous. There is a conflict between the Bantu clan solidarity and the European individualism, and a growing sense of 'for this cause a man shall desert father and mother, and cleave to his wife'.

The change in the make-up of the *umzi* leads to the earlier development of responsible women, and the extent to which men are away at labour centres fosters the growth of responsibility in their wives. Christianity also tends to make women more independent, because when, as most frequently happens, the wife of a pagan man is converted, she is taught by the missionaries and forced by her convictions to assert herself against her husband in certain questions. For instance, a man may wish beer brewed for a sacrifice to ancestral spirits, and a Christian wife refuses to do it. The backing of her religion and often of her teachers (though some of the missionaries consider that some of their women converts are in danger of becoming unduly self-assertive towards their pagan husbands) gives her courage to demand an independence of judgement and freedom of action which under the old conditions she would never have dreamed of claiming.

Changes in relations between husband and wife.

In the relations between husband and wife the greatest change lies in the introduction of the ideal of a single standard of morality for men and women. Although monogamy is not strictly practised by many who call themselves Christian, and sexual promiscuity is more readily condoned in men than in women, there is the new ideal which has influence on thought and practice. Church law forbids wife-beating, and in East London women, when beaten, frequently brought a case for assault, but a woman is still regarded by the community as being subject to her husband and owing obedience to him. With the change in the make-up of the *umzi* and the decline of kin solidarity there is a growing tendency for man and wife to be companions. Under the old conditions a man and wife did not normally go to beer-drinks or festivals together; he went with his men friends; she with the other

women. Now it is quite usual to see a man and wife going to church together, and among the most civilized one occasionally sees a man and his wife going out for a walk, or going to games together, but these changes come slowly.

As we have seen above, women, under old tribal conditions, played a large part in religion, medicine, and magic, so quite naturally they have developed in the corresponding spheres of European culture. The proportion of girls in school is higher than of boys; government education statistics¹ for 1930 give a total of 78,487 girls to 59,317 boys attending school in the Cape Province, and in the country schools the disproportion is greater. This is partly because parents find it difficult to spare boys, who are needed as cattle-herds, for school, and partly because the girls are more eager to go. It is more the 'done thing' to go to school, among girls, than it is among boys. Women are in the majority in every congregation, and readily take part in religious meetings, speaking, praying, and reading in public. The background of women diviners and the acceptance of education as suitable for women has made possible extensive training of women teachers, who with trained nurses are accepted as fulfilling duties proper to women. There are women graduates of Fort Hare, the Native University College, and it is interesting to note that the *African Yearly Register*, an *African Who's Who*, compiled by a native, includes 29 women in a total of 325.² These women were noted as being conspicuous for educational, or social work, or activity in religious or political organizations. In the 'notes and news' columns of vernacular newspapers also there are frequent references to women.

In political life native women have not yet played much part; in no Province are any native women eligible as voters, and there are no women members of the Bunga; but there is a women's section of the African National Congress, and many women members of the Independent Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, who struck along with the men in East London in 1927. When I overhear our woman cook expatiating on the iniquity of the poll tax and the sins of the government, I feel that serious agitation for women's political rights is not far distant.

¹ Cape of Good Hope. Dept. of Education. Educational Statistics, 1930.

² *African Yearly Register*. Compiled by J. D. Mveli Skota.

We have come to no definite conclusions as to the changes in the status of woman as the result of contact with Europeans, but find opposite tendencies arising from the complex economic and social changes. There is economic adjustment; detailed changes in the sexual division of labour, and, where the family is dependent upon wages, a tendency to depress the economic status of the wife, but an increase in the freedom of unmarried girls, owing to new opportunities of earning a living. *Ukulobola* is partly commercialized, but the position of those for whom *ikazi* is not given is definitely worse than that of those for whom it is given. The loosening of the marriage tie and the changing attitude towards children mean that the position of wives is less secure. On the other hand, the decline in kin solidarity and the growing sense of individualism emancipate women from the control of parents-in-law, and tend to draw husband and wife closer together. As teachers, nurses, and church-workers, women play a large part in education and in leading public opinion, a function for which they have a precedent in the doctor-diviner.

MONICA HUNTER.

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