African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.

Visiting the Issue of Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives: An Introduction

Liv Haram, The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
Bawa Yamba, Diakonhjemmet University College, Oslo

This special issue of the *African Sociological Review* contains papers from the Conference on Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives that Liv Haram, affiliated to the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, convened in Arusha, 9-11 April 2003. Participants from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, as well as from England, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, presented papers, twenty-four in all, in the three-day conference. The conference had its origins in Haram's project at the Nordic Africa Institute, entitled 'Modernisation and Stress in Men's and Woman's Lives: African Experiences', initiated in January 2000. The project deals with societies in transformation under rapid change brought about by forces such as modernisation and globalisation, which, one would assume, increase stress and uncertainties in the lives of young men and women. The central theme of the conference was uncertainty. The meeting, inevitably, sought to explore and understand how people in contemporary Africa experience situations of great upheaval, stress and uncertainty in their everyday lives. Our approach was grounded in the awareness that it is important to see people not merely as victims of inauspicious circumstances, but rather as agents actively responding to their life situation, however adverse, in an increasingly troubled world. Professor Sandra Wallman, University of London, Professor Susan Reynolds Whyte, University of Copenhagen, and Dr Todd Sanders, then at the University of Cambridge (currently at the University of Toronto), were specially invited as resource persons and also chaired sessions and presented their own papers. Other persons chairing sessions included Professor Francis Nyamnjoh, then at the University of Botswana (currently acting head at the Department of Publications and Communications at CODESRIA), and Bawa Yamba, then at the Nordic Africa Institute, and co-editor of this volume (currently associate professor at Diakonhjemmet University College, Oslo). We wish to thank the editors of the journal for their encouragement and support in producing the issue. Very special thanks to Inga-Britt Isaksson Faris (the Nordic Africa Institute) for her meticulous assistance with the format as well as constructive comments concerning language, and to Elaine Almén for checking the language.

Dealing with Uncertainty in Africa

While one cannot hold that uncertainty is something specific to Africa, the impact of various kinds of upheavals and catastrophes on the continent has been disproportionably large during a great part of the past century, and so it is even today. In recent years, Africa has undergone profound political, economic, and social changes, resulting from a contingent set of internal as well as external forces. Examples of the former are legion, but one might mention such recurrent phenomena across the continent as civil war, drought, and famine that have resulted in wide-scale displacements of people and, consequently, led to a weakening of the social fabrics and traditional support networks. The latter kind are constituted in the phenomena, often glossed as modernisation and globalisation, which, while sometimes equated with progress, have also contributed to an increase in social distress, insecurity and, thus, compounded the uncertainties in the daily lives of people. In addition, poverty and associated conditions such as

unemployment and social deprivation have also taken their toll on people's health and general well-being.

A prerequisite to understanding how people in Africa cope and live in such difficult conditions, is to carefully scrutinise the factors that impinge on present-day African social life; how people draw on their various support systems to manage. Such an approach inevitably covers a range of themes. Many of the papers addressed themes such as risk and agency (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Blystad, Moland, Yamba), the ramifications of gendered inequalities (Besendahl, Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Moland, Mookodi, Ringsted, Nymabedha), the inevitable consequences of ultimate despair (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Blystad, Moland, Yamba), the consequences of coping and living with HIV/AIDS (Blystad, Moland, Mookodi, Ringsted, Nyambedha, Yamba), as well as the theme of seeking solace and relief in religion (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Ringsted, Nyambedha). However, the recurrent leitmotif that runs through all the papers, more or less explicitly, is that of uncertainty and misfortune derived from modern life.

Uncertainty, though a common do-it-all concept in the social sciences, needs some unpacking to highlight its appropriateness and limited sense in which it is applied in this context. We realise that we cannot sufficiently expound all the connotations of this vital concept in this brief introduction, but a few clarifying statements are necessary. What we mean by uncertainty here has, of course, nothing to do with economic predictions on the likelihood of healthy returns from an investment, or anything resembling indeterminacy in physics. What we are interested in on the one hand is how the idea of uncertainty is operationalised in the studies of the contributors to this volume and, on the other, how the people under study deal with problems of uncertainty. With regard to the former, anthropologists and social scientists generally have treated uncertainty as a concept denoting non-recurrent and unpredictable phenomena that are intrinsically difficult to counteract but affect the lives of individuals or a given group of people. The fathers of social science may have felt comfortable in suggesting that we could predict some elements in the likely social action of social collectivities and human populations - cf. Comte (1869). Durkheim's notion of 'collective representations' and statistically based extrapolations on the likely number of suicides to be expected in a given population were of this kind (Durkheim, 1930, 1938). However, it would appear that problems arise when we attempt to predict the consequences of the actions of individuals.

The papers in this volume focus broadly on instances of uncertainty, by describing certain defined situations in the lives of the people they have studied. They do not problematise uncertainty as an epistemological concept, although such issues were addressed and discussed in some of the papers at the conference.[1] The main focus of the papers here is on concrete social situations where some contingent set of factors coincided to cause uncertainty and suffering in everyday life. The next step is then, to paraphrase Sandra Wallman (Haram forthcoming), how the people concerned manage their uncertainty.

Commonly what we refer to as uncertainties, are exemplified with and manifest in phenomena such as accidents, sudden death, and other events that cannot be predicted, and, which, even if they were predictable, would involve certain aspects and details that a careful retrodiction might not have arrived at or even envisaged. The contingent notion of providence or the perception of an event as the result of God's will may suffice for those who are religiously inclined, as explanations of random and unpredictable phenomena. But this is not enough, even when such models are not explicitly cited, people sometimes still resort to words such as *accident* and *chance* in accordance to our common human effort to make sense of such events. Occasionally, uncertainty is also perceived as the outcome of the agency that is believed to have *caused* a

situation. Accidents and occurrences that we attribute to chance come out of the blue and, as it were, strike at random; they are part of people's everyday life. People do not completely surrender to chance, but instead often take a pragmatic approach to their problems by trying to deal with uncertainty and contingency (Whyte 1997). However, the impact of the unpredictable always shakes the very foundations of human existence. Regularities are what we prefer, be they something we infer from nature, as, for example, the inevitable sequences of the seasons; or something we impose on nature and other phenomena through a simple activity as the assigning of names to things that would appear to comprise intimations of such order. We need to explain unpredictable occurrences, in an effort to manage or control them, or, perhaps we even hope thereby to be able to prevent their future occurrence. In less complex societies of the kind that used to be the happy hunting ground of anthropologists, many kinds of ritual were performed to prevent uncertainty and thereby to minimise risk. Classical anthropology abounds with examples of enactments of such anxiety-reducing rituals before activities are perceived as precarious. Thus Malinowski's Trobianders felt no need for performing precautionary rituals before embarking on fishing in the lagoon; conditions here were to be perceived familiar and predictable (Malinowski 1935, 1961). They, however, resorted to performed ritual when they were going out to fish in the open sea, the wide unknown where unpredictable weather changes needed to be faced. The Azande oracles, as Evans-Pritchard has shown (1976), sought not only to explain unfortunate events through the assigning of agency to particular malevolent witches, but also conducted rituals to prevent their future occurrence. In other words, they too sought to minimise uncertainty. A fairly recent study (Roalkvam 1997) dealt with a range of precautionary rituals including those performed to ensure that the sun would rise tomorrow; something that they did not take for granted as most other people would do.

The imposition of regularities fails when something out of the ordinary happens, usually events that we perceive as bad. We then assign agency to some person or persons believed to have 'caused' those occurrences. The perpetrators are identified and duly punished; witchcraft accusations are the prime example here. Identifying the source of a malevolent event, and assigning agency to that particular source, appears to be one way of ensuring certainty and thereby minimising risk.

Agency may be seen as a parallel concept to risk and uncertainty, but it could also be argued that agency is, in effect, the counterpart of these concepts. It is through agency that a person makes choices (rational or irrational, depending on the particular type of logic we apply to others' choices) in order to minimise uncertainty in everyday life. This, too, appears to be one of the basic assumptions of some of the global messages that HIV/AIDS control organisations apply across contexts with disastrous consequences. This point is clearly underscored in the contributions by Blystad, Moland, and Yamba in this issue. As clearly illustrated in these papers, what the proponents of these global messages appear to ignore is the fact that different knowledge systems and local discourses inform and shape the type of choice a person is likely to make in attempting to do something about the situation. The cultural understandings of messages emanating from outside the local context, be it on HIV/AIDS prevention or something gleaned from globally transmitted information, are important in any attempt to understand the action of people in local contexts.

The important issue, then, is how people make sense of everyday afflictions which are perceived to promote uncertainty, since their perceptions and understanding of these issues shape their responses. These issues crystallise themselves when we see them as intrinsic aspects of trying to cope with the ontological insecurity (Giddens 1993, 1995) of modern life.

Some Consequences of Modern Life

Modern life in Africa has been a mixed blessing. It certainly brings with it much improvement in the lives of people: for example, access to education and improved health care. Even if these spheres have later been eroded by many unforeseen factors, the improvement in people's lives is incontrovertibly quite positive. However, modern life, rather than modernity, has also brought with it much that is not always positive. Modern life has brought (increased) urbanisation and migration. The latter has sometimes led to the large-scale movement of people for economic reasons, such as postings of those in state employment systems, or political unrest. One consequence of such migrations is explored in most of the papers, which show that whether these migrations occurred as movements within or across states, they usually resulted in a weakening or even the severing of traditional social relations. It would not be wide of the mark to assert that such movements have contributed to a weakening of some of the central premises upon which traditional African social life was based. Moving from one's village to live in town in another region or country results, to some degree, in a dissipation of one's resources; it leads to some loss in one's belongings, supportive kinsmen, and one's ethnic group as well. Movements of this kind are equivalent to abandoning a spatial and moral sphere where norms, obligations and duties are clearly specified, for another spatio-moral context where such structures are weak, non-specific or non-existent. Migration might very well be seen as entailing not only a physical displacement but a mental displacement as well.

Because migrations lead to the weakening of traditional ways of life, it also makes the transgressing of traditional norms easier than would have been the case with living in close proximity to relatives (Nyambedha, Ringsted, infra). Migration entails displacement and marginality. Thus the migrant often operates on the margins of what is the socially and morally acceptable. Little wonder then that stress, danger and risk appear to increase on the margins of urban space in Africa, where the transplanted migrants live. This means compounding situations of vulnerability and risk, even if such risk may also be regarded as culturally specific, as Douglas (1992) has shown. To recapitulate a key point; the individual who moves from one place to another risks not only severing his/her support ties but is also in danger of losing a grasp on other support systems as well. Three of the papers in this volume deal with some of the consequences of the weakening of the supportive, but also demanding, bonds of kinship, when a person moves into urban space (Besendahl, Nyambedha, Ringsted). Besendahl shows how in plural ethnic urban settings in Malawi, the traditional marriage brokers (*ankhoswe*) were no longer able to exert any influence once the couple had migrated to town. Previously the *ankhoswe* played an important role in marriage formations, by imbuing them with traditional authority, and thereby also safeguarding the rights of women in situations of domestic strife. Physical distances, as well as changing relations among and between generations, have all contributed to make the lives of young women negotiating marriage in Malawi today a very uncertain affair indeed.

Ringsted deals with the problems of pregnant girls, a third of them orphans. They are about to enter the role of parenthood before having reached adulthood, and have neither a supportive network of kin or the support of the boy who had impregnated them. Consequently, they have to forge all kinds of new relations in order to survive. Ringsted also deals with a situation where the social fabric and traditional support network are weakening. She illustrates how these pregnant girls and young unmarried mothers, deprived of their traditional support systems, are displaced socially, economically, and mentally. They not only find themselves rejected by their own natal

families because they have given birth out of wedlock. Ringsted shows how these young girls/mothers make or become part of new support networks - far beyond what we usually think of as traditional family/extended family and kin networks. Taking a critical look at what she considers outdated anthropological kinship theories, she shows how these girls/women, with the loss of support from their own (biological/blood/natal) kin, manage to get by in their everyday life by forging new relatives, albeit remaining vulnerable. The pregnant young girls in Ringsted's paper, like in many other papers, truly encapsulate the new troubled world of the children and youth in Africa, and in particular the horrendous vulnerability of young girls. Nyambedha's paper also shows that the weakening of extended kin networks, and transformations in traditional support structures, which in the past cared for weaker member of society, are not only a consequence of physical movement away from one's traditional clime, but also result from new structures and spaces created by NGO and Church groups, to whom widows and orphans can turn for support. These modern support groups have their own sets of demands in return for the help they provide. As these demands both empower women and make them independent, as it were, they are perceived as eroding the demands of the traditional ways of life. While this might not be held as something accentuating uncertainty in the lives of these women and children, it nonetheless compounds the situation and increases structural discord between the traditional identity and emergent modern forms of relatedness that are not kin based (cf., for instance, Carsten 2000).

Bereft of their support systems people become very vulnerable. Vulnerability is thus one of the most common consequences of modern life, but it is also a consequence that is usually not equally distributed between the genders in society. This is particularly true in Africa and most of the papers in this volume highlight the specific vulnerable state of women in times of increased uncertainty. However, we find that Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, with the apt sub-title of 'Lessons from some "near miss" experiences of women', provides powerful testimony to the sad situation of women in many parts of Africa today. She deals with narrow escapes from death mainly due to gender specific conditions of reproductive health. In most African countries maternal morbidity and mortality are unacceptably high even though the medical means to prevent them exist. These occur not only because of poor health care facilities, transport deficiencies, but also because of gendered and culturally specific beliefs of how pregnant women should comport themselves. This has resulted in many women in labour attempting to tolerate pain, and to stoically delay seeking help in obstructed conditions. At worst, these women become part of the dismal statistics on increased maternal mortality, and, at best, they suffer a great deal of distress while risking their own lives and the lives of their unborn children. The stories of Bantebya-Kyomuhendo's six cases are powerful testimonies of personal tragedy in the everyday lives of women. They show that indigenous beliefs and local knowledge on child-birth practices are no longer assumed as safe or valid alternatives in any effort to improve the lives of women and reduce the suffering of pregnant women in Africa.

HIV as a Source of Increased Stress and Uncertainty

Apart from the theme we have discussed above, a number of problems stand out and receive careful examination in the papers. We must inevitably mention problems associated with HIV/AIDS and its horrendous impact on life in Africa. One of its less appreciated corollaries is troubled sexuality. The papers cover changing relations between men and women, and between spouses, and the need to grapple with the negotiation of safe and mutually acceptable sexual

encounters between the genders. Such problems are shown to be clearly part of the consequences of the impingement of modernity on the everyday life of people. Present day marriage and marital patterns, new gender roles and their association with gendered violence, and the unintended consequences of attempts to help local people live less risky and better lives, are some of the themes covered in the papers (Blystad, Moland, Mokoodi, Besendahl).

Blystad's paper deals with how the Datoga of Tanzania are grappling with globally constructed HIV/AIDS control and prevention messages. Old and well-known institutions and practices are - with the spread of HIV/AIDS - no longer valid knowledge or safe guidance for sexual and reproductive life, but have become dangerous and risky not only for the individual but for the reproduction of Datoga society as a whole. Blystad's analysis deals with the discord between Western/national Tanzanian notions of safe sex in an HIV/AIDS context and the Datoga notions of proper management of sexuality and fertility as well as the troubled effects of such dissonance. As she cautions, her analysis does not aim to map sexual conduct *per se*, but to explore how local concepts and practices of sexual conduct contrast with the national HIV/AIDS discourse. She then argues that such knowledge may enhance our understanding of why it may be difficult to accept the precepts of the HIV-prevention messages while also adhering to local African custom. Blystad's elegant analysis also shows that in exploring the dynamics in what are in effect asymmetrical encounters between local African context and (inter-) national/Tanzanian/global discourse on HIV/AIDS, the danger of reification of both sets of discourses is substantial. Yamba also castigates such global-to-local-context, 'we know better' discourses as well, and suggests that unless their perpetrators carefully examine the easy underlying assumptions and implied superiority of their activities, they end up contributing to more uncertainty than in the past.

Moland's paper poignantly illustrates the social and moral dilemma of HIV-positive women, who have to grapple at once with cultural expectations of being a good mother and the risk of infecting the new-born child. The almost universal ambiguity about bodily fluids, which are regarded both as life giving and life threatening sources, and also as potential sources of death, is generally known. As anthropologists have shown, life-giving fluids such as semen, blood, and mother's milk, are now - because of the spread of HIV/AIDS - even more strongly associated with death. Of these, the mother's milk, the pure fountain of life, has become very problematic for women in Africa. Moland's carefully argued paper shows how breast-feeding one's infant informs the world that one is a good mother - perhaps the most important one of the expected roles of women and motherhood in Kilimanjaro - and thus behaving in a culturally appropriate manner. But for an HIV-positive mother to do so - and this is made abundantly clear in the messages on HIV preventions transmitted from the World Heath Organisation - the risk of transmitting the virus to the baby is high and might result in the death of the child. To follow the guidelines of WHO for a HIV positive mother - not to breast-feed - would be a flagrant breach of a much valued norm. Thus, such mothers find themselves in both a social and a moral dilemma, which compounds the situation. They are torn between the short-term need for the approval of the encapsulating society and the long-term consequence of, most likely, transmitting a fatal disease. Moland also shows how the uncertainties of choices are compounded by the AIDS preventions instructions, which are far from clear, and which ignore the cultural contexts within which they function. Perhaps we could add that the only 'option' left for the breastfeeding mother is simply to hope that her child, in spite of the likelihood that her infected milk will kill her child, will survive. More knowledge about prevailing options, or the wide range of possibilities one faces, may lead to a situation where one is unable to make an informed choice.

One may then become constrained by the sheer range of choices available, which accentuates uncertainty and stress in life.

As we have pointed out above, another consequence of modernity is that sexual and reproductive/procreative life has become increasingly troubled. The movement from one's natal place in order to look for a livelihood in another, which may not facilitate cohabitation, has resulted in increasing tension between the spouses. In many parts of Africa it was the men who migrated to look for jobs, leaving behind their wives and children in their homes elsewhere, occasionally returning to their homes to resume conjugal relations with their wives. Many of these men had sexual relationships with other women during their long absences. This pattern has been cited as one of the fundamental causes of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and, of course, one of the ultimate causes of the unprecedented spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa (Moland, Mookodi, Yamba and Blystad). Even in cases where spouses have been able to migrate together, the traditional bonds that regulated conflict in the domestic sphere appear to have weakened in the urban area. This problem is perhaps best illustrated in the case of Botswana, a country which has experienced the most rapid modernisation and urbanisation in Africa. Women themselves might see their quest for modern life and economic independence as empowering. Men however, perceive it as a threat to traditional and patrilineal structures that constitute proper male-female roles, with women being 'naturally' and traditionally subordinated to men. The new empowerment of women seems to lead to an increased resentment by men and is sometimes advanced as the cause of male violence against women. Indeed some researchers explain this as the fundamental cause of the 'crises in masculinity' (cf., for instance, Morrell 2001), which drive the frustrated male to batter women. It is tempting to see the rise of male violence against women in Botswana, although we do not believe this phenomenon is solely limited to that country, as being caused, above all, by the increase in female emancipation. From the powerfully argued paper by Mookodi in this issue, it is clear that such a hypothesis will not be easily rejected. Botswana, now generally classified as middle-income country, contains a rising middle class including many independent women with access to their own income and thus less dependent economically on their male partners. The very high numbers of single parenthoods in Botswana may well be correlated to the increase in domestic violence (Mokoodi, Besendahl, Ringsted). While rejecting what she perceives as the 'reductionist' propensity to see female battering by male as exemplifying patriarchal dominance, Mokoodi's paper does not perceive such a person in such a situation as a victim either. In doing so, of course, she neither condemns nor accepts the ethically and morally unacceptable violence again women, which is so graphically depicted in her study.

Our discussion so far may seems to have centred on the grave conditions that heighten uncertainty and difficulties in the lives of people in Africa. This is, of course, inevitable given the topic we have decided to grapple with. We also wish to point out that issues of agency arise when people act upon their situation trying to control it an effort to minimise the levels of uncertainty in their lives. The scope of their possibilities of making a difference through their action may be quite limited; the fact that they do act, however, is significant. All the papers in the present volume deal also with situations where people act, despite grave adverse situations, to manage and cope with life. In this short introduction we have only been able to touch tangentially on these vital themes, which we believe no researcher interested in present day African life can avoid. We hope our sweeping statements will spur the reader to explore the interesting contributions in the present volume carefully and find them engaging. We wager that the papers will not leave the reader untouched.

Notes

1. Papers presented by Professors Sandra Wallman, Susan Reynolds Whyte and Todd Sanders at the conference discussed some of the broad ontological issues intrinsic to the concept of uncertainty. These papers will appear in a forthcoming volume edited by Liv Haram.

References

Carsten, J., (ed.) 2000. *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Comte, A. 1869. *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, 3rd edition, 6 vols, Paris.
Douglas, M. and Wildavsky, A. 1992. *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
Durkheim, É. 1930. *Le Suicide Étude De Sociologie,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
Durkheim, É. and Catlin, G. E. G. 1938, *The Rules of Sociological Method,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1976. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande,* Oxford, Clarendon Press.
Giddens, A. 1993. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* Cambridge, Polity Press.
Giddens, A. 1995. *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
Haram, L. (ed.) (Forthcoming). *Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Malinowski, B. 1935. *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, New York, American Book Co.
Malinowski, B. 1961. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific : An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea,* New York, E.P. Dutton and Co.
Morrell, R. (ed.) 2001. *Changing Men in Southern Africa,* Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, and London, New York, Zed Press.
Roalkvam, S. 1997. *Pathways to Hardness: Values of Body, Gender, and Place in Onotoan Social Life,* Oslo, University of Oslo.
Whyte, S.R. 1997. *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Kirsten Besendahl
Negotiating Marriage on the Eve of Human Rights

Abstract: This paper examines the case of women's rights in marriage. It adopts a pluralist perspective on law and rights that highlights the complex legal framework within which women negotiate marriage. Based on research carried out in two Malawian cities in 2000-2001, it focuses on the interplay between different types of laws and norms related to marriage and discusses the opportunities and limitations women experience when negotiating polygynous marriages. One important aspect of the plural legal framework in contemporary Africa is the concept of human rights, which has accompanied the democratisation proces. The paper draws attention to the possible impact of the introduction of women's rights on the legal framework in Malawi.

Introduction

In an African context, to negotiate a marriage usually signifies the communication and transactions between two families before a marriage is contracted. This paper focuses on the negotiations that take place between the spouses and their respective families *during* marriage and at the discontinuation of a marriage in the case of divorce. Based on research in Malawi in 2000-2001, the paper explores the ways Malawian women negotiate marriage. The focus will be on polygyny which many African women have experience of, one way or the other. To some of them polygyny causes uncertainty, such as worries about the ability of the husband to support two wives, while others have a more positive experience of it. Using insights from theories of legal pluralism (cf. Griffiths 1986; Moore 1978) the interplay between different types of laws and norms related to marriage will be discussed from the point of view of the opportunities and limitations women experience during their negotiations. As the examples presented below will show, women's responses to polygyny draw on and are informed by a complex framework of diverse and sometimes contradictory norms and laws found inside and outside state law. Women's responses are not always meant to challenge polygyny as such; they must also be seen as part of wider societal processes and conditions, which have an impact on women and men alike. The uncertainties caused by contemporary life conditions, such as the consequences of HIV/AIDS, the increase in poverty due to shortage of land and unemployment, and uneasiness about what the ongoing democratisation process will bring, also affect people's expectations of marriage and may call for a redefinition of the traditional gender roles and a review of the laws governing marriage.

The last decade has seen the introduction of the concept of women's rights into public discourse in Malawi, and local NGOs are making a huge effort to promote rights as a means of improving women's status. The concept of rights may be a useful input in the struggle for meeting the needs and interests of women.Yet, in line with other research on women's rights in southern Africa (Griffiths 2001; Hellum 1999), I will argue that the introduction of human rights does not automatically bring the intended changes in women's lives. Instead, a sensitive approach to the application of rights is needed which takes into account the ways women themselves negotiate their marriages and the solutions they aim at.

First, I will give an introduction to the laws and norms governing marriage in Malawi and suggest a theoretical perspective with which to conceptualise the legal framework. Then, the

empirical context will be described from the point of view of the socio-economic conditions and cultural characteristics that form the background against which Malawian women negotiate marriage. Women's experiences of polygyny will be discussed next with a focus on the gendered nature of norms and power relations, which women are informed by and draw on during their negotiations. Finally, I will relate the plural legal framework to the introduction of the human rights concept and discuss the potential of a human rights-based approach for meeting the needs of women.

Malawian Marriage Law

Owing to the country's colonial past, Malawi's legal system is based on English common law as well as African customary law.[1] At the constitutional level, since 1994, Malawi also recognises human rights on the basis of international human rights conventions. I use the term state law to signify this whole body of law sanctioned by the state, that is, constitutional provisions, common law, and the customary law observed by the courts and state institutions.[2] Malawi has a uniform court system, but the different types and levels of law are not fully integrated, for example, the constitution's human rights provisions have not yet found their way into all parts of the legislation.

The Malawian constitution recognises 'all marriages at law, custom and marriages by repute or by permanent cohabitation' (Republic of Malawi 2001:5). Only marriages at law and custom enjoy full legal protection. Marriage law includes four categories: marriage under the Marriage Act, marriage under Customary Law, Asiatic marriage, and Foreign Customary Law marriage (Mvula and Kakhongwa 1997:33). The Marriage Act derives from English common law; marriage is monogamous and can be contracted by religious or civil ceremony. Asiatic marriage applies to the small non-Christian population of Asian origin and these marriages are essentially Islamic or Hindu. A Foreign Customary Law marriage signifies marriage between a Malawian and a foreigner according to the practices of the foreigner (Mvula and Kakhongwa 1997:33). Customary Law marriages are contracted according to the customs and traditions of Malawi's ethnic communities and are potentially polygynous. Since Customary Law marriages are by far the most common, my examples of women's negotiations of marriage concern this type of marriage.

Malawi is host to a variety of ethnic communities; therefore, the formalities of customary marriage differ. Within the matrilineal communities, which are the most prevalent in Malawi, marriage formalities include the exchange of gifts and matrilocal residence. Within the patrilineal communities marriage involves the payment of bride wealth (*lobola*) and patrilocal residence. These are general characteristics and actual practices may deviate from them, for example as regards residence patterns. Often, a Customary Law marriage involves both traditional and religious marriage rites, that is, entering into marriage entails traditional marriage negotiations and ceremonies as well as, for example, a church ceremony. Despite the Christian adherence to monogamy, the Christian blessing of a customary marriage does not change the legal consequences of the marriage; it remains potentially polygynous. The only way of ensuring a monogamous marriage by legal means is to register the marriage under the Marriage Act. However, marriage under the Marriage Act is rare; people choose a customary law marriage, which enjoys profound social recognition. Customary marriage is more than a union between two individuals; it involves a whole network of extended family members with obligations and rights towards the two individuals. Mutual obligations involve support in the case of illness and

death, through taking care of orphaned children and old relatives, and giving them financial support (WLSA 2000). In connection with marriage formation important key actors are the *ankhoswe*. *Ankhoswe* are marriage counsellors, usually the couple's uncles, who are involved in contracting the marriage. In both patrilineal and matrilineal societies a marriage is not considered valid unless the *ankhoswe* have been involved in the officiating of the marriage (WLSA 2000:28). *Ankhoswe* continue to play a potentially crucial role in a marriage as they also mediate between the spouses in the case of matrimonial disputes.

The involvement of relatives in matrimonial affairs means that in order to comprehend the full legal context of marriage it is necessary to not only consider the law applied by courts and state institutions, but also the way women's lives are embedded in various social contexts and relations which shapes their options. In other words, 'law' must be conceptualised so as to embrace different types and levels of law.

Conceptualising Multiple Norms and Laws

Based on longitudinal studies among the Chagga of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Sally Falk Moore (1978) has developed the concept of the 'semi-autonomous social field' to analyse the interaction between state institutions and society. This concept makes it possible to avoid a purely centralist perspective which sees state law as the only moral guide and regulative force in society. Likewise, the concept avoids a relativist perspective that sees all kinds of norms as 'law' (Griffiths 1986).

Semi-autonomous social fields are collectivities with 'rule-generating' and 'rule-enforcing capacities', which are interposed between the level of the state and the individual (Moore 1978:57). For example, a village or a lineage may have this capacity, or a branch of trade which itself contains a number of social fields in the form of business companies (Moore 1978:59). Semi-autonomous social fields are not fully regulated by state law neither are they fully isolated from state intervention or from intervention by other social fields. Thus, the autonomy of a social field is variable as it is constantly being challenged by members of the social field who seek to promote new interpretations of norms and social relations, and by the impact of the surrounding world.

Because of the 'rule-generating' and 'rule-enforcing' capacities of semi-autonomous social fields it is important to distinguish between law operating at the official level and law operating at the unofficial level (Moore 1978:80, cf. also Armstrong 1993). The courts and state institutions apply their version of customary law; a version that was originally constructed by colonial courts, often in collusion with African male leaders (Armstrong 1993, see also Channock 1985). Alternative versions of customary law evolve when people regulate their own communities and solve disputes through customary institutions without the assistance of the state system; this type of customary law is conceptualised as 'living customary law' (Armstrong 1993). Living customary law often plays a more significant role in people's everyday lives than state law.

Women's lives intersect with a variety of social fields where the nature of law and the content of law differ. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork in two Malawian cities in 2000-2001 I will examine how this plurality of social fields and laws shapes the options women have at hand when negotiating marriage.

Urban Women in Malawi

The fieldwork sought to trace the opportunities and obstacles connected with implementing women's rights in local practice. It focussed on the everyday experiences of urban women and the significance of NGO activities. The fieldwork took place in an urban context, initially examining legal aid cases at a local NGO, the Society for the Advancement of Women based in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. This NGO rendered legal aid to women from all over the city. The insights gained from these client cases were further developed during a four months' stay in the township of Ndirande on the outskirts of Blantyre, the country's largest city and commercial centre. In Ndirande, another local NGO, the Nkhomano Centre for Development, was running a legal aid and human rights project.

During the last 10-15 years urbanisation in Malawi has increased by more than 50 percent (National Statistical Office, n.d.). Today 15-25 percent of Malawi's approximately 11 million people live in urban areas (National Statistical Office, n.d.; United Nations Development Programme 2000), primarily in Lilongwe and Blantyre. People, not only from the hinterlands of the cities, but also from the most distant regions are drawn to the cities in search of a job and a better living. The scarcity of land and natural disasters like floods and drought make urban life seem more attractive than smallholder farming (it is estimated that about 60 percent of smallholder farmers live below the poverty line (WLSA 2000:ix). Despite people's aspirations, jobs and business opportunities are not abundant, not even in the cities. Therefore, poverty is as widespread in the urban townships as it is in the rural areas.

The urban population represents a diversity of ethnic groups and religious affiliations. Common to these urban dwellers is that even though they often live far away from their home villages and relatives, the traditions and customary law observed by their ethnic group still play a decisive role in their lives. Everyday life for urban women first and foremost revolves round the domestic sphere. As about 58 percent of women are illiterate and only nine percent have more than four years of schooling, few women are found in formal employment (Mvula and Kakhongwa 1997). In the informal economy too, women have difficulties because they lack business skills and access to credit facilities (Mvula and Kakhongwa 1997). Therefore, having no land they can cultivate to feed the family, urban women often depend on their husbands for economic support. Cultural norms contribute to this dependency. Although Malawi's new constitution gives women the right to be treated as equals and the right to formal employment, women and girls are being socialised to see themselves as inferior to men (Mvula and Kakhongwa 1997; Women's Voice 2000), whether it be their husbands or male relatives. The acknowledgement of men's position is very strong and a woman's refusal to accept it is likely to cause disputes, maybe even violence. With the man as breadwinner and head of the family women are differentiated from men as regards access to resources that might otherwise have given them more choices.

By exploring women's narratives, in the following sections I will provide an insight into the norms governing marriage in Malawi and how the different norms intersect. As will become apparent the importance to women of state law and the semi-autonomous social fields of everyday interaction vary according to the actual circumstances and the course of events as women proceed with their negotiations of polygyny.

Negotiating Polygyny

I will begin by telling the story of a Malawian woman. I call her Helen. She was 45 years old and had been married for about 25 years. She had four grown-up children. By Malawian standards she was well educated, as she had finished secondary school (10 years of school). She used to

have a job, but early in their marriage her husband had told her to stop working. She accepted and devoted her time to household tasks. I met her at the women's NGO in Lilongwe in November 2000 when she was receiving legal aid from the NGO. Her husband was divorcing her because she would not accept polygyny and resisted her husband's wish to have a second wife. At this point, Helen had been living by herself for the past two years, earning a small income from the nursery she had established in her tiny one-room house in a township outside Lilongwe. Her case had a long pre-history before it went to court.

After some years of marriage Helen found out that her husband was seeing another woman. She questioned him about it, but he denied it. She decided to call her own uncle and her husband's uncle to discuss the matter. At this point her husband admitted to having a relationship with another woman and to having a child by her. The uncles advised him to stop the relationship, but he refused to do so because of the child. Then the uncles told him to bring the child to Helen for her to look after it.

Helen's husband did not follow the uncles' advice. He simply continued the relationship. Helen went on to complain to her husband who, tired of her complaints, sent her back to her home village. He claimed that she would stay there only for a few weeks while he was looking for a solution to their matrimonial problems. Helen's uncle accepted this arrangement. Despite his promises, Helen's husband let Helen stay in the village for several months without telling her what was happening. In the end, she decided to return to the city on her own. Now she was entirely on her own since her relatives were not in a position to help her further and she could not return to her former home where her husband was staying with the second wife.

Helen's 22-year-old son who was staying with his father had objected emphatically when the second wife moved in and demanded that his father send her away. Helen's husband responded by reporting his son to the police accusing him of smoking *chamba* (a drug). The son was taken into custody whereupon Helen went to the police to explain the reasons for her husband's accusations, namely their marital problems. At this point the police advised Helen to seek help from a human rights NGO that offered legal aid. The NGO negotiated the release of the son and made sure he could return to his father's house whereupon the second wife chose to move out. Then Helen's husband petitioned for a divorce. Helen accepted that it was no longer possible to save her marriage; now her wish was to get half of the matrimonial property. The NGO provided legal assistance for the court case.

Helen is an example of a woman who chose to resist her husband's wish to practise polygyny. Her feelings were hurt and she wanted to achieve certainty about her own and the second wife's position. Her husband had caused doubt and uncertainty because he claimed not to want a second wife while continuing his relationship with another woman.

Seen from the perspective of the second wife, despite not being formally married, the relationship may have caused some kind of security in her life compared to staying on her own or being dependent on her relatives. The relationship probably gave her some financial security. Also, she may have wanted to achieve an acknowledged position as a wife and mother. One reason for this consideration is that single women living on their own are often regarded as prostitutes and are subject to social exclusion. They resist any attemp to to label themas prostitutes. Sarah, an informant from Ndirande, explains her sitation:

> I decided to get married and have children and a husband because I was running from being a prostitute. I couldn't choose to be independent and stay on my own because definitely more men would come to my house just to give me kids, so I would be suffering and it would be better to have a husband.

Having a husband, formally or informally, gives a woman an acknowledged position in the community and some financial security. These circumstances contribute to making women see an informal marriage as a better option than no marriage at all.

Apparently, the practice of polygyny is changing. According to national surveys polygyny seems to be on the decline. From 1992 to 2000 the proportion of married women in polygynous unions had fallen from 21 percent to 17 percent. In 2000 nine percent of married men reported being in a polygynous union. Polygyny is also less frequent in the urban areas and matrilineal communities compared to the rural areas and patrilineal communities (National Statistical Office 2001). The figures suggest that although Malawians recognise polygyny as a Malawian tradition, a vast majority does not actually live by this tradition. However, the surveys probably capture formal marriages only. Polygynous unions were a common feature of the stories told by the Malawian women I interviewed. Many of them had experienced 'informal polygyny' whereby a man is officially married to his first wife while entering into an informal relationship with a second woman. This practice is also seen in other parts of southern Africa and may indicate a change of marriage patterns from formal polygyny to informal polygyny. Based on her research in Botswana, Anne Griffiths notes that there are men who prefer informal polygyny in order to escape the obligations of plural marriage. According to Griffiths, lack of resources to meet marital obligations and the fact that polygyny is no longer a means of accumulating power and resources are the reasons for this development (Griffiths 2001:113).

To women, informal marriage has its drawbacks. As we saw in Helen's story, the destiny of the second wife and her child was very much determined by the way Helen's case developed. Even though Malawi's constitution acknowledges marriage by cohabitation on an equal footing with other types of marriages (Republic of Malawi 2001), in reality, such a relationship is hard to prove and a woman is left with very few legal rights. Therefore, the NGOs warn women not to enter into an informal marriage (Network Against Gender Violence 2000).

The diverging perspectives on polygyny, which Helen and the second wife represent, show that women cannot be regarded as a homogenous group with common interests. Their stories also indicate that a woman might not have a completely free choice of marriage partner. Women's negotiations around marriage within various social fields illustrate how social and cultural norms as well as economic circumstances shape the options available.

Negotiating Marriage with the Relatives

The extended family was the social field in which Helen negotiated her resistance to polygyny. To consult the *ankhoswe* is usually a first step in solving matrimonial disputes due to the key role they play in contracting customary marriages (WLSA 2000:28). By consulting family elders, people also comply with the norm to keep a matrimonial dispute within the realm of the family. Matrimonial disputes are supposed to be solved 'within the four walls of the house', that is to say, these are private matters. To discuss private matters in public means disrespecting one's spouse. Helen explained:

> When you are marrying each other, we have this time of counselling with elders. They tell you what to do, you don't have to be vicious even if you have this problem, and you don't need to take it out [. . .] you have to be patient [. . .]. With those that's why we are underrated because the husband always gets boasting: 'As I am the head I can do anything I want'. We have this problem of respecting too much somebody instead of limiting.

Such instructions to keep a 'problem' inside the family contribute to maintaining the influence of family elders on a marriage and to maintaining the position of the husband as decision maker. According to research conducted by Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) *ankhoswe* are usually male relatives and for these men it is difficult to empathise with the women and assist them constructively (2000:30). Also, *ankhoswe* were found to favour attitudes like 'a man is the head of the family' resulting in biased rulings and a feeling of injustice among the women (WLSA 2000). Thus the norms observed by the *ankhoswe* may limit women's opportunities to obtain the solutions they prefer. This was experienced by Jennifer, aged 42, who lived in Ndirande. Her husband had abandoned her for a second wife and he no longer supported her and their seven children. When she discussed the matter with the *ankhoswe* they had told her that she would have to accept polygyny. Jennifer accepted their advice because, at the same time, they had told the husband that he should support both wives. But the husband continued to ignore his marital obligations and Jennifer did not receive any support from him. Therefore, she wanted him to leave the second wife and return to her; a goal she did not manage to achieve.

Contrary to Jennifer's experiences, the *ankhoswe* in Helen's story displayed an openness towards and understanding of the problems she experienced and the solutions she aimed at. By referring to recognised norms, such as the duty of a husband to care for his family and to respect his wife, a woman may succeed in winning the sympathy of family elders. Family elders also appear to be receptive to pragmatic arguments, for example about HIV/AIDS (an argument against polygyny), and about school fees for the children and improving the well being of the whole family (arguments for women's participation in formal and informal employment). By using such arguments, a woman is able to challenge the conduct of her husband, at the same time acknowledging the position of the husband as head of family. Therefore, as Moore (1978) stresses, the norms found within a social field like the extended family should not be seen as mere givens, they are continuously being maintained or contested, and changed or given different priority. A man's right to practise polygyny is negotiable within the realm of the family, though people who resist polygyny appear not to be in a position completely to abolish the perception that polygyny is a feature of customary marriage.

It is one thing to modify attitudes towards polygyny and quite a different matter to enforce them. An obvious difficulty connected with using the *ankhoswe* as mediators concerns enforcement mechanisms. As we saw in both Helen's and Jennifer's cases, the *ankhoswe* were not successful in making the husbands comply with their decisions. It seems that *ankhoswe* and other family elders are losing their authority owing to changing family structures and changing relations between generations.

When a couple moves to the city, often far away from their home villages, rural family elders have little influence on everyday matters and cannot guide the actions of their children. Because it is costly and time-consuming, some urban women simply give up involving the relatives at all as explained by two women from Ndirande, both married for about 25 years:

> Our *ankhoswe*, they are in the village so it is far, I was beaten here in town, and to have transport [money] to go to Ntcheu [the home village] - I didn't have the opportunity of getting transport [money]. We have never consulted the *ankhoswe*. Sometimes we can quarrel but the *ankhoswe* are far away so for them to come it will be too late.

Apparently, urban women share some of these experiences with rural women (WLSA 2000). When the *ankhoswe* live too far away or if the *ankhoswe* fail to solve the matter a popular alternative in the rural areas is the chief or village headman who usually lives within walking

distance and has an acknowledged position in the community (WLSA 2000:34). The urban neighbourhoods also have chiefs, but women did not make use of them for settling matrimonial disputes. As people move quite often - when they find a better house or have to move because they cannot pay the rent where they live - they seldom know the chief of their neighbourhood very well and, likewise, the chief is not familiar with a couple and their relatives. Therefore, women are reluctant to involve the chief in their private matters.
Apart from the constraints posed by physical distance, the authority of family elders is also affected by changing relations among generations. One factor causing this change is that a man who earns his own money does not depend on his relatives for land or other kinds of resources. Helen considered that:

> It's the money who talks, when you have money you think of doing everything. Before he [her husband] was very good. Because he knew where he was, he knew where he was coming from. But since he started touching more money that's the time he changed.

The obligations within the extended family to support kin who are in need mean that a man's relatives, and even his wife's relatives, may depend on him for financial support. This dependency on the part of relatives places the husband in a position where he may get away with ignoring the relatives' attempts to interfere in his affairs.
Contributing to the effect of differentiated access to resources is a general tendency for young people to free themselves from the control of older generations, a trend which people connect with the democratic wave and its promises of individual freedom (Englund 2000, 2001). Moore ascribes the autonomy of a social field to the ongoing, binding social arrangements between members of the field that obstruct attempts from the world outside to direct change within the field (1978:58). She is primarily concerned with the prospects for state law to intervene in the semi-autonomous social fields. But the relations between individuals within a field are also most important in the context of women's negotiations around polygyny. An individual is a member of several, possibly overlapping, social fields, which makes the flow of ideas from one field to another possible, and it may give an individual the choice of loosening his or her ties with one field while strengthening the ties with other fields. The latter appears to be the case when men ignore the authority of family elders despite the role *ankhoswe* play in matrimonial matters. When women fail to obtain the solutions to their marital problems they aim at within the extended family, popular alternatives are the religious communities. The Christian churches offer a different normative stronghold to customary marriage law and most congregations offer counselling services to their members in the case of matrimonial disputes.

Negotiating Marriage within the Religious Communities

Their relatives being far away, urban women engage in other kinds of networks to supplement the family network. One such network is the religious community. The women I interviewed were typically involved in church activities, like the church choir or Bible study groups. Most churches offer counselling services, usually free of charge. They are easy to access as they are often found in the immediate neighbourhood. Women feel quite comfortable about using this option, as they tend to have close relations to their congregation.
When people take their matrimonial problems to the church for counselling, the church personnel (the reverend, church elders or deacons) refer to the prescriptions of the Bible. For over a century the Christian churches have advocated monogamy (Phiri 1997). Recently, the

churches have also begun to adopt the concepts of gender and equality (see for example Kholowa and Fiedler 2000). Therefore, women can usually count on sympathy and help when they involve the Christian churches in their matrimonial problems. Jennifer, whose husband had left her and did not support her and their children, went to the church for help after the *ankhoswe* had failed to help her. The church tried to convince the husband to return to Jennifer and pressured him by excluding him from communion. Unfortunately, it had no effect; he stayed with the second wife and refused to support Jennifer. As membership of a religious community is voluntary, there is a limit to the authority of the churches. If both spouses are members of the same church and are willing to compromise, the counselling rendered by church personnel may be successful. But if the spouses belong to different churches or one of them is not a devoted member, the chance of success is limited.

Simultaneous membership in different social fields entails the risk that an individual may find herself trapped between diverging norms. This is the case for devoted Christians for whom customary law may be an obstacle because of the Christian adherence to monogamy. A case in point is Lisa from Ndirande who was a 47 year-old widow. Being a devoted Christian, for most of her married life she had wished for a Christian blessing of her customary marriage. But her husband had married a second wife and Lisa felt forced to accept it because of the possible consequences of resistance:

> In fact, I accepted, but I wasn't deep down in my heart accepting that my husband should go [and marry her], but because of how my husband was doing, his behaviour, I just lied and said that it was OK.

Lisa's husband was a drunkard; often he came home drunk and was very aggressive. At the same time she suspected him of having a lot of extra-marital affairs and she feared sexually transmitted diseases.Yet she accepted the second marriage because she feared that her husband would beat her if she resisted, and she hoped that if he married a second wife he would stop seeing other women. The second marriage hindered a Christian blessing of Lisa's marriage because the churches do not accept polygynous marriages. Though her husband was a member of the same Christian congregation as Lisa, apparently he did not see a contradiction between being a Christian and entering into a polygynous marriage.

Finding oneself belonging simultaneously to different social fields may also imply a potential for flexibility and individual choice making: Margaret from Lilongwe was a second wife in a polygynous Customary Law marriage. She was a Christian herself and her husband was a Moslem. She considered that because she herself was a Tumbuka (a patrilineal ethnic group which practise polygyny) and her husband was a Moslem, polygyny was quite natural. She lived in her own house while the first wife lived in a different neighbourhood of Lilongwe. So the two wives lived separate lives while the husband stayed a few days or a week with each of them in turn. Margaret felt that she had a quite free and independent life, a freedom that she valued. In her case compliance with the marriage customs of her ethnic group and with her husband's religiously sanctioned right to practise polygyny overruled the Christian adherence to monogamy. The important thing to her was not religious convictions, but whether or not her husband was able to support two wives and the freedom she enjoyed.

Again, the examples show that women's interests and preferred marriage patterns differ. The intersection of the norms found in ethnic communities and those found in religious communities underline the complex interrelations between different types of norms and the processual character of norms and law (cf. Moore 1978). The customary marriage law as defined by the

courts and the perceptions of traditional custom found within the ethnic groups challenge the Christian adherence to monogamy. At the same time, within the ethnic groups, the practice of polygyny is being challenged by members who are devoted Christians and by men and women who for various other reasons resist or abstain from polygyny.
Although semi-autonomous social fields have the capacity to exclude influence from the outside they are not immune to the continued efforts by actors from within and outside the social field to challenge the prevailing norms. Women's negotiations of polygyny indicate that alternative norms can be successfully invoked in a social field, but the end result depends on the relative power of key actors in these negotiations and on the strength of social and cultural values surrounding the position of women. So far I have discussed the opportunities and constraints women find outside the sphere of state law. I will now turn to the consequences of the official marriage law.

Taking a Case to Court

According to customary law marriage is potentially polygynous. Therefore, the courts will not take up cases in which a woman asks the court to reject her husband's polygyny. Likewise, it will not be possible to obtain a divorce on the grounds of polygyny. In the case of polygyny, the courts refer to one interpretation of customary law, namely the one that perceives polygyny as the right of a husband. This interpretation of customary law both confirms and diverges from the norms observed outside the realm of state law. As the examples above have shown, Malawian women who resist polygyny may succeed in winning the sympathy of *ankhoswe* and other relatives, thereby challenging the polygynous feature of customary marriage. The Christian churches[3] also challenge the interpretations of the courts. The surveys, which showed a decline in formal polygyny, confirm these observations. In addition to present day family negotiations and the official Christian adherence to monogamy, ethnographic descriptions of Malawi's ethnic groups indicate that polygyny has not always been an option for each and every man; on the contrary, it seems to have been a privilege only for men of a certain social position and wealth (Davison 1997; Read 1970; Wilson 1977). On the other hand, within the Moslem communities polygyny is religiously sanctioned.[4] The informal polygynous unions also point in this direction. The customary law applied by the courts does not embrace this variety, and the courts thereby limit the options at hand to those who wish to resist polygyny, as they cannot invoke the level of state law in their struggle. Unless, of course, they have their marriage registered under the Marriage Act, which would necessitate the consent of their spouses.
The courts also fail to acknowledge the heterogeneous experiences of women in another way. When hearing cases about matrimonial disputes or divorce cases, the courts find it important whether people have tried to solve the matter through family channels. This is a way of probing whether a complainant or defendant has sincerely tried every possible means to solve the dispute. For example, in a divorce case on the grounds of domestic violence, a woman who has not discussed her problem with the *ankhoswe* will have difficulties in legitimising her claim. The fact that the courts acknowledge the family as a dispute resolution setting makes it possible to use family members as primary witnesses. But it has the consequence that the courts preserve and enhance the importance of the extended family in dealing with matrimonial disputes despite the fact that family elders seem to be losing their importance, at least to urban women. By doing this, the courts contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of women's subservience to the authority of their husbands and family elders.

The reluctance of the courts to take into account the existence of alternative norms when dealing with cases of polygyny is striking, as they appear to be increasingly turning to the constitution for guidance in other types of cases. Thus, for example, a court hearing a dispute on the distribution of property between a husband and wife, where the wife is demanding half of the property, is more likely to rule in favour of the woman. Kaunda (2000) cites an appeal case at the High Court where the constitution's provisions about 'fair disposition of property' (Section 24) were taken quite literally to mean half the property, without regard to official customary law. This decision overruled the decisions of two lower courts that had found that the husband was entitled to more than half the property.

The decision of the High Court indicates that when it comes to distribution of property the courts appear to be attentive towards changes in living customary law which work to the disadvantage of women. The majority of Malawi's ethnic groups are matrilineal and, by definition, matrilocal, in which case the husband is supposed to provide a house for the wife in her village. However, urban residence often causes people to disregard this custom. In addition, a husband and his relatives will regard the entire matrimonial property as their's, claiming that he earned the money that paid for it. In this connection the wife's contributions, whether they be money or labour, are ignored. The same pattern is seen in inheritance cases. Women find themselves the weaker party in these kinds of cases and are often left with no assets at all; this was also the case in Helen's story where the husband took for granted that the house and all other property belonged to him. As mentioned above, if a case reaches the courtroom, there is a fair chance that the wife will not only be compensated for the missing house in her village, but also be given a larger share of the matrimonial property than what she was entitled to according to official customary law. By referring to the constitution the courts appear to be modifying the official customary law. Whether the courts will begin to be more attentive towards the plurality of norms connected with polygyny and to invoke the constitution's women's rights provisions in cases of polygyny remains to be seen. One development, which may push the courts in this direction, is the promotion of women's rights by local NGOs and international donor agencies.

The application of the constitution's provisions to serve the interests of women has been widely promoted by the Malawian NGOs. By way of their legal aid services, the NGOs accumulate knowledge about laws and social and cultural practices that affect women in a negative way. This knowledge enables the NGOs to enter into a dialogue with judges and to lobby government for legal changes. The accumulation of knowledge also enables the NGOs to promote public debate about contested norms and practices. Through the activities of Malawian NGOs the concept of human rights is slowly being introduced to ordinary people, like the legal aid clients who receive help from the NGOs or participants in human rights projects, like the residents of Ndirande, to whom I will now turn.

The Introduction of Human Rights

Since the democratic turn in 1994, Malawi has seen a growth of NGOs. Many of them engage in issues related to women such as women's legal rights, violence against women, women's political participation, and economic empowerment. The NGOs make continual efforts to advocate women's rights through campaigns targeting the Malawian people in general, the political leaders, the traditional authorities, and state institutions like the police. The main goals are to alter or discontinue cultural and institutional practices that discriminate against women, and to make women aware of their rights. The list of discriminatory practices is long: 'property

grabbing',[5] domestic violence, lack of economic support, polygyny, excluding women from formal employment, treating women as minors subject to the authority of men, to mention but a few (Ministry of Gender 2000; Women's Voice 2000). Much hope and aspiration is linked to the concept of human rights that has become firmly embedded, not only among NGOs, but also among politicians, journalists, and religious leaders (Englund 2000).

Harri Englund argues that the public discourse in Malawi is dominated by 'human rights talk' that seeks to define what is acceptable and conceivable (2000:580). During my fieldwork (2000-2001) the image presented by the NGOs was that women are being oppressed by paternalist attitudes and male-dominant structures to the degree that women find practices like the ones mentioned above a natural part of life because they do not know their rights. It seemed as if 'rights' was the yardstick applied to all sorts of practices and was posed as the only solution to all kinds of problems. At the same time women were talked about as if they constituted one, homogenous group. No doubt the local NGOs have been inspired by the trend within the international development community during the last 10-15 years where human rights and gender equality have been the main guidelines. In Malawi it is true that the majority of women do not know much about the rights that are accorded to them by the constitution. Likewise, there are women who take for granted the acts and practices that are being challenged by the NGOs. So far, the concept of human rights seems not to have invaded the social field of the extended family and only to a limited degree the religious communities, as it did not occur in women's negotiations of marriage within these fields. As such, 'human rights talk' remains a preoccupation for the educated elite who engage in the public debate. But the NGOs make an effort to introduce human rights into the lives of all Malawians.

An important initiative with long-term perspectives is awareness-raising activities, which can be seen as an attempt to influence social fields like the family. NGOs use the human rights discourse as a means of initiating a change in attitudes and behaviour among the population at large. Awareness raising about human rights encourages reflection and debate, including issues that are usually not discussed in public like the intimate relations between spouses. The introduction of the human rights discourse also has the effect of transforming the individual woman's struggle into a common experience of women, thus creating attention about the kinds of problems women face and reassuring the individual that her own private struggle is justified and worthwhile. As such, awareness-raising activities are an important supplement to law enforcement, and the women who participated in these activities welcomed the concept of women's rights.

At the same time, though, the human rights discourse causes much tension, as it tends to create stereotyped images of men as perpetrators and of women as passive victims. Naturally, this gives rise to objections. Many men take offence at such negative images of themselves as they struggle every day to care for their families. In this sense the 'human rights talk' might unintentionally cause opposition to women's rights. During the awareness-raising activities organised by the NGO Nkhomano in Ndirande discussions were at times fierce, with utterances like '*ufulu wa amai* is poison' (women's rights are poison) and the associating of human rights with neo-colonialism. Accordingly, human rights were posed as a threat to African culture and full African independence. The rhetorical construction of a dichotomy between human rights and Africanness was invoked in order to oppose the arguments in favour of women's rights.

These kinds of tensions caused by the human rights debate create uncertainty about the personal consequences of demanding one's rights. The opposition to the very concept of rights along with the examples I have given of women's negotiations of marriage suggest that the concept of

women's rights might not easily find its way into everyday practice. As noted by Englund (2001) the struggle for rights runs the risk of being rejected by the people whom it was intended to benefit because it might uproot existing social relations and have unforeseen consequences. Therefore, the norms found within the spheres of everyday interaction, like the family and the ethnic and religious communities, may continue to have a stronger impact on women's lives than the public discourse on rights and the constitutional provisions.

Women's narratives also revealed that women have different views on polygyny and different needs, which call for a sensitive approach to the concept of rights. As other studies, focusing on the interplay between individual rights and the social context have concluded, human rights per se might not serve the needs and interests of all women (Griffiths 2001; Hellum 1999). Based on her study in Zimbabwe of people's management of procreative problems, Anne Hellum (1999) found that women's rights must be seen in the light of the social contexts and the complex relationships within which women think and act. Her examples show that the abolition of polygyny by law may work to the benefit of some women while putting other women at a disadvantage. Polygyny would protect a childless woman who is in danger of being divorced by her husband or a woman who is in an informal relationship, thus being vulnerable to exploitation by a man to produce children that he was unable to have with his wife. Anne Griffiths reached similar conclusions from her research in Botswana: '[Polygyny] would protect some women from being abandoned or divorced by their spouses on the basis of old age or childlessness' (2001:113). Both Hellum and Griffiths discuss how best to interpret the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. According to the United Nations Committee (CEDAW) that considers the progress made by ratifying states as regards implementing the Convention, polygyny amounts to discrimination against women. It is debatable, though, whether polygyny is discriminatory if seen from the context in which it is being practised. Plural marriage law may offer more equality than a homogenous law that does not take sufficient account of women's actual life circumstances. Armstrong (1993) notes that living customary law may give some guidelines on the best way to protect women's rights. She gives examples that suggest that living customary law may change in a way that is less discriminatory to women than the official customary law because living customary law is constantly being modified in response to changing socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, she sees a need for more research into living customary law in order to enforce it at state level. The degree to which the concept of women's rights will serve the interests of Malawian women, thus, depends on how far it will be possible to adapt the application of it to the reality of women's lives. Englund (2001) argues that current interpretations of the rights concept in Malawi put too much weight on the freedom of the individual, ignoring local conceptions of the sociality of the individual. As current life conditions in Malawi are affected by poverty and fragile public security it might be more important to maintain the notion of mutual obligations between people instead of promoting individualistic rights (Englund 2001). This point of view seems to be in line with the attitudes of Malawian women in general. Although they did oppose norms and practices that they did not favour, they were keen to maintain relations with husbands, family elders, and others, and they continued to value marriage as an integral part of their lives.

Multiple Laws And Norms Revisited

The stories of the Malawian women disclosed that they did not all share the same attitudes towards polygyny. Some preferred a monogamous marriage for emotional, financial or religious

reasons, others entered into a polygynous union in order to obtain some degree of financial security and social standing. The latter option arose either out of compliance with ethnic traditions or because they found that this type of marriage offered them more individual freedom than a monogamous marriage. At first sight, the laws governing marriage seem to fit this heterogeneity as both monogamous and polygynous marriage law is available. However, when taking the socio-economic and cultural realities of women's lives into consideration it appears that not all women have a free and individual choice as to which type of marriage they want. In this sense, women cannot be regarded as the 'autonomous' individuals on which the human rights concept is founded.

Yet there are individualising trends in society that affect women. The practice of polygyny is moving away from being subject to decision within the extended family towards being the individual choice of a man. This means that women have fewer chances of acquiring an influence on the decisions being made through the ordinary channels. The women's negotiations around polygyny showed that living customary law is flexible and sensitive, to some degree, towards women's needs, but the extended family lacks enforcement mechanisms. Likewise, there is a limit to the authority of religious communities. The 'modern' perceptions of the free individual appear to confirm the 'traditional' views of the husband as decision maker, which reduces the capacity of the dispute resolution settings outside the state legal system to enforce solutions that suit women's needs.

At the same time, the concept of 'custom', which lies behind the construction of official customary law (Channock 1985) links an individual to a specific culture. In this sense 'custom' tends to underplay the fact that people as individuals might be members of several social fields with potentially different norms. In this sense state law does not accommodate the uneven development of society, which manifests itself in a plurality of diverging or even contrasting norms and practices.

The concept of women's rights has the positive effect of directing attention towards the legal, social and economic structures at the root of women's weak position in law and society; thus, it may serve as a vehicle for initiating change (Hellum 1999). As I have shown, women's rights encourage debate and reflection, and they have in certain instances provided a new input to the courts' interpretation of family law. However, along with other research (Armstrong 1993, Griffiths 2001, Hellum 1999) I would argue that a uniform application of women's rights principles will only benefit some women while putting others at a disadvantage. Formal equality does not necessarily ensure equality in practice; instead, the diverse experiences of women call for adaptation of women's rights to local circumstances in a manner sensitive to women's actual needs. Therefore, concepts like equality and discrimination must not only be measured by the standards of international human rights norms, but by the everyday life situation of women (cf. Armstrong 1993). This would mean that the state legal system must be responsive towards the multiple voices and interpretations of 'custom', that is, take into account the developments within living customary law and actual marriage practices (cf. Armstrong 1993). It would also mean, for example, making use of the constitution's recognition of informal marriage arrangements in order to ensure the rights of those women who enter into such unions. In other words, it is important to avoid essentialising culture or rights, and it may be desirable to adapt state law to reflect the pluralism in which the reality of people's lives is grounded.

Notes

1. Customary Law refers to the norms and practices of the African population recognised by the courts in the colonial period (Channock 1985, p. 240, n. 1). Through the colonial institutional processes local customs were transformed into law and, to a large degree, codified into written rules that could be used for judicial enforcement (Channock 1985:47). In post-independence Malawi customary law has remained an integral part of the law enforced by the state (WLSA 2000).
2. In line with Armstrong (1993) and Hellum (1999) I distinguish between the customary law applied within the state legal system and the customary law found outside the state system because of the differences in form and content between the law operating at the official level and that operating at the unofficial level.
3. About 75 percent of Malawians are Christians (CIA 2001).
4. About 20 percent of Malawians are Moslems (CIA 2001).
5. 'Property grabbing' occurs when the relatives of a deceased man take all matrimonial property, leaving the widow and children with hardly anything (WLSA 2000).

References

Armstrong, Alice. 1993. 'Internalising International Women's Rights Norms', in P. Nherere, and M. D'Engelbronner-Kolff, (eds.), *The Institutionalisation of Human Rights in Southern Africa*, Oslo, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, pp. 55-70.
Channock, Martin. 1985. *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia*, African Studies Series 45, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
CIA. 2001. *World Fact Book*, (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mi.html), October 9.
Davison, Jean. 1997. *Gender, Lineage, and Ethnicity in Southern Africa,* Oxford, Westview Press.
Englund, Harri. 2000. 'The Dead Hand of Human Rights: Contrasting Christianities in Post-Transition Malawi', *The Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.* 38, no. 4, pp. 579-603.
Englund, Harri. 2001. 'Chinyanja and the Language of Rights', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 299-319.
Griffiths, Anne. 2001. 'Towards a Plural Perspective on Kwena Women's Rights', in Jane K. Cowan, Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, Richard A. Wilson, (eds.), *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives***,** Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-126.
Griffiths, John. 1986. 'What is Legal Pluralism?', *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, vol. 24, pp. 1-55**.**
Hellum, Anne. 1999. *Women's Human Rights and Legal Pluralism in Africa,* Norway and Zimbabwe, Tano Aschehoug.
Kholowa, Janet Y., and Fiedler, Klaus. 2000. *In the Beginning God Created Them Equal,* Blantyre, Christian Literature Association in Malawi.
Kaunda, Desmond. 2000. 'Court Watch', *ARISE! - Newsletter of the Network Against Gender Violence,* vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 6-7, Lilongwe, Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre.
Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. 2000. *Information Kit on Violence Against Women*, Lilongwe, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services.
Moore, Sally Falk. 1978. 'Law and Social Change: The Semi-Autonomous Social Field as an Appropriate Subject of Study', in Sally Falk Moore, *Law as Process*, London, Routledge.
Mvula, Peter M., and Kakhongwa, Paul. 1997. *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Malawi*, Zomba and Harare, UNIMA/SARDC.

National Statistical Office. n.d. *Malawi People and Housing Census 1998,* Zomba, Malawi, National Statistical Office.
National Statistical Office. 2001. *Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2000,* Zomba, Malawi, National Statistical Office.
Network Against Gender Violence. 2000. *Breaking the Silence*, Issue 1, May 2000.
Phiri, Isabel A.. 1997. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre, Christian Literature Association in Malawi.
Read, Margaret. 1970. *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd.
Republic of Malawi (Constitution) Act. 1994. (www.sdnp.org.mw/constitut.html). December 7, 2001.
United Nations Development Programme. 2000. *Human Development Report 2000*, New York, Oxford University Press.
Wilson, Monica. 1977. *For Men and Elders: Change in the Relations of Generations and of Men and Women Among the Nyakusa-Ngonde People 1875-1971*, New York, Africana Publishing Company.
WLSA. 'Women and Law in Southern Africa'. 2000. In *In Search of Justice: Women and the Administration of Justice in Malawi,* Blantyre, Dzuka Publishing Co. Ltd.
Women's Voice. 2000. 'Traditional Practices/Customs and Their Effects on Women's and Children's Rights. Research Findings', Unpublished Research Report, Blantyre.

Kirsten Besendahl
Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology,
The University of Aarhus, Denmark.

African Sociological Review, 8, 1, 2004, pp.00-00.
C. Bawa Yamba
Some Dilemmas of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Coping in a Zambia Village[1]

Abstract: The paper examines the activities of researchers in a multidisciplinary HIV/AIDS prevention project in an African rural setting. Like most such projects on health promotion, it entailed trying to pass on superior knowledge on how to save people from dying of AIDS. It draws on an ethnography that spans over a decade of HIV/AIDS prevention in Zambia to show some of the problems inherent in applied projects that do not problematise the very idea of capacity building that aims to empower local people to deal with their own problems. It is argued that such researchers ought to reflect on questions such as what it entails to say that people cope (or are coping) with a given situation of stress and uncertainty; whether this means that such people draw from a range of resources to counter the impact of the situation, or simply drift along with the inevitable and are, thus, able to reduce the impact; and what kind of knowledge is internaliseable so as to make its recipients think it prudent to act in accordance with its precepts. It is argued social scientists working with HIV/AIDS prevention ought to examine these kinds of underlying assumptions in their work, otherwise they end up creating increased uncertainty and leaving they people they study more vulnerable than before. Examples from the project are drawn to illustrate these issues, to conclude with some tentative points on why it is necessary to be modest about knowing what is best for others, particularly in HIV/AIDS prevention.

Preamble

I take as my point of departure two sets of issues that are intrinsic to the activities of social scientists involved in HIV/AIDS research and prevention. The first is: what does it entail to claim a superior knowledge that, if successfully transferred to and accepted by local people, will save them from dying of AIDS? The second one, a corollary of the first, is the further question: given that such knowledge exists, what is the distinctive essence that makes it internaliseable so that the recipients of such knowledge would think it prudent to act in accordance with its precepts? Such questions lead to a further sub-set of related issues on what it means to say that a particular group of people are able to cope with their problems; and in what manner do social scientists involved in applied research (that is, in effect, what we do when we become involved in AIDS prevention) contribute to making the people they study cope with the contingencies of everyday life. These are the kind of questions that I believe we ought to address before embarking on HIV/AIDS prevention. It is because we never explicitly examine such questions that we, at the end of the day, find that we have not achieved a great deal in our efforts. At worst, that we have contributed to heightening uncertainty in the lives of the people we study.

My paper is therefore both an accusation as well as a confession. I am one of those who wanted to do some good and must now cast a reflective look at the activities in which I was involved. I thus examine the well-meaning activities of a group of researchers involved in what was broadly termed ‘a health promotion project’ even though its ultimate objective was to reduce the spread of AIDS, and the unintended consequences of those activities that unambiguously led to the aggravation of the situation they sought to improve. I draw on more than a decade of HIV/AIDS research in Zambia where my colleagues and I have been working intermittently since 1990. I shall focus specifically on Chiawa, a village in Zambia where our project was based, discuss what we did as well as what propelled our efforts and, with the aid of hindsight, conclude with

some general reflections pertinent to the broader theme of uncertainties of everyday live in contemporary Africa.

Capacity Building, Coping and All That

The specific perspective of our project crystallised after a series of workshops, during which we grappled with what would be the most appropriate and effective methods for studying sexual behaviour in Africa.[2] Influential scholars such as Caldwell and his associates (Caldwell et al. 1989) had, at the time, postulated the existence of a distinct African model of sexuality which was causally related to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS on the continent, and a flurry of activity had arisen to find out how to change the risky behaviour that was to blame. We also saw our workshops as necessitated by previously bungled efforts to study African sexuality mainly through the use of questionnaires that tore sexuality from its social contexts, with many rapid appraisal methods and in the so-called KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice), later KAPB (Knowledge Attitudes, Practice, Belief/Behaviour) studies (cf. Schoepf 2001:342), that assumed a rather simplistic notion on the nature of the relation between knowledge and practice. Most of these early studies of African culture and AIDS failed because many an African villager was unwilling to answer intimate and sometimes offensive questions about their sexual behaviour. Indeed, we used some of the questionnaires for our own exercises in our workshops. We subjected each other to questions such as: How many times did you have sex this past week? During your sexual act, where did your partner put his sexual organ?, and similar questions. We expected our colleagues to choose from a multiple range of answers on the modalities of their sexual act itself, as had been the applied in the efforts to understand African sexuality (Schoepf 1991). The exercises brought home to us the absurdity and uselessness of such questionnaires. For an anthropologist, the problem was the fact that such questions tore sexuality from its embeddedness in wider sexual relations and put it under scrutiny. It is the removing of sexuality from its broader context that makes it lewd, vulgar and offensive. Brooke Schoepf is right when she observes:

> Some early studies of culture and AIDS in Africa, undertaken at the behest of biomedical researchers, were less than competent. Novices to African studies produced rapid assessments and cobbled-together surveys. The worst literature searches tore bits of erotica from context [...] Sweeping statements were made about a special 'African sexuality' [...] (Schoepf 2001:340).

It was also partly in reaction to such claims that some Africanists felt they had to strike a blow for a more nuanced view of things (Ahlberg 1994; Heald 1995). Grappling with appropriate methodology to understand the sexual behaviour of Africans in three workshops led us to formulate our own specific approach to studying AIDS in Africa. We launched our project 'Community Capacity to Prevent, Manage and Survive AIDS'[3] in early 1991. We thought of the project's name as significant because it conveyed a distinct perspective that was new at the time and, as it has turned out, far ahead of its time: the notion that local communities had an important role to play in combating HIV/AIDS, and that the contribution of local communities was a prerequisite to the sustainability of development projects in general. This is, of course, something no one would dispute today. However, in the early stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic this was not the case. For example, one of the anonymous reviewers who scrutinised our project for SAREC, the potential funders for the project, wrote:

> This reviewer is sceptical of the weight the project attributes to communities. Communities in Africa, which largely comprise people with low levels of literacy, can hardly be expected to play any significant role in an epidemic such as AIDS that is basically a medical problem.[4]

Our research team comprised a multidisciplinary mix of bio-medics and social scientists: medical doctors, nurses, anthropologists, sociologists, bringing together the combination of skills which we perceived as needed to combat the steadily growing number of infections. The cornerstone of AIDS prevention then, as now, was focused on specific issues such as how to bring about sexual behaviour change (conceived then as limiting numbers of sexual partners, and using condoms), treatment of secondary infections, and the counselling of persons affected by the epidemic. We realised from the beginning that for a multidisciplinary research team to function well, there must not be any hierarchy between the disciplines involved in the collaboration. The contribution of each discipline must be regarded as equally important for dealing with the problem at hand. But early in the course of our work, it was clear that the bio-medics saw themselves as the legitimate vanguard in the fight against the epidemic. They exerted a predominance that was sanctioned by the international biomedical forces, the national governments, as well the local communities wherever they worked. Even if the absence of a cure for HIV/AIDS was later to draw attention to the need for input from other disciplines, and gave rise to a new discourse on the need for inter-sectorial strategies in prevention, the medical dominance in HIV/AIDS research has continued to this day (see Schoepf 2001). Anthropologists in the field of AIDS research often still find themselves struggling as no more than underlabourers to the bio-medical side of any purported team work. Apart from being sometimes licensed by society to deal with diseases, the training and specialisation of bio-medics enables them to make a more visible contribution in any interdisciplinary collaboration where AIDS is concerned. This is what occurred with our team. We, the social scientists, had nothing equivalent to offer. Unable to make such visible contributions to the people among whom we worked, we soon found ourselves frequently trying to legitimise our role in the interdisciplinary partnership. However, we were not swayed from the conviction that we too had a role to play. We tried to comply with the expectation that we would help design strategies for promoting sexual behaviour change, or that we would find out why people did not use their local clinics, for example. An important part of all this would be to first try to understand local constructions of sexuality and the people's aetiologies of disease transmission. Like our medical colleagues, our activities were, even if not as distinct as theirs, somehow predicated on the assumption that we too possessed some superior knowledge that would prevent people from getting infected with HIV/AIDS. This was the assumption that propelled our activities, and was given some legitimacy as local young men in the villages we worked began to demand condoms or ask our advice on some aspects of AIDS prevention. Nonetheless, there was a kind of crisis that hampered our efforts, which for lack of better terms, might be regarded as the crisis of legitimacy and creditability. There were no easy returns from the input of the social scientists, whereas the contributions of the bio-medical part of the team were frequently visible. The bio-medics could treat infections or dispense palliative drugs, whereas social scientists do not appear to make such visible contributions. The social scientists collected information, seemed to ask questions repeatedly, claiming that they were there to learn from the people - as well as to teach, perhaps. What rescues the social scientist in such situations of collaboration in health projects may well be their sustained presence in field research contexts. 'Being there' in itself is what

serves, above all, to convince the local people that the social scientists are truly interested to learn about local life, and that they are committed to help find solutions to the problems, the reason for the existence of that particular project in their midst.

Although our project was concerned with the capacity of a community to cope, manage and survive AIDS, we never problematised the very notion of coping itself. We merely assumed the import of the concept as it was employing in AIDS discourse, vaguely, perhaps, as how the people managed to go on living despite the horrendous havoc the epidemic was causing, the kind that must have led some writers to regard as an 'under-reaction to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa' (Caldwell et al. 1992). Since we were working with people who were living with HIV/AIDS, we should have posed the question: what does it mean to say that people cope (or are coping) with situations of stress and uncertainty? Is the idea predicated on the presence of resources of some kind that people are able to draw on to counter the impact of the situation? Or does it mean that they simply drift along with what they perceive as inevitable, and are thereby able to reduce the impact? As I have already admitted above, we did not pose such questions.

My interest in these issues has germinated from more than a decade of work in the field of HIV/AIDS. Every once in a while my reflexive exercises shake me out of my reverie, and I am faced with the question: have I really made a difference with my activities? The truth is that I have come increasingly to doubt that my training as an anthropologist had equipped me with the tools to make a difference in HIV/AIDS prevention in Africa. For example, I had been trained to approach other cultures and ontologies as working alternatives to my own, not as things that I would try to change, even if they were to be perceived as cruel and inimical by some cross-cultural ethical standards. However, in working with applied issues, and specifically in HIV/AIDS prevention, what was often expected of me was being able to provide alternatives to others' ways of doing things; my own ways not only, presumably, deemed better than theirs but also as something that would also improve life for those I studied. Thus, I was expected to tell people that their practices of widow inheritance and polygyny, for example, were dangerous - they would do well to stick to one partner. The assumptions and premises that had guided their action through countless years of tradition were now dangerous and destructive. Yet the simplicity of the message made it unnecessary to convert it into an explanatory model that would make them see that it was the conjunction of some present historical factors that made their practice unhealthy. In a situation without AIDS, for example, their cultural practices would be safe and appropriate. But there was neither time nor reason to expand and explain such complicated factors. To be effective the messages I was made to pass on had to be simple and unambiguous: stick to one partner, do not inherit a widow, do not practise dry sex, etc. While not doubting the need for such unambiguous messages, doing so has bothered and continues to bother me. This is not merely because I perceived myself as sharing an identity with 'the natives', as it were, but because what I propagated as certain knowledge was neither certain nor complete; nor was it even a suitable alternative to that indigenous ones I sought to replace. These are, of course, issues that anthropologists, who have ever applied their disciplinary perspective to practical social problems, would have encountered and often had to grapple with. They are important enough to warrant continuous introspection.

Promoting Coping Capacity and Preventing HIV/AIDS in Chiawa

One of the ways of empowering people in development research is to devise strategies that would enhance the capacity of local people to manage their own problems. Capacity building has

thus become one of the most favoured phrases in development discourse; it also serves partly as one of the most important criteria for assessing projects in the development aid field. Building capacity cuts both ways: there is that of enhancing the partner organisations, mainly in the South, to deal with specific problems, and there is that of equipping institutions in donor countries with the expertise to deal with those kinds of problems. Thus, for example, our grant from SAREC came from a special fund that was earmarked for the promotion of excellence in HIV/AIDS research in Sweden, as well, of course, as in the partner countries in the South. Despite the conditions of this special fund, one unarticulated objective was the same as the one always present in development cooperation encounters between North and South: that of enhancing capacity in the South. Yet no one quite knows exactly what is meant by or how to measure 'capacity'. The important thing is that it is believed that we get value for money and achieve progress by enhancing the people we study. Enhanced capacity is also desirable, development agencies would assure you, because it is most likely to lead to sustainability; conceived as problem solving strategies that are most likely to remain even after the foreign aid workers have packed and left.[5] In HIV/AIDS, research one way of building capacity was to help people to 'claim the disease as their own', in the words of one early proponent of the point of view (Chikankata Hospital Home Based Care Programme).[6] Only when communities affected by AIDS acknowledge *ownership* of the epidemic, would they be likely to contribute seriously to solutions to manage and prevent its further spread.

Armed with similar assumptions, but certainly not in such clear terms, we descended into the village of Chiawa in 1990, to help the people fight HIV/AIDS, but presenting our efforts in terms of general health promotion.[7]

Chiawa is situated in the lower Zambezi valley, between the Mindwe Hills and the Kafue River. The inhabitants, who numbered around 8000 when we conducted household survey around 1992, were predominantly Shona-speaking who preferred the name *Goba* as the term for self-ascription (Bond and Wallman 1993). The Goba profess to be a matrilineal group with an uxorilocal residential pattern (a post-marital residence in which a couple resides with the wife's family or kin). I stress professed, because the real situation was different. The household survey we conducted at the beginning of our research revealed not only a higher number of male-headed households, but a post-marriage residential pattern that was predominantly virilocal. Several factors may be seen as having contributed to this changing social structure. Some were economic, others political at the core, but both kinds served to dilute some of the ideal models the people of Chiawa had about who they were. Already in the 1970s Lancaster (1974) noted this changing pattern that was incongruent with professed tradition. Later anthropologists (Leavey 1989:28; Bond 1993; Dover 1995) writing on the Goba, also dealt with the transformations in Goba residential pattern, showing, for example, how most young men in Chiawa strove to establish their own compounds, partly because they wanted to avoid economic reciprocity within a wide kin-group, and partly because they sought to be independent of their wives' kin groups.[8]

Chiawa was ruled by a charismatic Chieftainess, who never tired of extolling her plans to carry her people into the twentieth century. She would explain that while the rest of the world was moving into the twenty-first century her area was still, in her own words, 'backward and primitive'. Thus she had been instrumental in bringing some international development aid projects to Chiawa. A European Union project was already on the verge of eradicating the tsetse fly, a Japanese company had recently dug boreholes in some of the villages that provided most villages with safe drinking water; and now, of course, was there was the Swedish HIV/AIDS prevention team.

The main economic activity in the area was subsistence farming augmented with fishing and poaching. Many of the villagers also had riverside gardens which provided them with extra food while they awaited the harvest of maize, the main staple, *nshima* (a kind of porridge that is eaten with stew). Recurrent droughts in the past decade had made such subsidiary economic activity imperative. Occasionally, during serious periods of drought, the government stepped in with food distribution in so-called 'work for food' projects, in which households contributed their labour such as repairing roads for rations of maize flour. Some young people were employed on a nearby commercial farm (Bond et al. 1993).

When we began to work in Chiawa in 1991, the people had recently returned to their homes, having been evacuated during the Zimbabwe liberation war in the 1970s. The people were only allowed to return in the mid-1980s when peace had been achieved. The returning groups brought with them new kin constellations, spouses and affines who belonged to other ethnic groups such as Tonga and Korikori, who introduced elements of their own culture into the new local social organisation.

While traditionally the Goba of Chiawa had been sedentary and matrilineal, some of the post-evacuation groups were patrilineal and semi-nomadic. The introduction of cattle herding had become possible with the eradication of the tsetse fly, which somehow introduced a new kind of conflict into the social organisation of the new Chiawa: the usual one emerged from cleavage between the sedentary groups, in this case, the Goba, on the one hand, and the cattle herding groups such as the Tonga, on the other.

Chiawa as a Venue for HIV Prevention

Chiawa seemed a most appropriate venue for such a project on HIV/AIDS prevention. Situated in the Zambezi valley about 130 kilometres from the state capital of Lusaka, it was in fact still quite remote and very rural. Geographical proximity to the capital town of Lusaka did not necessarily mean closeness in terms of easy access. Even with the best four-wheel drive vehicles, it could take as long as four hours during the rainy seasons to reach Chiawa. A more relevant factor, from the point of view of HIV/AIDS, was the fact that Chiawa was also home to a large commercial farm that had begun to attract migrant workers from around the country, who numbered up to 3300 at the height of the agricultural season. A majority of these workers were young males. The workers lived in barrack-like structures, which lacked the most basic facilities, such as toilets and clean water, conditions that did not make cohabitation of spouses possible. It had at the time begun to be generally accepted that migration contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. We therefore hoped to observe some of the factors that fuelled the epidemic at close quarters (cf. Hunt 1989). For example, because the young men had a regular income, they were considered attractive as prospective husbands for the local girls. We watched the emergence of beer bars around the commercial farm. Local young women came to the bars to find husbands. But as most of the men had wives back home, all that the young women of Chiawa could find were occasional liaisons, which quite soon evolved into transactional sexual relationships. Our research activities included explicit efforts to teach people about STIs (sexually transmitted infections), community feedback exercises in which research finding were converted into drawings by a local artist, into graspable information which extracted much discussion from the people. We felt all along that our health promotion in Chiawa had made an impact. Yet it is now not at all certain that we had achieved much at the end of it all.

Ten years or so later these factors must be seen as having probably contributed to the present

situation in Chiawa, where AIDS mortalities have increased sharply. Statistics from a village school in Chiawa for 2002 show that over thirty percent of the pupils in a school of 600 had lost a parent during the year.[9] I have no statistics for the present HIV prevalence levels in Chiawa district although current World Health Organisation figures indicate a national level for Zambia of about 1,000,000 adults are infected, which is 21.5 percent of the adult population (WHO 2003). Local people, as well as the Ministry of Health in Zambia, generally acknowledge that the Chiawa area has some of the highest infection levels. Almost every week, deaths occurred of young men and women in their most productive years. Most households have to take care of children who have lost their parents to unknown diseases, most likely HIV/AIDS-related. The project folded in 1999, despite an effort to turn Chiawa in to a 'field laboratory' in which issues of health promotion could be studied in controlled settings. The researchers have packed their bags and left for home, to become successful academics and renowned researchers in the field of HIV/AIDS. The project had in all produced five Ph.Ds, an equal number of MA degrees, and dozens of fine papers in academic journals, not to mention several Minor Field Studies by young students who attached themselves as journeymen to AIDS prevention specialists in rural Africa. The story of HIV prevention in Chiawa has still to be written; but despite the tone of this account all was perhaps not in vain.

One Conception and Practice of Applied Anthropology

I have, of course, described a context typical of many rural societies in Africa these days, with all the co-factors that sometime conjoin to make an African society vulnerable, not only to HIV/AIDS, but to other calamities as well. In Chiawa our attempts to get people to alter their behaviour started with an effort to make them realise that HIV/AIDS was their own problem and that only they could come up with strategies to deal with it. Two research assistants lived in the Chiawa, one conducting conventional anthropological fieldwork, the other a public health specialist, following up the objectives of the project. Their presence in the village and recurrent efforts by other members of the project to apply various interactive methods, which sought to actively involve the people in the ultimate task of prevention, made the people accept our project as different from those that descended upon them to collect survey data and disappear. For example, we employed and trained local people as interviewers, and we used focus group discussions to highlight the importance of AIDS as a common problem. We also involved them in how to improve health in the village in general. In all our activities, we always had the support of the Chieftainess Chiawa. Among the visible achievements we made in the course of our research were: carrying out what we termed 'community feedback' exercises in the form of mini seminars, where research findings were converted into easy-to-grasp pictorial representations and discussed; an increase in the demand for health information and condoms; and persistent questions about various health hazards that affected them. Another important indicator of enhanced capacity was that we successfully facilitated the process of an application by the people of Chiawa to the micro-projects' funds from the World Bank to reconstruct the local clinic. Further we were also able to secure a steady supply of essential drugs kits for the clinic. And, dubious though it might be, we did succeed in the course of the years to contribute to the high level of AIDS awareness in the area. We propagated VTC (Voluntary Test and Counselling) in accordance with the recommendations of UNAIDS (The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS), although we were not convinced it did any good in a context where they were no support therapies for people who were tested. All they would know was that they

would be dying of a frightful disease for which there was no cure. Nonetheless, for some time we could pride ourselves with saying we had achieved some degree of behavioural change, contributed to the ability of the people to deal with their health problems - the primary reasons that had brought us to Chiawa.

But had we? One of the first indicators of enhanced capacity emerged in 1994, when after a series of community meetings the local Headmen of Chiawa sent for a witchfinder to come to help them uproot evil, with the consequence of sixteen villagers being accused of witchcraft and killed through poison ordeals in an effort to show they were innocent. I have recounted this sad episode in the history of Chiawa elsewhere (Yamba 1997). Here I wish only to highlight what may well be a paradox of information transfer in connection with HIV/AIDS prevention. We propagated the biological model of disease transmission and the importance of getting the local people to take their own problems into their own hands to do something about them. This should logically have led them to use condoms and/or to resort to changing their sexual behaviour. But enhanced capacity in this case meant turning to a witchfinder to help the people of Chiawa uproot evil, the manifestation of which was, for them, very visible in the sharp increase in HIV/AIDS infections and mortalities. Evil was not only evident in the increase in AIDS-related deaths, but in some recent misfortunes such as road accidents and attacks by man-eating crocodiles in the Zambezi. It could, of course, be validly argued that they had resorted to the witchfinder not because of enhanced capacity resulting from our work, albeit not the kind intended by us, but because they had always done so in the past.[10] Such a contention, however, weakens when we consider the fact that the last time a witchfinder worked in Chiawa was in the early 1960s, despite the periodic occurrence of crises similar to the one that precipitated their requesting the services of another witchfinder. Moreover, the witchfinder of the 1960s was not invited after consultative community meetings. He was someone who was passing through the district, and was consulted as a witchfinder by many local people.[11]

Capacity Building and Coping in Retrospect

It is now time to switch our gaze at the present, to cast a reflexive look at the consequences of our activities to improve life in Chiawa. The following is how the picture looks like as from the July 2002. According to the local people themselves - without any form of statistics or hard facts to legitimate their claim - Chiawa has had very high HIV/AIDS-related deaths in the past four years. Most households now contain either a person or persons living with HIV/AIDS. For instance, many have experienced HIV/AIDS-related deaths. In one of the schools where we once held community feedback exercises in our effort to share research findings with the local people, 33 percent of children in the school of 330 had lost a parent during the year 2002, most probably as a result of HIV/AIDS. The commercial farm that was the major source of livelihood for many young people and their dependents (even if as I have shown, it unwittingly could be seen as having contributed to the spread of AIDS), had gone bankrupt. A new company had taken over the farm, promising initially to turn the Chiawa into the breadbasket of Zambia. News of the arrival of a vibrant new employer created a brief period of euphoria, heightened and affirmed by the new President of Zambia, who was present at the opening of the new farm. No sooner had the newspaper articles faded than the new owners of the farm sacked all but 120 workers. The farm clinic, which our project had been instrumental in establishing to offer health care to the workers, was closed. The migrant workers had left; what was the point in retaining the clinic? But, more than that and worse than that, is the fact that the new owners of the farm are now

attempting to evict about 200 households in villages that have existed since pre-colonial times. The new owners claim that they own the land and have thus the legitimate right to evict any persons found there. The villagers say they are on tribal land, with rights enshrined since time immemorial. Such rights, they claim, cannot be transformed into European systems of ownership. They then sought help from their Chieftainess who, to their utter despair, thinks the new owners are right. The villagers must vacate the land. They must obey the law, they were told. The villagers reminded their Chieftainess that it was her duty to uphold the traditional law that makes the sale of tribal land illegal. The Chieftainess was particularly incensed by the fact that the villagers are led by a young man whose party label is UNIP (United National Independence Party), and not MMD (Movement for Multi-Party Democracy) to which she belongs.[12]

To compound matters, the people of Chiawa have had three successive years of drought. They now subsist on the distribution of food by the World Food Programme through a number of religious NGOs, some of whom demand 'food for work'. The 'food for work' system demands that each household contribute a number of able-bodied persons to work on some communal project, such as mixing concrete for some local buildings, or filling potholes so that tourist cars can reach the Zambezi safari lodges, where the rich visitors pay over a hundred and fifty US dollars a night to experience 'primitive Africa.' The problem is that there are many households in Chiawa which cannot send an able-bodied person to work for food for the household's members. Households consisting of aged and frail grandparents, who often also have orphans to care for, and households with persons incapacitated with AIDS or other illnesses, cannot send anyone to work for the day's ration. This idea of food for work is perhaps one of the most demeaning strategies ever employed to help people in need. It is certainly beneath the dignity of many of the people of Chiawa.[13]

That is the situation in Chiawa, today. To recapitulate, AIDS deaths are now occurring at an alarming speed in the area, and this suggests that the AIDS-related diseases must result from HIV infections that must have occurred around the time our HIV/AIDS prevention activities were regarded as being at their most successful stages - if indicators such as number of condoms distributed and professed self reported reduction in number of sexual partners were anything to go by.

Concluding Points: Weaving Fragments into an Easy Whole

The story of Chiawa encapsulates what may well be the fate of many African communities, which occasionally encounter well-meaning busybodies, such as me, who think they can make a difference. But they quite often do not. They often expand the horizons of expectation and possibilities which remain at the end of the day illusive as ever. A proper ending to this paper, therefore, would have been a section entitled 'The trial of the development anthropologist': prosecuting as well as defending the legitimacy of activities of such a figure, with all the pros and cons of the necessity for such a person's work.[14] The prosecuting attorney would be a development policy bureaucrat, while the presiding judge would be an epistemological neutralist, who would decide whether the consequence of the anthropologist's work does not in reality create situations where risk and uncertainties increase extensively. The anthropologist would, I should expect, claim that if such was the result of anthropology in development work, as exemplified with the case of Chiawa, then it must have been due to unintended consequences, rather than outcome of direct agency or intentions. We can only guess what the verdict would

have been. I choose not to end with such a trial, but must content myself with number of points in an effort to give some semblance of coherence to this paper.

The Anthropologist in Development Research

From what I have said above, the role of the development anthropologist seems not only improbable but also logically impossible. One cannot hope to improve something, unless one's presumption is to replace it with another that is better or superior to what was there to replace.[15] Furthermore, the anthropologist's training is not designed to embrace the kind of ethnocentrisms entailed in replacing indigenous technologies, for example, or other cultural constructions that underpin the actions of the people studied. So, while I would imagine the development anthropologist as someone who unwittingly contributes to uncertainties in the lives of those she or he studies, the role of an anthropologist who approached social problems as a concerned advocate, would have been defensible, and certainly of greater use. In Chiawa, the sum of our activities must only have heightened the uncertainties that prevailed locally. Our attempts to change the sexual behaviour of the people, by imparting correct knowledge about the modes of transmission of sexually transmitted infections, only led to people embracing alternative aetiologies regarding the cause of HIV/AIDS. That was the principal reason why they invited a witchfinder to come to help them.

Local Disparities or Hegemonic Localisms

Concern with global forces and how they impinge on local situations often leads many social scientists to interest themselves in an asymmetrical encounter in which Africa is both exploited and its problems perpetuated. Such a perspective also leads us to juxtapose the global to the local, and even argue, on occasion, that this encounter is part of what creates uncertainty and aggravates the inability of local villagers, like the people of Chiawa, to control their lives (by this, read: a causal link between globalisation and modernisation, whatever the theoretical blueprints they conjure up, as well as, risk, uncertainties, witchcraft, etc, in Africa). But in resorting to this attractive but overworked dichotomy, I think we overlook what I want to term hegemonic localisms, which are operative in probably most local contexts in Africa. We need to scrutinise and analyse the disparities that exist locally. In Chiawa, hegemonic localism was evident in the contestation and struggles for control of resources by a segment of the population. On the one hand, there was the alliance of the Chieftainess - now obviously the ally of a white commercial farmer - and her sub-chiefs, and, on the other hand, the common villagers struggling to retain their right to remain in their villages. The former had the power, for example, to identify which households were 'vulnerable' and therefore deserved food aid. In such an environment, it hardly needs pointing out that there would be a tremendous increase in desolation and uncertainty. Each decision an individual makes in such an environment entails much risk, since it would be made under circumstances that are both hostile and constraining. Further, each decision involves risk of some kind irrespective of whether it is a calculated one, or one that we might regard as inevitable.

Applied anthropologists - particularly those working with AIDS prevention - also contribute to the heightening of uncertainties in local life because they begin by supplicating local hegemonic forces so as to legitimate their work and gain support for their activities. This is necessary partly because of the urgent nature of the problem at hand, which requires being able to get a foot in

the door of the community as fast as possible. That is also what we did in Chiawa; our easy reception in the village was facilitated by the Chieftainess and her Headmen. Whenever we arrived in the village we first paid a courtesy visit to the Chieftainess Chiawa, or to the village Headmen. And yet, as I indicated, she and the Headmen epitomised those who exploited others. The Chieftainess and her Headmen are regarded locally as having more in common with the *musungus*, Europeans, than with ordinary Chiawa people. It is to the Europeans she had given - some claim sold - tribal land. A local expression often employed to describe this category of people regarded as exploiters was 'they do not live like people'. Informants describe 'those who do not live like [the common] people' as those who have turned their backs on tradition. They would not contribute to funerals or feel compelled to practise local rituals like ordinary people. That a traditional leader should have been described in this manner is very serious indeed. The anthropologist who works with HIV/AIDS prevention, with the connivance of such local rulers, is certainly guilty at least by association. There must be better ways to make a difference when one is applying one's academic training to the solving of social problems. The jury is still out, but it won't be long before the verdict comes in.

Notes

1. The paper was presented at the Arusha conference while I was a Research Fellow at the Nordic Africa Institute. It was revised after I left the Institute for Diakonhjemmet International College, Oslo, where I am currently based. I thank the participants from the conference in Arusha for many interesting and lively discussions, some which proved to be very important when I was revising the paper.
2. The pre-research workshops were sponsored by the ODA, UK (Overseas Development Agency) and Sida/SAREC (Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries), Sweden. I recall the lively discussions between scholars and policy makers, such as Brooke G. Schoepf, Elisabeth Ngugi, Beth Maina Ahlberg, Virginia A. Bond, Eric van Praag, Katele Kalumba, and many others, who in their own way became prominent in the field of public health and HIV/AIDS work.
3. The project was funded by Sarec, Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries, now SAREC and the research department of Sida, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Sandra Wallman, Lisbeth Sachs and Katele Kalumba produced the methodological and theoretical framework of the project, while Ginny Bond, Paul Dover and Phillimon Ndubani, and many others too numerous to name, carried out the burden of field research. They all deserve my thanks for sharing the data with me; none of them is responsible for the interpretation I have made.
4. Feedback from one of the unconvinced reviewers of the project proposal (Wallman et al. 1990) that was passed on to us by SAREC.
5. We need not belabour this point, but it is perhaps necessary to point out that the discourse of capacity building and sustainability is one that runs across the documents and mission statements of most donors. This is true of Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands, and Norway, to name a few of the countries that belong to the group of Like-Minded Donors.
6. From an interview with Clement Chela, a medical doctor who was then Director of the Chikankata, Home Based Care Programme (See also Siankanga et al. 1991).
7. Thus, for example, our vehicle was labelled, 'IAS/UNZA and IHCAR Health Promotion project', IAS standing for the Institute of African Studies, University of Zambia, the present

name for the famous Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, IHCAR, the Division of International Health, Karolinska Institutet.
8. Yet another factor may well be the fact that most men move to other parts of Zambia to look for work. Lancaster (1981), Leavey (1989), and Dover (1995) cover transformations in Goba residential patterns.
9. Data collected by Mr David Matesama, research assistant, Chiawa, Zambia.
10. This is the position of my colleague, Dr Solveig Freudenthal, Sida, Sweden.
11. I am grateful to Mr Peter Katiyo, Chief Advisor to Chieftainess Chiawa for this information.
12. UNIP was the party of Dr Kenneth Kaunda that led the country out of colonial rule, to be replaced by MMD, which holds power at present in Zambia.
13. I tried to point out the flaw in the system to the NGOs in charge of the food distribution. They said they had already anticipated the problem, and usually made the headman of each village identify 'vulnerable' households for assistance. Such households, they were proud to point out, did not need to provide labour for food. Unfortunately, some village Headmen see this as a way to get even with intractable and difficult members of their communities. At present, it is the two hundred households who are fighting eviction that are being punished in this manner. To get their share of food aid, they must obey their Chieftainess and leave their land.
14. This fanciful notion of putting the researcher on trial for the alleged consequence of her or his work is borrowed here from Professor Joseph Agassi, who turned one of his lectures on the philosophy of science into a trial of Paul Feyerabend. In his 'trial', Agassi was both the prosecuting attorney as well as the defender, and surprisingly does a brilliant job with both sides of the whole thing, so that, at the end of the 'trial', the student, and I should expect, the reader, too, is not quite sure whether to vote guilty or not guilty.
15. For some sophisticated views on these issues see Wallman (1985).

References

Ahlberg, Beth May. 1994. 'Is there a Distinct African Sexuality?: A Critical Response to Caldwell', *Africa*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 220-242.
Bond, V. A. 1998. 'Household Capacity and "Coping Up" in Rural Zambia: Dealing with AIDS, other Illnesses and Adversity in Chiawa', Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Hull University.
Bond, V. and S. Wallman. 1993. *Report on the 1991 Survey of Households in Chiawa, Community Capacity to Prevent, Manage and Survive HIV/AIDS*, IHCAR/Hull/IAS, Working Paper 5.
Bond, V., M. M. Macwang'i, and P. Ndubani. 1993. *Report on a Survey of Migrant Labour Camps in Chiawa. Community Capacity to Prevent, Manage and Survive HIV/AIDS*, IHCAR/Hull/IAS, Working Paper 6.
Caldwell, John C., Pat Caldwell, and Pat Quiggin. 1989. 'The Social Context of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Population and Development Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp.185-234.
Caldwell, John C., I. O. Orubuloye, and Pat Caldwell. 1992. 'Underreaction to AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 34, no.11, pp.1169-1182.
Dover, Paul. 1995. '"I want to Play with a Woman": Gender Relations, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Rural Zambia: Report from a Minor Field Study', University Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm.
Heald, Suzette. 1995. 'The Power of Sex: Some Reflections on the Caldwell's "African Sexuality" Thesis', *Africa*, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 489-505.

Hunt, C. W. 1989. 'Migrant Labor and Sexually Transmitted Disease: AIDS in Africa', *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour,* vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 353-73.
Lancaster, C. S. 1974. 'Brideservice, Residence and Authority among the Goba (N. Shona) of the Zambezi Valley', *Africa*, vol. 44, no.1, pp 46-64.
Lancaster, Chet S. 1981. *The Goba of the Zambezi: Sex Roles, Economics, and Change*, First ed., Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.
Leavey, C. 1989. 'Cash-Cropping and Social Organisation: The Case of the Goba of the Zambezi in a Comparative Framework', BA Dissertation, Anthropology Department, University of Cambridge.
Schoepf, B. G. 1991. 'Ethical, Methodological and Political Issues of AIDS Research in Central Africa', *Social Science and Medicine,* vol. 33, no. 7, pp. 749-763.
Schoepf, B. G. 2001. 'International AIDS Research in Anthropology: Taking a Critical Perspective on the Crisis', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, pp. 335-361.
Siankanga, Z., C. Chela, B. Bailey, and R. Mwilu. 1991. 'Home Based Care for HIV Infected Individuals in a Rural Zambian Community: A Four Year Experience of Integrated AIDS Management', The Salvation Army Chikankata Hospital, Mazabuka, Southern Province, Zambia..
Wallman, S. 1985. 'Rules of Thumb', *Advocacy and Anthropology: First Encounters*, Edited by R. Paine, St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp 1-13.
Wallman, S., K. Kalumba, K., L. Sachs, and N. Krantz. 1990. 'Community Capacity to Prevent, Manage and Survive HIV/AIDS in Africa', IHCAR/Hull/IAS.
WHO. 2003. *Academic Model United Nations 2003*, Topic Area, HIV/AIDS, Geneva, World Health Organisation.
Yamba, C. Bawa. 1997. 'Cosmologies in Turmoil: AIDS and Witchfinding in Chiawa, Zambia', *Africa*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 183-209.

C. Bawa Yamba
Diakonhjemmet University College
Oslo
Norway.

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Astrid Blystad
On HIV, Sex and Respect: Local-Global Discourse Encounters among the Datoga of Tanzania

Abstract: The topic of concern in this paper is the manner in which globally constructed AIDS and HIV control messages are received by the Datoga of Tanzania. The text will reflect on how messages on safe and healthy sex in national/global HIV campaigns are not in accord with Datoga concepts and practices aimed at ensuring proper sexuality and fertility, and the troubled effects of such dissonance. In an attempt to grasp the dynamics at work in the encounters between HIV prevention messages and local sexual concepts and practices, some central Foucauldian questions are asked, such as how and why sexual activity is constituted as a moral domain among Datoga. The substantial Datoga preoccupation with procreation is located at the heart of the argument. The discussion will reveal how Datoga sexuality is becoming increasingly troubled, compounding and accentuating the already severe uncertainties experienced in everyday life. The argument is offered that unless communication about HIV/AIDS takes the cultural contexts that shape risk behaviour into account, such campaigns will fall on deaf ears, and may cause more suffering rather than less.

Introduction

The focus of the paper is introduced with an extract from a discussion that took place in connection with the making of a culturally specific HIV film to be used among the semi-nomadic Datoga of Tanzania. The group that discussed the content of the upcoming film consisted - in addition to the author of the paper - of schooled and non-schooled, Christian and non-Christian Datoga men and women.[1]

> *Datoga herder (Dh)*: I heard that some people from the Mission said that we can no longer have sexual relationships with our brothers' wives, we can't inherit our brothers' wives and we can no longer circumcise our children like we have always done.
> *Datoga health worker (Dhw):* It is true. These are dangerous customs since the HIV-virus is transmitted through semen and blood. These customs increase the danger of transmission.
> *Dh* : But then we can't marry like before.
> *Dhw*: Indeed, a man must only have sex with one woman, his one wife, or he may easily acquire the virus, and then he will die, and his wives will also die because the virus will be transmitted to them.
> *Dh*: Then we will all die, because our tradition says that when we are healthy and rich we should have more wives. How can we tell our people that they cannot have a proper sexual relationship with their brothers' wives... and tell me, who are then to take care of our brothers' wives if our brothers pass away?
> *Dhw:* Our people are still 'in the dark' and don't understand. Therefore we have to teach them. We will have no development if we continue to follow these old beliefs and customs. We have to live respectfully with one wife like it says in the Bible.
> *Dh*: But why do the Christians then have many more girls (unmarried women) who become pregnant than us who follow Datoga custom? And your village is filled with men who have sex with other than their wives.

Dhw: True. They don't follow the words of the Bible.
Dh: You say we have to talk about the condom. The film will never be taken seriously if we are going to talk about this thing that no one knows what it is.
Author (A): I believe we have to mention the condom since it is the only way to ensure fairly safe sex, even if it will not have to be made a major point at this stage.
Dh: Do you say that if people just put on this plastic thing, they can have sex with anyone? Do you say that 'condom sex' with an Iramba is better than having sex with my brother's wife?
A: Not better, but talking about AIDS transmission, this is true.
Dh: This we can surely not say. Do you know that we used to live respectfully and were rich, healthy and had many children and cattle, but now respect is quickly coming to an end. Datoga youth are starting to ignore our tradition, they drink and have sex here and there, and we are now becoming poor and unhealthy. Before people died of age and accidents. Now even our young start to fall ill and die. It is because they are losing respect for our traditions.
Dhw: It is because Datoga don't want to send their children to school to be educated and learn how to lead a good and healthy life.
Dh: No it is not. Saigilo's prophecy many years before you were born said that one day Datoga will start to ignore respectful coupling. Datoga will start to reproduce themselves like dogs, and that will be the end. It is this we are now seeing. Remember how Saigilo told us that one day we would start to put our cows in our pockets? Indeed, we now see it. Our cows have turned into money. Respect is coming to an end.
Dhw: It will be very difficult to have you in this project if you don't understand anything. These are the kinds of old beliefs that you need to put behind you.
Dh: OK.

The topic of concern in this paper is the manner in which globally constructed HIV/AIDS control messages are received by the Datoga of Tanzania. The text will reflect on why Western/national Tanzanian notions of safe sex in an HIV/AIDS context are not in accord with Dagota notions of proper handling of sexuality and fertility, and the troubled effects of such dissonance. The exercise is hence not carried out to map sexual conduct *per se*, but is to explore how local concepts and practices related to sexual conduct both contrast and resonate with the national HIV/AIDS discourse. Such knowledge may enhance our understanding on why HIV-prevention messages may be difficult for people who adhere to local African custom to take seriously. In exploring the dynamics in the encounters between 'local African' and 'national Tanzanian'/'global' discourse on HIV/AIDS, the danger of reification of both sets of discourses is substantial. Thus, I shall primarily refer to material collected in the context of the above-mentioned Datoga HIV prevention film project.[2] The project particularly aims at reaching the non-schooled segments of the population, i.e. the ones who commonly adhere most strongly to Datoga custom. I believe however that the material may also have some relevance in other contexts. The project was carried out within the context of a larger research- and competence-building programme (GeGCA-NUFU) established between the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the University of Bergen, Norway.[3]
In the process of attempting to grasp the dynamics at work in the encounters between HIV-prevention messages and Datoga sexual concepts and practices we shall address the particularities of Datoga concern with sexual morality, as well as the vantage points from which

such concerns evolve. In the process we shall ask some central Foucauldian questions (Foucault 2001:32) such as how, why and in what ways sexual activity is constituted as a moral domain among the Datoga. The discussion will reveal how Datoga sexuality is experienced as becoming increasingly troubled, compounding and accentuating the already severe uncertainties experienced in everyday life.

There is still to date a very low HIV prevalence among the Datoga (Hinderaker et al. 2001). This is at least partly related to the relative remoteness of their lands and to their relatively limited interaction with non-Datoga. Nothing however indicates that this people will be spared when HIV fully enters this area. On the contrary, there are indications that particular norms and practices may facilitate a particularly rapid spread of the virus. Pastoral movements, relatively low literacy rates, limited competence in Swahili (the *lingua franca* of Tanzania), and relatively strong adherence to local custom, have been pointed out as particular challenges confronting health prevention campaigns among Tanzanian pastoral peoples. The text below will indicate that challenges may lie as much in a generalised HIV language as in forms of adaptation and levels of education.

Despite general and repeated calls for approaches in the communication about HIV/AIDS that take cultural contexts into account (see e.g. Kowalewski, Henson and Longshore 1997; Sumartojo 2000), and documentation of the importance and efficacy of culturally specific approaches (see e.g. Dushay et al. 2001; Nations and de Souza 1997; Parker 2001), culturally designed approaches are yet to gain real influence on global HIV prevention campaigns (Carey et al. 2004) - a scenario that may have grave consequences not the least in Sub-Saharan Africa. I shall in the present paper explore dynamics at work if global HIV messages are communicated in an unmediated form in a local African community.

The Datoga and the Perils of History

The Datoga are a southern Nilotic-speaking pastoral people numbering around 100,000 individuals. Albeit culturally pastoral, most Datoga are largely agro-pastoral in practice with very small average herds. Sieff's study (1995:59, 62) indicates 4.1 livestock per individual in Yaida Chini, Mbulu, but the numbers vary starkly between individuals and communities. The core Datoga area was for several centuries the Hanang and Mbulu Districts of Manyara Region in northern Tanzania, but Datoga communities are today spread over much of northern, central and southern Tanzania in smaller localised enclaves.

Datoga history for the past 100 years has been characterised by dramatic marginalisation and impoverisation, not least for the part of the population that has remained in the Hanang and Mbulu areas. Colonialists early associated Datoga pastoral life with primitivism, barbarism and savageness. Increasing frustration related to continuous failed attempts at governing Datoga areas led to public executions, arbitrary imprisonment, forced conscription in the army, collective cattle fines, and discriminatory resource allocation (Rekdal and Blystad 1999). Considerable continuation of policy vis-à-vis Datoga dominated areas was experienced after the close of the colonial era. Colonial encouragement of agricultural expansion onto Datoga grazing land, for example, continued unabated after independence. The shortage of pasture was magnified with the coming of a large-scale Canadian-sponsored commercial wheat project in the mid-1970s (Lane 1996). The project not only dramatically reduced available Datoga pasture, but attracted international attention for its gross violation of Datoga rights (Kisanga 1993; Lane 1991). Datoga with sufficient health and wealth fled the area in large numbers during the 1980s

and 1990s in search of improved grazing, while the weakest and poorest segments of the population stayed behind, relying increasingly on cultivation.
Along with transformations in adaptation, dramatic cultural transformation of housing, dress, diet, decoration and other key cultural features have taken place. These transitions have partly been elements of complex processes of mixing and merging with the neighbouring Iraqw, partly elements of general processes of modernisation. No modification of Datoga custom has however received the attention given to the transformation of sexual norms and practices. Ongoing modification in concepts and institutions that regulate sexual conduct as well as actual sexual practice is in fact substantial, transitions that many Datoga observe with unease and fear. I shall return to these important transitions below, but we shall first address the customary domain of norms and practices pertaining to sex and procreation that is vested with so much moral significance among Datoga. Such knowledge will enhance our understanding of the dynamics at work in the discussion on HIV prevention messages presented at the onset of the paper.

Ensuring Respectful Sexual Relations in Datoga Custom

There is a tremendous respect for the sexual act among the Datoga. Coitus is certainly regarded as inherently potent and fertile, but it is simultaneously conceived as potentially risky and hazardous. The notion that the exchange of procreative liquids can lead to conception and new life, but similarly to infertility and death, is located at the core of Datoga anxiety. This notion is made manifest in elaborate pollution practices (*metida*) discussed elsewhere (Blystad 2000). The apprehension linked to the sexual act surfaces both in the everyday sexual preoccupation of lovers and marital partners, and in elaborate normative complexes present in daily and ritual talk, song and prayer related to diverse domains of life. The blessings as well as perils inherent in sexual encounters make them a favoured domain for normative ordinance.

Sexual Play Among the Young

While freedom, excitement, and sexual play are cherished and encouraged attributes of non-marital relations, sexual intercourse is strictly prohibited for unmarried Datoga girls. A number of institutions facilitate and endorse romantic encounters between youth on the one hand, and act as a control of these encounters on the other. Formal youth meetings (s*eyooda tangaz*) are mandatory[4] gatherings headed by female and male youth leaders taking place in hidden bush land. The meetings facilitate proper splicing of potential girlfriends and boyfriends through a formal calling out of clan and generation set names among the participants. In principle the same regulations about relationships are to be followed between boyfriends and girlfriends as between potential marital partners, but the rules are somewhat more relaxed in premarital relations. The meetings facilitate romantic private meetings (*seyooda*) between young men and women, and are a precondition for young couples' engaging in 'youth talk' (*gharemanend dumeed*), highly poetic and ritualised conversations performed between young men and women. The ultimate aim of these lengthy oral competitions that may go on for hours and even days is from the man's point of view an intimate relationship. In cases where a girl outwits a boy, the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship is put on temporary or possibly full hold, ideally resulting in boys taking off to hunt/spear lions, elephants or other large mammals to win the admiration of the girl (*lilichta/lugooda*). During the early phase of the engaging in such youth activity, a girl will have her own formally appointed male guardian (*ng'wasaneeda*). From the point of view of the girl's

family, this man is to ensure their daughter's assertive but proper conduct in her dealings with men in order to prevent pregnancy prior to marriage. Girls also arrange their own secret girls' meetings (*makchameeta haweega*), where approved as well as sanctioned sexual practices preoccupy the participants. The number one principle governing the youth pacts is respect (*mureeda*). The following brief extract from a 'poem of departure' (*gighatta*), performed at the time a young man leaves for a hunt, indicates the concern with respect.

> Geenyabwaas performed the song
> It (the song) is like the stick and the spear of the performer
> Even if you (boy and girl friends) are by yourself, do judge
> Keep respectful conduct
> [. . .] the girl Jang calls you
> Whose leather cape has glass beads on its fringes
> She showed the group going to war the path.
> [Geenyabwas gwargu dumda
> Deaschi fayooda nyeashaneeda
> Ii bea geaw adeena
> Waamwana seamda ea mureeda
> Ea goojeagu geaba Jang'
> Bea seaptseapta unbugida
> Nyusu mudadtor naweeda.]

Marital Sexual Norms

Datoga marriage is ideally polygynous which implies that rich Datoga men will aim at marrying more than one wife. Marital sexual intercourse through the establishment of a proper procreative alliance is, as among so many other people, perceived as the essence of order. For a married woman to have sex with a man who is not simultaneously categorised as a potential procreative partner is culturally inconceivable. Considerable effort is vested in intricate assessment in an attempt to ensure proper and fertile marital unions. A woman in principle marries into her husband's clan, which implies that sexual and procreative relationships with a husband's clan 'brothers' (*rata*) are deemed good and acceptable. An institution related to such extended sexual rights of in-laws (*rata*) is the *orjetedameyda*, which facilitates sexual relations between individuals who have established a fictive kinship relation. This intricate system of potential sexual exchanges (which both men and women in principle may refuse to get involved in) also ideally implies an elaborate transfer of domestic animals which links families, patrilineages and fictive kin together in large procreative and co-operative networks, networks located at the heart of Datoga social organisation.

The generation-set institution (*seygeeda*), albeit formally discontinued, lives on in a simplified form, and complicates the picture of who may establish a boyfriend-girlfriend pact or a marital alliance. Siblings with the same social father are all born into the same set (however far apart in age), and the main principle is that men and women who have a parental generation-set relationship cannot marry, but one may marry into one's own or into a 'grandparental' generation set. The institution is to ensure proper sexual regulation between generations.

Beyond such institutional frames a number of normative measures aim at regulating sexual conduct in connection with key procreative moments, illness and death. Intricate regulations moreover direct where, how and when sexual activity should take place. Marital sex should be carried out in

a woman's bedroom/kitchen preferably at night, while the sexual play of the young should take place in the outside bush land during daytime only. The distinction made between youthful sexual play and marital procreative sex is elaborated on at great length and infused with immense significance.
These norms and institutions are aimed solely at internal Datoga relations as there is substantial culturally established scepticism to sexual relations and marital unions with non-Datoga, although such unions are becoming increasingly common. The major acceptable exception for the Datoga of Hanang/Mbulu is inter-marriage with Iraqw, which has gained acceptance to the point where Datoga and Iraqw move freely in marriage across the ethnic border. The reluctance towards sexual and marital relations with outsiders has complex roots with a general scepticism and partly hostile view of the outside at its base (Blystad 2000).

Breach of Sexual Norms

In real life all Datoga do not manage to adhere perfectly to the intricate sets of rules in a manner as proper as this normative complex attempts to achieve. The intricate inter-relations between human beings that build on diverse codes and principles leave first of all a large and ambiguous arena open for manipulation, an arena that is sometimes stretched beyond what is deemed acceptable. The carrying out of sanctions for the breach of sexual norms in fact makes up both a common and time-consuming Datoga preoccupation among both the married and unmarried. Hardly a youth meeting is convened without the announcement of discovered breaches, and subsequent elaborate discussion of the appropriate response. The most common sanction against illicit boyfriend-girlfriend relations is a forced break-up of the union, followed by fines as well as exclusion of the parties involved from youth activity for a certain period of time. The discovery of full-fledged sexual activity on the part of an unmarried girl and her partner leads to instant substantial fines, permanent removal of the girl from her partner and extended group of peers, and immediate initiation of marital negotiations. A girl's often limited influence over choice of marital partner completely vanishes with such discovery. Physical check-ups of girls by older women, albeit a custom losing its importance, have been carried out to keep incidents of sexual intercourse prior to marriage to a minimum. A worst-case scenario is the discovery of a pregnancy out of wedlock. A child in the Datoga patrilineal system is born into and receives the clan and lineage affiliation of his/her father, and without a formally established social father a child becomes a person 'without a name' and hence belongs nowhere. If not immediately married, the highly stigmatised unwed mother (*dorowaida*) and her baby will be isolated with remote, usually Christian, relatives, for at least a year. The child will eventually gain the clan affiliation of his/her mother but will remain stigmatised throughout life.
Also in the married population, a large variety of measures are employed to prevent unacceptable sexual, read 'procreative' unions, such as the return of wives when clan bonds turn out to be too close as well as diverse ritual measures. The following was the reaction towards a couple caught engaging in illicit sex. A sexual relationship was discovered between Gidajuri and the second youngest wife of his father. A ritual birth was performed so as once and for all to establish the structural mother/child relationship of the involved parties. The male offender was placed on the lap of the young woman; cow's blood was poured over their heads while the man was instructed to scream like a newborn baby. The performance was said to be an extremely humiliating experience for both the former lovers and their extended families.
In very serious cases of transgression spiritual punishment in the form of illness, difficult births,

infertility or even death is said to follow. The substantial time and attention given to the violation of sexual norms indicates the seriousness with which such breaches are perceived. The infringement of the rules that guide the domain of sex and marriage generates tangible distress, and is ultimately associated with Saigilo's frightening prophecy of uncontrolled coupling as an indication of the end to Datoga life. This prophecy is in fact increasingly referred to, as serious sexual breaches are gaining new dimensions. We shall return to the rapid changing norms and practices below, but first we need to gain an understanding of what the complex normative and institutional scenario surrounding sex and sexual relations is all about. To guide the further argument we shall draw upon Foucault's thinking and ask why sexual conduct as well as the activities and pleasures associated with it is the focus of such moral concern, and why sexual activity among the Datoga has become the focal point of apprehension, debate and reflection (Foucault 2001:32). We shall moreover explore in what cultural concerns such norms, structures and practices are embedded.

A Preoccupation with Respectful Procreation

A clue to increase our comprehension of these and related questions lies in grasping the intense Datoga desire to have children; the immense preoccupation with sexual control must be read as an avenue to promote enhanced and proper procreation. Both men and women need children to achieve adult status, and they gain prestige and influence with the birth of every additional child. Population control among the married is a foreign concept as fertility in human and animal populations is the only customary source of wealth. Men or women who die without a son and a daughter may never be given the honour of an 'official' Datoga funeral (*bung'ed*), an ultimate goal among Datoga of this part of Tanzania.

The celebration of fertility extends far beyond human physical procreation, and penetrates and imparts meaning and knowledge to nearly every corner of Datoga life. Besides the obvious areas of concern - human and animal pregnancy and birth - metaphors for fertility are widespread, adding an association with procreation to practices pertaining to the hearth, house and homestead, to medicines and healing practices, to rites of passage, and to mythical language. An important domain of meaning, experience, and power is opened up through immediate procreative contexts, engaging young and old, men and women alike in complex, partly complementary, partly contradictory ways. Fertility among the Datoga introduces the centrality of the maternal, and the maternal body, a body that encompasses the regenerative forces of material, social and cosmic continuity.

The centrality of fecundity in African symbolic and social systems has been widely recorded. A book edited by Jacobson-Widding and van Beek (1990a) sums up themes pertaining to fertility in the African ethnographic literature, and points to the articulateness of African folk models of fertility. The editors define fertility in African contexts as 'the whole scope of the perpetuation of life, i.e. human fertility as well as the agricultural variety: of crops and animals' (1990b:15), focusing on the bridges people construct and experience between procreation and other processes of growth. Moore (1999) in a similar manner notes that the larger context of the symbolic engagement in East and Southern Africa is a preoccupation 'with the continuity and maintenance of the social and natural worlds and their relation', and she argues: 'In this context, it is ideas about gender and reproduction that both undergrid and encompass the larger set of symbolic oppositions' (Moore 1999:6). She writes that a range of cultural issues can neatly be summed up as 'the problem of the maternal'.

Many Sub-Saharan writings are dense with feminine symbols, and many rituals are, in Sanders's (1998:239) terms, 'pregnant so to speak, with fertility and sexual symbolism' (see for example, Beidelman 1997; Devisch 1993; Herbert 1993; Kratz 1994). These works indicate how a 'procreative paradigm' (Herbert 1993) permeates and gives meaning to African ritual life. Devisch's (1991, 1993) studies from Yaka of Zaire for example, provide an exemplary illustration on how gender categories are associated with relations between birth, death and the succession of generations. A focus on the centrality of the female has been highlighted with regard to Nilotic cosmologies. Broch-Due's writings from Turkana, for example, substantiate Burton's (1991:81) claim that Nilotic cosmologies are brimming with feminine symbols, and she demonstrates how Turkana 'wind transformation images' around the female body (Broch-Due 1990, 1999). The ethnographic portrait of Turkana preoccupation with uterine images for processes of growth and transformation strongly resembles what is found among the Datoga.

These and other works powerfully reveal the attention paid to procreative processes, whether in human and animal bodies, or in the physical and social environments. Such immense concern with fertility generates immediate and natural links between sexual intercourse and conception to an extent where sexual practices in the married population can hardly be perceived without a procreative element. Talking about the sexual transmission of HIV, Datoga informants would hence instantly debate not sex but a troubled procreative domain as indicated in what is said below:

> I think there is no one who knows this, not even one, how this illness [AIDS] is. Normally among Datoga matters of birthing (*jeata*) are hidden/secret. When Udameselgwa [the major fertility spirit] is receiving a child at home there is no one who talks loudly about it. But this illness is not like birthing; it does not fit to be hidden. If it does not respect the sphere of Udameselgwa, which she herself respects so highly, why should we fear [to speak out]? OK, I will tell the women who are here, my mother is here, and even Udameselgwa is here. She will also assist in telling people about this matter. [Iyeang'ulay ng'asheanji sida manala ea dea mandana. Gidurji geyoni eawojusu eara jeata aba Datoga gefunya, ideapishi Udameselgwa aba gah, eara sisi ajuri mandana. Geyoni eara jeata mawurji, mudu efunyeday. Imudu ghowal howa eajisi awali Udameselgweani heda Udameselgwa eajisi ea mebadina, eanni geyi gajeweyini gaygudu ghowali naha? Basi, anini gaydayesha gheamadisu bea hijini, gwanda hiji iya ak gwanda hiji Udameselgwa. Eara ninyi gayghommu gwarukida ng'asheanji.]

The 'sphere of Udameselgwa' epitomises an idealised domain of marital sexual and procreative relations where proper conception takes place within the extended group of potential procreative partners. Implied here is that sexual relations that cause AIDS are not part of this proper but muted sphere secretly guided and guarded by Udameselgwa, but are infertile and deadly and should be talked of loudly.

The focus on proper and respectable Datoga procreation requires additional commentary when invoked in the talk on HIV/AIDS. The concern with respect (*mureeda*) is always implied when Datoga talk of customary pastoral life. The focus on respect is however brought to the forefront in talk about sex. In discussion of the many and complex institutions that regulate sexual relations, informants invariably said that they are to ensure respectful and fertile Datoga alliances. In discussing AIDS, allusion to a disrespectful (implied: infertile and foreign) sexual sphere was continuously made, as revealed in the short statement made by an older Datoga woman:

> This illness (AIDS) they say has no respect, (therefore) don't be afraid to talk to even your child (about it), don't be afraid. It has no respect. You shall tell your male youth, his father

> shall tell him, as for female youth, you shall tell her. You cannot hide this matter, right [. . .] things to be hidden, matters to be hidden are those of respect only. This has no respect (AIDS), what kind of respect would that be? [Miyeanji geyi manda mureda adiwali eara jeptang'u adiwali, manda mureda, gay ruksina eara jepta balleanda, gay gwaruksa ghwani dea huda gay ruksina ang'ing'i. Memusa gideaba gayduksina nimi [. . .] dukusinaneda jea dukusina, ng'asheanda gedukisa gita siwali mida muredanyini. Nih ea manda mureda, ha gwanda muredeaba enu?]

One work by Heald (1995) can enhance our understanding of Datoga concern with respect. She interestingly proposes that East African cultures can be dubbed 'respect cultures'. She writes:

> [...] I am going to propose that many - if not most - East African cultures can be dubbed 'respect cultures', and that the respect draws its power from that accorded to sexuality. There is a preoccupation with the control of sexuality, so that the controls surrounding sex, and the self-control that one must exercise with regard to it, epitomise social and moral behaviour. Coitus is fraught with danger, circumscribed by taboo and subject to restrictions unknown in the West (Heald 1995:492).

The Datoga material presented above substantiates Heald's contention with its immense preoccupation with sexual morality. Sexual control is located at the core of Datoga social and moral reasoning. The dramatic processes of transformation in the sphere of sexuality are however not equally well accounted for in Heald's work. She obviously recognises the processes of transformation in customary sexual norms and practices, but does not appear to take well enough into account the rapid transformation of customary sexual regulation, and how transformations themselves may at least partly account for the present obsession with sexual morality. It is to such transition in sexual norms and practice that we shall now turn.

When People 'Copulate like Dogs'

Increased alcohol consumption and the related night time youth dances (*gerona*), foreign sexual practices conceived as utterly immoral - such as the availability of girls providing sex in community centres - Datoga school-children's refusal to adhere to Datoga regulations for boyfriend-girlfriend pacts etc., are obvious examples of the ongoing transition. The steadily increasing number of girls who become pregnant out of wedlock is causing particular unease. Young Datoga moreover increasingly run off and disregard clan or generation-set affiliation norms and parents' marital partner choice. The concern with a vanishing sexual morality is powerfully revealed in Datoga talk about HIV/AIDS:

> It is said that if this illness enters a location like Dang'eyda, it will not leave behind people, not even one. If this illness is transmitted via sex, then these days sex is not like before. It takes place without a plan - people behave like the puppies of dogs. A person (no longer) 'eats things' (has sex) with a plan. Before there used to be a plan, and there used to be borders and now there are none. Have you heard how he says that the 'door' of Datoga had a ladder? These days even the Barabaig[5] have no ladder mother, matters have become just a coupling around. Now, won't people all die? It is true. Indeed it is finished. [Ak geyi geyoni iyabisa heayeda urji Deang'eyda ea mayghwabuti sida eara. Isinyasa geyoni luludayeda, deaba gweanyi ea mudu gawurji deaba ghay. Nih hiseadayeandumeda, buneda nibeshigwani ha ea gawurji buneda dayega gudeda. Sida mudu ghwaga gida descheda.

> Haleanjeni ghay gwanda descheda, gwanda monghajega ea mudu gwanda. Gwacha aba ghuta balleanda miyinyi gideaba Barbayiga ghay gwanda robutka? Gweanyi mudu gwanda eara emeni was Barbayigeani robutiga iya, gida sinyighada gabeachi. Asi buneda ea maygosha? Humwa gil. *Asi niduleani*.]

When reflecting on the experienced boom in immoral sexual conduct, Datoga informants point to the bad influence of outsiders (*bunga*, *emojiga*) on Datoga culture. Iraqw bring in the night time dances, Swahili people come with foreign brews and drinking patterns, pregnancies out of wedlock among Datoga girls are linked to the sexual transgressions of teachers in public schools, while disregard for parental partner-decisions is related to official Tanzanian courts' rulings in favour of the complaining girl or couple. The manner in which the Datoga see the dangers of HIV as brought into their communities - referred to as 'the house of God' - through immoral mingling with dangers coming from the outside, is indicated in the following statement by a Datoga woman:

> The way of protecting ourselves is listening to God who said 'close the door' (to the outside), and I shall come and help you. If you do not shut the door, things will enter inside. But the house is God's. OK, we shall protect ourselves, let us stop 'eating big' (having sexual relations with outsiders). You my relatives: Do soften this thing! We all agree! [Furiteaba geadi ghay eara Aseta gwayesha jaba doshta ak abeda wetang'u gaydahidu, imijaba doshita gayghafka ghoh haleanjajega, nea ghwanyawa gheda ea danyi. Ak ghwanung efura geat, genung'wadi agischedayida jea eyeagischeda aba jaronung'weaka. Ea emeda ghaheanya eaniyean ascheweasa nih. Gemasha!]

Ultimately, however, the rapid transformation of proper sexuality and patterns of procreation is not blamed on others, but is talked about as immoral Datoga conduct that poses a fundamental threat to the continuation of Datoga life. There are some examples that to Datoga reveal such immoral conduct in particularly powerful ways. Schooled and Christian Datoga women's increasing disregard for the leather skirt (*hanang'wenda*), the customary female attire which is loaded with sexual and procreative meaning, is by many perceived as a particularly disturbing example of immoral conduct. The skirt was handed to Datoga women by the spirit Udameselgwa in order to ensure fecundity in Datoga houses. Breach of respectful sexual and procreative norms implied by the disregard for the skirt is read as an omen of a kind of moral disruption that threatens the health, wealth and fertility of the Datoga at large.

In a parallel way the discontinuation of the generation set institution (*seygeeda*) gives us an indication of the dynamics at work. The denunciation of the institution is talked of wholly as a horrible consequence of disrespectful sexual conduct. The argument goes as follows: New generation sets cannot be initiated as one can no longer be sure to find Datoga who have not had an illicit sexual union, and hence can safely receive the sacred butter anointment *required* for the initiation ceremony of new sets. If new sets are initiated with 'impure' participants, God's anger will cause death and infertility throughout the Datoga community. Hence an institution, which in and of itself was to ensure the proper splicing of people, is discontinued due to the increase in illicit sexual relations. The gradual discontinuation of this institution is read as another realisation of the prophecy that people will start to couple like dogs and that an end to Datoga life is approaching.

Local/Global HIV Discourse Encounters

It is time to return to the point of departure, and with the newly acquired knowledge on Datoga

concern with proper sex and procreation, address encounters between Datoga discourse and HIV prevention messages. From a Datoga point of view both form and content of the discourse appear to be foreign. First of all it operates with an unacceptably direct talk of sex. Its focus on safe and unsafe practices such as 'wet' and 'dry' sex, detailed demonstrations of condom use etc., contrasts starkly with the secrecy and highly symbolic language employed to discuss sexual matters among the Datoga. We may recall the informant who talked of the 'hidden' or 'secret' 'sphere of Udameselgwa'. Secondly the focus of the HIV prevention messages is perceived as confusing, and is challenging to interpret and act upon. The main focus of the AIDS campaigns is placed on the sexual transmission of the disease, and the ABC of HIV/AIDS 'sexual *A*bstinence', '*B*e faithful' and 'use *C*ondom' makes up the three main pillars. A focus is also placed on how HIV may not be transmitted, referring to conduct such as talking or eating together, sleeping in the same bed, shaking hands and so on, as a part of the general information on transmission as well as part of attempts to confront the HIV stigma. These main themes were addressed thoroughly with Datoga in the context of the making of the film.
There are some interesting overlapping concerns between the national/global discourse on HIV/AIDS and local Datoga thought and practice:
- The concern with the potential dangers of sex: revealed in the concept of the danger related to sex with several partners (global), and in the notion of potential hazards of sexual intercourse particularly with people classified as 'outsiders' and with Datoga who travel a lot (local).
- The concern with sexual morality: particularly revealed in the elaborate notions of 'faithfulness' (global) or 'respectability' (local).
- The consequences of illicit sexual relations: revealed in terms of illness and death (global) and in terms of pollution, infertility, and illness and death primarily as part of spiritual punishment (local).

The apparent commonalities do however remain fairly shallow. Let us for a moment dwell on each of the three central preventive principles commonly focused upon by AIDS campaigns and assess Datoga understanding of them.
The concept of *abstinence* is hardly unknown for Datoga men and women who from childhood have been told about the disaster of children born 'without a name'. The substantial restrictions on premarital sexual intercourse, along with the many practices that endorse romantic youthful alliances make sexual abstinence, or rather, abstinence from coitus, a practice of which large numbers of adult Datoga have had harsh personal experience. Such a concept of abstinence is however perceived to have little relevance in the married population, except in the sense of avoiding sex with individuals from non-acceptable categories.
A far more problematic point is encountered in the second principle, the principle endorsing *faithfulness to one partner.* As we have seen, not only is marriage polygamous, but a large number of married women and men have potential sexual rights to each other through the *rata* and *orjetedameyda* institutions, as described above. A potential marital sexual partner is, as we have discussed, also a potential and acceptable procreative partner, and may be the genitor (biological father) of future children. As was noted, this network of potential sexual partners is a key feature in Datoga social organisation knitting people and lineages together in close bonds of mutuality and exchange. The concept of faithfulness to one sexual partner is thus problematic both with regard to the official marital partner and in terms of the potential sexual rights of the wives of the husband's 'brother/s'. Faithfulness is relevant only in the sense that an individual is to keep to an acceptable category of partners, and not in the sense of sticking to one single individual throughout life. This

does not mean that the concept of one wife is entirely new; most Datoga will be acquainted with the Christian concept of one lifetime partner, but in the Datoga understanding it remains an awkward notion.
The use of a *condom* is however an even more foreign concept. Indeed, as we saw in the introductory dialogue, the whole idea of preventing procreative fluids from passing between procreative bodies (within the recognised categories) is a contradiction in terms. Potential risks implied in the exchange of sexual fluids are certainly recognised, but the notion of sexual intercourse without the linked notion of potential conception is highly alien. The relevance of the condom can be comprehended with regards to the highly controversial sexual relations with outside girls who sell sex in district centres where conception is obviously not the aim. Such sexual relations between Datoga men and non-Datoga girls are feared, not the least by Datoga women, for the spreading of polluting substances. In the discussion on condoms and their use, Datoga informants also related that knowledge and access to the condom could potentially lead to sexual intercourse with unmarried Datoga girls, as it would facilitate desired sexual relations while hindering the hazardous consequence of undesired pregnancies. This scenario would facilitate previously prohibited sexual practices rather than add safety to already existing and potentially dangerous sexual practices. The frustration related to a similar notion of opening up for the possibility of accepting sex with groups where intimate relations have customarily been condemned, was revealed in the opening discussion. A Datoga asked in an irritated tone if the HIV message to be revealed was that it was better to have 'condom sex' with an Iramba - a neighbouring people with whom the Datoga have a strained relationship - than having proper sex with a brother's wife.

Troubled Consequences of New Sexual Scenarios

The above section indicates how concepts of sexual abstinence, faithfulness, and the use of condoms appear to be difficult to grasp in the sense aimed at in AIDS campaigns. They easily become incomprehensible or meaningless for a person adhering to Datoga custom. We need to establish that we are obviously not dealing with a 'culture' or 'people' resistant to change. As was detailed above, Datoga custom has undergone radical transitions in recent history, and has adjusted to these in the most diverse spheres of life. We saw however that transitions taking place within the 'procreative domain' were experienced as threatening the core of social structure and moral norms in a manner nourishing anxious Datoga concerns with the continuation of their lineages. Indeed, the content of HIV prevention campaigns with demands for dramatic and often non-comprehensible sexual transformation in a particularly powerful way highlights Datoga concerns with the threats to their own future, while leaving them with little possibility for addressing the situation in a productive way.
What moreover appears through the discourse on HIV/AIDS is the manner in which the messages that are presented sustain historically established notions of Datoga primitivity. The particular local/global encounter we have addressed in this essay is, when painted in broad strokes, a Christian/biomedical/rural Tanzanian encounter with local Datoga custom. In these meetings Datoga preoccupation with sexual morality largely vanishes, and is replaced by a focus on antiquated norms and permissive sexual practices of 'pagans'.[6] Expressions used about the Datoga in the discussion at the beginning of the paper such as their being 'in the dark', not 'understanding anything', that they must stop following 'old beliefs and customs', and start 'to live respectfully' are neither part of UNAIDS produced or locally produced HIV preventive messages, but reveal a

kind of degrading language commonly employed when the Datoga are talked about by neighbouring peoples and Datoga who have removed themselves from Datoga custom. The focus on primitive and promiscuous sexual practices of the Datoga are in HIV discourse spelled out in a way which plays directly into colonial and Tanzanian development discourse with well established dichotomies such as developed/underdeveloped, modern/primitive, civilised/savage, clean/dirty, healthy/unhealthy.

The language employed however has dimensions beyond the humiliating. Underlying global HIV intervention campaigns lies a forceful memorandum that reads 'comply or die'. Until sufficiently cheap medicines fully enter the world markets, people living with HIV in poor parts of the world will not be allowed to survive. These discourse encounters as such epitomise global power relations; global HIV discourse is hence a discourse on life or death. Haydom Lutheran Hospital, which is located at the centre of the area in question, has become one of the first hospitals in Tanzania that offers antiretroviral treatment, which implies that HIV-infected individuals can receive medicines. But the uncertainties involved in the complex of challenges related to complicated life-time treatment for increasingly large numbers of individuals are still not fully grasped, and until a cheap vaccine is developed, effective prevention regimes remain the true challenge.

Rather than blame the incomprehensible messages of AIDS campaigns, the Datoga will, however, most probably ultimately blame their own disrespectful conduct and the fulfilment of Saigilo's prophecy for their increasing illness and death, a scenario which in most fundamental ways remains at odds with global HIV prevention messages. They will say the same thing as a Datoga woman who in a discussion a couple of months back stated: 'These days we are dying because respect has come to an end' (*Siku hizi tunakufa kwa ajili ya heshima kwisha*).

Concluding Remarks

Espen Schaaning (1997) has commented on the immense speed at which sexuality today is constructed and reconstructed as well as on the attempts to streamline and globalise it. This is not the least powerfully revealed in global attempts to confront the HIV pandemic. However, unless these campaigns fundamentally recognise that sexuality materialises within a large range of heterogeneous practices with diverse geographical, historical, institutional and social origins and let such heterogeneity inform their messages, these campaigns will continue to have relatively limited impact in the areas of the world that need them the most. A Datoga pointed to this challenge in the following way:

> We Barabaig, we are different from all other tribes. Simply different among all these tribes. Now among those tribes - the Iraqw neighbours, Wanyaturu who live close, and the Iramba who are not far from here. Even the Rangi are here in the east, we live with them, and Fiomi as well - all of them. Among those tribes, if you lend me your ears. There are some among you who speak the languages of those peoples. Some have visited these places and seen them with their own eyes. Among all those tribes that I have called out, is there one that has *rata* [sexual rights of in-laws]? [Aseasa ghayi Barbayigea. Gewurjewi geat ghamnewa aba jedeaba emojusu seanini Gewurjewi geadi.Aba jedeaba emojusu seanini. Ghamnewa aba emojiga ghang'edewa Nayagida gescheyewi, Neadega sukwanji, Yeambi earada ea neki. Ea Reangida sukwanji ea ghayeawa nea gendeawa seani ea Goburega suh gendeawi seani. Aba jeda emojiga iyoleydit eara agoga ghanewa gwanda sida iyi ita emojiga ea gea nihita ea gea nidah. Emeda mida rata aba jeda emeni gwanda?]

Rather than generalised HIV prevention messages, attention needs to be directed at what is at stake in concrete local contexts. Only when health-promoting messages are phrased in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner, and when they are moulded to draw upon strengths and not only weaknesses inherent in concrete local contexts, can they be expected to become effective. Indeed, unless the communication about HIV/AIDS takes the cultural contexts that shape risk behaviour fundamentally into account, such campaigns will continue to fall on deaf ears, and may cause more rather than less suffering in many local African communities.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to all the Datoga who willingly took part in the GeGCA-NUFU film project, to the Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) for funding the project, and to the University of Dar es Salaam for providing the research permit.

Notes

1. This dialogue is based on notes taken during informal discussion in the early phase of the making of the film. All other references to Datoga statements are quoted from tape-recorded/filmed Datoga meetings where HIV/AIDS and its transmission were discussed. This latter talk is presented in a ritualised, but flexible speech form common among Datoga and Iraqw peoples in this area of Tanzania (*moshta ghwooda*), hence the somewhat formal character of the talk.
2. It should therefore be emphasised that this is no attempt to address the content of or to evaluate local AIDS campaigns. This paper merely addresses Datoga discourse on central messages employed in Tanzanian AIDS campaigns campaigns that to a large extent have adopted the messages developed by UNAIDS and formulated in terms of an ABC: A=Abstinence, B=Be faithful, C=Condom as reflected on in the process of the film production. The larger ethnographic material on which this paper is based has been collected through some three years of ethnographic fieldwork among the Datoga of Hanang/Mbulu (Blystad 1995, 1999, 2000; Blystad and Rekdal 2004; Rekdal and Blystad 1999).
3. The programme is funded by NUFU (Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education) and is a cross-disciplinary programme with history, anthropology, sociology, nursing, social psychology/education and medicine represented.
4. 'Mandatory' in the sense that youth and even parents may be sanctioned in cases when the young fail to be present. Many Christian or schooled Datoga youths do, however, not attend these meetings at all.
5. Barabaig is the largest subsection of Datoga, the subsection Datoga regarded as least influenced by outsiders.
6. When asked about their religious affiliation, non-Christian Datoga will refer to themselves as 'pagans'.

References

Beidelman, T. O. 1997.*The Cool Knife: Imagery of Gender, Sexuality, and Moral Education in Kaguru Initiation Ritual*, Washington, Series in Ethnographic Inquiry, Smithsonian Institution Press.

Blystad, A. 1995. 'Peril or Penalty: AIDS in the Context of Social Change among the Barabaig', in K.-I. Klepp, P.M. Biswalo and A. Talle, (eds.), *Young People at Risk: Fighting AIDS in Northern Tanzania*, Oslo, Scandinavian University Press, pp. 86-106.
Blystad, A. 1999. '"Dealing with Men's Spears": Datoga Pastoralists Combating Male Intrusion on Female Fertility', in H. L. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa*, London, The Athlone Press, pp. 187-223.
Blystad, A. 2000. 'Precarious Procreation: Datoga Pastoralists at the Late 20th Century', Dr. Polit. Thesis, University of Bergen, Norway.
Blystad, A. and Rekdal, O. B. (eds.) 2004. 'Datoga', *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures, vol. 2*, 2 vols, New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
Broch-Due, V. 1990. 'Cattle Are Companions, Goats Are Gifts: Animals and People in Turkana Thought', in G. Palsson, (ed.), *From Water to Worldmaking*, Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
Broch-Due, V. 1999. 'Creation and the Multiple Female Body: Turkana Perspectives on Gender and Cosmos', in H. L. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa*, London, The Athlone Press, pp. 153 84.
Burton, J. W. 1991. 'Representations of the Feminine in Nilotic Cosmologies', in A. Jacobson-Widding, (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 81-98.
Carey, J. W., Picone-DeCaro, E., Neumann, M. S., Schwartz, D., Easton, D. and St. John, D. C. 2004. 'HIV/AIDS Research and Prevention: Anthropological Contributions and Future Directions', in C. R. Ember and M. Ember, (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures*, vol. 1, pp. 462-479, New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
Devisch, R. 1991. 'Symbol and Symptom among the Yaka of Zaire', in A. Jacobson-Widding, (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 283-302.
Devisch, R. 1993. *Weaving the Threads of Life: The Khita Gyn-Eco-logical Healing Cult among the Yaka*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
Dushay, R. A., Singer, M., Weeks, M. R., Rohena, L. and Gruber, R. 2001. 'Lowering HIV Risk among Ethnic Minority Drug Users: Comparing Culturally Targeted Intervention to a Standard Intervention', *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 501-524.
Foucault, M. 2001. *Seksualitetens Historie 2: Bruken av Nytelsene,* Oslo, Exil. (Original title: *L'usage des Plaisirs. L'histoire de la Sexualité*. Tome II).
Heald, S. 1995. 'The Power of Sex: Some Reflections on the Caldwells' "African Sexuality" Thesis', *Africa*, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 489-505.
Herbert, E. W. 1993. *Iron, Gender and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies, African Systems of Thought*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
Hinderaker, S. G., Kruger, C., Olsen, B. E., Naman, N., Bergsjo, P. and Olsen, O. H. E. 2001. 'Low HIV-Seroprevalence in Pregnant Women in a Rural Area in Tanzania', *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, vol. 80, no. 12, pp. 1152-3.
Jacobson-Widding, A., and van Beek, W. (eds.) 1990a, *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life*, Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiksell International.
Jacobson-Widding, A., and van Beek, W. 1990b. 'Introduction: Chaos, Order and Communion in the Creation and Sustenance of Life', in A. Jacobson-Widding and W. van Beek, (eds.), *The*

Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life, Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 15-43.
Kisanga Commission. 1993. 'Report of the Commission on Violations of Human Rights in NAFCO Wheat Farms Hanang District', Mimeo (Government Commission), Dar es Salaam.
Kowalewski, M. R., Henson, K. D. and Longshore, D. 1997. 'Rethinking Perceived Risk and Health Behaviour: A Critical Review of HIV Prevention Research', *Health Education and Behaviour*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 313-25.
Kratz, C. A. 1994. *Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.
Lane, C. R. 1991. 'Wheat at What Cost? CIDA and the Tanzania-Canada Wheat Program', in J. Swift and B. Tomlinson, (eds.), *Conflicts of Interest: Canada and the Third World*, Toronto, Between the Lines, pp. 133-60.
Swift and B. Tomlinson. 1996. *Pastures Lost: Barabaig Economy, Resource Tenure, and the Alienation of Their Land in Tanzania*, ACTS Drylands Research Series, No. 7, Nairobi, Initiatives Publishers.
Moore, H. 1999. 'Introduction: Gender, Symbolism and Praxis: Theoretical Approaches', in H. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa,* London, Athlone Press, pp. 3-37.
Nations, M. K. and de Souza, M. A. 1997. 'Umbanda Healers as Effective AIDS Educators: Case Control Study in Brazilian Urban Slums', *Tropical Doctor*, vol. 27, no. suppl. 1, pp. 60-6.
Parker, R. 2001. 'Sexuality, Culture, and Power in HIV/AIDS Research', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, pp. 163-79.
Rekdal, O. B. and Blystad, A. 1999.' "We Are as Sheep and Goats": Iraqw and Datooga Discourses on Fortune, Failure, and the Future', in D. M. Anderson and V. Broch-Due, (eds.), *'The Poor Are Not Us': Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*, Oxford, James Currey, pp. 125-46.
Sanders, T. 1998. 'Making Children, Making Chiefs: Gender, Power and Ritual Legitimacy', *Africa*, vol. 68, no. 2, pp. 238-62.
Schaaning, E. 1997. *Vitenskap som skapt viten: Foucault og historisk praksis*, Oslo, Spartacus Forlag AS.
Sieff, D. F. 1995. 'The Effects of Resource Availability on the Subsistence Strategies of Datoga Pastoralists of North West Tanzania', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford.
Sumartojo, E. 2000. 'Structural Factors in HIV Prevention: Concepts, Examples, and Implications for Research', *AIDS*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 3, 10.

Astrid Blystad
Department of Public Health and Primary Health Care
The University of Bergen
Norway.

African Sociological Review, 8,1, 2004, pp.00-00.
Grace Bantebya-Kyomuhendo
Cultural and Resource Determinants of Severe Maternal Morbidity: Lessons from Some 'Near Miss' Experiences

Abstract: In Uganda severe maternal morbidity remains a problem to reckon with. This paper reports part of a wider study conducted in Kiboga, Hoima and Kampala districts, Uganda between 1999 and 2000 (Okong et al. 2001), the aim of which was to document the circumstances that led women to death-threatening medical crisis situations. It emerged that severe maternal illness is not necessarily a result of direct (biomedical) causes *per se* but may stem from other factors deeply rooted in culture and gender relationships. These factors notwithstanding, women are hampered by deficiencies in the formal health care system including *inter alia* inexperienced health workers, especially at lower level units, poor referral systems and the lack of a well-functioning transport system, limited space in the wards or operating theatre, and inability to access the busy health staff. These constraints often lead to critical delays, which aggravate women's morbidity experiences. Appropriate interventions, including delivery of culturally accepted maternal health information and addressing the lack of quality maternal health services, are required

Introduction

Background

In Uganda, as in a great part of Sub-Saharan Africa, maternal mortality and maternally related severe morbidity still pose a serious health problem. In fact Uganda has some of the worst maternal health indicators globally. The revised figures for 1990 from the World Health Organisations for Uganda were as high as 1,200 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO and UNICEF 1996). Recent estimates of 500-600 per 100,000 in 2000 and 2001 are mostly based on small-scale hospital based studies (Uganda Ministry of Health 2001, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development 2000). Considering that most women live in rural areas, and do not deliver in formal health facilities, the figures are likely to be much higher, with marked variation between the districts.

In 2000, Uganda had a total fertility rate of 6.9 and contraceptive prevalence rate of only 23 percent. The average age at first sexual intercourse was 16, the adolescent pregnancy rate stood high at 43 percent and the average age at birth was 18.7 years. Only 38 percent of births were attended to by trained attendants (Ministry of Health 1989). Compared to the previous decade, apart from a rise in the contraceptive prevalence rate (which was 5 percent in 1991) and large drop in the HIV prevalence rate, these indicators have barely changed in the past ten years.

In the past, high maternal mortality and severe morbidity rates were largely and justifiably attributed to the country's socio-economic and political instability, characterised by destruction of health infrastructure, chronic shortfalls in staffing and material supplies/equipment, poor remuneration of health workers, and erosion of medical ethics. Today a favourable and enabling policy environment is in place, including good policies with regard to gender equity, universal primary education, reproductive health, and decentralisation of health services. These contain measures to be implemented by government, NGOs and other stakeholders to increase health facilities, improve quality of services and care, and improve the numbers of professional health

staff, equipment and supplies (Uganda Ministry of Health 1999).
However, there has not yet been an increase in utilisation by women of obstetric services at health units nor a significant reciprocal reduction in cases of severe maternal morbidity and deaths. Although this can be attributed to the currently minimal implementation of these policies and interventions due to resource constraints, for example, lack of skilled attendants, emergency obstetric supplies, blood, and anaesthesia, or facilities capable of offering emergency obstetric care, it can also be argued that these factors *per se,* though valid, do not offer a sufficient explanation. Many authors believe that maternal mortality and severe morbidity in Uganda and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, is significantly influenced by socio-cultural beliefs including gender and power relations, and differences in roles and status between the sexes (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988:461-95, J. C. Caldwell and P. Caldwell 1990:118-25, Koblinsky et al. 1993, Ubot 1992, Vlassoff and Bonilla 1994:37-53).
It is in this context that the study on which this paper draws investigated women's near to death experiences due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth. The study *inter alia* sought to describe women's severe morbidity experiences, highlighting factors that constrain their ability to seek and obtain timely and appropriate obstetric care at formal health facilities when faced with life-threatening situations.
In recent maternal health care research, the category of 'near to death' (sometimes termed 'near miss' cases) represent a 'grey zone' category, i.e. a group of women who under slightly more adverse logistical or other circumstances would not have survived. Studies from South Africa, Benin, Ireland and France demonstrate the usefulness of analysing such cases (Mantal and Buchmann 1997, Filippi et al. 1996, Fitzpatrick et al. 1992:37, Bonvier-Colle et al. 1996:121-5, Stones et al. 1991:13-15). It has been estimated that there may be as many as 100 acute maternal morbidities per maternal death (Graham 1989:581-4), a factor that renders such morbidities a more practical and useful indicator of deficient maternal health than the mortality figure. This paper, however, does not attempt to assess the magnitude of the problem of near to death cases vis-à-vis maternal deaths, but rather explores the cultural and practical factors that contributed to selected women's experiences with severe maternal morbidity. Its contribution lies in establishing the background and context of these medical crises, through in-depth interview information.

Study Design and Methods

The project was designed as a prospective, descriptive study aiming at providing a baseline to elucidate the magnitude of the problem of adolescent maternal death in rural and urban settings, and the magnitude of severe morbidity 'near miss' cases in pregnant or puerperal women in selected hospitals. In relation to the latter, the issue of avoidability was a major concern, and the hospital based in-depth interviews were hence tailored to discern the circumstances directly linked to and associated with the severe morbidity experienced. The focus was on capturing issues of delay at various levels including domestic factors, cultural factors, local health facilities, transport deficiencies and intervention delay at any health unit. The women were particularly questioned about the initial danger signs, their first reaction, self-treatment, persons consulted and what was prescribed, the process of formal healthcare seeking, the use of private clinics, costs incurred and by who, who decided on hospitalisation, who helped her to get to hospital, mode of transport, the role of husband/partner, mother, or other significant persons, and type of treatment received at hospital.

The conversations with the women were loosely structured according to the above themes and conducted in a way that encouraged them to dwell upon the issues they perceived as most important or problematic. The interviews were transcribed soon after the hospital visits. Qualitative content analysis was done through classification of data according to emerging themes. These included medical factors, and attitudinal factors related to cultural realities including practical gender problems that impeded the women's ability to obtain appropriate healthcare before their condition become critical.

Study Settings and Ethnography

The study was conducted in two rural districts, Hoima and Kiboga; and one urban district, Kampala. In the respective districts, the study sites were Hoima, Kiboga, Nsambya, and Mulago hospitals.

Hoima district with a population of 197,857 represents a typically rural area where subsistence farming, cattle keeping and fishing are the main means of livelihood. The Banyoro, the indigenous ethnic group, predominate. In 1997 there were approximately 9,000 total births, of which around 8,500 were live births. With an estimated maternal mortality ratio of 500, the number of maternal deaths would be 45 per year, corresponding potentially to 130-140 deaths among women of reproductive age (Okong et al. 2001). Hoima hospital is a referral hospital for the mid-western region. It has one obstetrician/gynaecologist also supervising other district hospitals. There is also one district medical officer responsible for public health in the district and for supervision of health centres. Health indicators for Hoima district are not much different from national generalisations, such as 60 percent of the mothers were delivered by untrained individuals, lack of surveillance system and lack of up to date data.

Kiboga with a population of 141,607 is a new district consisting of both semi-pastoralist Banyarwanda and Baganda peasant farmers. There is one hospital, Kiboga, that offers essential obstetric care. The hospital has a maternity ward with 30 beds, a labour ward (6 beds) and one operating theatre bed. There is also one minor theatre for Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA) and post-abortion care services. One medical officer (1-2 years post-qualification) is usually allocated to be in charge of the maternity ward.

Kampala district is an urban district, with an estimated population of 980,000. It has the highest concentration of maternal services in the country with four referral hospitals. It also has the only functioning maternal mortality review committee. Kampala district has seven administrative divisions, including Makindye with a population of 187,000. Nsambya hospital is assigned to cater for Makindye west with a population of 100,661 (52,355 women). Nsambya hospital is a 360-bed general and maternity hospital with about 6,500 deliveries per year. The total number of maternal deaths ranges between 40 and 60 per year giving a maternal mortality of 700-800 per 100,000 live births. The number of 'near misses' would be in the range of 800-1000 per year depending on the criteria applied for this category of cases.

The New Mulago hospital is the largest national referral and university teaching hospital. It is a 1,000-bed facility, handling nearly 17,000 deliveries annually. The true 'near miss' figures for this hospital are estimated to be in the range of 2-3 times the figures for Nsambya hospital.

The Case Studies of ('Near-miss') Women

Out of the eleven women interviewed in the respective hospitals, six have been selected for this

paper because they are most illustrative in regard to the circumstances that led the women to end up in death-threatening medical crisis. It will thus be helpful to summarise the circumstances of these cases prior to a thematic consideration of what emerged from all the eleven interviews. Six of the women were married and five were single. Six were aged over nineteen, and the rest under eighteen. Three women experienced severe morbidity related to abortion complications, three had ectopic pregnancies, one suffered from eclampsia, two experienced puerperal sepsis, and one went into a coma due to a reproductive infection. At the time of interview, the women were in various recuperative stages in hospital.

Case 1: Savia, Narrowly Survived Complications Due to Ectopic Pregnancy

Savia was aged 27, married with three children and educated up to primary two. Her husband worked as a police constable in a distant town and came home only once a month. To supplement her spouse's meagre income, Savia operated a fruit and vegetable stall on her veranda, besides her routine household chores. Her problem started one morning when she was mopping the floor of the single tenement (*muzigo*) where she lives with her three children. 'Suddenly I felt excruciating pain in the lower back and collapsed on the floor. At first I suspected pregnancy as I had missed my period the previous month.' Previously Savia had suffered an ectopic pregnancy (a condition where the fertilised egg implants and develops out of the uterus, in the fallopian tube), and correctly suspected that this could be a repeat of a similar condition. When the pain subsided, she called in her neighbours who helped her to walk to a local clinic, one kilometre away. At the clinic she was given panadol tablets, but after explaining her previous condition, she was given a verbal referral to Mulago hospital, 40 kilometres away. As her husband was not around, she entrusted her children to the neighbours and boarded a public taxi to Kampala. After an hour of terrible discomfort as the pains kept recurring, she eventually reached Mulago hospital but had to wait for six hours to be attended to. A scan was done and an ectopic pregnancy confirmed. Savia however could not be admitted as the wards were full and the theatre fully booked. She was advised to secure accommodation in close proximity to the hospital and report the following morning for an operation. 'It was terrible not to be worked on immediately. Luckily I had an aunt near the hospital where I spent the night in sheer agony.' The following morning when Savia was brought to hospital, she could barely stand upright, and a stretcher was used to take her to theatre. The operation was successful though she lamented losing the pregnancy. She was further unaware of the fact that she would never conceive again, this being her second operation to remove an ectopic pregnancy. Her husband, despite being informed, was yet to show up and Savia was footing all the hospital bills from her savings. She attributed her survival foremost to God, and to past experience, which prompted her to seek timely and appropriate care at the referral hospital.

Case 2: Teopista Narrowly Survived Complications Due to Severe Post-Abortion Sepsis

Teo, as she is fondly known to her family, was a young woman aged 17, married with one child and had no formal education. She lived with her husband, a peasant farmer, in a village about 45 kilometres away from Kiboga town. Teo on top of her routine household work also helped her husband with subsistence farming. She shared her homestead with a co-wife, senior to her in age and experience despite being childless. Teo's pregnancy, which almost went full term, was problematic, characterisd by pain in the lower abdomen and a greenish, foul smelling vaginal

discharge (*amazzi ge mundula galinga ga dodo*). Despite the pain and discomfort, she did not consider this a serious problem, and continued to rely solely on traditional herbal medicines provided by her grandmother. As with the first pregnancy, she did not seek prenatal care at any health facility.

Once, however, she visited a district hospital (Mubende) where she reported her problem, but received no treatment. Soon after the Mubende visit, Teo experienced sporadic but weak contractions, which ended up in a stillbirth at home. After the stillbirth, which was attributed to the malevolence of the barren co-wife, the foul discharge and pains persisted. All the traditional home therapies she continued to receive (herbal orally administered medicines and abdominal massages) were not effective, and her situation worsened. Her husband was against seeking hospitalisation and continued to consult a spiritual medium who lived nearby to ward off the co-wife's evil. However, when Teo went into a coma, he panicked and decided to take her to Kiboga hospital.

The journey to Kiboga in a public taxi, which Teo could not recall, lasted over two hours. At hospital she was rushed to the theatre and successfully operated on. She regained consciousness after two days and was unaware of the treatment she underwent, apart from the several daily injections. Though Teopista lost the baby, she was saved from the severe sepsis, which had almost killed her. She attributed her survival foremost to God, and the staff at Kiboga hospital.

Case 3: Joyce Survived Complications Due to Incomplete Abortion

Joyce was aged 27, married with nine children and lacked formal education. She lived in a remote village, 40 kilometres from Hoima town. Joyce engaged in subsistence farming which she supplemented with making petty handicrafts (baskets and mats) for sale. Her husband, a tobacco farmer, had another family elsewhere, and was not permanently resident at Joyce's home. He dropped in a few days a month.

Joyce took much pride in her prolific reproductive history and when her problems started, she was pregnant with the tenth child. One night, luckily with her husband around, she suddenly felt sharp pains in the lower abdomen followed by bleeding. She consulted her husband the following day and he gave her white pain relief tablets. Joyce later that day visited Melani, a local Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) who also doubled as a family friend. Melani could not diagnose any serious ailment though she prepared a herbal concoction for Joyce to drink. When there was no lapse in the pains after two days, the TBA advised Joyce to visit the nearby Kyangwali Health Centre. At this time Joyce could hardly walk unassisted, but thanks to Melani's help, she managed to trudge to the centre. At the centre, she was urgently referred to Hoima hospital.

Despite the prompt referral, Joyce received no treatment at this facility and neither was she facilitated by way of logistics to travel to Hoima hospital. With her husband, who had a reputation for being not only uncompromising but also miserly, not around, Joyce turned desperately to her friend Melani for help. The latter sent a message to the husband, soliciting both permission and funds to enable Joyce travel to Hoima hospital. The husband came two days later and Joyce's grave situation prompted him to relent by giving permission and providing some of the required money. After entrusting the children to a relative, Joyce, escorted by Melani, squeezed herself on the back of an overloaded pickup truck and headed for Hoima town. Joyce did not remember much about the journey, as she was barely conscious by then. Melani, however, says it lasted about two hours, and the driver was kind enough to drop them at the

hospital gate. At the hospital, she was rushed to the theatre and successfully operated on. She had suffered an incomplete abortion and lost the baby. Joyce was hospitalised for seven days, and on the eve of discharge, was in high spirits. Her main worries were not medical, but how to settle Melani's cumulative debt. Her husband had visited her only once. She owed her recovery foremost to her friend Melani, and the staff at hospital. Her husband on the other hand was blamed for all the misfortunes she has suffered. 'My husband does not take pregnancy and birth seriously ... [H]e thinks it is something normal and routine... '

Case 4: Sifa Survived Eclampsia

Sifa, aged 20 and single, was a student enrolled in a commercial school in Kampala. She lived with an elder brother and sister-in-law in Kitintale, one of the several peri-urban slums in Kampala. Sifa had one child from an earlier relationship with a man who despite accepting responsibility and taking the child, declined to have any marital or co-residence relationship with her. At least relieved of the childcare responsibilities, Sifa had moved to Kampala where she met another partner, a junior clerk, and became pregnant. Since the partner lacked accommodation of his own, Sifa was compelled to continue residing with her brother and sister-in-law. As with the first pregnancy, Sifa did not seek ante-natal care at any health facility preferring to rely on traditional herbal medicines (mainly *mmumbwa*) provided by her grandmother who lived upcountry. Her pregnancy progressed smoothly to full term, and she delivered normally at a local clinic, ten minutes walk from her home. However, complications started two hours after delivery. She suddenly started shivering, and feeling very ill. She experienced intense heart palpitations, fever, profuse sweating and thereafter became delirious and started hallucinating. The attendant nurse, scared and confused, and suspecting malevolence, hastily sent her away without any treatment. Her brother, who was fortunately around, hired a car, which transported her to Nsambya hospital 5 kilometres away. He also dispatched a message to their mother in the village to come urgently. Sifa meanwhile arrived at hospital barely conscious. Despite her critical condition, admitting her was not easy since she had no Antenatal Care (ANC) records, let alone a referral letter. Eventually she was admitted out of compassion, and diagnosed with eclampsia (a potentially fatal condition, where a patient becomes delirious and mentally confused due to high blood pressure and protein in the urine). After two days of treatment Sifa steadily improved. She attributed her survival foremost to her brother who rushed her to hospital and was footing the bills, and the competence of staff at Nsambya hospital.

Case 5: Margaret Survived Post-Partum Haemorrhage (PPH)

Margaret, aged 18, grew up an orphan at her grandmother's home. She never attended school and married at sixteen to a partner three times her age. They lived in a remote village about 40 kilometres from Hoima town. Her husband was a petty trader and Margaret brewed and sold a local alcoholic brew to boost her family income. She had two children (twins) both surviving, and her complications started during the second pregnancy. Two and a half months into the pregnancy, she developed abdominal cramps, followed by sharp pains and later bleeding '... I knew I was having a miscarriage and hurried to the clinic for help'. At the clinic which is operated by Nursing Aides, malaria fever was diagnosed and an injection given. Chloroquine and other white tablets were also dispensed. Margaret's partner further procured for her other drugs from unspecified sources. Meanwhile, Margaret's mother-in-law prepared herbal

medicinal concoctions, some of which were orally ingested and others inserted in the vagina to stop the bleeding. Margaret however did not respond to these medications and grew weaker with each passing day. This prompted her to seek help from another private clinic about 5 kilometres away, near the sub-country headquarters. At this facility, Margaret was treated though not examined by a *musawo,* i.e. any practitioner presumed to be a doctor due to his/her white attire. The *musawo* diagnosed an abscess in the womb and verbally referred her to Hoima hospital, 40 kilometres away. Margaret's deteriorating condition prompted her husband to seek permission from his father (Margaret's father-in-law), who lived next to their homestead, to take her to hospital. Margaret and her father-in-law never enjoyed good relations, and the decision to take her to hospital took two days to make! Margaret's husband escorted her to hospital and the journey in a crowded taxi took over one hour. Margaret had by then lost a lot of blood, and fainted on arrival at the hospital. Her attendant said that getting her admitted was not easy and it was not until the following day that the patient received attention. She was taken to the theatre and had a successful operation. She had suffered an incomplete abortion, and lost the baby. She steadily improved and attributed survival foremost to God, and the health personnel at Hoima hospital. She blamed her 'near miss' experience on her mean father-in-law and the lack of her own money which initially compelled her to seek care from inappropriate sources. She declined to comment on her husband's role.

Case 6: Fatuma Survived Severe PPH after a Normal Delivery

Fatuma was aged 36, had ten children and lacked formal education. She was a third wife to a Hajji who operated a local butchery. On top of her routine household and childcare chores, Fatuma operated a small business making pancakes and banana juice, which her children sold to passers-by at the roadside. Her husband had to divide his time between his other households and Fatuma's, hence his long absences from the latter's home. Fatuma's home is some over 30 kilometres away from Kiboga Township. Her problems started after delivery of her eleventh child. As with all previous pregnancies, she did not seek pre-natal care, relying instead on traditional herbal medicines and advice from a local TBA, who was also a neighbour and close friend. Onset of labour was sudden, and as with most of the earlier deliveries, she sent for her friend, the TBA. Childbirth was not problematic but several hours later the placenta was still retained. Full of confidence the TBA prepared for her a herbal concoction to induce uterine contractions to expel the placenta. Fatuma drank two half-litre mugs of the medicine and soon after became very ill. She experienced intense and painful contractions and the placenta was expelled. However the contractions did not stop and severe bleeding followed. All attempts to stem the profuse haemorrhage failed and by the time the TBA prepared another concoction to counter the effects of the previous one, Fatuma had already fainted. Alarmed the TBA called in the husband, who was at his butchery at the time. In panic, the husband hastily organised transport to take Fatuma to Kiboga hospital. The rough one-hour journey aboard a pickup truck further exhausted Fatuma and on arrival at the hospital, she was initially taken for dead. According to her attendants, her heart was however still faintly beating, and blood was readily available at the hospital. A transfusion was given and the remains of the placenta removed. Fatuma regained consciousness after two days. She attributed her survival to the health workers at Kiboga hospital, and another 'doctor' who remained at home, warding off malevolent spirits whose sources she declined to disclose. Fatuma also expressed gratitude to her TBA friend especially for safely delivering her baby, and trying hard to rescue her life.

Women's Culture Concerning Pregnancy and Childbirth

There is significant evidence from the cases of the six women that socio-cultural realities, including gender and power relations at family level, have a profound effect on women's behaviour in pregnancy, birth and the post-partum period. The findings also delineate the significance of other institutional and practical factors like failures in the formal healthcare system, insufficient logistics and long distances to health facilities, in subjecting women to various risks and uncertainties when seeking care during episodes of critical obstetric complications. Though these factors work in synergy to put women's lives at risk, often resulting in death or 'near miss' situations. The six cases above have dwelt on each separately so as to discern their individual effects.

Interviews with the women in the study point to the existence of an elaborate and vibrant women's sub-culture concerning pregnancy and childbirth. The rules, practices, normatively sanctioned behaviours, expectations and rationale of this 'birth culture' appear to be clearly known within the local communities in which the women live, irrespective of their ages, marital or socio-economic status and morbidity experiences. This 'birth culture', it can be argued, had evolved in order to prepare women, their families and the local communities to cope with the events of pregnancy and birth, and to rationalise whatever outcomes follow. Community perceptions and cultural expectations have considerable significance in this context.

For instance in the study settings, as elsewhere in Uganda, descent is patrilineal and in such communities where continuation of the lineage is a central dynamic and the individual subordinated to the group, the importance of women lies in their ability to bear children. In regard to power dynamics, pregnancy and childbirth are two of the main areas of contestation of status and power. Women want to keep control of a factor that increases their status, not only within the home but the community at large. Further, their ability to conform to the local 'birth culture' validates their individual experiences.

In this context women are expected and taught to be stoical during pregnancy and childbirth, and in conformity, many of them delay seeking timely care until the symptoms have reached crisis level. This in turn leads to loss of lives, or as in the case of most of the women studied, a narrow escape from death. All the six women, apart from Savia, who had had a similar previous experience, exhibited various degrees of stoicism before seeking help, with disastrous consequences. Teopista for instance persevered with the foul discharge for a long time, Joyce and Margaret bled for several days before seeking outside professional help, and the severely haemorrhaging Fatuma was rushed to hospital only when unconscious. The stoic demeanour exhibited by the women is however not limited to the study communities. In another study involving other communities in Kiboga, it was commonly said that pregnancy prepares women for the 'women's battle' of childbirth (*lutalo lwa bakyala*), which every woman is expected to win, with stoicism and without showing any signs of fear (Kyomuhendo and MacNairn 1998). The conceptualisation of childbirth as 'the women's battle' was also found to be prevalent in West Africa where maternal mortality was explained as 'she fell in the battlefield in the line of duty' (Diallo 1991). A study among the Baariba of Benin describes how women take pride in giving birth unassisted and are 'in turn silently admired' (Sargent 1990:11). However, the view that birthing wields immense power, attributed to the unique nature of child bearing, is especially noticeable in societies where women command much less power than men in the public domain (Howson et al. 1996).

Some women felt that the outcomes of pregnancy and birth are beyond human control implying

that fate is the main determining factor. Savia, Teopista, Margaret and Fatuma attributed their narrow escape from death foremost to divine powers, i.e. God, ancestral spirits or relatives/friends even though they were still in hospital recovering from a 'near miss' situation from which they had been rescued by health workers. The fatalism encountered here which is also a component of the local birth culture aimed at rationalising pregnancy and birth outcomes, also serves to explain the women's care seeking patterns; for example why none of them sought prenatal care or sought treatment late. Sifa's eclampsia condition could, for instance, have been detected early and prevented had she sought antenatal care from a health facility. As a consequence of fatalism the women were reluctant to publicise their pregnancies, choosing to accept silently whatever outcome. Problems were generally ignored for as long as possible, and in all the cases described except Savia, who had had a similar experience, the women were at first unwilling to discuss the problems they experienced.

This 'culture' of silence definitely has an impact on women's care-seeking behaviour i.e. whom they consult and at what stage of the problem. The utilisation of options like self-treatment either with traditional herbal medicines or unprescribed over the counter (OTC) pharmaceuticals despite their questionable efficacy can be explained in this context. All the six women at one stage or another treated themselves, or if this did not help, consulted close female relatives or traditional healers who, being custodians of the local birth culture, could not publicise their problems. Formal biomedical options, even where readily available (Sifa), were not utilised until the danger symptoms reached crisis levels. All cadres of health workers, irrespective of their competence, are regarded as outsiders who may only be consulted as a last resort. This was seen in the cases of Teopista, Joyce, Margaret and Fatuma.

Other factors also rooted in culture, especially aspects of prevalent gender and power relations at family level, emerged as important determinants of women's pregnancy and birth outcomes. As a result of illiteracy and acute material poverty, most of the women lacked authority in many respects and were hence ill prepared to respond to the severe subsequent morbidity they experienced. On top of lacking their own money to use in seeking appropriate care, some of the women (Joyce, Margaret, Fatuma, Teopista) even lacked the power to make decisions as to where and when to seek care. In the cases of Joyce and Margaret, it was only the husband or father-in-law respectively who could make the decisions. Even when it was agreed they needed to obtain medical care outside the community, it was only the men who could arrange for their transport and other logistics.

Another key element was the limited support these women received from their husbands/partners at the time of their pregnancy or birth-related problems. Though most of them were married, hardly any reported receiving significant financial, moral or other assistance from their husband or partner at the time of their crisis; in fact most of the interviewees shied off from the topic of the man's role, preferring to discuss other issues. Lack of male participation results in part from the local 'birth culture' since conception and childbirth are commonly viewed as a woman's business. Thus, like health workers, men are also treated as outsiders, even if they are relatives, and are consulted only as a last resort. As is evident in most of the cases, even when men were contacted, the aim was to seek specific financial or logistical support, like finding transport to hospital or paying medical bills. Men are aware that routine monitoring of the progress of their wives' pregnancies is not welcome, and in most cases they were not even around when the complications arose (Savia, Joyce, Sifa and Fatuma). This not only leads to poor preparedness during pregnancy or birth but also deprives the women of vital support at critical times, often aggravating their morbidity situations.

The minimal involvement of men can also be viewed in the context of the broader gender and power relations prevalent in the patriarchal communities where all the six women live. Men stay away from issues of women's health during pregnancy and childbirth in part because those matters are seen as unimportant. Married women in these communities are not encouraged to have their own money or to make independent decisions, not even decisions concerning their healthcare. Therefore, in addition to the financial constraints that undermined their ability to seek timely and appropriate care when faced with obstetric complications, most women even if they had money would still lack the fundamental power to decide whether, where or when to seek care.

Institutional and Structural Factors

The study findings also provide evidence that, the socio-cultural constraints not withstanding, other factors, especially deficiencies in the healthcare system, directly or indirectly predispose women to severe morbidity situations. For instance even when the women strove to seek care at health facilities, the treatment they received left much to be desired. In most cases no attempts were made to diagnose their problems, or what was diagnosed clearly reflected a lack of even rudimentary professional competence on the part of the health workers (Teopista, Joyce, Sifa and Margaret). The poor referral system is evident both in the rural and urban settings. Sifa who was in Kampala was chased away from the clinic without even a verbal referral to hospital. All the other women in the rural areas merely received verbal referrals, and in all the cases no facilitation was made available to them by way of transport to the referral hospitals, or other logistics essential for hospitalisation. Even after reaching the referral hospitals, often in critical situations, some of the women were not immediately attended to (Savia, Sifa and Margaret). At the district hospital, which she had earlier visited, Teopista was not treated despite her obviously dangerous condition. Most of the problems like lack of space in the wards or the theatre (Savia, Margaret) at the referral hospitals were purely institutional. The long distances to the referral facilities and the poor transport system are also worth mentioning. Most of the women lived over 35 kilometres away and had to travel in crowded taxis or pick up trucks to reach hospital despite their critical condition. No wonder that most of them were barely alive by the time of arrival at hospital.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study findings demonstrate that severe maternal illness in not necessarily a result of direct (biomedical) causes *per se* but may stem from other factors deeply rooted in the local 'birth culture' and gender relationships. Socio-cultural issues, especially how pregnancy and childbirth are perceived by individual women and the community, together with the gendered distribution of power at the household level, contribute significantly to severe maternal morbidity experiences. The expectation that women will not publicise their pregnancy and will maintain a stoic demeanour during labour and birth aggravates their morbidity situation, since danger signs or conditions that require urgent attention are suppressed and not communicated to qualified health personnel until too late. Many of 'near to death' experiences could otherwise have been avoided. Another detrimental consequence of such attitudes is reliance upon culturally accepted but high-risk options (e.g. self-treatment or consultation of relatives/friends, TBAs, or traditional healers), even in episodes of life-threatening obstetric complications. Utilisation of options of

proven efficacy that lie outside that culture (e.g. seeking professional help at formal health units) is seen as irrelevant, often leading to near fatal consequences for the mothers.
This research also makes it clear that women's maternal health care is deeply embedded within a cluster of other gender and power based relationships. Women who lack income, access to resources, and the ability to make decisions even concerning their own survival, are inevitably at risk. This situation is compounded by the definition of pregnancy and childbirth as lying outside the scope of male concerns. Men have little if any involvement in their wives' reproductive activity and provide little support when problems arise.
The socio-cultural and gender-related bottlenecks notwithstanding, the severely sick and resource constrained women are more often than not hampered by the glaring deficiencies in the formal healthcare system including *inter alia,* incompetent health staff especially at lower level health units, the poor referral system, and the lack of an institutionalised transport system. Even at the referral hospitals, lack of space in the wards or theatre, or inability to be seen by the busy medical staff may lead to critical delays, which aggravate women's morbidity experiences.

Recommendations

(i) The evidence provided here about the significant contributory role of socio-cultural factors in severe maternal morbidity highlights the need to design new, alternative interventions to address the problem. These strategies must recognise the local 'birth culture' of the locality and confront directly the constraints that arise from it.
(ii) Interventions should focus on active community involvement (sensitisation and mobilisation) aimed at preparing women for safer pregnancy. Delivery of culturally acceptable factual information and maternal health services should also be a priority issue. Enlisting community support in general and men's involvement in particular should be high on the agenda.
(iv) More in-depth research is required in this area, to explore different aspects of prevalent 'birth cultures', especially among rural ethnic communities where most 'near death' cases occur. The knowledge generated will enable identification and possibly incorporation of the relevant (positive) aspects of the birth cultures into the alternative interventions mentioned above.
(v) Measures should be taken to address the comparative lack or poor availability of maternal healthcare resources in the rural areas. The focus should be on training of health workers, providing relevant materials and supplies, improvement of the referral system and providing institutional transport.
(vi) Facilities, especially wards and theatres at referral hospitals, should be increased and admission procedures streamlined to adequately cater for women in maternal morbidity situations.

Acknowledgements

My profound gratitude goes to the many individuals and institutions who assisted in the research and writing of this paper. I am particularly indebted to Sida/SAREC for providing financial support for the study, and the research team (Pius Okong, Annika Johansson, Josaphat Byamugisha, Florence Mirembe and Staffan Bergström) and their respective institutions for their indispensable input in accomplishing the research.

References

Bonvier-Colle, M. H, B. Salavane, T. Y. Ancel, and N. Varnoux. 1996. 'Obstetric Patients in Intensive Care Units and Maternal Mortality', *European Journal of Obstetrics Gyneacology (Reproductive Biology*),vol. 65, pp. 121-5.
Caldwell, J. C., and P. Caldwell. 1990. 'High Fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Scientific American*, May, pp. 118-25.
Diallo, A. B.. 1991. '"A Tora Mousso Kale La": A Call Beyond Duty, Often Omitted Root Causes of Maternal Mortality in West Africa', Issues paper no. 9, New York: UN Development Programme, HIV and Development Programme.
Filippi, V., T. Gandaho, C. Ronsmans, W. J. Graham, and B. Alihonou. 1996. '"Near Misses': Are Life Threatening Complications Practical Indicators for Safe Motherhood Programmes?', IUSSP Committee on Reproductive Health, Population Institute, University of the Philippines.
Fitzpatrick C., A. Halligan, T. Mc Kenna, B. N. Coughlan, M. R. N. Darling, D. Phelan. 1992. '"Near Miss" Maternal Mortality', *Irish Medical Journal* , vol. 1, no. 85.
Graham, S. G., and M. C. Luxton. 1989. 'The Requirement for Intensive Care Support for the Pregnant Population', *Anaethesia*, vol. 44, pp. 581-4.
Howson, P. C., P. F. Harrison, D. Hotra, M. Law.(eds.) 1996. *In Her Lifetime: Female Morbidity and Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa,* Washington D.C., Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press.
Koblinsky, M. A., A. Tinker, P. Dally. 1993. 'Making Motherhood Safe', World Bank discussion paper, World Bank, Washington D.C.
Kyomuhendo, B. G., and R. MacNairn. 1998. 'Social Cultural Factors in Reproductive Health and Maternal Mortality', Unpublished report, FIGO Safe Motherhood Needs Assessment Project, Kiboga District, Uganda.
Mantal, G. D., and E. Buchmann. 1997. 'Maternal Morbidity: A Definition for a Maternal "Near Miss"', Proceedings of the 16th Conference, Priorities in Perinatal Care in Southern Africa, March 11-14, 1997, University of Pretoria.
Ministry of Health. 1989. 'Macro International Inc. Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 1988–89', Kampala: MoH.
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. 2000. 'Uganda National Household Survey Report', Entebbe, Statistical Department.
Mukhopadhyay, C. C., P. J. Higgins. 1988. 'Anthropological Studies of Women's Status Revisted; 1977-1987', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 17, pp. 461-95.
Okong, P., A. Johansson, G. Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, B. Steffan. 2001. 'The Adolescent Mother's Right to Survive: A Study on Teenage Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in Uganda 1999-2000', Unpublished report, Division of International Health (IHCAR), Department of Public Health Science, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, and Makerere University, Kampala).
Sargent, C. 1990. 'The Politics of Birth: Cultural Dimensions of Pain Virtue and Control among the Baariba of Benin', in Handwerker Penn, (ed.), *Birth and Power: Social Change and the Politics of Reproduction*, Boulder, Westview Press.
Stones W, W. Lim, F. Al-Azzawi, M. Kelley. 1991. 'An Investigation of Maternal Morbidity with Identification of Life Threatening "Near Miss" Episodes', *Health Trends*, vol. 23, pp. 13-15.
Ubot, S. 1992. 'Social Science and Medicine in Africa', in T. Fallola, D. Hyavyar, (eds.), *The Political Economy of Health in Africa*, Athens, Ohio University Press.
Uganda Ministry of Health. 1999. 'Uganda National Health Policy', Kampala: MoH.
Uganda Ministry of Health. 2001. 'Macro International Inc. Uganda Demographic and Health

Survey 2000–2001', Kampala: MoH.
Vlassoff, C., and E. Bonilla. 1994. 'Gender-Related Differences and the Impact of Tropical Diseases on Women: What Do We Know?', *Journal of Bio Social Science*, vol. 26, pp. 37-53.
WHO/UNICEF. 1996. *Revised 1990 Estimates of Maternal Mortality: A New Approach by WHO and UNICEF*, WHO/FRH/MSM/96.11 and UNICEF/PLN/96.1, Geneva, World Health Organization.

Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo
Department of Women and Gender Studies
Makerere University
Uganda.

Growing up Pregnant: Events of Kinship in Everyday Life

Mette Ringsted

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how pregnant girls and young mothers, between the ages of 14 and 19, manage their social relations during pregnancy and early motherhood. Whereas most of the pregnant girls and young mothers in this study lived as 'unwanted family members' others were reintegrated into their families. The paper focuses on how they actively negotiate and form relatedness to reduce uncertainty in their daily life, and particularly how they and their children struggle not to be excluded from mutual and reciprocal family responsibility. During recent decades, people in Tanzania as in most of sub-Saharan Africa, have been experiencing major changes in the family structure. Modernisation and urbanisation, and more recently the HIV/AIDS pandemic, have also resulted in the disintegration of social support networks and a high level of mobility – also among young adolescents and children. The research is based on fieldwork in Muheza, a roadside town in north-eastern Tanzania (2002–2003).

BIONOTES

Mette Ringsted is a PhD student at the Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen. She has previously conducted fieldwork in Kenya, on childcare among the Luo.

INTRODUCTION

‘I just Keep Quiet and Do what They ask Me to Do’

I shall begin this paper by telling Maria’s story – a story which illustrates the uncertain life situation for many young mothers in contemporary Tanzania.

> When Maria got pregnant, at the age of 13, she was still in primary school. At that time both her parents were terminally ill and she was staying with her maternal uncle in the nearby village. When her teachers realized that Maria was pregnant, she was expelled from school. Her uncle called a family meeting and, as Maria explains, ‘My uncle told the others that the one who took the responsibility of staying with me would get a lot of troubles and he himself would chase me away.’ After some discussions, another uncle said that he would let Maria stay at his place until she had given birth. Soon the news about Maria’s pregnancy was spread throughout the local community and Maria’s boyfriend disappeared. The information also reached Maria’s father who, by then, was hospitalised, but announced that he would no longer recognise Maria as his daughter, and forbade anyone in the family to take care of her. Nevertheless, one month after Maria had delivered her baby, she was dumped at her father’s sister’s place in Muheza. Her father never forgave her.
>
> After 14 months at her father’s sister’s place, during which she suffered mental torment and physical assault, Maria was finally thrown out and she returned to her uncle’s place in the village. When I met her there, she looked happy and was very optimistic about the future, but she explained, ‘Now my name is Fatuma. My

Muslim family told me that if I wanted to stay at their place, I had to convert and get a Muslim name. It is fine with me.'

Next time I met Fatuma, she was no longer staying with her uncle, but had moved to her maternal grandmother further down the road. During that visit, family members were preoccupied about how the aunt at Muheza had succeeded in getting the life-insurance after Fatuma's (Maria's) deceased father. She had said, in court, that she was the one taking care of her niece. 'She even took those things which I was entitled to inherit, like the furniture and the chickens', Fatuma (Maria), explained with a feeling of being betrayed.

Such a life situation as illustrated in the story about Fatuma (Maria), raises the question of how pregnant girls and young unmarried mothers manage their relationships with their family members during pregnancy and early motherhood. Based on fieldwork (2002–2003) in Muheze, a roadside town in north-eastern Tanzania, this paper explores how young girls negotiate and form 'relatedness' (Carsten 1995, 1997, 2000) by sharing responsibility in their social life.[1] In the edited book, *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, Janet Carsten (2000) encourages anthropologists not to take the content of kinship for granted, because, as she argues, ' […] indigenous statements and practices of relatedness are infinitely more dynamic and creative (or destructive) than analysis of kinship predicated on a straightforward division between biological and social domains would imply' (2000:24). What kinship means, can only be appreciated by studying the immediately lived experience of relatedness locally, and by describing the implications for people living in such communities.

Mainly due to modernization and urbanization, including a high level of spatial mobility, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Klepp et al. 1995), family structures are changing with a resulting disintegration of social support networks (Nyambedha et al. 2001; Urassa et al. 2001; Madhavan 2004). Currently Tanzania has more than 800,000 AIDS orphans (AXIOS 2003). Children living with relatives is not a new phenomenon, but the amount and degree of what has been referred to as 'crisis led fostering' mainly due to the AIDS-pandemic, is rapidly increasing.

Eight of the total of 31 girls who were part of this study, have moved four, or more, times while pregnant. With such changing family structures, new notions and practices of 'family' relatedness, responsibility and support, or lack of it, emerge in everyday life, and while many pregnant girls and young mothers live as 'unwanted family members' others are somehow reintegrated into their families.

Muheza town, with its 15,000 inhabitants, is the district centre of Muheza District and is located 30 kms inland from the coast of Pangani, and 30 kms southwest of the regional capital Tanga (AXIOS 2003). Subsistence in Muheza is based on agriculture in the rural hinterland where many even among the urban population hold agricultural land (the main crops are maize and cassava, coconuts, bananas and plantains, as well as keeping some small-scale livestock). In 2003, Muheza experienced a gold rush in the nearby Amani Hills in Usambara, which attracted a large number of young Muhezan men to the hills in pursuit of prosperity and their fortune.

Muheza town is ethnically and religiously heterogeneous. During the German and British colonial periods (1884–1914 and 1914–1961, respectively) when Muheza was a centre in the sisal plantation economy, Muheza grew into a commercial small-town. The major ethnic groups living in this area are the Bondei, the lowland people, and the Sambaa,

who in pre-colonial times formed a kingdom in the Usambara Mountains (Feierman 1974). The primary language is Swahili, the *lingua franca* of Tanzania, but, at times, people shift to their ethnic mother tongues. The sisal economy attracted people from the neighbouring area and people such as the Zigua from the plains south of the Bondei, Digo from the Tanga coastal plains, Pare from western Usambara, and people of Arab descent from the coastal trading communities, came to settle (Willis 1993, 1994).

The predominant religious group in Muheza is Muslim, which is a common pattern in most of coastal Tanzania (Middleton 1992), with some Christians (Willis 1993, 1994) and, more recently, Anglican Protestant and Catholic churches together with various 'born-again' (*waokole*) Christian denominations, have also settled in the area.

The Girls' Social Background

The 31 girls had a wide variation in age, marital and educational status. The youngest was 12 years old when she got pregnant for the first time and the oldest was 17 years old. Whereas 24 of the girls gave birth to their first child, two girls had two children, one had four children and three were pregnant with their second or third child. Half of them had lost one or both of their parents, and nearly all the girls had at one time lived outside their natal home. While some returned to their natal home, 21 of them were living either alone, with their partners, or with other relatives. The main reasons for leaving their natal home were orphanhood (10), marriage/cohabitation (6) and work as a house-girl (6). 23 girls were Muslims, five were Christians, and three of them changed their religious identity from Christian to Muslim during the time of the study.

Regarding education, three girls had not attended school at all, while twelve had been in school for three years or less, 7 had finished standard six, and 9 had completed the primary school exams.

While 12 girls were attending school when they got pregnant, 9 were in primary school, one in secondary school, and two in a tailoring school. All except one discontinued their education due to pregnancy.

URBAN LIVELIHOOD

Walking through Muheza town one gets the impression of heated activity, hawkers shout about their commodities and prices, the colours explode in front of you when passing the food market where the women's clothes (*kangas*) compete with the colours of the fruit, men are busy with repair-work, and music squeaks shrilly from many radios in the small shops. In the middle of town, there are several mosques, pharmacies and a computer training school. The town is highly strung. Young men are walking around, looking for work and amusement.

Some young women, even girls, are also involved in small business activities, such as selling scones, charcoal or soap. Very few of them, however, make sufficient profit for survival and thus they remain economically dependent on others.

At least two of the girls in this sample, had supported themselves economically through small-scale prostitution-like behaviour. The term 'prostitution' is problematic and I am using the term to refer to those girls who, on a regular basis as they themselves put it, 'go to the streets to find a man who is willing to pay for sex'. The girls themselves refer to

it as ‘work’ (*kazi*). Stella, for instance who has taken care of herself and her three younger siblings, explains why she, at the age of 12, began with this type of ‘work’: ‘When I came to live at my aunt’s place and asked her for money to support myself and my two brothers, she never gave us any. Later I got pregnant, and gave birth, but my problems continued.’ This kind of prostitution is not institutionalized like the type going on in the small hotels and bars along the main road passing through Muheza. Young women, like Stella, seem to be looking for a man at the moment of immediate need of money (hunger or need of medicine) or when a relative tells them to contribute to the daily family budget by encouraging them to find a man with money. It should be noted however, that it is not only sex-customers or the so-called ‘sugar-daddies’, i.e. relatively wealthy men in their forties and fifties, who have to pay for sex, but also boyfriends in more regular-based sexual relationship (Haram 1995; Gysels et al. 2002). As many girls put it, ‘no gifts – no sex’. Saumu expresses it like this; ‘The only way a girl can show real love for a boy is by making love with him, and the way a boy shows love is by giving his girlfriend gifts every time he wants sex.’ Girls, on their part, do not necessarily see the gift or money as payments for sex-services, but as a sign of love. Whereas the ‘well-off’ girls can spend the money on personal, luxury things, others, less fortunate, spend theirs on school articles and daily needs. As an elderly grandmother told her granddaughter: ‘If you want sugar in your tea, then go and find sugar!’

Among the 31 girls/young women in this study, only four of them had a partner who was self-employed and thus was able to give some economic support on a more regular basis.[2] Some men have periodic full-time work, primarily in the construction industry, but normally they are uncertain about how long the employment will last. Most young men are employed only on a daily basis (getting 500 to 1000 TZS [3] a day – often for ten hours of

work), loading fruit, carrying things back and forth from the food market or carrying mud for building houses. During the most labour-intensive time at the (home) farm most young men help their family and get some of the crops in return for their labour input.

MARRIAGE NEGOTIATIONS AND MARITAL LIFE

According to the Law of Marriage Act of 1971, a girl can get married from the age of 15 years, if she gets consent from the court. Whereas some people argue for raising the marriage age for girls from 15 to 18 years, as it is for men, others hold that such a change will cause more children to be born and raised out of wedlock.

Although becoming pregnant out of wedlock is common and rapidly increasing throughout Tanzania, it is something which ‘brings shame’ to both the pregnant girls and the family she lives with. As a means to hide her (shameful) condition, she stays indoors or she could be transferred to relatives living somewhere else. The family usually fear being judged by their neighbours, teachers or other relatives who blame them for not having cared properly for their daughter. It is not uncommon that a girl experiences being blamed by her family throughout her pregnancy and they may continue to blame her after she has given birth as well.

If the girl’s family, however, manages to get the responsible man, i.e. the father of the child, to marry their daughter, the family is forgiven (and the shame is removed). This is, however, often both difficult and time-consuming. It is not uncommon that the responsible man denies it, or he simply disappears – often encouraged by his own family. Only one girl in this sample was married before her delivery. This girl’s grandmother and

her uncle actually forced the man to marry her, threatening him and his family that they would report the case to the police. Some few (three) girls waited for their relatives to initiate marriage negotiations, but with no parents, or few relatives around, such negotiations were never initiated. Some girls who are visited by their child's father, and receive him well – offering him 'husbandly rights', i.e. love and food – may receive some future support from him. Yet, without having relatives to initiate, define and settle such negotiations, a girl cannot hope for a proper marriage.

Even if the girl's family succeeds in getting the man to accept his responsibility, he does not usually marry her, and the girl will still be in an ambiguous position. She is still a 'daughter' but also a mother, which causes a lot of conflict. Such conflicts are usually about economic support of her and her child. Unmarried mothers, may also experience difficulties later on in life when they get involved in a relationship with a man who is not the father of the child. Such male partners are seldom willing to support children from previous unions, or as explained by Fatuma (Maria), 'You either have to leave the child with some relatives or find an older man, maybe a widower, who already has children himself and needs you to take care of his children.' Fatuma's explanation is the reality for many unmarried mothers in Muheza today. Furthermore, with the AIDS epidemic, many widowers are infected with HIV (AXIOS 2003), and thus the future for a young girl is fatal. Yet, for lack of other options, some 'choose' a widower even though it increases the risk of contracting HIV.

Similarly, many girls are aware of their partners/husband's extramarital affairs, but usually accept such behaviour as long as the partner/husband maintains his economic responsibility towards his family. Some of the girls are worried and also discuss such issues with their friends. Most girls, however, have no other alternatives but to remain since they are economically dependent on the partner/husband. Some will try to convince their

partner/husband to remain in the marriage and to cease their extramarital affairs. By remaining with their partner/husband, they are reducing the uncertainty related to 'where to get the next meal', but they are at the same time aware of the risk such a 'strategy' may cause in the time of AIDS. Thus, avoiding hunger and lack of shelter today is more urgent than avoiding the risk of dying of AIDS in the years to come.

INSTITUTIONS THAT IMPINGE ON THE MANAGEMNET OF PREGANCY AND EARLY MOTHERHOOD

The Clinics

In 1980 the Anglican Church built Teule hospital in Muheza, which still serves as the district hospital. The hospital has 260 beds and an out-patient clinic, a mother-child health clinic and a small HIV/AIDS counselling facility. In Tanzania the number of HIV infected people is increasing, and, in some places, one out of five pregnant girls between the ages of 15 and 24, are HIV-positive (Fuglesang 1997; Katapa 1998; Ministry of Health 1997, 2001; Nader and González 2000). In Muheza District 9.2 per cent of blood donors in 2000 were HIV-positive, which matches very well with the figures for pregnant mothers tested before delivery at Teule hospital where roughly 10 per cent are HIV-positive. Among the informants, I heard of no one who was infected with HIV, but of course I only have their word for this. Since October 2002, Teule hospital has been offering the medicine Nevirapine – an intervention for prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (pMTCT) to HIV-positive pregnant women. Furthermore the hospital offers a 'local antiretroviral' (i.e.

herbs tested for efficacy) to HIV-positive patients, which is free of charge (AXIOS 2003; USPGT 2004).

Many girls were worried about their HIV-status and talked about how they and their partners have been involved in risky sexual behaviour. As Mwajuma, a 14 year old girl, explained it: 'This is our disease and we will all die from it, so why not have fun, when we are still here.' Others told, with relief, that they had been tested at the hospital and been found negative. Still others referred to with sadness and insecurity, conversations they had had with their friends about those who had recently died of AIDS in their community.[4]

Induced abortions are increasing in Tanzania today (cf. Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001), and nearly all the informants with unintended pregnancies (around 60 per cent) had considered and even made inquiries about different kinds of abortions available.[5] However, due to lack of money (an abortion may cost from 10,000 to 30,000 TZS depending on the month of the pregnancy), or fear of complications, especially of dying, made some of them hesitant to induce abortion. Only one of the nformants went to an 'abortion doctor' at Teule hospital. Fifteen year old Zubedha recalls it with horror, 'It was very early in the morning when my boyfriend and I arrived at the hospital, but when we entered the operation theatre and I saw all the instruments lined up, I said 'If these are for me, I will keep my pregnancy'.'

Pregnant girls in Tanzania also tend to stay away from health services and attend antenatal clinics late in pregnancy (Fuglesang 1997). In my group, nearly 70 per cent did not attend the clinic until the seventh month, and two girls did not go to the clinic before the birth began. This is mainly, according to themselves, due to being ashamed which makes them want to hide their condition as long as possible. Some of the girls did not know that they were pregnant until very late in pregnancy and still others were delayed because

their family refused to help them to the clinic. However, only two gave birth at home. During fieldwork, I also often witnessed that some of the girls returned from the clinic without getting proper treatment. This is mainly due to the subordinate position of young women giving birth out of wedlock and the staff's rather moralising and humiliating behaviour towards those without husbands.

The Schools

In this study, I found that the normal procedure in schools (primary as well as secondary) was to expel pregnant girls when noticed by the school authorities. This is commonly practised throughout Tanzania, even though there is no explicit statement in the Law of Education of 1978 that pregnancy shall lead to expulsion. Nearly a third of the informants (9 out of 31 girls) had been expelled (7), or they had left school before the teachers found out about their condition (2). As a follow-up, I visited seven schools in the District, and none of the headmasters doubted that their procedure was not correct. Many denied that there had been any pregnant girls in their school, and none of them looked forward to the new national policies (still in the pipeline), which will allow pregnant girls to continue in school until they give birth and to return after maternity leave. As one Secondary School headmaster comments: 'The major disadvantage [with this new law] can be that if a pregnant girl can return to school, other students learn nothing, but go on conceiving when they know that they can continue in school after giving birth […] We have no other means than expulsion against this sexual licentiousness.'

The registered number of pregnant girls expelled in the first 10 months of 2003 in Muheza district, was 20. But as the Secretary for Education in Muheza comments, the number could easily be double that, even more, because girls often leave school before their pregnancy is recognized. They then disappear, maybe to relatives living elsewhere and their 'leave' from school will not be registered as due to pregnancy. On top of this, we also find all those girls who have never attended school or dropped out for other reasons. One of the pregnant girls I followed, was unofficially allowed to complete her standard seven examination because the teachers chose to close their eyes. Another returned in standard six after one year at home, in a new school and under another name. Such practices are, according to one of the headmasters, common practices throughout Tanzania.

For many of the expelled girls it was a big loss of identity and thereby self-confidence. Some explain how their relatives continuously blamed them for having misused their money and jeopardised their future opportunities. Having a pregnant daughter while she is still in school, is shameful, as Francisca, explains: 'My parents told me that I shamed and dishonoured them and that people in their community will 'disrespect' them, in return. I had to ask them for and apology.' Some of the girls who are still in school when they get pregnant are concerned about having to leave school without a primary-school exam, and hope to get permission, from relatives and school authorities, to return to school afterwards. Usually, however, they meet difficulties, both practically and financially. Who will take care of her child while she is in school, who will pay school-fees, if she has been expelled from a public school, due to pregnancy, the logic goes.

The Courts

Very few families bring a case concerning the responsibility for providing maintenance for the girl to the local court (*baraza*). They might well have done this if they had not been trapped in the new school policies. The Government demands that schools bring cases of pregnancy in schoolgirls to the local court. If a man is found guilty of impregnating the girl thus causing the girl to discontinue her education, he will be sentenced to 30 years in prison. The long imprisonment is one of the main explanations as to why people usually do not take such cases to court. The girl's family often know the man who has impregnated their daughter and usually try to settle the issue of maintenance out of court. The problem however, is that such alternative arrangements are not legally binding and thus the man can easily escape his responsibilities later.

Also, if a father is supporting his child economically and is thus fulfilling his responsibilities, this gives him custody right, under the Law of Marriage 1971. Thus when the child has reached the age of 11 years (recently changed from 7 years), the fact is that the child's father in such cases, has custody right of the child. This is a concern for most unmarried mothers. As expressed by Saumu, a single mother, 'I can't do anything. It is the law, but I will try to negotiate with the child's father, so that he can stay with me until standard six or seven.'[6]

SPHERES OF INTERACTION IN DAILY LIFE

Historically the study area is described as patrilineal and virilocal, 'allowing' married women to keep their ties to their natal family (Fivawo 1986). In my sample, only two out of

ten married/cohabiting girls, were living in the home of their 'husband's' family. The remaining couples were living by themselves in small rented rooms – the main residential pattern in Muheza town. But as found in many other places in Tanzania, sexual and reproductive relations between men and unmarried mothers are often peripheral or of a short-term basis (cf. for instance, Khwaya Puja and Kassimoto 1994). Liv Haram (1999) shows from her study in northern Tanzania, that unmarried mothers often have a succession of male partners. This pattern is reflected in my own study.

Consequences of Estrangement from Parents and Family

One mother threw her nine-month pregnant daughter out of the house in the middle of the night. Fortunately, the neighbours heard the girl crying. They felt pity for her and offered her shelter for the night. The day after, the girl's father, living with another woman, was informed by the neighbours. He came and took his daughter to his old mother in Muheza. Five months after she gave birth, neither of the parents had been to visit their daughter. She wrote a letter to her parents asking them to forgive her. Some other girls/women – although not physically expelled from home – had to deal with daily assaults by being forced to do hard work, getting too little to eat, not being allowed to meet with their friends, and constantly being told that they were unwanted by their family. Consequently, in fear of being thrown out, they tried to keep quiet and do whatever they were told.

Such families, who live with unwanted children, draw a sharp line between their own, i.e. biological, children and others' children. In daily life, this perception of different

kinds of relatedness to children is used to discriminate between their own children and those coming from ‘outside’.

Neighbourhood and Friendship

In Muheza town, most families share an outdoor space – an inner courtyard or an outdoor area – the (female) neighbours thus become the basis for women’s daily company. Women belonging to the same neighbourhood will talk and laugh together, and will also usually ask each other for minor support and favours, but they can also accuse each other of witchcraft or of ‘stealing’ each other’s husbands or lovers.

Neighbours normally cook separately and even if one of them does not have food one day she should not expect to be offered food. But whenever an emergency arises, the neighbours may nevertheless take on the responsibilities of a family such as helping a neighbour to the hospital before they inform the family.

In addition to their acquaintances at school or at the work place, neighbours are also important friends. Most girls have friends of both sexes. With friends you can share your worries and joys, but like neighbours, they will only be able to help with minor problems.

Religious Affiliation

According to my findings, the girls were not very concerned about religious identity in their everyday life. Three of them had changed religion as a means to please their relatives.

Friendships were made without the slightest consideration of religion. Neither were religious and ethnic identities interlinked. Intermarriage between such religious groups as Muslims and Christians was not uncommon and at least four of the girls in this study had a father to their child who belonged to another religion.

RELATIVES AND RELATEDNESS

‘A Relative is like a “Donda Ndugu” [A Chronic Wound] – You can’t get Rid of It’

By referring to this proverb, a woman tried to illustrate the importance of kinship: ‘If you have a relative, you will never be able to separate – even if there is a conflict between you, you will still remain relatives, you may even have to help him if he is in need. This is equal to having a *donda ndugu,* there is no way you can escape it.’ In Muheza, kinship relations are contained in various social expectations about support and help among recognized relatives, especially during real life suffering. Such expectations are the ones pregnant girls call upon when they try to get people to help them. And even if girls and young mothers are involved in other kinds of social relations, e.g. neighbourhood and friendship, it is within the family they can hope to get real support. Furthermore, there are no Government/non-Governmental initiatives trying to help pregnant girls. Consequently, only the girl who has a supportive family will be in a safe situation, especially if her mother is alive. Girls with no family, or with a family which is not willing to help are in very difficult situations. For example, when the health personnel expect the family to bring food when the pregnant girls are admitted to the hospital. If the family does not bring any food, the newly delivered mother will go without. Or when a mother is hoping that her parents will take care of her

children when she is dying, but finds out that they are not willing to do this and thus the children will be left in a very difficult life situation. Most of these girls/young mothers are experiencing uncertainty. A supportive mother can die, a partner can find another wife, or a sister's economic support ceases when she is getting married.

'She is My Grandmother from the Village'

In Muheza, being included in a kinship group and being referred to by kin terms does not necessarily rest on biological or conjugal ties. The boundaries between biological and social relations are much more blurred and a non-biologically related person can become a relative through 'family-like acting', by, for instance, exchanging help when needed. In Muheza, such practices are, for instance, practised by people coming from the same village/area. Lambert (2000) describes this type of shared locality as 'locally created relatedness' (2000:76). In Muheza, this is illustrated by Monica when she, through lack of natal kin, called upon an elderly woman, *bibi*, i.e. her grandmother, when she and her child needed help and support. Monica and bibi were old neighbours in the village and had for a long time called each other by kinship terms. Such relationships compensated those who did not have biological or conjugal families present. This is similar to what Bodenhorn (2000) terms 'chosen kin/families'. She describes how people in Alaska 'add on' ties to children through adoption. Non-biologically related adults and children like to stay together and to include each other as kin.

That many 'fosterings' are not 'voluntary', as I have already shown, has a significant impact on a girl's general life conditions – emotionally as well as socially. This

matches well with Madhaven's (2004) findings from South Africa, she states '[…] the message is clear: children raised in foster families suffered physical, educational, and emotional hardship' (Madhaven 2004:5).

'All My Fathers (Kinababa)'

According to the local, classificatory kinship system, a person will have many *baba*(s) (fathers), *mama*(s) (mothers), and *kaka*(s) (brothers). By adding the prefix *kina-* the same term will refer to a group. All your father's brothers and also his male cousins are called *baba*. It is good to have many relatives and when a person is using such kin terms, it calls for relatedness and thus compassion and support. For instance when Salma was unable to pay her house rent, she asked her landlord for postponement, which she said he was obligated to give her, because he is her brother-in-law (*shemeji*). She explains with a joking smile, 'My mother's brother's daughter, [that it] my sister, once got a child with my landlord's brother, so he is my brother-in-law – and relatives are helping each other'. Thus, the kinship terminology has the functional characteristic of maximizing the number of individuals who can be 'made into' relatives.

This echoes Nuttall's (1992) work on the Greenlandic kinship system where a functional characteristic is to maximize the number of individuals who can be 'made into' relatives. Many children in Muheza are living in post-divorced families and such inclusiveness in terms of kinship shares, furthermore, some similarities with what Simpson (1994, 1998) describes in Western post-divorced families and their ability to include children from previous marriages.

‘I am the Real Mother because I had the Labour Pains’

The above examples of socially made relatives do not mean that biological kinship is devoid of meaning. On the contrary, we find lots of metaphors for relatedness which are termed in corporal and substantial connections. For example, you can distinguish between all kinds of siblings, sisters and brothers, and the siblings you share a mother with ‘*Watu wazaliwa tumbo moja’*, which literally means ‘people who are born from one womb’. And often you hear people explain how they are related differently to their different siblings. Some share both father and mother, while others share only mothers, but in everyday life they are all termed brothers or sisters. Or if people want to specify that it is their biological father, they normally put it this way ‘the father who gave the pregnancy to my mother’, or they will specify their biological mother, by saying that ‘she is the one who gave birth to me’ or, ‘she had the labour pains’. Statements of relatedness give meaning to people when they want to confirm the right to support or explain why nobody will help them. As, for instance, expressed by 15 year old Stella: ‘I do not have my mother who gave birth to me anymore. Nobody will feel responsibility for you like your own mother. If you have a mother, then you have one who will love you – no matter what.’

In the same way substances like blood are important for talking about and signifying special relatedness between biological parents and their children, as when Salma explained about her husband’s disappearance, ‘He will come back one day. You see, a man will always trace his blood.’ Or, when she later explained to me why she would have to

leave her child in another's care if she was going to cohabit with another man than the child's father, 'a man will never accept another man's blood'.

Young mothers often try to call upon an irresponsible father by raising their awareness through bodily or substantial connections, as for instance, 'you were the one who gave me the pregnancy'. Or, 'If that child isn't from my urine, I will not support it.' Thus even though many children are living with other family relations than biological ones, and address them by kin terms, people still use language and knowledge to describe a specific sister among all the other sisters, or a specific man, who is the father of a specific child. Or a mother says about the child she is the *mzazi* (parent) of, 'she is a child I have nursed myself', to distinguish the child from the others' for whom she is a social mother (*mlezi*).

These are all elements used when people try to strengthen or weaken particular relations or relatedness, and refer especially to what people are made from, and less to what they do, a discussion of which will follow in the next section.

RELATING DAUGHTERS

When I argue that young mothers are manoeuvring within local idioms of relatedness, it does not necessarily mean that they always succeed in their efforts, but it points rather to which relations they work on to get help and support in daily life, as well as to those they put lots of work into making and strengthening. This way of looking at kinship puts emphasis on individual agency. Young girls have to work hard on such relationships in order to be included as a family member. Here I have stressed the meanings of relatedness

that deal with what people ‘do’ or how they ‘act’, and not just the substance exchanged when they relate to each other, as the concept of Carsten (2000) would have encouraged. It seems that in Muheza the perception of relatedness is negotiable, but at the same time, something remains non-negotiable, such as, ideas about what people ‘are’ through bodily and substantial relatedness (i.e. blood) – substances which in this local context are central in the local inheritance jurisdiction acts. Such distinctions and their consequences will run through this section. I will focus on how the different foundations for relatedness, negotiable or not, are continuously under reconsideration. As when Veronica’s father says, ‘She is our daughter by blood, but considering what she has done [given birth out of wedlock], she does not deserve to be called our daughter.’ Veronica, on her part, tries to defend herself, ‘What can I do to make him change his mind, but to work hard and hope that he one day will forgive me.’

‘Crying for A Name’

Negotiations about relatedness are going on at different levels. There are many extraordinary events in the families from where girls find opportunities to negotiate and form relatedness. For example when a child is named at the seventh-day celebration. Here the mother has the opportunity to show and negotiate a special relatedness to a relative, as parents normally name their children after a kin member from their parents’ generation. Doing this a young mother can hope for a small acknowledgement in return, like receiving gifts for her child, to signal relatedness and that she is someone included in the bigger family sociality.

According to the kinship system, the first-born baby, must be named after its father's family, his mother's or father's name depending on the child's sex. Thus unmarried girls and their families normally take a name in their own family. A problem only appears if a child starts 'crying for a name', i.e. from its father's side, and cries so much that they fear it will die if the father does not come and give his child a name from his own kin. If he does so, at the same time he confirms the biological relatedness between him and the child – a fact the child's mother may later remind him of to call upon his fatherly responsibilities. During this study, many children changed names within the first months, because the father came and requested that the child should be given a name from the father's side. Although many fathers did not have any intention of living with the child's mother or assisting much, many men were still proud to have a child (with their name).

It seems that unmarried mothers are often willing to change the child's name partly hoping to reduce the economic uncertainties in life, but also to reduce the sense of shamefulness of being a single mother. Having a child named after its father, means that the child's father is socially identified and even a potential husband. This all increases the mother's 'respectability' (*heshima*) in her family and her immediate community.

Another pivot, around which relatedness can turn, is the choice of religion. Normally people are born into a religion, and stay within it during their lifetime, and for most people it is not a basis in everyday interacting, as friends often have different religious backgrounds. But I saw how four of the girls in this study 'used' religion to negotiate relatedness to people whom they really desired a family relationship with, or needed it to be confirmed. Remember Maria (Fatuma) in the opening vignette. When I visited her the second time, it was Ramadan and she was fasting even though she was surrounded by many relatives who did not fast, and she explained to me, 'Even though a breastfeeding woman

does not need to fast, I consider it a good practice and I also know that I am pleasing God and my relatives by doing so.'

When choosing a boyfriend, girls run the risk of being met with religious value judgments. Such was the case for Luiza, when her grandmother, who took care of her and her baby, expressed dissatisfaction with Luiza's choice of partner. He was a Muslim and, consequently also wanted the baby to become a Muslim. And because Luiza planned to stay with him and informed her grandmother that she would convert to Islam, the grandmother was very angry and threatened her with exclusion from the family if she did so. After some time, the man disappeared and Luiza told me that she had changed her mind and wanted to follow her grandmother's instruction about baptizing the baby.

Girls' everyday life is full of family-like acting, by doing home chores, especially cooking and serving the elders who could be their father coming home from work, an uncle passing by to greet the family or just the grandmother with whom she lives. Related to this, cooking and bringing food to relatives admitted to the hospital is a very important way of showing relatedness. When reading the girls' diaries, I find that they almost daily visit and bring food to relatives at the hospital.

Against the background of exchange of proper relative-like acting (daughter/granddaughter/niece/wife), a girl can hope to become included in the family's support network. For a girl to become pregnant while still in school or not yet married, can, however, make a formerly supportive family-member throw her out from the home thus excluding her from any support from her family. Many daughters try to ask for forgiveness, by, for instance, sending a remorseful letter to their mother – hoping that their relationship can be re-established.

This brings me back to the topic of non-negotiable elements of family-relatedness. One case in particular, showed me how a family discussed ‘being’ against ‘acting’; descent against credentials. After the death of Luiza’s grandmother, the family should in principle have distributed the inheritance to be shared among the four granddaughters in accordance with biological idioms of descent. They would all, being equally her descendants, be given the right of living in her house, as they all were orphans and had nowhere else to stay. But when the family really started the discussion, Luiza’s many mistakes were taken up as elements which should not give her the same right as the others. She had run away from home several times, she had become pregnant out of wedlock and was not able to take proper care of her baby, and, worst of all, she had not been present to take care of her grandmother during her illness and death. And although some family-members pointed out that she had apologized to her grandmother before she died, the oldest woman still argued that Luiza should not inherit anything from her grandmother. This example shows how expulsion is an element present in the family and kinship behaviour in present day Muheza. It furthermore emphasizes the point that relatedness is both founded in non-negotiable elements of biology as well as in negotiable elements of individual behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Studies on the varieties of family-relatedness practised in Tanzania today are very important in understanding how adolescent girls – often orphans – manage such difficult situations as pregnancy and early motherhood. This is so, because interacting in family terms gives rise to various hopes and expectations. In times of rapid change and increasing

uncertainties in everyday life, people may reconsider notions and practices of kinship and relatedness while living them. This is not intended to say that kinship and family practices did not have any social and biological disturbances in former times. What is worth noting, however, is that today nobody can live unaffected by such uncertainties, as for instance unstable marriages, the crisis of the AIDS epidemic or the tragedy of orphanhood. In this paper I have tired to show how inclusive practices of kinship are present in today's families, such as, when grandmothers-to-be – in spite of the shame – reintegrate their pregnant daughters into the family. But I have also shown how exclusiveness is working, such as when people's personal behaviour, leads to their family's expulsion of them. Within such processes it is important to recognize girls' different possibilities for forming relatedness as well as their survival strategies to mobilize resources and support over time.

We have also seen how the boundaries between biological and social relations are blurred, as when non-biologically related persons are made into relatives by exchange of kin terms and family-like acting. People find each other in the urban setting and 'choose' each other as kin, on locality based relatedness. Such social relations compensate for when the biological or conjugal family is not present or does not want to help. Today such non-biological relations are very valuable when many, especially children, are left alone or live in very uncertain life-situations in the fostering families, sometimes as undesirable family-members. Such social processes of creating relatedness, show us that we have to take into consideration how children and adolescent girls are not only passive recipients of kinship processes, but also actively participate and initiate relatedness. They do have a lot of strategies and act to negotiate relatedness, even when non-negotiable elements of kinship and family notions are at stake in the family. In looking at relatedness in this way, I emphasize the individual agency, and stress that kinship behaviour is not just who people

‘are’, through substances like notions of shared blood running in family lines, but also what people ‘do’ or how they ‘act’ in their exchange of relatedness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the National Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) in Tanzania, the Tanzanian Ministry of Health, for ethical clearance, and the Tanzanian Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) for granting me a research permit. I would also like to thank my assistant Miss Sayuni and all the girls and their families for sharing their experiences and dreams with me. Thanks also go to the Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen – especially to my supervisor Professor Susan Reynolds Whyte – the Danida Council for Development Research, the Nordic Africa Institute, Knud Højgård’s Fund, and Sasaskawa’s Fund for economic support.

REFERENCES

AXIOS, 2003, *Designing Programs for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in AIDS Affected Areas*, Paris: AXIOS International.

Bodenhorn, Barbara, 2000, ’He Used to Be My Relative’: Exploring the Bases of Relatedness among Iñupiat of Northern Alaska’, in Janet Carsten, ed., *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, Cambridge, England, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 128–48.

Carsten, Janet, 1995, 'The Substances of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malays in Pulau Langkawi', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 223– 41.

Carsten, Janet, 1997, *The Heat of the Hearth: The Process of Kinship in a Malay Fishing Community*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Carsten, Janet, 2000, 'Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness', in Janet Carsten, ed., *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, pp. 1–36, Cambridge, England, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Feierman, Steven, 1974, *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Fivawo, M., 1986, 'Community Response to Malaria, Tanzania 1983–1984', PhD Thesis, University of Illinois.

Fuglesang, Minou, 1997, 'Lessons for Life–Past and Present Modes of Sexuality Education in Tanzanian Society', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 44, no. 8, pp. 1245–54.

Gysels, Marjolein, Pool, Robert, and Betty Nnalusiba, 2002, 'Women who sell Sex in a Ugandan Trading Town: Life Histories, Survival Strategies and Risk', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 179–192.

Haram, Liv. 1995. 'Negotiating Sexuality in Times of Economic Want: The Young and Modern Meru Women', in Klepp, Knut-Inge, Paul M. Biswalo and Aud Talle, *Young People at Risk Fighting AIDS in Northern Tanzania*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, pp. 31–48.

---- 1999, '"Women Out of Sight": Modern Women in Gendered Worlds, The Case of the Meru of Northern Tanzania', PhD Dissertation, Bergen: University of Bergen,

Katapa, Rosalia, 1998, 'Teenage Mothers in their Second Pregnancies', in Rwebangira, Magdalena, K. and Rita Liljestrøm, ed., *Haraka, Haraka ... Look before you leap*, Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 122–143.

Khwaya Puja, Grace and Tuli Kassimoto, 1994, 'Girls in Education – and Pregnancy at School', in Tumbo-Masabo, Zubeida and Rita Liljestrøm, eds, *Chelewa, Chelewa: The Dilemma of Teenage Girls*, Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 54–75.

Klepp, Knut-Inge, Paul M. Biswalo and Aud Talle, eds, 1995, *Young People at Risk Fighting AIDS in Northern Tanzania*, Oslo: Scandinavia University Press.

Lambert, Helen, 2000, 'Sentiment and Substance in North Indian Forms of Relatedness', in Janet Carsten, ed., *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, Cambridge, England, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 73–89.

Madhavan, Sangeetha, 2004, 'Fosterage Patterns in the Age of AIDS: Continuity and Change', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 58, no. 7, pp. 1443–1454.

Middleton, John, 1992, *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization*, Michigan: Book Crafters.

Ministry of Health, 1997, 'Strategy for Reproductive Health and Child Survival, Tanzania 1997–2001', Dar es Salaam, MOH, Reproductive and Child Health Unit, Tanzania.

Ministry of Health, 2001, 'Adult Morbidity and Mortality Project', Working Paper no. 1, Progress in Safe Motherhood in Tanzania During the 1990s, Findings Based on NSS/AMMP Monitoring, Dar es Salaam, MOH, Tanzania.

Nader, Laura and Roberto J. González, 2000, 'The Framing of Teenage Health Care: Organizations, Culture, and Control', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, vol. 24 no. 2, pp. 231–258 (28).

Nuttall, Mark, 1992, *Arctic Homeland: Kinship, Community, and Development in Northwest Greenland*, Policy and Research Series, London: Bellhaven Press.

Nyambedha, E., Wandibba, S. and J. Aagaard-Hansen, 2001, 'Policy Implications of the Inadequate Support Systems for Orphans in Western Kenya', *Health Policy*, vol. 58, pp. 83–96.

Silberschmidt, Margrethe and Vibeke Rasch, 2001, 'Adolescent Girls, Illegal Abortions and "Sugar Daddies" in Dar es Salaam: Vulnerable Victims and Active Social Agents', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 52. no. 12, pp. 1815–26.

Simpson, Bob, 1994, 'Bringing the "Unclear" Family into Focus: Divorce and Re-Marriage in Contemporary Britain', *Man N.S.* vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 831–51.

Simpson, Bob, 1998, *Changing Families. An Ethnographic Approach to Divorce and Separation*, Oxford: Berg.

USPG, 2004, 'Teule Hospital, Muheza in Tanzania', update from USPG project 166, January 2004, www.hereford.anglican.org.

Urassa, Mark, J. Ties Boerma, Raphael Isingo, Juliana Ngalula, Japhet Ng'weshemi, Gabriel Mwaluko, and Basia Zaba, 2001, 'The impact of HIV/AIDS on mortality and household mobility in rural Tanzania', *AIDS*, vol. 15, no. 15, pp. 2017–2023.

Willis, Justin, 1993, 'The Nature of a Mission Community: The Universities' Mission to Central Africa in Bondei', *Past and Present*, no. 140, pp. 127–154.

Willis, Justin, 1994, 'The Makings of a Tribe: Bondei Identities and Histories', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 191–208.

NOTES

[1] As a supplement to participant observation and extended case studies, I used life-story interviews and diary writing.

[2] Two of them were 'traditional healers'/'witchdoctors' (*waganga* in Swahili), one had a small shop selling articles for women and babies, and the fourth one sold fish at the market and was (relatively) well off.

[3] During fieldwork 10 USD were roughly equivalent to 10,000 Tanzania shillings (TZS).

[4] Teule Hospital began testing at the labor ward in February 2003 and at the MCH-clinic in July 2003 for the HIV status of the pregnant woman and mother and offered treatment with anti-retroviral drugs specifically aimed to prevent vertical transmission from mother to child.

[5] Induced abortion is illegal in Tanzania.

[6] When a child is in standard six or seven, he/she will normally be 12–13 years of age.

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Karen Marie Moland
Mother's Milk, An Ambiguous Blessing in the Era of AIDS: The Case of the Chagga in Kilimanjaro

Abstract: HIV/AIDS has renewed the need for a critical interpretation of breastfeeding in social and cultural terms. The issue that this study addresses is how medically informed knowledge of HIV transmission through breastfeeding is interpreted and transformed in a local rural community in Kilimanjaro Region in northern Tanzania. The paper explores the articulation between a medical discourse on risk and a local discourse on motherhood which informs the choice of infant feeding method. It discusses the complexities involved in making an appropriate decision on breastfeeding, and argues that breastfeeding must be understood as closely tied to the cultural elaboration of the female body and of motherhood. It shows that the body of the mother and the body of the newborn child are subject to close scrutiny and local diagnostic processes. Not breastfeeding is not only perceived as a significant failure of motherhood, but also raises suspicion of a likely HIV positive status on the part of the mother.

Introduction

For the last few decades, the influence of feminism in the social sciences has put issues related to fertility, reproduction and childbirth on the agenda of anthropological inquiry (see e.g. Jordan 1993; Handwerker 1990; Lindenbaum and Lock 1993; Davis-Floyd and Sargent 1997; Lock and Kaufert 1998). The absence of breastfeeding in the literature produced in this field of research is however remarkable. It is quite clear that breastfeeding, as an aspect of human reproduction, has not attracted much research interest compared to, for instance, pregnancy and birth. An important exception is *The anthropology of breastfeeding: Natural law or social construct,* a selection of studies edited by Vanessa Maher in 1992. Maher holds that the reason for the neglect of breastfeeding in social science research is related to the fact that breastfeeding has been bound up with the concept of nature (Maher 1992). The act of breastfeeding has been defined as a matter of natural law rather than as a matter of choice and subject to social and cultural pressures. Research efforts accordingly have primarily been geared towards understanding the nutritional and immunological secrets of mother's milk. But clearly, breastfeeding involves more than biology and human nutrition. Situated in the field of fertility and reproduction, breastfeeding is subject to considerable cultural elaboration, and to paraphrase Maher, more complex cultural conditioning and social relationships are at stake if breastfeeding is threatened (1992). In view of the current knowledge of the risk of HIV transmission through breastfeeding, the HIV epidemic may represent such a threat.

HIV/AIDS has put breastfeeding on the agenda of social science research and has renewed the need for a critical interpretation of breastfeeding in social and cultural rather than merely medical terms. This paper deals with breastfeeding as an issue of increasing concern and uncertainty in Kilimanjaro Region where the HIV prevalence in the general population is among the highest in Tanzania (Ministry of Health 1999). It discusses the articulation between two opposing discourses on breastfeeding. One discourse focuses on *risk* and emanates from medical research on HIV transmission through breastfeeding. The other focuses on *motherhood* and is local in origin, and closely tied to the gendered discourse on parenthood and the general

conditions of life in the area. These two discourses propel their proponents into different directions, causing the women to make a choice that might result in further risk and uncertainty. In her discussion of uncertainty among the Nyole in Uganda, Susan Whyte (1997) argues that: 'uncertainty and response are linked to broader social and moral concerns that shape and are shaped by them' (Whyte 1997:3). It is these broader social and moral concerns that are examined here.

The current attempt to approach the problem of breastfeeding in the context of HIV/AIDS is based on long-term fieldwork on maternity, birth and birth care in Kilimanjaro Region during 1997 and 1998 and subsequent yearly follow-up visits from 1999 to 2003. The data presented here have been collected through participant observation of daily life in a low-income rural community on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro and through interviews with men and women of different ages. Key informants were women who were pregnant or breastfeeding at the time of the fieldwork, and grandmothers and local experts on birth and reproductive health including Traditional Birth Attendants. Most women in the community are involved in farming combined with petty trade. The area used to supply labour to a large coffee plantation that is no longer operational. Many of the men are unemployed; others commute to town for work. The common residence pattern in the community is virilocal involving a relationship of interdependence between a married woman and her affinal kin, especially her mother-in-law. The people living in the area identify themselves as Chagga. Although the local vernacular, Chagga, is used in domestic settings, Swahili, the national language, is the unifying tongue and is commonly known and widely used.

Kilimanjaro Region has been badly hit by HIV/AIDS. The prevalence rate rises above the national average of 7.8 percent among adult men and woman (Ministry of Health 1999; UNAIDS/UNICEF/WHO 2002). According to the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) in Tanzania, 13.5 percent of the pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in Moshi in 2000 were HIV positive (Ministry of Health 2000).[1] Moshi is the regional capital and the largest town with a population of 150,000. The town partly owes its recent development and pace of modernisation to the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC), the national referral hospital for the northern zone which is situated in the vicinity of Moshi town. Within Tanzania, Kilimanjaro Region is known for its educated and development-oriented population. The coffee and banana cultivating Chagga farmers who inhabit the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro constitute the dominant ethnic group both in terms of numbers and in terms of economic and political power (Klepp, Biswalo, and Talle 1995). The Christian Church is strong in the area, especially among the Chagga. The particular area where the data for this paper were collected is often described by other Chagga as backward in terms of education and economic development. The interpretation and the management of the problem of HIV and breastfeeding in this area must therefore be understood in the context of poverty.

In the following section I introduce the concept of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (pMTCT) and the discourse on risk that surrounds it.

Mother-to-child Transmission of HIV and the Risk of Breastfeeding

Vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding is an urgent problem in sub-Saharan Africa and is the main cause of HIV positive status in children below 15 years of age (UNAIDS 1998). With an increasing population of HIV positive pregnant women, and an estimated overall risk in populations who breastfeed of between 30 and

45 percent if no preventive measures are taken (WHO 2001), we are talking about a problem of dramatic proportions. It is estimated that breastfeeding causes between one third and one half of the cases of HIV transmission from mother to child. The risk of HIV transmission through breastfeeding varies with viral load and maternal health, as well as with the breastfeeding pattern and duration (see e.g. Chopra et al. 2002).
Mother-to-child transmission of HIV is an issue that has raised concerns about human rights and the protection of the unborn child as an urgent matter. The social, demographic and ethical implications of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) have encouraged the establishment of projects of prevention (pMTCT).

Prevention Efforts

In Tanzania, intervention projects to reduce the risk of transmission have been established in many regions of the country, including Kilimanjaro, and the risk of transmitting HIV through breastfeeding is an issue that is receiving growing attention. Since 1999 KCMC has been one of five pilot sites in Tanzania for a UNICEF funded VCT (voluntary counselling and testing) and pMTCT programme. The pilot phase ended in 2003 and the Ministry of Health is now in the process of expanding VCT and pMTCT services to all regional hospitals in the country. The social and legal consequences as well as the policy implications of the complex issues involved in vertical transmission of HIV are also vigorously debated locally by women's organisations working with legal rights issues and with HIV/AIDS NGOs like KIWAKKUKI (Women against AIDS in Kilimanjaro Region) and KWIECO (Kilimanjaro Women Information Exchange and Consultancy Organisation). The subject is also raised in newspapers and radio broadcasts. Mama Terry, a popular local health educator broadcasting information on HIV/AIDS on the radio every Thursday morning, represents an important source of information on MTCT, particularly to women living in rural areas who have limited access to other sources of information. Although medical knowledge about mother-to-child HIV transmission and prevention remains low in the general population in Kilimanjaro Region, the idea of breastfeeding as potentially dangerous to the child of an HIV positive mother has become widespread even in rural areas.
The prevention of mother-to-child transmission projects involve voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics and the administering of antiretroviral drugs to the HIV positive mothers as prophylaxis during pregnancy and/or during labour and delivery.[2] Short-course antiretroviral prophylaxis reduces the risk of transmission in late pregnancy, during birth and through early breastfeeding postnatally to about one third.[3] The drug treatment does not change the HIV status of the mother. The infant feeding advice given is based on the international guidelines on breastfeeding and HIV suggested by UNAIDS, WHO and UNICEF from 1998, and promotes a so-called fully informed and free choice of infant feeding method for HIV positive mothers. The guidelines recommend that counselling for HIV positive women should include the best available information on the benefits of breastfeeding, the risk of HIV transmission through breastfeeding and the risks and possible advantages of alternative methods of infant feeding (UNAIDS/WHO/UNICEF 1998). Guidelines for safe infant feeding methods developed specifically for Tanzania recommend either exclusive breastfeeding for six months or replacement feeding from day one (Ministry of Health 2003). Exclusive breastfeeding means giving no supplement of any kind and should be followed by abrupt weaning after six months. Replacement feeding such as commercial infant formula or home prepared formula from cow's or goat's milk should be introduced immediately after birth,

as breastfeeding should be avoided altogether. Expressed and heat-treated breastmilk has been added as another safe option in the new draft guidelines of 2003, but has previously been found not applicable to the Tanzanian context, and is not presented to parents as an option on a routine basis during counselling at KCMC.

The concept of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (pMTCT) is based on medical knowledge and discourse defining breastfeeding in terms of nutrition, disease prevention and, at best, mother-child attachment. It follows that when breastfeeding becomes a risk to the health of the baby, it should be replaced by other feeding methods. Although replacement feeding is promoted as the safest option in terms of HIV transmission, the guidelines recognise the medical and nutritional superiority of breastfeeding and the potential risks involved in other feeding methods in terms of hygiene, knowledge, access to money to buy replacement foods, and convenience. At the same time exclusive breastfeeding and abrupt weaning is an alien concept in an area where prolonged breastfeeding, usually extending into the second year of life, and early introduction of supplements have been common practice (de Paoli et al. 2002). Hence, neither of the options promoted are easily implemented. Both methods involve major dilemmas particularly for poor women, and according to de Paoli et al. (2002), the best infant feeding method for economically disadvantaged women is still being debated internationally as well as locally in Tanzania.

The Social and Cultural Context of Choice

The current national and international policy guidelines on infant feeding in HIV positive women do not fully recognise that breastfeeding is a practice that involves much more than a physical and psychological relationship between two individuals. Neither do the guidelines sufficiently reflect the fact that infant feeding choices are never made in a social and cultural vacuum. The social relationships surrounding and conditioning breastfeeding involve much more than the relationship between mother and child. Breastfeeding is embedded in a social system involving relationships of control, power and authority. It is integrated into a universe of symbols about the female body, about sexuality and reproduction, about motherhood, and about belonging.

In the following sections I discuss how the information or medical knowledge on HIV transmission through breastfeeding is interpreted and transformed within the social and cultural context of the Chagga of Kilimanjaro. This involves an examination of the cultural significance of breastfeeding and an inquiry into the kind of choice that women are faced with in deciding on infant feeding. It also involves a discussion of the tension between customary practice and culturally informed ideas about breastfeeding and motherhood on the one hand, and the knowledge transmitted through the intervention project on the other. International and national agencies involved in pMTCT have agreed on the concept of free and informed choice as a standard expression and as an ethical ideal (see e.g. Chopra et al. 2002). Informed choice implies that it remains the mother's right to choose the most appropriate feeding method. The relevance of the concept in the particular social and cultural context of the Chagga and the application of the mother's right to choose is questioned here.

The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding

Fertility and the Power of the Milk

The cultural importance of fertility in defining women's status in Kilimanjaro is well documented (see e.g. Raum 1996/1940; Moore 1986; Howard and Millard 1997; Setel 1999; Moland 2002). Fertility refers both to the ability to create and to sustain life, to give birth and to nurture the child. Bodily fluids in general represent a rich source of symbol production, and breastmilk is no different. Sally Falk Moore (1986), who has conducted extensive fieldwork among the Chagga, holds that the local concepts of sexuality and reproduction emphasise semen and mother's milk as life-giving forces. While semen is necessary to create life, breastmilk is necessary to sustain it. But as all-powerful substances, mother's milk and semen were also considered able to transmit evil and sickness (Moore 1986; Raum 1996/1940). While the proper combination of male and female created life, improper combination and timing could result in death and sickness (Moore and Puritt 1977).

A woman's milk is seen as her own blood, her own life-sustaining fluid. The same blood that feeds the foetus in the womb runs from the breasts as milk after birth so that the mother can continue to nourish the baby. The positive attitude towards mother's milk contrasts sharply with the negative connotations given to menstrual blood. Menstrual blood and mother's milk, according to Moore, represent opposite aspects of the female in Chagga cosmology. While menstrual blood is associated with pollution, death and danger, mother's milk is associated with feeding, life-bringing and maternal qualities (Moore 1986). According to O.F. Raum (1996/1940), a German missionary who worked in Kilimanjaro Region in the early twentieth century, and who later wrote a Chagga ethnography, the image of mother's milk as powerful is represented in a number of sayings and practices. He mentions that when a mother offered her breast to an unrelated child, it could be accepted into the family. The relationship among brothers and sisters was, and still is, recognised by the phrase 'they were suckled by the same breast'. Being breastfed by the same woman is seen to create a sense of belonging and solidarity that may be described in terms of milk kinship (for a discussion on milk kinship in Islam, see e.g. Khatib-Chahidi 1992). The relevance of the term in this context has, however, not been fully explored and the rights and obligations involved are not well known. More important in understanding the role that mother's milk plays in the ideology of reproduction is perhaps the concept that the lineage draws its strength not only from a common descent, i.e. from common ancestors in the patriline, but also from mother's milk (Raum 1996/1940). The implications of these ideas about the importance and the power of mother's milk in a patrilineal kinship system go beyond the topic of the current paper and require further research.

Although the context of the local conceptions and ideas about breastfeeding and mother's milk have changed dramatically in the post-colonial era, there is no doubt that mother's milk is still seen as vital for lineage continuity. But at the same time, the AIDS epidemic has attacked the two major life-giving substances represented in Chagga ideology of sexuality and reproduction. Both semen and mother's milk have become potentially life threatening.

The issue that I now turn to is how the powerful role of breastfeeding in human reproduction in general, and in the reproduction of the patriline in particular, is expressed in social institutions and in the gendered division of labour and responsibility.

Motherhood and Post-Partum Confinement

In most societies women's sexuality and reproductive capacity are subject to control mediated by the political and the symbolic systems (see e.g. Lock and Kaufert 1998; Maher 1992). In the case of the Chagga, patrilineal descent and a virilocal marriage pattern represent important conditions

for the way that fertility is controlled and represented in general, and for the way in which breastfeeding is interpreted and infant feeding decisions are made.

A major theme in Chagga cosmology is the continuation of the patriline through the chain of ancestors and descendants. In the gendered division of labour among the Chagga, women may be said to have done the *necessary* work that sustains life. A woman's work is closely tied to the reproduction of the patriline. It is her responsibility to bear and nurture children. A woman who bears six children may spend about twenty years either pregnant or breastfeeding. According to the Health Statistics Abstract for 1997, the fertility rate of Kilimanjaro region is 5.8 children per woman (Ministry of Health 1997). As Marylynn Salmon (1994) comments in her historical study of breastfeeding, these very physical realities of childbearing place motherhood in the very centre of women's lives.

The power of the breastmilk as a life-sustaining fluid is still strongly emphasised in concepts of infant feeding and is clearly expressed in the respect for women's physical powers and role in infant feeding. Respect as a mother is earned not only through giving birth, but is significantly produced and reinforced through breastfeeding and nurturing the child. The mother receives credit if her baby flourishes. The good health of the child enhances her status. The respect for women's power in nurturing and rearing a child finds concrete expression in the privileges granted to the breastfeeding woman during the period of confinement. Today, childbirth is the one event that exempts a woman from her normal duties and places her in a position requiring special care and attention from her husband and her mother-in-law. Similar practices in connection with circumcision and marriage have largely been discontinued due to competing demands on time and lack of economic means.

Pregnancy, birth and confinement have traditionally been the province of the mother-in-law and as a senior woman she had considerable power over her daughter-in-law. In contrast to pregnancy and childbirth which have been subject to increasing medicalisation and to a large extent been moved to the domain of nurses in hospitals, confinement has remained the concern of the lineage and primarily the mother-in-law (Moland 2002). The major purpose of the confinement period is to establish motherhood through breastfeeding and to secure the fertility and reproduction of the lineage. The woman eats and rests in order to be able to feed the child. At the same time the body of the woman ending her confinement mirrors the love and the economic power of the household. The woman's body should be firm and fat and her skin should be shiny. It brings shame over the family if a woman leaves her confinement thin and unhappy. This will tarnish the reputation of her husband and her mother-in-law (Moland 2002). Today it will also create some suspicion that she may have AIDS.

The period of confinement, ideally extending over three months, has been highly appreciated as a time of rest, recognition from kin and good food. Although women today rarely enjoy the customary three months of postpartum confinement, birth continues to bring attention and assistance to Chagga women albeit in a changing fashion (Howard and Millard 1997).

Failure to Breastfeed: A Failure of Reproduction and Motherhood

According to Howard and Millard's important study of malnutrition among the Chagga in the 1970s and 1980s (1997), failing to breastfeed was a significant failure. People saw the absence of breastfeeding, whether as a conscious choice or not, as an act against the lineage, against the values of cooperation and commensality and against ideas about mother's milk as an essential link in the life cycle (Howard and Millard 1997). Women who did not breastfeed could fall

victim to witchcraft accusations and were said to actively refuse to breastfeed their children. The strong influence of Christianity in Kilimanjaro Region from the end of the nineteenth century may have strengthened the sanctions against non-breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding, according to the Bible, is a woman's sacred duty and should take precedence over all other obligations (Baumslag and Michels 1995). Failing to breastfeed is not less important and not less sanctioned today. People say that for a mother to deny her infant her breast is an evil act that may cause the death of the child. The cultural imperative to breastfeed in Chagga is still so strong that it hardly allows for an alternative. When presented with the possibility of a child not being breastfed, a common reaction from both men and women is astonishment and disdain, and they question whether the baby will live if it is not breastfed. Breastfeeding is experienced as vital to child survival. A common phrase is: 'mother is life' (in Swahili: 'mama ni uhai'). Conversely, the absence of a mother means insecurity, illness and even death. Mothering implies breastfeeding. The two issues are intertwined and interdependent, and the one cannot be seen in isolation from the other. The failure to breastfeed is a failure of reproduction and motherhood. The context and the interpretation and social consequences of *not* breastfeeding, have, however, changed in the course of the AIDS epidemic.

Childbearing Women as the Core Narrative of AIDS

To be able to understand the social dynamic of choice of infant feeding method, we need to investigate how people talk about and make sense of the link between breastfeeding, mother's milk and HIV/AIDS. In view of the concept of mother's milk and blood as one, people do not find it hard to understand that breastfeeding may transmit HIV. As explained by a grandmother and a local expert in birth care: 'Milk is blood, the virus is in the blood. Hence, the milk also carries the virus'. She explains that while the child is fed by the mother's blood in the womb, it is fed by the mother's milk after birth. Hence a woman who is infected with HIV cannot have a healthy child. The child will already be infected at birth or it will be infected through the milk of the mother. The common concept, which derives from this understanding, is that women infected with HIV/AIDS should not breastfeed. The issue of exclusive breastfeeding is rarely raised as an alternative.

Not breastfeeding a newborn child, however, is taken as a sign of AIDS, and as illustrated in the following narratives, it causes fear on the part of others, and isolation of mother and child:

> Mary, a 38-year-old educated woman living in Moshi town, has a friend who recently gave birth in the referral hospital. Mary tells me that: 'I went to see Rose in the hospital to congratulate her on the child. I asked her how she was doing and she told me that the doctor had advised her not to breastfeed her child. She started to cry and asked: 'What am I going to give this child?' I was shocked. I understood that she was infected. I said she had to do what she was advised to do by the doctor. I tried to comfort her by talking about other things. Since that time I have not been to visit her again. I don't know what happened to our relationship. I don't feel like going. The love is not there. She reminds me that death is near. I think they will both die.

Rose and her baby died a few months later. Mary attended the funeral, but she never went to see Rose before she died.

Elisabeth is in her early twenties, married, and staying with her husband and her parents-in-law in a rural area not far from Moshi town. She recently lost a baby in childbirth and has previously

miscarried twice. She has no live baby. Elisabeth is still confined to the house and is very worried about her future and her health. She tells us that the neighbour's daughter gave birth at the referral hospital. She is divorced and came back home to stay with her mother. Elisabeth further explains:

> She has got problems. She was told not to breastfeed her child. She is sick. Her mother takes care of the child. People around here say it is AIDS. It is only AIDS that makes a woman not breastfeed her child. I have not been to see her. I fear. Nobody from here goes to that house any more. We think she might bite.

People often express fear of being bitten by an HIV positive person and are uncertain about the risk involved in terms of HIV transmission.

The stigma of HIV/AIDS finds new expression in the mother who does not breastfeed her child. Breastfeeding, the quality of the mother's milk, and the development of the child, have become a topic of increasing interest, suspicion and gossip. It is well documented that stigmatisation in the AIDS epidemic in Tanzania as elsewhere has built on pre-existing prejudices (see e.g. Lie 1996). The idea of the female body as dangerous and polluting has been nourished by the AIDS epidemic, particularly through the construction of risk and risk groups in the early phase when female prostitutes were defined as the prime targets of intervention. The focus remains the female body, but the attention is drawn not only towards defined risk groups, but also towards women in childbearing. This marks a significant change in the common interpretation of AIDS and of risk. The change is not unique to Kilimanjaro or to Tanzania. In their study of stigma and pMTCT in Zambia, Bond et al. (2002) argue that women with HIV have become the *core narrative* of HIV infection in the particular community of the study. According to the findings, mothers are commonly suspected and blamed for infecting their babies and people talk about how visible AIDS has become through pregnant women and new-born babies falling sick and dying.

We need to recognise that in a situation of an unknown or HIV positive status, childbearing women have to live with two kinds of fear, the fear of infecting the baby, and the fear of social sanctions both from close kin and from the community at large. The fear of being ousted from the social network of respectable people involves not only loss of economic security, but also loss of belonging and recognition as a social person.

'Food for What, Money for What?': The Uselessness of the Infected Mother

> A woman earns a place in her husband's family through proper wifely behaviour, motherhood and obedience to her mother-in-law (Howard and Millard 1997:144).

Anna has been worried about her own health for several years. Her husband is a driver in Dar es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania, roughly a one-day bus-ride from Kilimanjaro, and he only comes home once or twice a year. Now she only worries when she or her last-born child, who is still being breastfed, gets sick. About the idea of not breastfeeding her infant, she says:

> I would have felt very bad if I had not been able to breastfeed my newborn child. I would not be fulfilling my responsibilities and I would start thinking about the death of the child. If I could not breastfeed, the child would die very fast. People would think I am *useless*. Neighbours and relatives, who would otherwise bring confinement food like bananas, or money, would not bring anything. People would think food for what, money

> for what? I would not get assistance from anybody but mother-in-law and I would not get the rich confinement food meant for a mother who is feeding her newborn. I would not fit into life here any more (emphasis added).

It is not only Anna who reasons about breastfeeding and confinement in these terms. The confinement period is seen as a benefit that a woman is granted to pay respect to her role in reproduction and to enable her to fulfil her obligations to feed the infant. Unless a woman breastfeeds, she cannot complete her role in reproduction and she will have no need for the rest and the feeding that the husband and the in-laws customarily provide. Neither is a woman who does not breastfeed worthy of respect as a mother, according to Anna. Not only would failing to breastfeed seriously downgrade her respect vis-à-vis her in-laws and in the local community, it would also critically reduce her self-esteem.

Complying with the feeding advice issued by the doctors and nurses in the pMTCT project is, no doubt, a huge burden to carry particularly in a situation where a mother's respectability and belonging hinge on her fulfilling the obligations to 'feed the child from her own blood' as Mama Neema, a local expert on birth care put it. This is not only so in relation to the mother-in-law. As the cases above illustrate, it also involves rejection and distrust on the part of neighbours and friends. The significance of keeping the HIV positive status of the mother a personal or a family secret must be understood in a context where the non-breastfeeding mother is stamped as being useless to the child, to the patriline and to her social network in general.

The efforts to hide the problem of not breastfeeding involve avoiding arenas where women normally gather and not taking part in activities that are expected by a woman after the end of the confinement period, like going to the *shamba* (Swahili for agricultural plot), to the market or to church. The common expectation that a mother should carry her child on her back while attending to her normal duties, and at the same time be very responsive to the child's needs for comfort and feeding at her breast, adds to the burden of the non-breastfeeding mother. As one of the key informants commented: 'What will she do when the child cries and people start commenting that she should respond to the needs of her child?'

The close and symbiotic relationship between the body of the mother and the body of the child, otherwise celebrated in the ideology of fertility and reproduction, is for the non-breastfeeding mother turned into a barrier, which hinders her from taking part in social life.

'The Child Will Reveal the Secret of the Milk'

Considering the perceived close association between failing to breastfeed and HIV/AIDS that has developed, it may be very hard for a woman to convince her mother-in-law that she should not breastfeed her child without at the same time revealing that she is HIV infected. As Anna, to whom I refer above, puts it:

> If the mother-in-law sees milk running from the breasts while the mother refuses to breastfeed her crying child, the mother-in-law will know it is AIDS. Most women will keep quiet and just breastfeed.

But even if an HIV positive mother breastfeeds her child, her secret will be revealed in due course. The local birth expert, Mama Neema, who regularly counsels women on issues related to maternal and child health in her community, explains that an infant's development is seen as directly linked to the quality of the mother's milk. Thus, people are able to judge the milk of the

mother on the basis of the health condition of her child. Mama Neema elaborates further:

> Nowadays we judge the woman's health through the development of her child. If you get a child, the child itself will reveal the secret of the milk. Breastfeeding has become an issue not only to women. These days also men know that if you have AIDS it is also in the milk. People will pay attention to women who breastfeed and ask if the milk is good, saying: 'Let us see how the child will grow up'. And they will watch carefully.

The common concept then, is that a mother will not be able to keep her secret of being HIV infected whether she breastfeeds or she fails to breastfeed. Paulina, a local family planning counsellor and local expert in birth care, comments on the predicament of the HIV positive mother, saying that:

> The health authorities advise HIV positive women not to breastfeed. If you don't breastfeed, people will know. If you breastfeed and the child does not develop well, people will suspect that you have AIDS. They will start whispering and gossiping. The only way to keep your secret is not to get pregnant.

The link between the health of the mother and the health of the child is the milk. This is not a new idea in Chagga. The quality of the milk reflects not only the health condition of the mother in a narrow sense, but also her *tabia*, i.e. her moral character (see e.g. Haram 1999; Setel 1999). Today women talk about two conditions in addition to AIDS that can harm the baby through breastfeeding. One is a new pregnancy and the other is illegitimate sexual relations. Being a good mother means not exposing the milk to pollution of any kind, and in particular to avoid the damaging effect of semen from a man other than the father. Hence, violations of these moral codes are evidenced through the development of the child. According to the elders, however, no disease or condition before AIDS has been understood to epitomise the link between the health of the mother, including her moral character, and the health of the child, so unambiguously.

Decision-making and the Predicament of the HIV Positive Mother

To understand the HIV positive mother trying to cope with the infant feeding dilemma, we need to understand the context of choice and we need to ask what is at stake. We need to consider her understanding of risk and child survival, and we need to understand the cultural significance of breastfeeding as well as the social implications of not breastfeeding.

In the choice of infant feeding method, there are two issues at stake, child survival and motherhood - two sides of the same coin. Women with HIV/AIDS have to consider the message from the medical doctors that breastfeeding implies a risk of HIV transmission. As I mentioned earlier, the popular understanding of this message is that HIV positive women should not breastfeed; breastfeeding may kill the child. At the same time the body of a woman who does not breastfeed her newborn carries the imprint of HIV. Susan Whyte (1997) groups misfortune among the Nyole in Uganda into four categories, including failure of health, failure of prosperity, failure of gender and failure of personal safety. In Chagga society, where breastfeeding is a cultural imperative, not breastfeeding is considered a failure of motherhood and of reproduction. When, in the same context, reproduction and motherhood are so central to the expectations about being a woman, not breastfeeding may even be seen as a failure of gender, a failure of fulfilling the purpose of being a woman.

By addressing only the issue of child survival, focusing on infant feeding and ignoring how this

is linked to motherhood, pMTCT projects introduce a distinction between motherhood and breastfeeding that is alien to the Chagga concept of reproduction. The two issues cannot be addressed separately. The issue of breastfeeding can only be understood in the context of women's wider roles as mothers. Therefore questions of *motherhood* must be addressed alongside questions of breastfeeding.

Medicalisation of life events in general and of sickness in particular has often been associated with the imposition of power over the bodies of individuals (Lock 2001). In Ivan Illich's (1976) famous terms, the medical rationality colonises people's consciousness and causes dependence on medical expertise. A recurrent topic in the early feminist literature was women's resistance to medicalisation and thus to the power of medical knowledge and technology (see e.g. Martin 1989). It would be tempting to see HIV positive women's choice to practise customary breastfeeding, with early introduction of supplements, contrary to counsellors' advice as an example of resistance to medical knowledge and power.[4] I do not think however, that such an approach would bring us much further in understanding women's choice of infant feeding method, nor women's responses to medicalisation. To many women the pMTCT project, that works to medicalise not only childbearing, but also breastfeeding, is experienced as *enabling*. It potentially provides the woman and her family with a choice. The prospect of saving the child is greatly appreciated and replacement feeding is appropriate in many cases, particularly among urban, educated and employed HIV positive women. The response to medicalisation shows great variation within Kilimanjaro Region too, and it is closely related to the individual woman's economic and social position, and hence to her agency.

I would argue that it is the rural, economically poor and socially disadvantaged women that are least likely to practise what, by the health authorities, have been defined as safe feeding options, including replacement feeding of animal milk or infant formula, or exclusive breastfeeding. But this effect cannot be explained in terms of disbelief or distrust of medical knowledge and expertise. HIV positive women who breastfeed tend to do so because the alternative is worse and involves a great risk of losing status as a social person. Breastfeeding despite HIV positive status I argue, is a function of social pressure from close kin and neighbours, and is connected to individual women's lack of agency. Living in an extended family setting may expose a woman to the close monitoring and control of the mother-in-law and severely limits her opportunity to make a so-called free and informed choice of infant feeding method.

As Margareth Lock puts it, 'the responses of individuals, families and communities to medicalisation are complex and perhaps best described as pragmatic' (Lock 2001:81). In Kilimanjaro the choice to breastfeed in spite of medical personnel urging caution, I argue, is an expression of pragmatism in a situation of uncertainty and doubt as to the management of HIV/AIDS on the one hand, and of a deep fear of being ousted from social life on the other. Thus the articulation of the medical discourse on breastfeeding which focuses on risk and risk reduction, and the local discourse focusing on motherhood, produces patterns of infant feeding that vary across social and economic groups within Chagga society.

In closing, I return very briefly to the issue that I started out with - the possibility that the AIDS epidemic represents a threat to breastfeeding and hence to the social relationships that surround and condition breastfeeding. My initial assumption was that people's ideas about breastfeeding would change as a result of the negative publicity that breastfeeding is getting through the pMTCT project and the way this information is interpreted locally. I was concerned about the public health effect of the pMTCT project. From seeing mother's milk and breastfeeding as a blessing, I anticipated a change towards an attitude to mother's milk and breastfeeding

characterised by ambiguity. To some extent I believe that this is also the case. People do talk about the milk of HIV positive mothers as poison *(sumu)*. But even so, this very uncertainty of breastfeeding and AIDS may have a quite unexpected impact on practice. Interestingly, there are some signs that the cultural significance of breastfeeding in the AIDS epidemic has been not only reinterpreted, but also reinforced. The woman who does not breastfeed has become the subject of negative attention, suspicion and blame for not fulfilling the obligations of motherhood. Breastfeeding has become an important sign in lay diagnostic processes of HIV/AIDS. In the context of HIV/AIDS, breastfeeding, no doubt, has been given new attention and acquired new meaning, not only in the research community, but also in local Chagga communities where breastfeeding continues to be widely practised and collectively praised.

Acknowledgements

The study is part of a research project on reproductive health, a collaboration between The Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) and The Centre for International Health at the University of Bergen, that has been funded by grants from the Norwegian Research Council and NUFU (The Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education). I am particularly grateful to the key informants for their willingness to participate in the study, and to Agnes Ngowi, my local collaborator. I would also like to thank the Nordic Africa Institute and especially Liv Haram for inviting me to take part in the conference on 'Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives', for which this paper was prepared.

Notes

1. Figures vary a great deal between reports. The latest updates from UNAIDS/UNICEF/WHO for Moshi town in Kilimanjaro Region are based on data collected through the National AIDS Control Programme in 1998, not on the data from 2000 referred to in NACP 2000. It is therefore hard to establish an accurate figure on HIV prevalence. For comparison, the median of HIV positive women attending antenatal clinics countrywide was found to be 17 percent in 2001 (UNAIDS/UNICEF/WHO 2002).
2. There are different antiretroviral regimens used in pMTCT projects. While the UNICEF pilot projects used AZT as prophylaxis from the thirty-fourth week of pregnancy and throughout delivery, the drug of choice, as stated by the Ministry of Health in Tanzania in 2003, is Nevirapine, which is administered by the mother herself at the onset of labour before she reaches the hospital. The baby is given a dose of Nevirapine syrup after birth (Ministry of Health 2003). Externally funded intervention research projects providing full HAART (highly active antiretroviral drug treatment) to HIV positive pregnant mothers and their partners are also being set up in a few hospitals in Tanzania, but because of the small scale of these projects, the impact will probably be limited - population wise - in the initial trial phase.
3. The figures on the risk of MTCT vary quite a lot both with regard to the risk of transmission if no preventive measures are taken, and the risk of transmission when antiretroviral prophylaxis has been administered to the mother.
4. Research on infant feeding has shown that mixed feeding (breastfeeding combined with supplementary feeding) increases the risk of transmission of HIV because it reduces the resistance to microorganisms in the intestinal tract.

References

Bond, V., Chase, E., and Aggleton, P. 2002. 'Stigma, HIV/AIDS and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission in Zambia', *Evaluation and Programme Planning,* vol. 25, pp. 347-356.

Baumslag, N., and Michels D.L. 1995. *Milk, Money and Madness. The Culture and Politics of Breastfeeding,* London, Bergin and Garvey.

Chopra, M., Piwoz, E., Sengwana, J., Schaay, N., Dunnett, I., and Sanders, D. 2002. 'Effect of a Mother-to-Child HIV Prevention Programme on Infant Feeding and Caring Practices in South Africa', *South African Medical Journal,* Vol. 92, pp. 298-302.

Davis-Floyd, R.E., and Sargent, C.F. (eds.) 1997. *Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives,* London, University of California Press.

Handwerker, W.P. (ed.) 1990. *Birth and Power: Social Change and the Politics of Reproduction,* Boulder, Westview Press.

Haram, L.. 1999. '"Women out of Sight": Modern Women in Gendered Worlds. The Case of the Meru of Northern Tanzania', Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Bergen.

Howard, M., and Millard, A. 1997. *Hunger and Shame: Poverty and Malnutrition on Mount Kilimanjaro,* New York and London, Routledge.

Illich, I. 1976. *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health,* New York, Pantheon.

Jordan, B. 1993. *Birth in Four Cultures: A Crosscultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States,* Prospect Heights, Waveland Press. First published in 1978.

Khatib-Chahidi, J. 1992. 'Milk Kinship in Shi'ite Islamic Iran', in Maher, V., *The Anthropology of Breastfeeding: Natural Law or Social Construct,* Oxford, Berg Publishers Ltd.

Klepp, K.I., Biswalo, P.M., Talle, A. (eds.), 1995. *Young People at Risk: Fighting AIDS in Northern Tanzania,* Oslo, Scandinavian University Press.

Lie, G.T. 1996. *The Disease That Dares Not Speak Its Name: Studies on Factors of Importance for Coping with HIV/AIDS in Northern Tanzania,* Research Centre for Health Promotion, Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen.

Lindenbaum, S., and Lock, M. (eds.) 1993. *Knowledge, Power and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life,* Berkeley, University of California Press.

Lock, M. 2001. 'The Tempering of Medical Anthropology: Troubling Natural Categories', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly,* vol 15, no. 4, pp. 478-492.

Lock, M., and Kaufert, P.A. (eds.) 1998. *Pragmatic Women and Body Politics,* London, Cambridge University Press.

Maher, V. (ed.) 1992. *The Anthropology of Breastfeeding: Natural Law or Social Construct,* Oxford, Berg Publishers Ltd.

Martin, E. 1989. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction,* Boston, Beacon Press.

Ministry of Health. 1997. *Health Statistics Abstract 1997,* Dar es Salaam, Health Information, Research and Statistics Section, Planning Department, Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health. 1999. *National AIDS Control Programme - HIV/AIDS/STD Surveillance,* Report No. 14, December 1999, Epidemiological Unit, NACP.

Ministry of Health. 2000. *National AIDS Control Programme - HIV/AIDS/STD Surveillance,* Report No. 15, January–December 2000, Epidemiological Unit, NACP.

Ministry of Health. 2003. *Draft PMTCT National Guidelines,* Unpublished.

Moland, K.M. 2002. 'Giving Birth in Kilimanjaro: The Politics of Knowledge in Moral

Contexts', Doctoral Dissertation, University of Bergen.
Moore, S.F. 1986. *Social Facts and Fabrications: 'Customary' Law on Kilimanjaro 1880-1980,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Moore, S.F. and Puritt, P. 1977. *The Chagga and the Meru of Tanzania,* London, International African Institute.
de Paoli, M., et al. 2002. 'Counsellors Perspectives on Antenatal HIV Testing and Infant Feeding Dilemmas Facing Women with HIV in Northern Tanzania', *Reproductive Health Matters,* vol. 10, no. 20, pp. 144-156.
Raum, O.F. 1996. *Chaga Childhood*: *A Description of Indigenous Education in an East African Tribe,* Hamburg, LIT Verlag. Published 1940 by the Oxford University Press.
Setel, P. 1999. *A Plague of Paradoxes: AIDS, Culture and Demography in Northern Tanzania,* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
Salmon, M. 1994. 'The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America', *Journal of Social History,* vol 28, no. 2, pp. 247-269.
UNAIDS. 1998. *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, Geneva, UNAIDS.
UNAIDS/WHO/UNICEF. 1998. *HIV and Infant Feeding: Guidelines for Decision-Makers,* Geneva, UNAIDS.
UNAIDS/UNICEF/WHO. 2002. *Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections,* United Republic of Tanzania.
WHO. 2001. *Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV: Selection and Use of Nevirapine. Technical Notes,* Geneva, World Health Organisation.
Whyte, S.R. 1997. *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Karen Marie Moland
Faculty of Health and Social Science
Bergen University College
Bergen
Norway.

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Godisang Mookodi
Male Violence against Women in Botswana: A Discussion of Gendered Uncertainties in a Rapidly Changing Environment

Abstract: Male violence against women has become commonplace in contemporary Botswana. Analyses of gender-based violence in Botswana indicate that men are acting out their dominance through acts of violence. This dominance is created and reinforced by patriarchal beliefs and practices. The discussions are characterised by notions of female victimhood and universal male dominance. This paper contextualises male violence against women by examining the role played by economic and social change in the shaping of gender identities and relations. I show that while contemporary forms of male dominance have resulted from their privileged access over time to resources such as wages and property, men also face uncertainties of unemployment and reduced social status. I also show that rather than assuming the role of passive victims, women have developed, and continue to develop, contradictory survival strategies such as cohabitation and sexual relations that not only reinforce notions of male dominance but sometimes also challenge power relations and render some men victims.

Introduction

Botswana is best known internationally as a shining example of economic growth, sound fiscal management and democracy in contemporary Africa. Botswana was classified as one of the poorest nations at the time of independence from Britain in 1966. The rapid economic growth was largely due to the discovery of two diamond pipes in 1971. The classification of Botswana as a middle-income country is directly linked to the sale of diamonds, which have provided the basis for the development of infrastructure, as well as social welfare provisions, such as health and educational facilities.

There are problems that breed uncertainty in the lives of ordinary Batswana. The last detailed analysis of household income survey data by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA 1997a; 1997b) indicated that up to 46 percent of all households are either very poor or poor. The lives of those living in poverty are further complicated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which poses a major strain on financial and human resources. The 2003 HIV/AIDS Surveillance of Botswana indicated that about 283,765 adults between the ages of 15 and 49 are living with HIV/AIDS. A breakdown of this age group by gender reveals that 63 percent were females compared to 37 percent males. Just over 40 percent of the infected women are between 20 and 29 years old (National Aids Coordinating Agency 2003:30-31).

Gender inequalities continue to result from women's inferior access to resources resulting from their lower participation in wage employment and their limited access to the necessary capital for engagement in income-generating activities. Culturally-based social and economic disparities have been linked with escalating rates of gender-based violence, particularly male violence against women (Mogwe 1988; Botswana Police Service 1999; Women's Affairs Department 1999; Metlhaetsile Women's Information Centre n.d.). Acts of male violence against women have come to be commonplace in contemporary Botswana society. Research conducted in Botswana (Botswana Police Service 1999; Women's Affairs Department 1999) has suggested that much of this violence is meted out by men against their female partners, wives, cohabiting

partners, and girlfriends, leading to the conclusion that most violence against women occurs within domestic settings. These findings of 'domesticated' violence against women are not unique to Botswana, but illustrate a global trend (see Watts et al. 1995; Green 1999; Summers and Hoffman 2002).

This paper examines the dynamics of domestic violence against women in Botswana. I argue that the escalations in these particular forms of violence result from negotiations and re-negotiations of gender identities (by women and men) within a society that is undergoing rapid change. As Batswana continue to be affected by social and economic influences from outside and within the country, they are faced with many uncertainties that arise from negotiating the new values that accompany modernisation on the one hand, and traditional beliefs and practices on the other. Women and men are constantly reflecting and acting upon their positions with respect to each other, particularly regarding power and control.

This paper begins with a brief review of the dominant discourses on gender inequality and patriarchy that form the basis of analyses of male violence against women in Botswana. This is followed by a discussion of the effects of rapid change on social organisation and gender roles as illustrated by decline in marriages and an increase in the number of cohabitating couples. The next section provides an overview on violence against women in Botswana. It begins with a discussion of some of the research findings of a national study on the causes and implications of violence against women. The findings from my doctoral research illustrate how cultural ideals of men as breadwinners and heads of households come into question as more women maintain their families financially, and assume responsibility for their welfare on a daily basis. These gender roles often place women and men in conflicts that are manifested in acts of violence. The following section highlights some issues emerging from the male crisis debate that seeks to situate men in gender discourses. The concluding section presents suggestions for more holistic analyses of gender inequality and violence that focus on ongoing negotiations of structure and agency by women and men in a rapidly changing society.

Theoretical Considerations

Most theoretical frameworks for discussing violence against women illustrate how violence stems from unequal power relations between women and men (Vieritis and Williams 2002). The dominant discourses on gender violence in Botswana, as elsewhere in Africa, continue to be women-based and women-centred. Most discussions and studies of gender violence in Botswana have occurred in a policy environment (Botswana Police Service 1999; Women's Affairs Department 1999**);** some have been spearheaded by women's organisations (Emang Basadi-NGO Network on Women's Rights and Women in Law and Development in Africa, 1995); others have been conducted by feminist scholars who are also change agents linked with civil society organisations (Mogwe 1988).

The policy studies are situated in the Gender and Development (GAD) framework as the modus operandi for addressing social, economic and political disparities between women and men in Botswana. The GAD approach was touted as a move from the women-centred Women in Development (WID) perspectives towards more holistic analyses of gender that included *women* and *men*. In reality, however, the focus continues to be almost exclusively on women as victims and men as evil perpetrators of injustices against them.

Treatments of gender-based violence by women's organisations and by feminist scholars have centred on illustrating the workings of patriarchy as the gender system that perpetuates all forms

of women's subordination. The broad conceptualisation of culturally-based patriarchy continues to dominate discussions of women's subordinate socio-economic, legal and political status (Mannathoko 1992; Alexander 2001; Maundeni 2001).

My concern is that the conceptualisations of patriarchy within discourses on violence against women and gender relations have not been adequately criticised. This is despite the reservations held by scholars such as Walby (1986) about the limitations of notions of 'universal male agency' and associated images of women as passive victims. It could be argued, as Nyamnjoh (2001) does, that without critical discussion and review, such conceptualisations represent 'strategic essentialism' which is an inevitable facet of political mobilisation by feminists.

The problem with both the GAD perspective and patriarchal analyses, however, is that they tend to isolate women further, and to exclude men from an active part in gender discourses (Greig, Kimmel, and Lang 2000). Detailed critiques of these dominant discourses fall outside the scope of this paper.[1] My discussion of male violence against women does, however, raise pertinent issues with respect to negotiations of culture and sexuality against the background of change and uncertainty in contemporary Botswana society.

Introducing the Tswana

Historical accounts indicate that the original inhabitants of the area covering present-day Botswana were the Khoisan (also referred to as the Hottentots, Bushmen or *Basarwa*) who subsisted on hunting and gathering (Tlou and Campbell 1984; Schapera and Comaroff 1991). The area was later occupied by Tswana agro-pastoralists.

The Tswana who settled in present-day Botswana are comprised of eight principal sub-groups. Seven of the groups, BaKgatla, BaKwena, BaNgwaketse, BaNgwato, BaTawana, BaTlokwa and BaRolong, are direct descendants of the original Sotho migrants. The eighth group, BaLete, are descendants of the non-Tswana Ndebele who have assimilated Tswana customs and languages (Colcough and McCarthy 1980). While there are variations in dialects among the groups and localised components of culture, the Tswana have been described as culturally homogeneous in terms of their base beliefs and customs (Alverson 1978; Schapera and Comaroff 1991; Gulbrandsen 1996).

Early Tswana (seventeenth to nineteenth century) societies were politically and economically stratified along class and gender lines. The Tswana were politically stratified into two broad layers: the leadership, and the subjects or commoners. Each Tswana principal sub-group (*morafe*) was politically independent, managing its own affairs under the centralised leadership of a chief (*kgosi*). The chieftainship was male-centred, with succession being passed down to male descendants within the leadership lineage of each sub-group. The social significance of cattle was associated with trade, ploughing, and the payment of bridewealth (*bogadi*).[2] Ownership of cattle was a marker of wealth and prestige.

Men were the recognised heads of family-households. Membership in family groups was passed down through males, with the most senior male in the lineage ward being regarded as the elder and primary decision-maker (Schapera 1933; Schapera and Comaroff 1991; Gulbrandsen 1996). Succession in traditional Tswana society was male-based, with the eldest son (*mojaboswa*) succeeding his father as the head of the family. Besides inheriting the role of decision-maker, the eldest son also inherited most of his father's property such as his cattle and agricultural implements. Where there were no sons, or if the sons were still minors, the dead man's estate would fall under the control of the most senior male relative - usually the younger brother - who

would assume the role of household head. Women did not inherit cattle and fixed assets following the deaths of their fathers, but were entitled to clothing and domestic implements after the deaths of their mothers and female relatives (Driel 1994).

The rapid transition from subsistence agriculture to a modern cash economy during much of the twentieth century has been accompanied by changes in social fabrics and individual lifestyles. In addition, other opportunities for social mobility, particularly education, have caused many Batswana to abandon subsistence activities in rural areas to seek greener pastures in urbanised villages, towns and cities.

The migration of young men to work in the mines in South Africa during much of the twentieth century loosened the grip of elders and relatives over them, particularly with respect to marriage and family formation. Their participation in wage work has also resulted in the development of the male breadwinner, which came to be embedded in traditional marriage practices of bridewealth (*bogadi* and *lobola*). This male-breadwinner ideology, coupled with men's relatively higher access to resources - particularly cash - forms the basis of male violence against women in contemporary Botswana.

It must be noted that women in Botswana had access to 'new' opportunities for wage employment that have grown since the 1970s (Driel 1994). Accounts of female migrants in urban areas suggest that education and increasing employment opportunities have opened up prospects for female autonomy (see Larsson 1989; Bhebe and Mosha 1997). While some women may have the chance to escape dependence on men, others are faced with lives of uncertainty due to their limited choices and opportunities for economic empowerment. Many negotiate their precarious situations by engaging in survival strategies that expose them to perils such as violence from partners and husbands.

Changing Gender Relations and Marital Strategies

Botswana society has undergone, and continues to undergo, rapid change, which has significant implications for family formation. Anthropological accounts alluded to the decline in the significance of marriage as the basis for reproduction and family formation, and the rise in the incidence of extra-marital pregnancy and mothering during the 1930s (Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Schapera 1933, 1966; Schapera and Comaroff 1991).

Extra-marital pregnancy has been attributed to changing cultural norms relating to family formation and altered personal outlooks that come with modernisation - particularly access to western education and increased mobility on the part of women and men.[3] Analyses of household organisation and family forms show that the mother-child family form features prominently in contemporary Botswana (Syson 1972; Molenaar 1980; Ingstad and Saugestad 1987; Molokomme 1991; Driel 1994; Motts 1994). The 2001 Census shows that 54 percent of all households in Botswana were headed by men, and 46 percent were headed by women (Mookodi 2003a:3).

The results of censuses conducted since 1971 point to continued declines in the rate of marriage as well as the growing significance of cohabitation. While 40 percent of all household heads were married in 1991, the figure had declined to 31 percent according to the 2001 census (Mookodi 2003a:8). Data from the 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses show that the proportion of married persons over the age of 15 years has declined by up to 20 percent (Mookodi 2003b:1). While marriage is declining, the proportion of cohabiting persons has increased from 12 percent in 1991 to 16.6 percent according to the 2001 census.[4]

How do we account for declining marriage rates in Botswana? Gulbrandsen's examination of marital strategies among the Ngwaketse[5] in post-colonial Botswana focused on the relative delays in marriage among women and men, as well as increased incidences of non-marriage and childbearing out of wedlock (1986). While his study concurred with Schapera's earlier observations (Schapera 1933) relating lengthy male absences to the increase in the 'surplus of marriageable women', he posited that gendered marital strategies were embedded in customary practices of lengthy marriage processes, the payment of *bogadi* (bridewealth) and the relative weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of marriage by women and men.

In his discussion of men's marital strategies, Gulbrandsen (1986) pointed to the relative autonomy that they gained from wage labour, which in turn reduced their reliance on relatives for the payment of *bogadi*.[6] Secondly, he pointed out that, in a changing economy, men would rather use their earnings on cattle than establish farming homesteads. This relates to the arguments raised by Driel (1994) and Women and Law in Southern Africa WLSA (1997; 1999) regarding the significance of *bogadi* as a means of consolidating male power and control; a means of acquiring labour of women and children for agricultural production. An interesting point that Gulbrandsen (1986) and Townsend (1997) took up is that during a great part of their twenties and thirties, men's affinities to their natal families ensured them security and the domestic services that they would otherwise require from women. It may also be suggested that men take advantage of alternatives to marriage such as serial relationships and cohabitation. Gulbrandsen concluded that delays in marriage extended men's youth, allowing them to remain longer on the marriage market. In addition, the availability of females was relatively guaranteed as illustrated by the rate of pre- and extra-marital pregnancies.

Gulbrandsen (1986), Driel (1994), Women and Law in Southern Africa (1994) point to women's increasing ambivalence towards marriage. This, they argue, is due to the general view that marriage limits women's autonomy. Instead, they engage in livelihood strategies that involve direct forms of male economic support while falling outside the rubric of formalised marriage commitments.

Women's survival strategies that are based on male economic support include serial sexual relationships that result in pre- and extra-marital pregnancy. They may culminate in cohabitation or marriage. An examination of the cohabitation figures from the 2001 census shows that most of the persons who were cohabiting were of the prime child-bearing ages between 15 and 29. Within this category, women constitute 65.9 percent of all cohabiting partners (Mookodi 2003b:8).

The proportion of cohabiting males increases with age, suggesting that younger women are cohabiting with relatively older men. Within that context cohabitation can either be regarded as a stage in the marriage cycle, or be utilised as a survival strategy by many women in Botswana. The strength of the latter argument is supported by women's relatively lower economic activity and higher levels of female unemployment or economic 'inactivity'. The 2001 census shows the overall unemployment rate in Botswana is 19.5 percent (Siphambe 2003:7). The unemployment rate among women is 23.6 percent, compared to 16.24 percent among men (ibid). Women form the majority of those who are classified as 'economically inactive' homemakers - many of whom rely on men for economic support.

The foregoing discussion has pointed to the contradictory conditions that change has often presented in Botswana. While modernisation may have increased women's and men's chances for economic empowerment, women still lag behind and patterns of male economic power continue to prevail. The following section examines the tenuous relationships between men's

economic power and women's 'male-based' economic survival strategies as possible causes of violence in Botswana.

Male Violence Against Women

At the beginning of 2003 Botswana was rocked by a series of violent acts, which have come to be described within the community as 'passion murders'. The *Botswana Daily News* (2003:2) wrote the following report:

> Gasekgale's body was found with multiple stab wounds in a hostel.... Petrus's body was found hanging from a tree... Although the Gaborone Central Police Superintendent said it was too early to determine what could have led to the deaths of the students, unconfirmed reports suggested that they were lovers. Their deaths bring to three the number of deaths resulting from what appear to be crimes of passion within a month in Gaborone alone.[7]

Soon after this report, there was another murder in a tertiary institution in northern Botswana. These murders sparked a series of debates that explored the possible causes, as well as measures to address the problem. Some of the discussions were initiated by students at the University of Botswana.[8] The discussions provided an opportunity for university students to debate the possible causes of violence against women. Much of the discussions centred on female and male attitudes towards the changing status of women.

Many of the young men, and some women lamented what they regarded as the abuse of men by women, which results from multiple relationships. They argued that young women establish relationships with their age-mates, and cheat or abandon them for *sugar daddies* who, as the term indicates, provided them with cash, financed their cell phones, and transported them in cars. The materialistic tendencies of women in their pursuit of 'the three C's', Cash, Cell phones and Cars were regarded as cheating and exploitative, and triggered violent reactions from men.

It was also evident that men felt a sense of alienation and confusion that stemmed from women's seeming independence on the one hand, and their expectations of support from them. The concerns about the changing status of women and challenges to male authority and power have been found to be the main cause of violence against women in Botswana.

The increased participation of women in wage work places a degree of uncertainty on men's roles as breadwinners and principle decision-makers. Women's earning power is regarded as fostering more independence and autonomy, thereby reducing their dependence on men. Socialisation imparts cultural norms that are also seen as contributing to gender inequality by teaching females to be submissive, and men to be aggressive. These cultural norms are practised among unmarried couples, but are particularly predominant among married couples between whom the payment of bridewealth can be construed as justification for husbands' control over their wives (Women's Affairs Department 1999; Maundeni 2001).

On Violence against Women

A national study in Botswana on the socio-economic implications of violence against women (Women's Affairs Department 1999) examined the incidences and causes of violence against women. It also examined the social and economic impact of violence against women as individuals, in communities and institutions, and made recommendations for action. The research assessed the perceptions and experiences of violence of 735 women from the age of 12

in rural, semi-urban and urban locations. The ten types of violence that were defined included physical slaps, severe beatings, sexual harassment, rape and sexual assaults, incest, verbal and emotional abuse and murder.

The study concluded that violence against women is a substantial problem, and that three out of five women in the study had been victims of violence. The majority of cases of violence are perpetrated by partners or acquaintances of victims, making violence against women a primarily domestic phenomenon. The most commonly perceived causes of violence were identified as unequal power relations between women and men. Married men or temporary male partners resort to the use of force to keep women and children under their control:

> When a woman gets married, she is told she is the junior partner or child in the relationship and her duty is to listen to the man. This is the start of violence, since it makes her a willing accomplice in it (Women's Affairs Department: 1999:76).

Based on the accounts of female respondents, the study indicated that men felt insecure about wives' and partners' earning power, which was regarded as reducing their (men's) power in the household:

> In one abusive family the woman was the breadwinner. The husband was insecure, jealous, and always beating her. He even followed her to work to demand money from her. A month ago he broke her fingers so she could no longer work. She is now registered as a destitute (Women's Affairs Department 1999:76).

The study pointed to the dilemmas presented by socialisation and culture on women's perception of themselves and of men:

> When a man does not provide for the family's basic needs, as he is deemed the sole provider, or if he has many girlfriends, the woman should not say a word. She should be careful at all times not to register her displeasure. If she does, it's the beginning of violence! (Women's Affairs Department 1999:76).

Respondents also pointed to the crisis of masculinity, which they saw as resulting from unemployment and poverty:

> Poverty is the biggest cause of violence. Families are struggling to survive and men's pride in looking after the family is bruised and as a result men are hitting out at all those around them. Women get hurt! (Women's Affairs Department 1999:78).

The study concluded that violence against women has significant personal and institutional costs. Personal costs to women and their dependants include loss of income, medical expenses, and the costs of legal proceedings. Violence was also associated with loss of productivity due to absenteeism. The study pointed out that there were significant costs for providing social welfare services, prosecuting cases as well as the imprisonment of suspects and convicted perpetrators (Women's Affairs Department 1999).

The study on violence against women pointed to the magnitude of the problem, as well as the uncertainties associated with the juxtaposition of cultural and modern ideals and lifestyles. The discussions on the 'passion killings' reflected how the demands of modern life lead some women to have economically motivated relationships and multiple partners. These relationships were regarded as challenging male authority, betraying men's trust, and provoking some to commit murder. The following section discusses how women negotiate marriage and family life and their relationships with men - including violent situations. The accounts are based on my

doctoral study among low-income households, as well as compilations of women's stories by women's organisations.

Negotiating Gender Roles in a Changing Environment

'A man, like a bull, cannot be confined to a kraal.'
(*Monna ke poo ga a agelwe lesaka*.)

'Seize the breast of a widow, that of a divorced women is unstable.'
(*Letsele go tshwarwa la moswelwa, la motlhadiwa ke mogofe*.)

'Don't grab my wife, I have bought her with cattle.'
(*Se nkgapele mosadi, ke mo rekile ka dikgomo.*)

'Not all men are fools, some are single.'
(Bumper sticker on cars in Gaborone.)

'Girls just want to have funds.'
(Bumper sticker on cars in Gaborone.)

(Hermans and Nteta 1992:1; Maundeni 2001:41)

These proverbs and slogans reflect the contradictory values for male and female sexual behaviour in contemporary Botswana. While cultural beliefs and practices of male dominance continue to prevail, women and men are struggling to cope in a rapidly modernisng and cash-driven environment.
As indicated earlier, women in Botswana are making inroads into previously male-dominated areas. While many assume relatively autonomous positions within their families, others continue to negotiate their gender identities against the background of internalised cultural values.
In my doctoral study I examined the gender dynamics of poverty by looking at household organisation and the survival strategies of household members (1999). I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with women and men in 40 households in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, and Manyana, a small village in the southeastern part of Botswana. While the study was originally informed by patriarchal discourses of culturally-based male dominance, initial interviews pointed to the need to deconstruct the concept of 'household headship' in order to explore the social construction of gender and power relations between women and men. The results of the interviews showed the significance of culture in the shaping of gender identities on the one hand, and how the nature of gender roles has altered over time and space, on the other hand.
I asked women and men to define the term head of household (*tlhogo ya lolwapa*) and to describe the responsibilities that were associated with this role. The responses from women and men illustrated the cultural ideal. Most of the respondents indicated that *tlhogo ya lolwapa* had specific gender connotations - and was synonymous with 'man or maleness' within the context of cultural beliefs and practices. These perceptions were expressed by women and men both in Gaborone and Manyana.
There was a direct link between household headship and resource provision - with men being

associated with economic provision. However, respondents pointed to realities of resource-provision by women in households that are primarily supported by females, as well as within male-headed households.

Kgalalelo, a widowed single mother in Manyana who lived in her younger brother's compound identified him as the head of the household.[9] She alluded to the role that her non-resident elder brother played as head of the family (*lolwapa*), showing the importance of gender and age-based hierarchies in the determination of household headship. She mentioned that when important traditional events such as wedding negotiations and funerals take place in her family and community, her non-resident elder brother would represent her household as the most senior male member of the family:

> The head of this household is my older brother who lives on the other side of the village. He is the one who is consulted as the elder in the household. He often arbitrates in issues that are relegated to the uncles [*bo malome*]. He is older than both of us [herself and her younger brother]. When someone from the *kgotla* [the public kraal] brings an important message, they will want to consult a man, even if he is younger than me, to give him the message from the elders. He is my chief [*kgosi*]. I cannot supersede him in authority. If he is absent, I can receive the information as a woman only if he doesn't have a wife. If he is married, the message will be delivered to his wife, who in turn will deliver it to my brother.

Kgalalelo points to the subordinate status of women in culture-based gender and age hierarchies. During her marriage, she had been under the authority and guidance of her husband. When her husband died, she was unable to support herself and her children, and ultimately returned to her natal compound that had been bequeathed to her younger brother following the death of their parents. She effectively fell under the immediate guidance and authority of her younger brother. Her younger brother was in turn superseded in authority by her elder brother as a result of his age and by virtue of his having completed the passage into adulthood through marriage.

Another woman in Manyana who resided in her natal home initially identified her mother as the head of the household. During the discussion she indicated that her elder brother who lived and worked in Gaborone was the head of the household [*tlhogo ya lolwapa*] because he was chief [*kgosi*], even though he made virtually no input in maintaining the household financially.

Some respondents alluded to their dependence on the head of household for guidance, and saw that position as being associated with the handling and resolution of disputes within the homestead, as well as dealing with problems that faced household members from outside. These roles were largely associated with men. Moatlhodi, a self-identified male household head in Gaborone voiced this view:

> The main thing that I am responsible for in the household as head [*tlhogo*] is to ensure that the male responsibilities are taken care of. Care of the children and their mother. I am the one responsible for maintaining discipline in this home.

Women's accounts of their experiences illustrated that the male breadwinner-cum-decision maker was more of a cultural ideal than actual practice (Mookodi 1999).

In the discussions on marriage, some women alluded to cultural ideals of partnership and economic security, while others regarded marriage as a survival strategy, a marriage for maize meal (*nyalo ya paleche*). Marriage for maize meal was described as having a relationship with a man for the purpose of getting financial support for food and other basic needs. One single

mother in Gaborone further explained, 'Marriage is useful because it enables people to make financial contributions to the welfare of their families'. Another single mother had the same view, stating that the life of a married person is different from that of a single one. She indicated that a mother who is single is at an economic disadvantage compared to one who is married, as she alone has the burden of raising children. Motlatsi, another single mother in Manyana, felt the same way, stating that she could obtain assistance for raising her children if she married. Masego, a widowed grandmother in her late seventies, felt that the success and failure of marriage hinged on the extent of financial support that a woman received from her husband. She held the view that husbands should be the main breadwinners.

Many respondents in Gaborone referred to the increase in incidence of economically motivated cohabitation. A study conducted by Bhebhe and Mosha in Gaborone (1997) indicated that help from male partners came in the form of groceries, payments towards rent, utilities and food. In my study, Meisie, a 43-year-old single mother of two children, had been deserted by her long-term partner. When asked about the value and significance of consensual relationships, she had very strong views that reflected her expectations of economic support from the man she cohabited with: 'The man I told you about is the only one that I cohabited with. I thought that he was a person with integrity who would assist me financially...' These expectations of economic support from male partners were echoed by other women such as Betty, a 48-year-old who had also been deserted by her partner of fifteen years: 'The life of a married person is different from that of a single person. The life of a married person is better. You know where you can get support and comfort'.

Some of the widows in Manyana believed that through marriage, women would be protected and provided for by men. They believed that the main reason for failures in relationships was due to the fact that young women were too independent, and disobeyed their husbands. A 71-year-old widow in Manyana said: 'When you agree to get married to a man, he will shield you from all danger. When he tells you something, you must obey. That will save you from getting into problems'. The older women who had adult children were perturbed by the increasing rate of casual sexual relationships which they regarded as a loss of morals. They were worried that young people were not formalising their relationships through marriage.

While many women's survival strategies involve male economic support, an increasing number of women are establishing and maintaining 'independent' lives. This view was reflected by some self-identified female heads of households in Gaborone. Meisie, a 43-year-old woman gave the following reasons for identifying herself as the head of her household:

> When you are alone with nobody to help you, like I am, then all responsibilities fall on your shoulders. If there is a problem in this yard, and the police are called, I am the one that will have to answer for it. Only me. The police will not ask for my children, or my siblings. They will ask for me. They will ask *me* what happened.

She indicated that she had little contact with relatives in the rural areas. While she may not be recognised as the head of her household due to her gender, many of the roles that she performs in her urban household incorporate those traditionally relegated to men. The 'new' autonomy among single women is related to the economic independence that has been partly obtained through wage employment and property-ownership. Meisie's views illustrate what Larsson (1989), Driel (1994), Bhebe and Mosha (1997) refer to as the social freedom and autonomy gained by many women in urban areas from reduced reliance on extended family economic support and influence.

It can be argued that a growing proportion of single women who spend the majority of their adult lives and establish homesteads in the urban areas are less affected by kinship influences than those single mothers whose lives remain embedded in their natal families out of economic need. The degree of autonomy that women exercise over their lives and the lives of their dependants is highly contingent on the degree of economic power that they possess. For many women, however, the continuous juggling of cultural expectations and changing realities often results in violent reactions from male partners.

As indicated earlier, much of the research on violence against women in Botswana has been conducted by women's organisations such as Emang Basadi, Women and Law in Southern Africa, The Women's Shelter Project and Lentswe La Basadi. One important aspect of this research is that of providing the opportunity for abused women to voice their experiences of abuse. Many women's experiences of violence revolve around perceived challenges to male authority. Lentswe La Basadi relates one young married woman's story of exploitation and abuse:

> Ever since I finished school, I have been working at the National Food Laboratory. I have done some short courses to develop my career at the University of Pretoria, and with the City and Guilds of London. My husband is illiterate and has always been self-employed. His business has been quite successful, and at first he supported me quite well financially ... Our problems started when my husband stopped supporting me and the children financially. Fortunately I continued working, but my salary wasn't very much and I really struggled to make ends meet... During all this time my husband beat me several times . . . The climax to our problems started in August 1998 when I applied for a Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) loan [with the intention of] rearing and selling goats in Mochudi [a small town immediately north of Gaborone]. Since I was working full time I thought it would be difficult for me to administer the project so I allowed my husband to buy the goats and the stock feeds. Later I left for my course in Pretoria [the capital of South Africa]. When I came back, I found that my husband had bought a mini-bus (*combi*) and he told me that he had bought goats as well. At Mochudi I found him with his girlfriend and a certain man. I got very angry. How could he be playing around and having fun with a woman when he was supposed to be supervising the project for which I was suffering so much in repaying the loan? When I asked him that question, he got furious and the beating started. He forced me into the combi and said: 'I am going to teach you a lesson when we get home. I will teach you how a man can make a woman respect him'. He tried to strangle me and beat me with his fist (Lentswe La Basadi 2001:13).

The legal situation of married women in Botswana continues to be that of minors. Married women cannot obtain bank loans without the written consent of their husbands. This educated woman found herself in a situation where she had to defer to her husband due to marriage, but found herself bearing the financial, emotional and physical cost of challenging her husband's authority. The subordination of married women to the legal guardianship and authority of their husbands may have the effect of deterring young women from getting married. Unmarried women can apply for bank loans and land independently. The opportunities that are available to unmarried women with education and economic means provide the chance to live independently or reduce their reliance on male relatives and sexual partners.

Attempts to understand men's violent behaviour have resulted in a discourse suggesting that men throughout the world are *in crisis*. These crises stem from dwindling economic opportunities, as

well as actual and perceived threats to their authority over women (see e.g. Cornwall and White 2000; Morrell 2001).

Men in Crisis?

The literature on men in crisis/crises of masculinity attempts to contend with men's lived realities, including attempting to find reasons and causes for what are regarded as negative and harmful aspects of men's behaviour: violence, crime and unsafe sexual practices. The key argument here is that men find themselves in a predicament with regard to a loss of power and control (Cornwall and White 2000; Whitehead 2002).

In many African societies the breadwinner ideology was largely based on the insertion of men into wage labour during the colonial era. The breadwinner/head of household ideology is now an entrenched aspect of cultural organisation in many of our countries. In Botswana, the earning power of young male migrants increased their autonomy with respect to their family. Prior to labour migration, young men had relied on family elders to arrange their marriages and pay bridewealth. Their absence effectively delayed marriage processes, and their wages provided them with the opportunity to pay for the bridewealth themselves (Schapera 1933). The new cash-earning power shaped gender relations of male economic provision and dominance, and female dependence and subordination. While the position of breadwinner/head of household may provide men with much power and authority over women, it exerts pressure on men to live up to expectations of resource provision and authority. This pressure is generated within societies and is transferred to individuals through socialisation throughout the course of life.

According to this line of argument, men are facing challenges to their authority as increasing numbers of women enter the workforce and earn incomes. At the same time, men are not guaranteed incomes, due to limited employment opportunities, and retrenchments throughout the world. Men in Botswana are increasingly relying on cash incomes to survive, asserting their authority among family members, as well as illustrating their social mobility among peers and within their communities. This is becoming increasingly difficult against the background of limited employment prospects as illustrated by the high rate of unemployment.

In the context of South Africa, Ratele (2001) points to effects of the changing political and economic environment on male identities. He posits that, while black populations were affected by the misery that was part and parcel of apartheid policies, many hitherto unemployed black males in townships ameliorated this situation by heroic participation in the struggle for independence. The period following independence was the effective end of this 'honeymoon' period, as many men were forced to return to the realities of unemployment and the squalor of township life. Entrenched gender inequalities were manifested in heightened gender violence.

The male crisis discourse is useful for providing insight into the changing social and economic contexts that African men *and* women are forced to contend with. This type of analysis can be employed to understand the dynamics of uncertainty with respect to male violence against women, as well as the spread of HIV/AIDS. Male violence against women has been attributed to male assertion of power over women. The literature on violence against women, and HIV/AIDS in Botswana does not provide much insight into the uncertainties and challenges faced by men, and the possible links between the crises in men's lives and their behaviour.

Pattman (2001) examined the social construction of gender identity among students at the University of Botswana. The findings of the study allude to the male respondents' references to self-identified cultural markers of masculinity such as excessive drinking and womanising,

which they interpreted as virility and youthful defiance. Rather than being imprisoned by these cultural markers, however, young men were constantly negotiating dominant cultural images of masculinity. This is illustrated in the emergence of men's groups such as the Society for Men against AIDS in Botswana (SMMABO), and the Men against Violence group in Botswana. The very emergence of these groups suggests that some men are negotiating and renegotiating notions of male identity and behaviour.

Debates on 'males in crisis' in Botswana are being taken up in academic circles and public discussions as illustrated by Log Raditlhokwa's open letter to President Mogae on what he referred to as the 'The Plight of the Distressed Man'.[10] Raditlhokwa was responding to an appeal by the President to members of the gender movement to find solutions to the escalating rates of male violence against women. Raditlhokwa referred to the phenomenon of the 'distressed man' as being a new development in the country. His sympathy for this 'distressed man' largely emanates from what he believed to be failures of the state and society:

> ... 'problems of living' and the crisis of self-esteem overwhelm men, they become a danger to themselves, women, girls and children. It is a universal patriarchal tendency. It should also be accepted that in order to improve the status of women, we must eliminate environmental conditions that generate disaffection and destructive tendencies afflicting men and boys (Raditlhokwa 2003:13).

Raditlhokwa's intervention is clearly a plea for political commitment on the part of the state in order to address socio-economic disparities. His notion of the 'distressed male' with problems of living is clearly faced with a myriad of uncertainties marked by disillusionment caused by limited survival prospects and related losses in status within the society. He makes reference to patriarchy as, presumably, the system that fuels male crisis. While one would have expected him to elaborate this further, it was beyond his agenda. What we can glean from this article is a need to further examine what constitutes 'gender', 'patriarchy', as well as the role of the state in addressing or not, whichever the case may be, male violence against women.

Concluding Remarks

My paper situates issues of uncertainty, and gender-based violence in contemporary Botswana by examining how processes of modernisation and change have shaped women's and men's life experiences. I have illustrated how rural social organisation changed due to the migrant labour system, as well as the infusion of western education and Christianity. These influences altered value systems at societal and individual levels. The changing life experiences of women and men have led them to review their priorities. These changed priorities resulted in a dramatic reduction in marriages. Such change was made possible by the increased individual choice and the loss of authority among family elders. The emergence of the male breadwinner during this period created a new dimension of male dominance.

The discovery of diamonds has accelerated the rate of modernisation. While much of the benefits trickle down through social services, they have not reached all. Unemployment and limited economic prospects among women and men lead to the type of despair that breeds tension and violence. The findings of studies on violence and women's lived experiences illustrate how pursuing survival needs can bring them into conflict with men, particularly in situations where men regard their authority as being threatened.

The realities of violence and gender inequality have the consequence of weakening the ability of

Africans to address contemporary problems such as the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. I posit that while gender discourses on patriarchy have done much to situate the problem of violence against women, these benefits have the tendency of being reductionist by over-simplifying men's positions as being of dominance, while relegating women to victimhood status. This also assumes many certainties about power relations, particularly men's privileged status. The discussion on male crises has further illustrated the importance of understanding the processes that shape individual behaviour. This paper has presented the challenge of acknowledging the existence of uncertainties in their many varied forms within our societies. It is important to name them, and determine how African women and men relate to them in their everyday lives.

Notes

1. A more detailed critique of the dominant discourses is contained in Mookodi and Fuh (2004; in press).
2. The transfer of cattle from the family of the male spouse to that of the female spouse.
3. The manifestations of modernisation such as education and economic change and their effects on family forms are discussed by Molokomme (1991); Driel (1994) and the Women and Law in Southern Africa Project (1997).
4. The first time the category 'living together' was included in the national census.
5. A large ethnic group in south-east Botswana.
6. In this respect, Gulbrandsen's findings concur with Schapera's research in the 1930s.
7. The body of a murdered woman had been discovered in the grounds near the University in the same month.
8. Two of the discussions were facilitated by the Department of Educational Foundations, and Emang Basadi Women's Organisation (University of Botswana Branch).
9. All informants have been assigned fictional names.
10. A lecturer at the Social Work Department, University of Botswana, and a prominent gender activist in Botswana.

References

Alexander, E. 2001. 'The Case of Women in Politics in Botswana', in S. Kaye, L. Machacha, and T. Maundeni, (eds.), *Gender: Opportunities and Challenges: 1st National Conference of the Gender Policy and Programme Committee*, Proceedings from a conference at the University of Botswana, 22-24 October 2001, Gaborone: University of Botswana, pp. 79-84.
Alverson, H. 1978. *Mind in the Heart of Darkness: Value and Identity among the Tswana of Southern Africa*, London, Yale University Press.
Bhebhe, B., and A. C. Mosha. 1997. 'The Concept of Women Remaining Single and Its Economic Consequences: A Case Study, Gaborone City', Unpublished paper, the University of Botswana Library.
Botswana Daily News, 2003, 'UB Students Identified', 14 February, p. 2.
Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA). 1997a. *Study of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Botswana,* Vol. 1*, Overall Assessment of Poverty*, Gaborone, BIDPA.
Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA). 1997b. *Study of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Botswana*, Vol. 2, *Analysis of Income Poverty Using the Poverty Datum Line*, Gaborone, BIDPA.

Botswana Police Service. 1999. *Report of a Study on Rape in Botswana,* Gaborone, Government Printer.
Cleaver, F. 1982. 'Do Men Matter? New Horizons in Gender and Development', *IDS21 Insights,* issue no. 35.
Colcough, C., and S. McCarthy. 1980. *The Political Economy of Botswana: A Study of Growth and Distribution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Comaroff, J. L., and S. Roberts. 1977. 'Marriage and Extra-Marital Sexuality: The Dialectics of Legal Change Among the Kgatla', *Journal of African Law*, vol. 21, no. 1.
Cornwall, A., and S. C.White. 2000. 'Men, Masculinities and Development: Politics, Policies and Practice', *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 1-6.
Driel, F.. 1994. *Poor and Powerful: Female-Headed Households and Unmarried Motherhood in Botswana,* Saarbrucken, Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik Breitenbach GmbH.
Emang Basadi-NGO Network on Women's Rights and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF). 1995. 'Rape and Femicide in Botswana: A Report on the Proceedings of the National Workshop on Violence against Women', Gaborone, 3-4 March 1995.
Green, D. 1999. *Gender Violence in Africa: African Women' Responses*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
Greig, A., M. Kimmel, and J. Lang. 2000. *Men, Masculinities and Development: Broadening Our Work towards Gender Equality*, Gender in Development Monograph Series 10, New York, UNDP.
Gulbrandsen, Ø. 1986. 'To Marry or Not to Marry: Marital Strategies and Sexual Relations in a Tswana Society', *Ethnos*, vol. 51, nos 1-2, pp. 7-28.
Gulbrandsen, Ø.. 1996. *Poverty in the Midst of Plenty: Socio-Economic Marginalization, Ecological Deterioration and Political Stability in Tswana Society*, Bergen, Norse Publications.
Hermans, J., and D. Nteta. 1992. 'Men's Attitudes towards Women in Botswana - Phase One: Literature Review', Unpublished paper, University of Botswana Library.
Ingstad, B., and S. Saugestad. 1987. 'Unmarried Mothers in Changing Tswana Society: Implications for Household Form and Viability', *Forum for Utviklingsstudier,* no. 4, Oslo, Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt.
Larsson, A. 1989. *Women Householders and Housing Strategies: The Case of Gaborone, Botswana*, Stockholm, The National Swedish Institute For Building Research.
Lentswe La Basadi (NGO). 2001. *Unearthing Her Story: Stories By Women*, Gaborone, Lentswe La Lesedi.
Mannathoko, C. 1992. 'Feminist Theories and the Study of Gender Issues in Southern Africa', in R. Meena, (ed.), *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations*, Harare, Southern Africa Political Economy Trust, pp. 71-91.
Mathoma, A. 2001. 'Combating Domestic Violence: Essential for Women's Survival in the 21st Century', in S. Kaye, L. Machacha, and T. Maundeni, (eds.), *Gender: Opportunities and Challenges: 1st National Conference of the Gender Policy and Programme Committee,* University of Botswana, 22-24 October 2001, Gaborone, University of Botswana, pp. 117-123.
Maundeni, T. 2001. 'Images of Females and Males in Setswana Language: How Females Are Disadvantaged', in S. Kaye, L. Machacha, and T. Maundeni, (eds.), *Gender: Opportunities and Challenges: 1st National Conference of the Gender Policy and Programme Committee,* University of Botswana, 22-24 October 2001, Gaborone, University of Botswana, pp. 37-48.
Metlhaetsile Women's Information Centre. n.d. *Domestic Violence: It's a Crime!,* Gaborone, Lentswe La Lesedi.

Mogwe, A. 1988. 'A Go Itewa Ke Monna wa Gago ke Botshelo? A Preliminary Investigation into Battered Women in Botswana', M.Phil. Dissertation, Cape Town, University of Cape Town.
Molenaar, M. 1980. 'Social Change within a Traditional Pattern: A Case Study of a Tswana Ward', Unpublished article, University of Botswana Library.
Molokomme, A. 1991. 'Children of the Fence: Maintenance of Extra-Marital Children Under Law and Practice in Botswana', PhD Thesis, University of Leiden.
Mookodi, G. 1999. 'We Are Struggling: Gender Dynamics of Survival in Low Income Households in Botswana', PhD Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto.
Mookodi, G. 2001. 'The Complexities of Female Household Headship in Botswana', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* (published at the University of Botswana*),* vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 148-164.
Mookodi, G. 2003a. 'Household Perspectives of Women and Men in Botswana', Seminar, Gaborone, Botswana, September 8-11, 2003.
Mookodi, G. 2003b. 'Marriage and Nuptiality in Botswana', Paper presented at the 2001 Population and Housing Census Dissemination Seminar, September 8-11, 2003.
Mookodi, G. and D. Fuh. 2004. 'Finding the "Missing" Male in Gender Discourses in Botswana', Special issue, 'Critical Social Challenge', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (in press).
Morrell, Robert. (ed.) 2001. *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, and London, New York, Zed Books.
Motts, N. 1994. 'A Case Study of the Social and Political Economic Determinants of Female Headed Household Poverty in Kang, Botswana', Master of Science (MS) Thesis, University of Guelph.
National Aids Coordinating Agency. 2003. *Botswana 2003 Second Generation HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, Gaborone, Ministry of the State President.
Nyamnjoh, F. 2001. 'Concluding Reflections Beyond Identities: Rethinking Power and Africa', Paper presented at the University of Botswana, Department of Sociology Seminar Series.
Pattman, R. 2001. 'Ugandans, Catmen, Sackmen and Others: Student Masculinities at the University of Botswana', in S. Kaye, L. Machacha, and T. Maundeni, (eds.), *Gender: Opportunities and Challenges: 1st National Conference of the Gender Policy and Programme Committee*, University of Botswana, 22-24 October 2001, Gaborone, University of Botswana. pp. 106-116.
Raditlhokwa, L. 2003. 'Open Letter to President Mogae: The Plight of the Distressed Man', *The Botswana Gazette,* 22 October.
Ratele K. 2001. 'Between "Ouens": Everyday Makings of Black Masculinity', in R. Morrell, (ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, and London, New York, Zed Books. pp. 239-254.
Schapera, I. 1933. 'Pre-Marital Pregnancy and Native Opinion: A Note on Social Change', *Africa*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 59-89.
Schapera, I. 1966. *Married Life in an African Tribe*, Evanston, North Western University Press.
Schapera, I., and J. L. Comaroff. 1991. (revised edition.), *The Tswana*, London, Kegan Paul International.
Siphambe, H. 2003. 'Economic Activity and Labour Force', Paper presented at the 2001 Population and Housing Census Dissemination Seminar in Gaborone, September 8-11, 2003.
Summers, R. W., and A. M. Hoffman. (eds.) 2002. *Domestic Violence: A Global View*, Westport, Greenwood Press.

Syson, L. 1972. 'Unmarried Mothers in Botswana', *Botswana Notes and Records,* vol. 5, pp. 41-51.
Tlou, T. and A. Campbell. 1982. *History of Botswana*, Gaborone, MacMillan Botswana.
Townsend, N. 1997. 'Men, Migration, and Households in Botswana: An Exploration of Connections over Time and Space', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 405-420.
Vieritis, L. M., and M. R. Williams. 2002. 'Assessing the Impact of Gender Inequality on Female Homicide and Victimization across U.S. Cities', *Violence against Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 35-63.
Walby, S. 1986. *Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment,* Cambridge, Polity Press.
Watts, C., S. Osam, and E. Win. (eds.) 1995. *The Private Is Public: A Study of Violence against Women in Southern Africa,* Harare, Women in Law in Development in Africa.
Whitehead, S. 2002. *Men and Masculinities,* Cambridge, Polity Press.
Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA). 1997. *Botswana's Families and Women's Rights in a Changing Environment*, Gaborone, Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, Botswana.
Women and Law In Southern Africa (WLSA). 1999. *Chasing the Mirage: Women and the Administration of Justice*, Gaborone, Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, Botswana.
Women's Affairs Department. 1999. *Report on the Study on the Socio-Economic Implications of Violence against Women in Botswana*, Gaborone, Government Printer.

Godisang Mookodi
Department of Sociology
University of Botswana
Gaborone
Botswana

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Erick Otieno Nyambedha
Change and Continuity in Kin-Based Support Systems for Widows and Orphans among the Luo in Western Kenya

Abstract: This paper discusses change and continuity in the kin-based support for widows and orphans among the Luo in western Kenya. It shows how the involvement of external actors such as church and donor-sponsored institutions have transformed some traditional systems and created new opportunities for widows and orphans. For instance, an indigenous institution such as *duol* (originally a communal eating arrangement, which has now evolved into a prayer house), now addresses the needs of widows and orphans through church and donor assistance. Widows and orphans can now choose when and for what purpose they should utilise domestic ties, and when to turn to relations outside the extended kin group. It is noted that many widows and orphans prefer to deal with relations outside the kinship system in their everyday life. This has resulted in conflict between the traditional and the modern systems, with the traditional one feeling undermined. It suggested that to understand change and continuity in the kin-based support for widows and orphans, we need to understand the new social processes that have influenced changes in corporate kin group responsibility. It is argued that donor assistance to vulnerable groups, at the local level, should take into consideration the prevailing kinship structure and other relationships if conflictsof interest are to be minimised.

Introduction

This paper describes everyday life practices of the widows and orphans as they construct various relations to meet the daily needs of their livelihood in a changing kin-based support system. It examines how they seek support in the local community groups, the extended family system and the church, and the ways in which these affect authority structures in the local kinship system. I discuss the challenges faced by the local community, the extended family system and the donor community in assisting the widows and orphans in the community studied and describe how change as well as continuity are manifested in the attempts to support both the widows and orphans through the transformation of various kin-based structures.

Among the Luo, a patrilineal ethnic group in western Kenya, husbands are the traditional breadwinners. In addition to the husbands, the women and their children belonged to the entire kin group. They derived security and support from the extended family set up. This arrangement has its roots in the traditional marriage practices and the fact that bride wealth payment upon marriage was the responsibility of the kin members. Payment of bride wealth guaranteed children and their mothers the right to resources within the kin group and a place within the kinship structure (Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen 2003). While the husband had sole conjugal rights over the wife, their children were considered to belong to the entire community and socialisation was its responsibility (Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1991:19). In the same way, so was it the community's responsibility to support the children. The widows were supported to help children grow up within the extended family system where the corporate kin would have the opportunity to continue socialising the children according to their way of life. However, there have been changes in the corporate kin group assistance to the widows and orphans. When the husbands die, widows and their children have to look for alternative sources of support. Changes in kin-based support systems and general poverty in the community present the widows and

children with many uncertainties, particularly at this time when HIV/AIDS is ravaging communities. In some cases, there are indications of continuity in the people's attitudes and value system with regard to support for vulnerable members and that the indigenous kin-based institutions attempt to provide support for vulnerable members. There is, however, also much to indicate that the kinship system, which rests on the extended family network, has changed because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other forces that can be traced back in history to the beginning of colonial influence (Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo 1989). There are now great numbers of young widows and orphans (children who have lost one or both parents). They have been left by husbands and fathers who have died of HIV/AIDS, and there have been occasions of prolonged illness and eventual death of young adults due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Barnett and Blaikie 1992; UNICEF 1994). The extended family has been unable to cope with the increasing need for support, and many people therefore have looked for other forms of support to supplement the limited help that they are receiving in the traditional kinship system. The church has been an important provider of such support, and many people therefore have developed special relations with the church. This has led some people within the extended family system to feel that the authority of the kin group is being undermined when an external organisation such as the church gives support to widows and orphans.

Methods

The research on which this paper is based was undertaken between November 1998 and July 2002. The study was initially designed to collect data on support systems for orphaned children. However, during the course of data collection, some interesting data emerged on the survival mechanisms of widows and the orphans. Separating the two became impossible. In addition to using the techniques of participant observation during which I visited the widows and orphans in their homes or in their farming fields, and attended funerals in the study community, I collected both quantitative and qualitative data through interviews. Longitudinal data were also collected on household survival mechanisms among a few purposively selected orphan households where both the widows and orphans were monitored and interviewed. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to both the orphans and the widows by trained field assistants. Some of the widows who were in acute need of assistance, for instance medical expenses, food and schooling expenses for the orphans, were given financial assistance from the project. In a few critical cases, seriously ill widows who approached the research team were helped with transport costs to seek medical treatment outside the study area.

The Setting

This study was conducted in the Nyang'oma division of western Kenya. Nyang'oma division in Bondo district lies along the shores of Lake Victoria (Nyambedha 2000; Nyambedha et al. 2001). The local economy is mainly based on subsistence farming, though other activities, such as fishing, small-scale mining, labour migration and minor trading, are important in this 'pastoral-agrico-fishing' society (Ocholla-Ayayo 1976:18). The climate is characterised by scarce and erratic rainfall, which makes food production in the community uncertain because of frequent crop failure. To a limited extent, people earn their living as teachers or employees in the nearby public primary and secondary schools and at the local Roman Catholic mission. People, both from outside and within the community, settle at the fishing beaches to trade in fish

products and to pursue other income generating activities. Besides the Catholic Church many locals are also followers of the Anglican Church. A smaller number of the local people are followers of indigenous African independent churches.

The Luo have a patrilineal kinship structure and, like a number of other African ethnic groups, are polygynous. A recent study (Nyambedha 2000) shows that the majority of Luo people in Bondo district still practise polygyny. Marriage is exogamous. As Whisson (1964) writing on the Luo put it, kinship, rather than territory, was the charter for this kind of social organisation, although kinship could be adapted to give validity to a territorial pattern. According to Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo (1989), the village (*gweng*) consisted of people who were related genealogically, and of non-agnates. Its basis was in the formation of alliances, developing from strategic considerations, including seizing and holding a given territory. The original occupants of a certain territory could invite friends or affinal relatives to stay with them in the same village. Their smooth co-existence in the village could result in village relations that proved useful when people from the same village migrated to urban areas (Parkin 1978; Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo 1989). For these people, there are two classes of intra-familial relationships which are crucial. The first ones we call *domestic*: the kin ties which exist within the homestead and immediate locality (within *Kakwaro)*, or lineage, while the second set of relationships - called here *extended relations*, are those which exist with people outside the locality, that is, with the matrilineal kin and affines of a deceased husband or the matri- and patri-kin of the widow. In the recent past, village relations have also helped in addressing misfortunes befalling people inhabiting the same village, in particular widows and orphans.

Support for the vulnerable members of the community was the responsibility of the domestic kin groups in the past. But this support is no longer fully tenable within the larger domestic space of *Kakwaro* because of the great burdens, the lack of resources and changes in people's value systems. Under normal conditions, people only resort to the extended relations because they are unable to receive assistance from the domestic ties. Some people within the domestic sphere do not allow their children to move out to be supported by the maternal kin because it is embarrassing. A 41-year-old widower once explained to me: 'The maternal grandmother wanted to stay with the youngest but I have refused. It will appear as if I am incapable of supporting them' (Nyambedha 2000:65). Ideally, paternal relations among the Luo can lose their reputation if they are not able to support the widows and orphans within their kin network. However, with the present increase in the number of widows and orphans, many more maternal kin are supporting widows and orphans than was the case in the past.

Domestic ties - the creation of daily practice and interaction - are specific but they are also structured by traditional expectations. As Ominde (1952:69) has argued, the relationship between children of different mothers among the Luo is much less close, because the mother in each house thinks first of the future of her own children even if they share the same father. For this reason, accumulation of wealth in any particular house is viewed with alarm in other houses, and a mother will maintain a constant watch with the intention of putting up stiff competition to other sections of the family because their success could overshadow her own children. As happens in many situations, jealousy and accusations of witchcraft are generated if the competition is unbearable and one party feels that one section is responsible for their misfortune. This has worked to create tension among many people, especially among members of a kin group. Children of co-wives were more likely to be rivals for land. Furthermore, relations between full brothers who share land were characterised by tension because of their economic competition. This kind of rivalry among people who are genealogically related generates the

conditions for the construction of other forms of relations outside the kin circles for purposes of support and security in everyday life circumstances.

Extended Relationships: Moving Beyond Kinship

Apart from the fact that there are few resources to support vulnerable groups within the kin network, widows and orphans have other reasons why they do not always approach their kinsmen for support and prefer to deal with other institutions such as the church and other donor supported initiatives. Many people do not want to be indebted to their kin relations in the future. There is usually gossip within the families and many people within the extended family kin network would want to lay claim to the success of those who grew up as vulnerable members. Such claims are usually expressions of kinship obligations and expectations that a particular kin group would place on its successful members the burden of sharing their resources with a chain of kin members who are also needy. People would therefore prefer to obtain support from external sources. By doing so, in their adult life they do not have to bear the burden of supporting many other people who want to lay claim to their resources. Other reasons why vulnerable groups look beyond kinship for material assistance include rivalry between close kin members, and the problematic economic situation. However, the new modes of economic support available outside the kin network have opened up more opportunities for many people who are in need of assistance.

The Luo community was traditionally homogenous, with an egalitarian social system. This rested on the mutual social responsibility under which support was readily available for the disadvantaged members of the community (Whisson 1964). Assistance of various kinds and hospitality were given to members of the family and the clan. Hospitality and generosity were also extended beyond the family, and no one was ever left to starve as long as there was food to share. Indeed, the elderly widows were helped with the cultivation of crops and given young grandchildren, especially girls, to assist in household chores (Nyambedha et al. 2003a). In some cases, there was the practice of *Kisuma*: people who did not have food could request free donations from other relatives. There was also a communal eating arrangement in *duol,* the old man's court and *siwindhe,* the old woman's house. In these central eating places, orphans and widows and other young women ate together. The communal eating arrangements therefore served as security for the disadvantaged members of the society (Mbuya 1965; Nyambedha 2000). However, recently, the term *duol*, which had already fallen into disuse, is now being adapted by the mainstream churches among the Luo to mobilise people to respond to the new challenges of contemporary life. These challenges include those brought about by the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen forthcoming). The present activities of *duol* now move beyond the domestic and kinship ties to include extended relationships with members who share common residence but not kinship ties.

The Luo practised levirate marriage, in which a distant cousin or younger brother might enter into a union with the widows of a deceased cousin or brother to help socialise children and continue child-bearing on behalf of the deceased (Whisson 1964; Potash 1986). Children born out of levirate unions belonged to the deceased man and inherited his property alongside his own biological children. The men in levirate unions were in most cases already married and with their own families and they were only expected occasionally to visit the young widows. They did not exercise any control over the property of the deceased, especially if they were distant cousins. Thus many widows preferred to choose consorts from distant cousins who would not desire to

control the late husband's property, as the younger brothers would do. In my earlier research in this community, I found out that a few younger brothers were controlling property of the deceased without considering the needs of the widows and orphans. However, recently, because of HIV/AIDS and the uncertainty surrounding the death of many young men in the community, some young widows have not been able to find young men within the community for levirates. They therefore resort to outsiders (*jokowiny*) (Nyambedha 2000), since the young men within the lineage are suspicious of the circumstances that led to the death of the young husbands. Many widows therefore move out to different places where there could be unsuspecting young men and sometimes remarry or indulge in casual sex mainly for money. This practice has resulted in more orphans who are without the support of either kin members or biological fathers. It has also led to an increase in the number of adults or young men infected with HIV/AIDS, particularly along the fish landing beaches on the shores of Lake Victoria.

The community experienced social and economic changes during the colonial period with the introduction of migrant labour in urban areas, and the adoption of a monetary economy (Whisson 1964; Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo 1989). This change occurred when young men left the villages to look for wage employment in urban areas. The influence of money and external ideas derived from Western values and lifestyle from the urban areas, which emphasised small family size, significantly contributed to social and economic change among the Luo. One of the casualties of this change was the domestic economy, initially characterised by egalitarian relations, and the breakdown of the moral values that held together such indigenous institutions as *duol* and the practice of *kisuma.* The extended family and the kin network were thoroughly weakened. Compounding this problem was the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the community during the past two decades. My earlier fieldwork showed that the mortality rate among young men was higher than that of the females, and many young men have died leaving behind orphaned children and young widows. The rampant deaths of young and productive young men has also increased poverty levels in the community. This has seriously impaired the ability of kin members to support their vulnerable relatives. These factors have made it necessary for the widows to invest in other relations outside their kin network in order to cope with the complexities of their present situation. In doing so, the widows and orphans have acquired more external ties, such as embracing church values and denouncing some cultural practices. Some children have moved to stay within the church or in some cases, with people or some institutions within the locality that help orphans. Due to their hierarchy within the family set-up, children can easily move to stay elsewhere if that can enable them to access assistance. In other cases, orphaned children have declined to stay in foster homes and prefer being assisted within their deceased parents' homesteads. Some of them cite problems of being exploited and having little time for studies. Children have deployed their agency in negotiating for assistance through their own local connections and found ways of dealing with their situation. For the young widows, this has not been a common practice. They have responsibility towards their young children who need guidance and care in addition to other expectations such as holding the family together after the death of their husbands. If they have to move out, then the entire household has to migrate. But there are no institutions that can accommodate entire families. However, in the past few decades, elderly widows with no one to support within the extended family move to stay within church premises in order to obtain assistance.

Everyday Life Practices of Orphans and Widows among the Luo and the Changing Kin-based Support Systems

In this section, I will describe the daily life practices for orphans and widows and attempt to show how these life practices have embraced the changes in kinship obligations. I also discuss how some external actors, mainly the church and donor agencies, influence the practices of widows and orphans.

The African concept of kin-based support faces great challenges during this time of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This is because the values and moral bases that ensured support for vulnerable members have become increasingly strained. Among the Luo, and specifically in the community studied, orphanhood is remarkably high. At least one out of three children under the age of eighteen years has lost at least one parent (Nyambedha et al. 2003a). There are few resources to share, and members of the extended family are not able to embrace the values of the egalitarian mode of life. Kinship has to a great extent become symbolic, and occasionally finds its expression mainly in the performance of normative kin obligations, such as rituals.

Many women and widows have joined various community-based groups such as the *duol* and the *nyoluoro* (rotating credit scheme), which are mostly formed on the basis of the patronage of the mainstream churches in this community, particularly the Catholic and Anglican churches. Apart from acting as structures for perpetuating Christian values, the churches are also widely considered as vehicles for community development. Earlier studies conducted in the community showed that these groups are capable not only of supporting the orphans and widows, but also of helping to pass on knowledge useful for the prevention of HIV/AIDS (Ouko 1999; Nyambedha and Aagaard-Hansen forthcoming). The present *duol* and *nyoluoro* systems represent community collaborative efforts based on kinship structures and common residential boundaries. The activities of such groups also show efforts by the transformed structures of the past to address present problems.

Unlike the traditional *duol* described earlier in this paper, the present kinds of *duol* frequently transcend the traditional confines of kinship, such as a grouping of people either related genealogically or by marriage. Thus *duol* and *nyoluoro* are partly based on kin relations due to territorial boundaries, but many of them are also based on other forms of relations outside the kinship structure. Specifically, they include members of a particular church residing in a common territory. In these territories or villages, people have formed various relations which begin as church relations and expand to deal with most spheres of the everyday life of the followers. These relations are highly cherished as they help members face the challenges of poverty at the household level. They also spearhead community development initiatives. For the widows and orphans, they offer material support. They are also very instrumental during times of misfortune, as when a church member or a close relative of a member passes away. In such cases, the groups assume responsibility for the bereaved relatives when members of the extended kin are unable to do so. Orphans and their caretakers sometimes go to these organisations for assistance, especially for schooling expenses.

Locals sometimes find security, both during their lifetime and at an impending death, in the relations developed in church and outside the extended family network. In these forms of relations in this community, experiences of peril and responses to them are socially mediated in ways that are shared among various relationships. For example, women, the youth and other members of the community share their experiences of sadness, happiness and give support of any nature within their means to members of such groups. In the past, these responsibilities rested on the extended family. But these days with the numerous deaths due to HIV/AIDS, funerals and burial rituals are performed every weekend. Almost every household is affected and the burden is unbearable for the extended family kin network.

The people of the community studied have continued to use existing patterns of sociality like the church-based *duol* and the practice of *nyoluoro* to mobilise local resources to alleviate their problems. Widows and orphans have had to struggle with the effects of prolonged illness suffered by their husbands, and the expenses upon death when cattle have to be slaughtered to feed people during funerals. These further reduce the resource base of families that the orphans and widows can rely on in times of difficulty. In some cases, elderly widows are severely affected, especially when they have to support many orphaned children after the death of their sons and daughters. These situations of misfortune cause uncertainty, particularly when such people have to act and deal with relations both within and outside their kin network. In November 1998 when I began my fieldwork in the community, I met a 72-year-old widow and grandmother of nine double-orphaned children whom she supported. Her two sons on whom she had depended for her livelihood had just died, as had their wives. The children had been transferred from an urban area to the rural village where they now lived with her. Her features conveyed expressions of anxiety. She was uncertain whether her younger brother-in-law would be willing to continue to assist her in paying the required school fees for the grandchildren. She explained to me:

> When they were sent away from school due to lack of books, I went to my brother-in-law who teaches in a secondary school in Ugenya [a neighbouring locality]. But now I fear asking him anything else. He will complain that this woman's sons did not die for her to disturb me (Nyambedha et al. 2003b).

The old widow's sentiments exemplify feelings that are running throughout the community. Kin relatives alone can no longer be relied on for assistance in times of misfortune and those who give sporadic assistance do it half-heartedly.

Duol is a source of hope for many locals who live in situations of misfortune and poverty. Its re-invention has created new spaces for the many widows and orphans of today. It is also a source of hope for the sick who expect assistance towards the end. The members of *duol* pray for people when they are sick, die or are being buried. In many cases, they also help by buying coffins and feeding members of the church and others who come to the funeral on the day of burial. A few months before her death, Beatrice,[1] a widowed informant whom I had followed for four years, came to our research office to seek help for her trip to Mombasa, where she was receiving treatment for her illness. She was suffering from tuberculosis with persistent headaches due to her cough. Her local church prayer group, which now fulfilled functions similar to the *duol* of the past, had already agreed to help with part of the transport costs. She noted that she had moved to a new home built for her through the assistance of the local prayer group without consulting or requesting any assistance from kin members: 'I moved out of my house and built my own home because it was discovered that this sickness of mine is because of the house and the home where I have been staying'.

In dealing with her misfortune, Beatrice found it more satisfying to deal with relations outside her husband's kin, such as the church, our research office and many others who were of material benefit to her. This did not, however, go down well with her husband's kin who wanted their position as kin recognised, especially when she was building a new home. According to Luo traditions, the brother-in-law and perhaps other relevant persons within the late husband's kin should have been present to order the construction of the house, and the kin members should have legitimised its construction by performing certain rituals commensurate with the establishment of a new home. At Beatrice's funeral, one of the senior brothers-in-law declared

the new home illegitimate because rituals were not followed. He gave as his reasons for not visiting the deceased during her time of illness, as is expected of such kinsmen, that he was not consulted when the new home was being built. Instead, the deceased relied on the local prayer house for advice and material assistance. As he declared the home illegitimate, Beatrice's only son, by then 17 years old, was uncertain about many things in his life. He was uncertain not only about how his life would be without his mother, but he had no idea about what it would be like to live in the unfamiliar environment in Mombasa where he was moving to stay with his younger uncle who had struggled to get medication for his late mother. Other orphaned children, who had stayed with Beatrice for the past five years and seen how she struggled to feed them like her own biological children, are now living with different relatives within and outside the community. Families or kin groups within the community feel that their authority is undermined by the influence of the church activities and material assistance from the donors, because they only help if the receivers comply with certain requirements determined by the church or other donors. These requirements contradict some of the customary practices with regard to widows. For example, those who want to access assistance channelled through the church are not allowed to be inherited by the cousins or brothers of a deceased husband or any other man. If they fulfil this condition, the church can assist them together with their children who are orphaned. They have to be identified through the local 'prayer house' which is constituted on the basis of kinship structures and territorial boundaries. Such structures incorporate current Christian values. Many widows turn to the church to help them in constructing houses, to access credit through the groups, and to obtain assistance for their children, thus abandoning some of the cultural values of their people. This is when the other kin members who have not been exposed to these challenges feel undermined, and it has led to conflicts in the value systems of those who have embraced change and those who want to continue with the old values in a shared locality.

In contemporary life, relations are sometimes kept alive only to the extent that they can (potentially) satisfy vital material and symbolic interests. This is why it is normal to hear members of a certain lineage, the cousin of the late Beatrice's deceased husband for example, demand recognition while in other instances people withdraw from certain relations because they are no longer relevant to their needs at a particular time in their life. The interests here include recognition as an important member of a kin network who should be consulted when significant matters are being decided, or the ability to engage in exchange relations with other locals as happens in *nyoluoro* (rotating credit scheme). Already existing relations are reinforced by these acts of exchange and by the performance of rituals of the kind that are enacted when putting up a new home, as is the case among the Luo. People value more than anything else relations that help them in the struggle to meet the demands of a livelihood. Through exchange relations such as joining the local church prayer houses, thereby adding more substance to relations that are perceived to be more helpful in times of need, the sick in the Luo community do not only secure a decent burial upon death, as we have seen in the case of Beatrice, but also various kinds of help during the difficult time of illness. But we also meet cases where the widows have reduced their interaction with members of the kin network. Perhaps they had lost faith in such relations particularly with regard to any material support they might need to alleviate their suffering. Turning to relations outside the kin group may be preferable to seeking assistance from people whose willingness to help may be uncertain. People therefore resort to forms of relations developed in church and other informal groupings that are found in many villages. Such relations are formed as a way of insuring against misfortune in the present as well as the foreseeable future. For example, the old grandmother of the nine orphans had to turn to the church to deal

with changing realities because she felt the kin relations would not be willing to continue assisting her.

Common sad experiences of losing children who are also breadwinners have worked to bring together and consolidate relations among people who previously were not very close. Such new forms of relations also encourage sharing of the few resources available as we have seen in the case of the old widow. The church has been very central in cementing such relations and has offered some orphans and widows support. Organisations that seek funds from donors to help widows and orphans have mainly used churches as the link to connect them with the local people. This explains why many widows have become regular participants in church activities; it is presumably for their own benefit and that of the orphans even after the death of the widows. These organisations, for example, have in the recent past helped to raise registration fees for orphan assistance projects through the Catholic Church. However, this change in previous practice should not be taken to imply that church relations have replaced the kinship relations. Rather, these practices should be seen as strategic attempts by the widows and orphans to use existing structures introduced from the outside to create some form of relations that can be of use during times of misfortune. Everyday life experiences have shown that they stand to gain more from such relations than what the kinship relations can offer to meet the material and spiritual needs of their life conditions.

Within the area, the Catholic Church now co-ordinates activities for home-based care for the sick. Two years ago a 15-year-old female orphan, who had stayed at the orphanage taking care of her male infant after the death of her parents, was offered an opportunity to continue her schooling in one of the mission primary schools. She was again, through the same church, offered sponsorship for secondary school. Other people within the community have also registered at organisations that provide help for orphans. Orphans who are uncertain of where to go to for assistance visit these institutions on their own, particularly those having difficulties with paying school fees. One elderly woman whose organisation helps to connect orphans to donors who can pay school fees, particularly at secondary level, related:

> When I came back in the evening, children told me that I had a visitor and when I entered the house, I found her seated at that corner. She told me that she wanted me to take her to people who help orphans with fees.

She was talking about an orphan whom I first met in 1998 when both of her parents had died, and who was a female head of household. She was assisted by her elder brother, who then was 17 years old and had dropped out of school to be a 'turn boy' (a young man who carries loads and collects fares from commuters in passenger vehicles popularly known as *matatu* in Kenya). When she passed her primary examination, she and her brother approached our research office with a suggestion to organise a fundraising to get her started in secondary school. No one was certain about how future school fees would be paid after we helped them organise the fundraising to pay for the initial down-payment at school. In some cases, people struggle to secure their children's admission into the schools. It is then easier to negotiate for other sources of support, including donor assistance for the school fees of the orphans. Another source of support is the government's bursary scheme for students in government schools. At the present time, the Kenyan government has decentralised the administration of these bursaries to constituency level (political units with parliamentary representatives). This is because there has been a general complaint that in the schools the bursaries were awarded to undeserving cases and many orphans did not benefit. But even with this new development, local connections still play

an important role in gaining access to the funds.
The way widows and their children experience the situation in which they find themselves depends on many factors, one of the most important being a common community of experience and a life-world characterised by limited opportunities due to their vulnerable position in society. To act on their situation, they have taken advantage of the new opportunities offered by the external actors. Consequently, their plight dominates the local and international discourse on the perception of widowhood and orphanhood as one of the gravest effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the developing world. This discourse underlies the view that it is the moral obligation of the donor community to help such communities by channelling funds through the churches and other community-based development initiatives.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show how widows and orphans deal with the changes in kin-based support systems among the Luo in western Kenya. I have indicated that whereas there is change in kin-based support, there are also traces of continuity, such as the *duol* and *nyoluoro,* which combine past and present features with the aim of supporting widows and orphans. Donor support is now being channelled through the church and indigenous systems, such as *duol*, in the process transforming local social relations. Locals have resorted to investing in a wide range of relations as they strive to cope with situations of misfortune and uncertainty in their daily lives. Church-based relations, relations with other people based on common experiences of stress, and relations with other organisations and individuals who provide support, have taken the upper hand as compared to relations based on genealogical kin networks. Organisations that deal with assistance to orphans and widows ought to have a proper understanding of the dynamic relations in people's daily lives that exist in a community for any intervention to be feasible. Donor help therefore should work with existing systems of kinship to minimise tension between the traditional practices and modern values.

Acknowledgements

This paper could not have been completed without the assistance of various persons and institutions. I am greatly indebted to the Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory (DBL) in Denmark for funding my study and stay in the field for the past four years. I am also indebted to the Institute of African Studies (IAS), University of Nairobi, for assistance during the initial planning of the study. Special thanks also go to Nyang'oma Research Training Site (NRTS) and the Kenyan-Danish Health Research Project (KEDAHR) for practical support, to Karen Fog Olwig and Michael Whyte for their constructive comments on the initial draft of this paper, and to Liv Haram and Bawa Yamba for their insightful comments during the review process. I am grateful to our field assistants at Nyang'oma Research Training Site (NRTS) and the people of Nyang'oma for their hospitality.

Notes

1. The name is fictitious.

References

Barnett, T. and P. Blaikie. 1992. *AIDS in Africa: Its Present and Future Impact,* London, Belhaven Press.
Cohen, D. W. and E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo. 1989. *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*, Kenya, Heinemann, London, James Currey.
Kayongo-Male, D. and P. Onyango. 1991. *The Sociology of the African Family*, London, Longman.
Mbuya, P. 1965. *Luo Customs and Belief*, Kendu Bay, African Herald Publishing House.
Ntozi, J. P. M. 1997. 'Effects of AIDS on Children: The Problem of Orphans in Uganda', *Health Transition Review*, vol. 7 (supplement), pp. 23-40.
Nyambedha, E. O. 2000. 'Support Systems for Orphaned Children in Nyang'oma Sub-Location, Bondo District, Western Kenya', Unpublished MA thesis, Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi.
Nyambedha, E. O. and J. Aagaard-Hansen. 2003. 'Changing Place, Changing Position: Orphans' Movements in a Community with high HIV/AIDS Prevalence in Western Kenya', in K. F. Olwig, and E. Gullov, (eds.), *Children's Places: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, London, Routledge, pp. 162-176.
Nyambedha, E. O. and J. Aagaard-Hansen. Forthcoming. 'The Re-Invention of D*uol* as a Potential, Community-Based Solution to the Problems of Orphanhood in Western Kenya', Paper submitted for publication.
Nyambedha, E. O., S. Wandibba, and J. Aagaard-Hansen. 2001. 'Policy Implications of the Inadequate Support Systems for Orphans in Western Kenya', *Health policy*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp.83-96.
Nambedha, E. O., S. Wandibba, and J. Aagaard-Hansen. 2003a. 'Changing Patterns of Orphan Care Due to the HIV Epidemic in Western Kenya', *Social science and medicine,* vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 301-311.
Nyambedha, E. O., S. Wandibba, and J. Aagaard-Hansen. 2003b. '"Retirement lost": The New Role of the Elderly as Caretakers of Orphans in Western Kenya', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 33-52.
Ocholla-Ayayo, A. B. C. 1976. *Traditional Ideology and Ethics among the Southern Luo*. Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
Ominde, S. H. 1952. *The Luo Girl: From Infancy to Marriage*, London, Macmillan.
Ouko, A. G. 1999. 'Potential of a Local Community in HIV Preventive Strategies and Care: The Case of "Nyoluoro" in Usigu Division, Siaya District', Unpublished MA thesis, Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi.
Parkin, D. 1978. *The Cultural Definition of Political Response: Lineal Destiny among the Luo*, London, Academic Press.
Poonawala, S., and R. Cantor. 1991. *Children Orphaned by AIDS: A Call for Action for NGOs and Donors*, Washington, D.C., National Council for International Health.
Potash, B. 1986. 'Wives of the Grave: Widows in a Rural Luo Community', in Betty Potash, (ed.), *Widows in African Societies,* Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp. 44-46.
UNICEF. 1994. 'AIDS and Child Victims', in *The State of the World's Children*, New York, Oxford University Press.
Whisson, M. 1964. *Change and Challenge: A Study of the Social and Economic Changes among the Luo,* Nairobi, Christian Council of Kenya.
Erick Otieno Nyambedha
Department of Sociology

Maseno University
Kenya

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Harri Englund
Gender Relations in African-Language Literature: Interpretative Politics and Possibilities

Abstract: African novels can provide insights into history and society, but the risk, particularly when using them as learning materials in classroom, is that novels become mere illustrations of themes and conclusions already established by other means. The post-authoritarian era in some African countries, for example, appears to impose its own truths on interpreting literature. This article examines gender relations in Willie Zingani's Chinyanja novels and in Francis Moto's recent criticism of these novels. An alternative reading, pointing out the novels' potential for complex interpretations, suggests that Moto's dismissal of their gender relations as stereotypes must itself be understood as a literary product of a particular period. It is a period when the rhetoric of gender equality has emerged to support a form of state feminism in Malawi. Against its dichotomous view of gender the article shows how the complexity conveyed in Zingani's novels can be used to highlight class and generational contradictions obscured by the current rhetoric. The article concludes by recommending attention to narrative details as a measure against interpretations becoming mere reflections of teachers' and critics' own political preferences. The problems highlighted in the article are particularly germane to teaching and interpreting African-language literature. It often enters classrooms through literary criticism in metropolitan languages. When students and teachers cannot access the novel itself, it is important that they base their discussions on those interpretations that take into account as many narrative details as possible.

1. Introduction

African novels carry considerable potential as resources for teaching various disciplines within African Studies. A recent volume amply demonstrates how African novels can contribute to making a whole range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences more relevant and more humane from the student's point of view (see Hay 2000). Here the promise is not only for apt illustrations of major historical moments. The promise of African novels is for a deeper, impassioned understanding of Africa's past and present, inevitably complemented by more conventional studies in such fields as history, anthropology and sociology. From anti-colonial struggles for independence (Gagiano 2000) to post-colonial contests over freedom and democracy (Zeleza 1997; Mwaria et al. 2000), African novels tackle questions of subjectivity and experience in ways that are still largely unexplored in academic disciplines.

Much as one welcomes the appearance of African novels in the classroom, unchecked enthusiasm can also do great injustice to literary works. When a novel is introduced into a syllabus with the sole aim of discussing particular political and cultural processes, how can the teacher avoid imposing on the novel ideas that have already been established by other means during the course? How can a novel, as a work of fiction, not only affirm but also challenge and expand students' emerging understanding? In South African literature, for example, certain writers have been commended for 'arriving at the political through the personal' (see Head 1994: 163). Yet in other readings the same writers have been shown to demonstrate the impossibility of an easy reconciliation between the personal and the political, cross-cutting and contradictory identities contesting the clarity of political rhetoric (Medalie 1999). The South African example also serves to remind us of the intrinsically political act of choosing particular novels from the

multifarious corpus of fiction. Why, and with what consequences, are novels written by white South Africans in English time and again selected for the most extensive scrutiny in that country's literary debate (see e.g. Attridge and Jolly 1998)?

I approach these general problems through the specific issue of how the post-authoritarian era in some African countries appears to impose its own truths on interpreting literature. Following Mama, who states that African gender relations are currently 'one of the most dramatic sites of struggle and change' (1997: 69), I examine gender relations in both novels and their criticism in the context of post-authoritarian Malawi. I show that a criticism written in English carries the risk of becoming a gatekeeper when its subjects are novels written in an African language. As Barber (1995) has demonstrated, if the vibrant popular culture of African-language literature is appreciated in its own terms, new interpretative possibilities open out, challenging academic and political trends. It is, therefore, important to make available alternative readings of African-language literature, especially when the criticism I want to address rather dismissively blames its subjects for maintaining gender stereotypes. I offer a very different reading of the same novels and ask why the available criticism should be so dismissive at this point in Malawi's history.

The relationship between the novels and their criticism is complicated by the fact that both the author and the critic are Malawians. An easy refutation of the critic's point of view as something foreign to the culture in question is not, therefore, possible. Francis Moto, moreover, is no ordinary critic in the Malawian context. As Principal of Chancellor College, the largest constituent college of the University of Malawi, he is in a gatekeeping position when an opinion of Malawian literature is formed both inside and outside the country. His recent book, *Trends in Malawian Literature*, is explicit about its ambition to 'act as an essential tool for secondary school, teacher training college and university teaching' (Moto 2001: 11). The book analyses literature written in Chinyanja, Malawi's national language,[1] and declares gender stereotypes as its major fault. By juxtaposing Moto's criticism and Willie Zingani's novels, I discuss Moto's criticism as a literary artefact in its own right. The political context of Moto's own writing must become a part of the literary debate before his opinion can inform others' readings of Malawian literature.

Moto's case demonstrates how using novels as illustrations of particular attitudes can actually do a disservice to African literature. The available literature in languages like Chinyanja is not extensive enough to warrant dismissals of its popular works. The effect of Moto's critique can be to send novels such as Zingani's into oblivion or to severely impoverish the debates where they can be situated. Both prospects end up undermining what should be the distinct contribution of African novels in the classroom: the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations that they, as works of fiction, can afford in the context of studying African history and societies. After my own interpretation of Zingani's two novels, I return, therefore, to the question of interpretative possibilities in the necessary task of extending democratisation to gender relations. I conclude with specific suggestions as to how readers of African novels can avoid interpretations that are determined by their own political context.

2. The Politics of Interpretation in the New Malawi

Malawi's post-colonial and literary histories are remarkably entwined, with several prominent writers playing a pivotal role in ending the thirty years of Kamuzu Banda's autocratic regime in 1994. Much has been written about how such poets and novelists as Jack Mapanje, Felix Mnthali, Frank Chipasula, David Rubadiri, Lupenga Mphande and others provided a unique

outlet for interrogating and criticising a regime that had hijacked the promise of independence (see e.g. Vail and White 1991: 278-318; Mapanje 1995; Nazombe 1995; Zeleza 1996; Mphande 1996). In most cases, the price of such reflections was either detention without trial or exile outside Malawi. The Writers' Group, established at Chancellor College in the 1970s, persisted under difficult conditions, perfecting an ingenious literary style whose cryptic codes frequently outwitted the ever-present censor. Moreover, the group succeeded in instilling an appreciation of literature into Malawi's educated elite, with writing, whether in English or a Malawian language, an acceptable pastime among university students.

While many injustices of the previous era still await their proper historical and literary exploration (Mapanje 2002; Kerr and Mapanje 2002), Malawi's literary elite has embraced the new era of political pluralism with enthusiasm, keen to assess the extent to which both writers and politicians have been able to transform themselves. Bakili Muluzi, who with the United Democratic Front won both the 1994 and 1999 elections, introduced a new vocabulary into the political rhetoric (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996; Lwanda 1996; Phiri and Ross 1998; Englund 2002a). Concepts such as 'poverty alleviation', 'empowerment', 'human rights', 'gender equality' and 'freedoms' had never before been so publicly and so frequently uttered in post-colonial Malawi. The official rhetoric about changing gender relations is a particularly clear instance of the new vocabulary entering even the most intimate realm of relationships. The new government seeks to transform economic relations between men and women by earmarking credit opportunities for women, while it joins non-governmental organisations in demanding an end to cultural practices that appear to exploit girls and women. Free primary school education was one of the first promises implemented by Muluzi, designed to facilitate especially girls' access to schooling. A gender policy, signposting the path to gender equality, is another accomplishment after the political transition, while the First Lady has assumed a public role as the country's leading feminist.

The pressure to achieve new gender relations is, in other words, enormous, made all the more urgent by women's role as pawns and entertainers in Banda's conservative regime (see Mkamanga 2000). How are Malawi's literary circles to respond to this challenge without losing the capacity for critique that enabled them to undermine the rhetoric of the previous regime? As I discuss below, and as studies from other African countries undergoing democratisation have indicated, the danger is that the official concern with gender relations is little else than a new rhetoric, bringing about 'state feminism' rather than a genuine transformation at all levels of society (Mama 1995; Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet 2002). In state feminism, a token minister of women's affairs is left to parrot the rhetoric, while few others than elite women can count on enhanced opportunities to improve their lives. Writers' and critics' mandate to think unconventionally would be tragically compromised, if they became unduly persuaded by the new rhetoric.

Ross (1998) has provided an excellent review of the challenges that Malawian writers, who are predominantly male, face in imagining the implications of democratisation for gender relations. She is rightly scornful of some prominent Malawian writers' and critics' notion of 'first things first' in which struggles against national oppression must take precedence over the liberation demanded by feminists (Ross 1998: 173-174). Ross's example of a successful attempt to show how various kinds of struggles against oppression are not only compatible but also necessary as simultaneous struggles is Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's novel *Smouldering Charcoal* (1992). The other writings discussed by Ross do not fare as well in her assessment of the extent to which Malawian writers have, in their depiction of gender relations, dismantled the conservative and oppressive

structures inherited from Banda's era.

Moto's (2001) recent book has appeared in this transformed political and literary climate. Its focus on literature in Chinyanja is particularly welcome, because Ross's review is confined to Malawian fiction published in English. Moto examines Chinyanja novels from their early representatives in the 1930s to more recent ones. Although he outlines Malawi's political context in the introductory chapter, his primary interest is not to compare literary practices in the 'old' and 'new' Malawi.[2] Instead, he weaves his narrative around 'Christian propaganda' (Moto 2001: 178) in early novels, and the 'fall' of more recent writers into Malawi male writers' trap' which makes them portray 'women characters in a socially and culturally predetermined stereotyped way' (Moto 2001: 14). Hence although Moto does not explicitly relate his analysis to political changes in Malawi, his choice of gender stereotypes as a central theme clearly resonates with publicly voiced concerns in the new Malawi. His capacity to act as a prime arbiter of Chinyanja literature, already suggested by his position as Principal of Chancellor College, is also revealed by the facility with which Ross (1998: 173) appears to endorse this sweeping statement: 'We still have to come across a story that treats the woman character as a whole person in her own right and not only as a tangential individual who cannot lead a free independent life' (Moto 2001: 58).[3]

In this article, I challenge Moto's sweeping statement by focusing on the author to whom Moto devotes Chapter Four in his book. The author is Willie Zingani, who published a number of popular short novels in the 1980s, of which the two I discuss here were both originally published in 1984. Both novels - *Madzi Akatayika* (When Water is Spilt) and *Njala Bwana* (Hungry, Sir) - have been reprinted several times, and they are still widely available in Malawi. Zingani was trained as a journalist and worked for various media outlets before becoming President Muluzi's Press Officer in the new Malawi. He is not, therefore, a marginal figure who is put into an immediate danger of ostracism by Moto's criticism of the novels he wrote as a young man. Moreover, it appears that Moto and Zingani share similar party political leanings. Since I have no evidence of personal grudges between them, I concentrate on the novels and the arguments in Moto's critique in their own right.

I agree with Moto's misgivings about 'didactic inclinations' (2001: 182) in Zingani's novels. The author's eagerness to deliver moral lessons frequently impairs the development of his narratives. On the other hand, it is likely that Zingani never intended these novels as high literature, and their perspectives on adolescents and young adults, colloquial language and inexpensive prices have ensured them a prominent place in Malawi's popular culture market, with students and other youths as their primary readers. Moto, however, feels able to end his chapter on Zingani with the words, 'the plots are so simple and so straightforward that they fail to engage seriously the minds of more serious readers' (2001: 94). Moto, presumably one of the 'more serious readers', thus carves out a niche for himself as an authoritative arbiter, but my analysis below shows that his interpretations must be understood within their own political context. A certain political expediency informs the exposure of gender stereotypes. This is especially evident when, as I show, the exposure actually omits crucial details in a narrative. Far from stimulating debate on gender relations, the critic precludes the potential for imaginative readings of literary works.

3. Gender Relations in Two Chinyanja Novels

3.1. Madzi Akatayika: Responsibility, Respect and Gender

Moto's synopsis of *Madzi Akatayika* reads in full as follows:

> The main characters of *Madzi Akatayika* are Mayamiko Tionenso, Esnati Mbewe and Alufeyo. Mayamiko Tionenso and Esnati Mbewe fall in love after an initial encounter on a night bus as they travel to their respective secondary schools. The two never marry. Josaline, a fashionable city girl, spoils the proceedings and Mayamiko Tionenso abandons Esnati Mbewe who in a twist of luck marries Alufeyo, Mayamiko's house servant. Consequently Mayamiko Tionenso gets deranged whereas Josaline disappears without trace into the abyss of a nameless city life. The story is told in the first person singular by Mayamiko Tionenso from the confines of a prison where Mayamiko is serving a twelve year term for attempted suicide. (Moto 2001: 90.)

This overly compressed account of the story begs several questions, such as how Mayamiko and Esnati fall in love, how Mayamiko starts seeing Josaline and how she subsequently expresses her reason for rejecting him, how Esnati and Alufeyo organise their domestic relations, and how success in formal education may not guarantee happiness. As my analysis below indicates, such questions are crucial to a proper understanding of the author's objectives in writing this novel and can pave the way for a challenging debate on gender relations. Moto's criticism, on the other hand, is unlikely to inspire debate in which the complexities of the novel, and thereby the complexities of the gender relations it depicts, leave readers with the feeling that they have learnt something new. By giving short shrift to detail, Moto is able to claim that 'Zingani has a scheme to accomplish' (2001: 92) and that '*Madzi Akatayika* through its female characters documents Malawi's well entrenched male cultural subjectivity' (2001: 91).

Moto's understanding of the ways in which 'the gender subjectivity of the male writer' (2001: 91) is asserted in the novel becomes clear when his interpretations of two issues are considered. On the one hand, Zingani's novel depicts differences in educational and occupational trajectories among men and women. On the other hand, it provides accounts of how intimate relationships between men and women are initiated and abandoned. In addressing the first issue, Moto correctly reports that the protagonists' educational and professional aspirations are clearly gendered. While preparing for their final secondary-school exams, Mayamiko and Esnati discuss their ambitions (see Zingani 1984a: 10). Mayamiko announces his plan to enter the university, whereas Esnati settles for a teachers' training college. Mayamiko's question *bwanji osakachita za unamwino kapena za usekelitare?* (why not to pursue a nursing or secretarial course?; Zingani 1984a: 10) is a further indication of the expected career paths among female students. Esnati explains that she wants to acquire the same profession as her late mother. Moreover, as an additional sign of modest aspirations, Esnati swears that she will teach in a rural primary school. Mayamiko, who anticipates an urban career as a personnel manager, tries to persuade her to consider employment in a city, but to no avail.

In order for such exchanges between the protagonists to become indices of 'the gender subjectivity of the male writer' (Moto 2001: 91), the critic has to omit mentioning the specific destinies that the author devises for his protagonists as the novel progresses. Not only is it, as Moto does mention, Mayamiko who ends up serving a prison sentence after a suicide attempt; the story also involves his visit to Esnati's house several years after their separation (Zingani 1984a: 27-31). It becomes an occasion for Mayamiko to witness the domestic harmony that Esnati has been able to achieve with Alufeyo, Mayamiko's former servant. Despite teaching in a remote rural school, Esnati has found some measure of prosperity, with Alufeyo regularly travelling to a lake in order to buy fish that he sells in a nearby town. As an indication of their

relative prosperity, Alufeyo travels in a car that the couple have bought themselves. It begins to dawn upon Mayamiko that Esnati has provided the capital for Alufeyo's fish business, probably by using the money that a court ordered Mayamiko to send to her to assist in maintaining the child they had conceived before separating. Mayamiko, who intended to propose again to Esnati, escapes at night without meeting Alufeyo, only to hang himself on a tree in a failed suicide attempt.

After these crucial details, 'the gender subjectivity of the male writer' (Moto 2001: 91) appears rather more complicated than what Moto's criticism allows. Esnati, a woman, is the one who provides Alufeyo, a man, with enough capital to start a business. The result is that Alufeyo, Mayamiko's one-time servant, finds himself in a better position sexually, socially and economically than Mayamiko, who has gone much further in formal education. Moreover, it is in contrast to Mayamiko's demise that Esnati's choice of career must be analysed. Moto claims that 'in precluding university education for Esnati, Zingani is condemning her to an inferior social and economic position' (2001: 92). Yet it is the way a person plays his or her cards, Zingani appears to convey, that matters. Indeed, the very fact that Esnati chooses to become a rural teacher rather than some more fashionable professional in a city can be read as an index of her moral integrity. Malawi is a predominantly rural country where the vast majority enter formal education through primary schools in rural areas. Esnati's choice goes against the grain of class differences that educational success seems to foster. It gains particular relevance in present-day Malawi, where the introduction of free primary education has created a glaring shortage of qualified teachers.

Another issue that Moto uses to illustrate Zingani's fall into 'the Malawi male writers' trap' (2001: 14) is the way in which intimate relationships are initiated and abandoned. Zingani has Mayamiko, who is the main protagonist, to fall in love with two women. Moto does not describe the process leading up to the first love affair at all, whereas the second comes to represent Zingani's desire to portray the woman as a 'cannibal and destroyer of societal equilibrium' (Moto 2001: 93). Attention to detail, however, furnishes again a very different interpretation. While the story's female characters are certainly invested with their own interests, Zingani does not assign to them the responsibility for Mayamiko's downfall. The male protagonist is in charge of his destiny and faces his sad fate as a result of his own actions. The author provides enough detail to conclude that the female characters, while not always entirely pleasant personalities, have morally defensible reasons for acting as they do.

Mayamiko's first love affair is with Esnati whom he first meets on a bus as they are returning to their respective secondary schools after a holiday. After an increasingly friendly conversation, Mayamiko decides to ask her to be his girlfriend. Esnati's response is sharp: *Kunena zoona ife ndife ana asukulu chomwecho sibwino kumayamba kusokonezana maphunziro* (the truth is that we are schoolchildren, so it is no good to start confusing each other's studies; Zingani 1984a: 5). Mayamiko makes an effort to persuade her to accept him, but Esnati replies in no uncertain terms: *Ndisiye nditsirize sukulu, nthawi yatha kale apa, udzangoyamba kundilepheretsa mayeso akubwerawa* (leave me alone, I must finish the school, the time is short, you'll only make me fail the coming exams; Zingani 1984a: 5). It is clear that Esnati is the more responsible one between the two adolescents, mindful of the importance of schooling and what a love affair can do to damage her future. After the initial encounter, Mayamiko persists and writes her two letters, the first of which she replies by refusing him again and asking him to stop sending letters, while to the second letter she writes no response at all, although, as Mayamiko discovers later, it also reaches her.

It is only after several months when Esnati finally begins to show interest in Mayamiko. She comes by chance to watch a football match where Mayamiko impresses her with his skills as a goalkeeper. The two chat after the match, and her heart begins to melt when she realises that Mayamiko is an orphan like herself. Esnati clearly carries a loving memory of her mother, as her choice of career also demonstrates. This encounter marks a turning point in the lives of the two adolescents, and they gradually become lovers. Because Esnati's training as a teacher takes a shorter time than Mayamiko's university education, she actually supports him and his younger brother financially before Mayamiko finds employment. Esnati's responsible character gets thereby further accentuated, underscoring Mayamiko's own role in unleashing the subsequent tragedy. The title of the novel alludes to the Chinyanja proverb *madzi akatayika saoleka* (spilt water cannot be gathered again). It is Mayamiko who spills the waters of good fortune.

Moto introduces the other love affair in Mayamiko's life with almost equally scant attention to detail. He does not, for example, find it necessary to mention that Zingani describes how Mayamiko dates several young women before asking Josaline to come with him to a cinema: *Lero kupita ndi uyu, mawanso wina* (today going with this one, tomorrow with another; Zingani 1984a: 15). While Mayamiko works in town and secretly dates other women, Esnati teaches in a rural school and contributes money to their wedding preparations. By omitting Mayamiko's indulgence, Moto is able to accuse Zingani of representing Josaline as 'the embodiment of shameless greed' (Moto 2001: 93). Yet in the actual story Josaline only reluctantly accepts the date with Mayamiko, pointing out that his reputation as a womaniser frightens her: *Kodi iwe sudziwa kuti asungwana m'tauni muno mumaopsa chifukwa cha zibwenzi zanu. Kupanda kuchenjera munthu utha kungozindikira wamenyedwa* (don't you know that you scare girls in this town because of your love affairs. If one is not careful one just gets beaten up; Zingani 1984a: 15).[4]

While of a clearly different social class than Mayamiko and Esnati, Josaline is a far more complex character than what is suggested by Moto's description of her as 'the embodiment of greed' who 'places material welfare over other human concerns such as care, love, peaceful coexistence and understanding' (2001: 93). True, Josaline manipulates the class differences between her and Esnati once she has become interested in Mayamiko: *Nanga munthu wa digiri ngati iweyo nkumatenga mkazi wophunzitsa ku pulayimale sukulu, masekilitarefe sukutiona?* (a person with a degree like you taking a primary school teacher, don't you notice secretaries like us?; Zingani 1984a: 17). Yet Josaline is also the daughter of Phiri, a rich man who appears in her discourse as her beloved and respected father. When Mayamiko explains to her that they have to discard their plans of a white wedding because the court case with Esnati has depleted his savings, Josaline's response does not reflect mere greed. The honour of her family is at stake, and she declares to Mayamiko that *ine mwana wa a Phiri sindingachite chikwati chapansi chomwecho* (I the child of Phiri cannot have a poor wedding like that), adding that *makolo anga sangakondwere ndi chikwati chotero* (my parents will not be happy with a marriage like that; Zingani 1984a: 20). She even suggests that Mayamiko returns to Esnati, because he has 'already spoiled her' by making her pregnant (*wamuononga kale*; Zingani 1984a: 20).

The fact that Moto finds in Josaline an embodiment of greed reveals his own criticism as a literary product of a particular period. His criticism is not so much attuned to exploring the possibilities of interpretation as to illustrating currently influential ways of criticising 'the gender subjectivity of the male writer'. My alternative interpretation shows how much detail is lost when a critic follows such a politically expedient path. The characters of Zingani's novel may not be fully developed, but the students of African literature need not be engrossed only in its

faults. As I have indicated, the more they draw upon the novel's details in their interpretation, the more they are likely to appreciate the complexities that the author wants to convey. And the more they appreciate complexities, the more nuanced will their debate on real-life gender relations be.

3.2. Njala Bwana: Appearances Deceive

Moto's misgivings about Zingani's narrative skills are more pertinent in the case of *Njala Bwana*. The novel is ostensibly about the need to combat prejudices against mentally ill persons. The story is told in the first person singular by Mose Msungwi, a young journalist who on his way to a holiday in the village encounters a mother with a deranged adult son. After establishing that his parents and the woman were once neighbours, Mose decides to escort them to their village. Zingani's description of Mose's visit is not well-integrated into the rest of the story. The visit involves a conflict with a man called Kapitao who steals Mose's shirt when they share the same room. It is not clear how this incident contributes to the central theme of Mose's discovering the madman's true identity. Yusufu Nyondo, the madman, turns out to be an intelligent person who obtained university education abroad and taught English in a university at home before becoming insane. Yusufu's mother professes ignorance about the cause of his illness, but Mose is later told by Yusufu's former fiancée that a healer urged Yusufu to kill his mother through sorcery in order to become rich. Yusufu became deranged when this evil plan failed.[5] Long after Mose's visit a madman begins to frequent his neighbourhood in town. The madman saves Mose's child from being bitten by a dangerous snake. Before Mose manages to properly thank him, the news arrives that the madman himself has died. The final twist of events is that Yusufu's former fiancée tells Mose that the madman was actually Yusufu. He had become a destitute after his mother's death.

Moto's main criticism of *Njala Bwana* concerns its portrayal of women. He discerns three contexts where women are portrayed and, as with *Madzi Akatayika*, finds them all biased towards male perspectives. The first context is the widowhood of Yusuf's mother. Moto (2001: 85-86) stresses suffering as the essence of her experience, misfortune caused not simply by the death of her husband and the illness of her only child. 'Her suffering is caused by a crime she did not commit, namely being a woman', Moto (2001: 86) announces, conveying her weakness, as seen from a male perspective, as the main obstacle to surviving the loss of male support. Yet although her husband's death and her son's illness must have been great tragedies, Zingani also furnishes details that indicate her resilience and resourcefulness as a single mother. During his visit to her village, Mose is impressed by its cleanness and by her own house (Zingani 1984b: 32-33). He learns that she had built the beautiful house with the money she had inherited from her late husband. She also serves tea to Mose, joking that he must not think that only townspeople can afford tea. Such narrative details hardly warrant the conclusion that the author wants to portray the widow as a pitiful soul facing untold suffering. Coupled with the fact that her efforts actually contributed to Yusufu's success in education, these details can more plausibly be interpreted as a celebration of what a single mother can achieve. Society may well favour males, but strong women like Yusufu's mother, Zingani appears to say, can be achievers against the odds.

It is also highly significant that Yusufu's madness derives from the suggestion that he should kill his mother. Time and again, ethnographic research in sub-Saharan Africa has discovered that suspicions and accusations of witchcraft and sorcery thrive amongst intimate relationships

(Geschiere 1997; Moore and Sanders 2001). Witchcraft is the obverse of the moral order in which persons prosper because of their mutual care and trust. The fact that a healer asked Yusufu to kill his mother rather than some other relative indicates the special esteem in which mothers are held among Chinyanja-speaking peoples, most of whom trace their descent matrilineally. Their oral traditions have included mythical female ancestors, and the saying *mayi wako ndi Mulungu wachiwiri* (your mother is the second God) is still common (cf. Linden with Linden 1974: 5-6; Schoffeleers 1992: 33-34). Although this cultural background in no way precludes male dominance in contemporary political and economic contexts, it is necessary for understanding the true horror of Yusufu's apparent intent. The price of even contemplating to kill the mother is madness, a personal catastrophe that ruins everything that his illustrious education and career have been able to give him. Far from being inherently disadvantaged by the 'crime' of being a woman (cf. Moto 2001: 86), Yusufu's mother appears as a formidable figure of both moral virtue and mystical force.

The second context where Moto criticises Zingani's portrayal of women is when Mose discusses expectations of marriage with Kapitao, his room-mate during the visit. The two young unmarried men express, according to Moto, 'the stereotyped expectations the males have of the woman' (2001: 86). Kapitao's comments on women's skills in cooking and other domestic chores seemingly represent gender stereotypes (see Zingani 1984b: 23). Yet the reader can gain new insights into gender relations if he or she examines the specific context in which the author carries on this conversation. Mose and Kapitao argue as much about the differences between town and country life as about women. When Mose claims that a woman who does not know how to cook can find a partner to marry, Kapitao comments: *Nanga kugona kwa anthu am'tauni sikumeneko, mukamafuna mkazi woti mumukwatire mumayang'ana kavalidwe kake. M'midzitu chinthu choyamba ndi ntchito zake, zina zonse pambuyo* (that's the stupidity of townspeople; when you look for a woman to marry, you look at how she dresses. The first thing in villages is her work, everything else comes after; Zingani 1984b: 24).

Such an exchange, far from resting on one uniform 'male subjectivity', is an argument about a wide range of issues: appearances and actual conduct; whether aptitude for domestic chores should define a woman's marriageability; and whether village life is superior to town life. Such issues are bound to resonate with many Malawians' concerns, at present no less than when *Njala Bwana* was first published. Malawi is a predominantly rural country, but various political and economic factors have made the rural-urban connection both increasingly salient and increasingly contested since the late 1980s (Englund 2002b). To dismiss this passage in the novel as 'the stereotyped expectations the males have of the woman' is not only to confuse negative attitudes in society with the author's own intentions. It also erases the possibility of a complex interpretation that addresses some of the contradictions that contemporary Malawians grapple with on a daily basis.

Moto's haste in dismissing Kapitao's view on women as a stereotype is prejudicial to interpretative possibilities. Just as Yusufu's mother can quite plausibly be interpreted as a figure of resourcefulness and hope rather than as a loser in a male-dominated society, so too can Kapitao's comment on women's work be read as an indication of what constitutes respect. The view may be 'traditional', but once enmeshed in ongoing Malawian debates on gender roles, it becomes irrevocably contemporary in a battle of values and interests. Kapitao juxtaposes his appreciation of work with 'the way a woman dresses' that seems to be the priority for men in town. The readers of Zingani's novel would benefit from considering whether Kapitao wishes to portray women as objects at all - or whether objectification is more likely a feature of the

'modern' life-style that he appears to criticise. Once again, such interpretative possibilities resonate with findings in African cultural studies based on the ethnographic method. Conviviality in social relationships continues to build on very mundane work that is often gendered (see Nyamnjoh 2002). It is a characteristic of post-colonial Africa that this gendered work can be seen as both a 'traditional' burden and the very foundation of women's dignity (see Ogden 1996; Ribohn 2002). Arguments and counter-arguments proliferate as identities and the contexts for claiming them are transformed. Novels like *Njala Bwana* offer students of African cultures insights into such realities.

Moto's third context for criticising Zingani's portrayal of women in *Njala Bwana* is Yusufu's former fiancée Lisungu Mwimba. As Moto (2001: 87) notes, she appears rather late in the novel, and Zingani probably misses an important opportunity to develop his narrative for this reason. Lisungu is, however, a fascinating addition to the novel's cast of female characters. In Moto's words, she shows 'that women can achieve and do what is "normally" expected of men in Malawian society' (2001: 87). Lisungu has, as Yusufu's mother explains to Mose, a superb occupation in town,[6] and she gives Mose a ride from the village in her own beautiful car (Zingani 1984b: 36-37). Moto mentions these details, but gives more weight to what Lisungu says in response to Mose's question of how long it will take for them to reach the town: *Kuyendetsa kwa amuna ndi tsiku lathunthu, koma ife akazi ayi timayamba kugonera pa Nyambalo. Kuchoka apo mawa chakum'mawa ndiye kuti tidzikafika pakati pa usiku mawalo* (it takes men a day, but we women sleep at Nyambalo. After leaving very early in the morning, we arrive at midnight of the following day; Zingani 1984b: 37). Here, Moto comments, 'Lisungu, a woman, is made to reveal that she agrees that women are weaker than men' (2001: 87).

To end the interpretation of Lisungu's character with such a comment not only pre-empts discussion on whether women's caution in driving, as suggested by Lisungu, is necessarily a sign of weakness. It also fails to build on the very striking features of Lisungu's character that challenge existing gender stereotypes. She is clearly an independent woman, affluent and intelligent, and yet her visit to Yusufu shows that she has not abandoned him despite his madness. The highly intriguing mix of compassion and independence becomes particularly remarkable towards the end of the novel, when Lisungu informs Mose that the madman who saved his child and soon thereafter died was Yusufu. Mose had already buried the madman, but Lisungu insists on giving him a substantial amount of money for preparing a decent grave for Yusufu. The last page of the novel contains Lisungu's solemn promise: *Kutereku ine maganizo okwatiwa ndilibe chifukwa mwamuna yemwe ndidamukonda ndi mtima wonse ndi amene wafayu* (thus I do not have any plans to marry, because the man I loved with all my heart is the one who died; Zingani 1984b: 47).

Who, if not Lisungu, can challenge readers of African literature to rethink their gender stereotypes? Here is a 'modern' woman who does not simply become another stereotype, a cold and manipulative urban *femme fatale*. Lisungu achieves a measure of economic and sexual independence, but she never becomes too proud or greedy to forget her deranged former fiancée in the village. Her closing words at Yusufu's grave, quoted above, assert her own choice in shaping her future - *she* does not have plans to marry, even if suitors will appear in the future. Moto's complaint that in Zingani's novels 'the woman... has no choice of whether to get married or remain single' (Moto 2001: 86) encounters a severe challenge in Lisungu's character. Why does not Moto pursue the interpretative possibilities that such characters open out? Why does he accuse Zingani of having 'a scheme to accomplish' (Moto 2001: 92) instead of exploring the narrative details and contexts in his novels? Since, as mentioned, I have no evidence of personal

grudges between the two Malawians, I have to conclude that Moto himself has a scheme to accomplish. It is a scheme to expose gender stereotypes at whatever cost, a scheme dictated less by an appreciation of literature than by the critic's eagerness to align himself with political reforms in the country. The effect is not entirely unlike a witch-hunt; the righteous must find and expose culprits in order to demonstrate the high-mindedness of their cause.

The cost of such a scheme has become evident in the above analysis that attempted to do justice to literary works by giving attention to their narrative details. It may not be high literature, but *Njala Bwana* offers important food for thought to its primary audience: students in secondary and tertiary institutions in Chinyanja-speaking areas. My analysis above shows that, if led by a teacher who is prepared to take into account as many details in the novel as possible, all students, not only the Chinyanja-speaking ones, can have an enlightening debate on a whole range of topical issues, including complex gender relations.

The crux of the novel can be summarised by the saying 'appearances deceive', *maonekedwe amapusitsa* in Chinyanja. Yusufu is no ordinary madman, and he later saves Mose's child when 'normal' persons are too scared to chase the snake away. Before Yusufu's heroic act occurs and his true identity is revealed, Mose has a confrontation with the madman. It is Mose's wife who asks him to be more lenient towards the madman: *Kodi inu mwaiwala kuti tonse tidalengedwa ndi Chauta? Simudziwa kuti amisala nawonso ndi anthu monga ifeyo?* (have you forgotten that all of us were created by God? Don't you know that mad people are human beings like us? Zingani 1984b: 42). These questions, coming from Mose's wife, not only further nuance gender relations in *Njala Bwana*, they also gain special significance in the light of Mose's role as a Sunday school teacher in a local church (Zingani 1984b: 41). Such intricacies, playing with appearances and essences, are irrevocably lost when the novel becomes a target of politically expedient criticism.

4. State Feminism and Interpretative Possibilities

If Moto and I are able to arrive at completely different interpretations of gender relations in the two novels, what can be the source of our differences? There is no reason to doubt the extent to which both of us want to see Malawi's current democratisation played out in the transformation of gender relations. Yet Moto uses literature to illustrate the pervasiveness of negative attitudes in society,[7] whereas I have identified in Zingani's novels possibilities to imagine gender relations as complex social and cultural facts. I have suggested that Moto's interpretations must be understood as products of a particular political context. My status as an outsider in that context may account for my interest in complexity. Moto, on the other hand, has a considerable stake in the new Malawi. Not only is he the incumbent of an important public office; he is also known to have commercial interests in Malawi as a private entrepreneur. Although its rhetoric has changed, Malawi's political elite has not suddenly become more receptive to critical discussion. It is the task of state-sponsored intellectuals like Moto to support the prevailing rhetoric.[8]

Lest my argument is seen to suggest that my interpretations are unproblematically more 'objective' than Moto's, the difference in our interpretations must be theorised. Even if interpretations can never be unequivocally objective, some are better than others. I submit that the ultimate arbiter must be the literary work itself, its details and complexities. An interpretation that omits many of those details is necessarily more suspect than the one that builds its thrust on them. Theoretically, the impact of the political context on Moto's interpretations derives from a *closure* that state feminism imposes on the imaginings of gender relations.[9] Interpretative

closure, not interpretative possibilities, informs the literary criticism that serves the rhetoric of state feminism. It approaches literary works with a preconceived idea of what democratic gender relations are. Even more, state feminism as an ideological project *needs* negative examples in order to justify its proponents' positions of power. Hence my reference to a witch-hunt; amidst the shadows of Zingani's dark sexism the purity of Moto's attitudes shines like a candle.

It is beyond the scope of this article to assess the impact of Malawi's state feminism on women's position. Yet Moto's interpretations may be indicative of a particular kind of state feminism. It has been observed that state feminism has the greatest positive impact on women's citizenship when it is responsive to demands from society-based movements (Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet 2002). In Malawi, where Banda's regime effectively curtailed politically consequential associational life, women's movements and organisations have a very short history, hardly preceding the interest of the state in women's affairs. As such, it was less the pressure from society than from external donors that made Malawi's political elite adopt aspects of feminist rhetoric. As Mama has remarked, 'African governments have found it expedient to exploit the gender question so as to receive economic aid in an international climate that has become increasingly sympathetic towards women's demands for equality' (1995: 38). State feminism in Malawi, in other words, is a response more to the changing conditions of development aid than to the specific challenges in Malawian social and cultural context. Moto's interpretations are an example of its impact on understanding gender relations in Malawian literature.

Whereas contemporary feminist theory has come to embrace considerable diversity through the contributions of non-Western women (Imam 1997: 16), the state feminism represented by Moto turns a blind eye to the specific historical setting in which it claims a position of authority. It builds on imported orthodoxies that rebuke difference while failing to recognise how its approach to gender equality does little to address structural disadvantages. The major cleavage is thought to be between women and men, and men's evident domination in public life needs to be qualified by women's equal opportunities. While this type of state feminism may lead to positive initiatives in education and recruitment policies, its fundamental error is to view women as a unified category (cf. Sow 1997: 47). Class and generational differences are thereby erased, and literary criticism becomes a matter of establishing whether authors allow women to have the same opportunities as men. Hence Moto is disappointed when Zingani makes Esnati in *Madzi Akatayika* opt for the modest career as a primary school teacher, and when Lisungu in *Njala Bwana* claims that women are slower drivers than men. According to Moto's feminism, women as a category are disadvantaged unless they follow exactly the same paths as men. Paradoxically, what men do becomes the measure of success, and feminism consists in women's attempts to reach the standards defined by men. Alternative standards become inconceivable.

My reading of Zingani's novels has indicated the importance of class and generational differences for women's options in life. In *Madzi Akatayika*, for example, Josaline comes from a wealthy family and is able to be selective about men. In *Njala Bwana*, the madman's mother is a mature person who has been able to achieve a comfortable life despite the tragedies in her family. The novels can, therefore, contribute to our appreciation of multiple contradictions which, as Nfah-Abbenyi puts it, are 'valuable and empowering tools necessary to subverting gender(ed) dichotomies and exigencies' (1997: 34). Another kind of feminism begins to emerge when the critic sees beyond dichotomies to complex and contradictory trajectories that novels allot to both women and men (see Aegerter 2000). Ethnographic research, as I have shown, can also assist in imagining the interpretative possibilities that novels open out. The gender

dichotomy between men and women has been revealed as culturally relative, with ethnographic evidence from Africa and Melanesia pointing to the ways in which persons have embodied elements of both genders (see Strathern 1988; Oyèwùmí 1997). Much as contemporary Africans view their relationships through the gender dichotomy, such insights may provide more tools for resisting interpretative closure in literary criticism.

Some critics fear that attention to complexity and contradiction serves to dilute the political dimension of literary criticism. It has been claimed that this kind of attention, apparently influenced by post-structuralist and post-colonial theories, obscures, in turn, insights into difference in such critical approaches as Marxism: 'post-colonial normativity inheres in its claim to discover complexity and difference hitherto submerged by totalizing axioms' (San Juan 2002: 222). My aim is not, however, to propagate 'post-colonial normativity' but to engage with a particular type of feminism that constricts both literary and political debate. An exposure of interpretative closure in the state feminism represented by Moto's criticism is an exposure of power relations. While Moto claims to expose gender stereotypes, his reading of Zingani's novels is based on a narrow understanding of gender relations and their accompanying imbalances of power. In the dichotomous world-view of state feminism, the more a woman is like a man, the more she is liberated. Genuinely critical questions remain unanswered, or are not even asked, such as how this kind of feminism fails to distribute power beyond a tiny elite in most African polities, and why elite men should define the standards whereby emancipation and empowerment are measured. In their search for alternatives, critics, teachers and students have a lot to learn from the complex worlds of African literature.

5. Conclusion

It takes an open mind to realise the considerable potential of African novels to enrich classroom debate. If the aim is to seek imaginative perspectives on African historical and cultural processes, students and teachers can hardly expect novels to illustrate their preconceived ideas. It is through a careful examination of narrative detail that novels can be used as valuable learning materials. This requirement is complicated by the fact that literature in African languages often has to enter metropolitan classrooms through secondary sources, some of which are provided by self-appointed gatekeepers. In the absence of competing readings of African-language literature, the risk is that the gatekeeper's own objectives displace the actual contents of literary works. The result is that these works remain seriously 'underread' (cf. Harman and Meyer 1996), at worst read only as illustrations of ignorance, inequality and sexism.

Zingani hardly wrote his popular novels as contributions to feminism, but my analysis has shown how much they can advance classroom debates on gender relations. This potential is threatened by the fact that ours is an age of self-conscious gender politics whose impact is evident from development aid in the South to affirmative action in the North. Once institutionalised by a state whose democratic credentials are yet to be established, gender politics may entail few changes in the status quo, with its own arbiters of literary taste prescribing proper readings of popular fiction. Moto's interpretations of Zingani's novels are an example of political expediency in literary criticism, encouraged by the self-congratulatory rhetoric of a post-authoritarian regime and the expectations of its foreign sponsors. The problem with Moto's interpretations is not unlike the one he identifies in much Chinyanja literature; a 'didactic mission' (Moto 2001: 183) overrides the search for interpretative possibilities. The literary critic is eager to deliver a message, based on a particular view on gender relations. As Kishindo, another literary and

linguistic scholar at Malawi's Chancellor College, has remarked about didactic literature, the result is that 'the message is all there is' (Kishindo 2001: 157).

Despite his criticism of the didactic element in Malawian literature, Kishindo takes a more sanguine view than Moto on its future. Whereas Moto ends his book by claiming that 'the future of Malawian literature/drama in whatever local language is not bright' and lamenting the paucity of 'enduring literature' (Moto 2001: 185), Kishindo points out the ultimate unpredictability of literary tastes: 'what may be judged "low quality" or plainly "bad" today might conceivably be regarded as beautiful in a different age' (Kishindo 2001: 168). Kishindo recommends that the arbiters of literary taste let popular literature in Malawian languages flourish. And flourish it will, at least in Chinyanja, as attested by its output as short stories and poems in Malawian newspapers and as novels in the country's publishing houses. The challenge, for critics and students, is to develop an open mind that will enable them to gain insights into popular concerns and desires.

I conclude, therefore, with two lessons that this article suggests for interpreting African-language literature. The first is to desist from confusing an author's description of undesirable attitudes with his or her own convictions. The need is to examine carefully the uses to which these attitudes are put in a literary work. Is the author trying to describe something that is common in society, and what is, in the overall narrative framework, the purpose of that description? The second lesson follows from the first and concerns the respect for detail in literary criticism. While objective interpretations are not possible, it is necessary to assess the extent to which interpretations take into account the details that narratives provide. The more the critic notices details, the more his or her criticism is likely to resist interpretative closure. If the aim is to do justice to literary works, these two lessons probably apply to interpreting all literature. And yet they are never repeated often enough in a context where political expediency imperils literary appreciation.

Notes

1. Between 1968 and 1999, the official name of the language was Chichewa. Kamuzu Banda, Malawi's first president, changed the name of the language from Chinyanja to Chichewa as a part of his attempt to promote the Chewa identity as the core of Malawian culture (Vail and White 1989; Kishindo 1994; Kamwendo 2002). After the political change in 1994, despite moves towards changing the name back to Chinyanja, particularly in the domain of education, the majority of Malawians continue to call the language Chichewa. The language is also widely spoken in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where it has always been known as Chinyanja.
2. Kishindo (2001) has examined Chinyanja/Chichewa literature in the context of the 'new' Malawi. His conclusion is similar to Ross's (1998), who also noted the continuing appeal of didactic stories revolving around intimate relationships. It appears that popular musicians have more directly addressed the promises and frustrations of the new era (see Chirambo 2002).
3. Ross refers to a draft of Moto's book, but nothing was changed in this passage for the published book.
4. When Zingani wrote the novel in the early 1980s, public discussion about HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases had not started. One can plausibly argue that, given the saturation of the current Malawian media and popular arts with warnings against HIV/Aids, Zingani's female characters would also voice concerns about sexually transmitted diseases if the novel was written today.

5. Although Moto reports that 'the mother refused to die' (2001: 85), suggesting that Yusufu did try to kill her, Zingani's text is more ambiguous at this point. It makes Yusufu's former fiancée say that 'nthawi ina yake akuti amafuna kulemera, chomwecho mlonda wa kuntchito kwake adamuuza za sing'anga wina yemwe akuti amakhoza kulemeretsa anthu, koma atapita kumeneko adauzidwa kuti chizimba chake ndiye chakuti akaphe mayi wake. Atakana basi misala idayambira pomwepo' (one time when he wanted to get rich, a watch-man at his work told him about a healer whom he said could make people rich, but when he went there he was told that he had to kill his mother in order to activate the medicine. When he/she refused, that's when the madness began; Zingani 1984b: 38). Because the subject prefixes in Chinyanja do not distinguish between the genders, it is impossible to ascertain who refused what in the above excerpt.
6. Yusufu's mother's words are: 'Ali kutauni komweku pantchito yapamwamba kwambiri' (she is there in town in a very high position; Zingani 1984b: 36). The expression 'ntchito yapamwamba' summons up the work as something 'heavenly' - pamwamba means 'in heaven'.
7. As I have mentioned, what Moto calls the 'Malawi male writers' trap' (2001: 14) is a central theme in his criticism and not presented only as Zingani's problem.
8. For accounts of how the new rhetoric has not displaced intolerance and intimidation in Malawi's political culture, see Kayambazinthu and Moyo (2002) and Mapanje (2002). As recently as in 2002, the popular singer Billy Kaunda received threats to his life after releasing the album Mwataya Chipangano (You Have Broken the Agreement) which is highly critical of Muluzi's government. As an incumbent of a public office and a prominent businessman, Moto therefore treads a politically slippery slope.
9. The critique of interpretations that effect a closure has been elaborated by post-structuralists, influenced especially by Derrida (1976). As my reluctance to accept Moto's interpretations indicates, I do not subscribe to the extreme relativism in some forms of post-structuralism. Nevertheless, post-structuralist insights into multiple subject positions are worth pursuing in feminist theory and practice (see Weedon 1997).

References

Aegerter, Lindsay Pentolfe. 2000. 'Southern Africa, Womanism and Post-coloniality: A Dialectical Approach', in D. Gover, J. Contet-Morgan and J. Bryce (eds) *The Postcolonial Condition of African Literature*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press.
Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly. (eds.) 1998. *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Barber, Karin. 1995. 'African-Language Literature and Post-colonial Criticism', *Research in African Literatures* 26(4): 3-30.
Chimombo, Steve and Moira Chimombo. 1996. *The Culture of Democracy: Language, Literature, the Arts and Politics in Malawi, 1992-94*, Zomba, WASI.
Chirambo, Reuben Makayiko. 2002. '"Mzimu wa Soldier": Contemporary Popular Music and Politics in Malawi', in H. Englund (ed.) *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins Press.
Englund, Harri. (ed.) 2002a. *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Englund, Harri. 2002b. 'The Village in the City, the City in the Village: Migrants in Lilongwe',

Journal of Southern African Studies 28(1): 137-154.
Gagiano, Annie. 2000. *Achebe, Head, Marechera: On Power and Change in Africa*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner.
Geschiere, Peter. 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Post-colonial Africa*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press.
Harman, Barbara Leah and Susan Meyer. (eds.) 1996. *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*, New York, Garland.
Hay, Margaret Jean. (ed.) 2000. *African Novels in the Classroom*. Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner.
Head, Dominic. 1994. *Nadine Gordimer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Imam, Ayesha. 1997. 'Introduction', in A. Imam, A. Mama and F. Sow (eds.) *Engendering African Social Sciences*, Dakar, CODESRIA.
Kamwendo, Gregory H. 2002. 'Ethnic Revival and Language Associations in the New Malawi: The Case of Chitumbuka', in H. Englund (ed.) *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Kayambazinthu, Edrinnie and Fulata Moyo. 2002. 'Hate Speech in the New Malawi', in H. Englund (ed.) *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Kerr, David and Jack Mapanje. 2002. 'Academic Freedom and the University of Malawi', *African Studies Review* 45(2): 73-91.
Kishindo, Pascal J. 1994. 'The Impact of a National Language on Minority Languages: The Case of Malawi', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 12(2): 127-150.
Kishindo, Pascal J. 2001. 'Chichewa Literature in the Political Context of the 1990s', in C. Bodunde (ed.) *African Languages Literature in the Political Context of the 1990s*, Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies.
Linden, Ian with Jane Linden. 1974. *Catholics, Peasants, and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland, 1889-1939*, London, Heinemann.
Lwanda, John Lloyd. 1996. *Promises, Power, Politics and Poverty: The Democratic Transition in Malawi 1961 to 1999*, Glasgow, Dudu Nsomba.
Mama, Amina. 1995. 'Feminism or Femocracy?: State Feminism and Democratization in Nigeria', *Africa Development* 20(1): 37-58.
Mama, Amina. 1997. 'Shedding the Masks and Tearing the Veils: Cultural Studies for Post-Colonial Africa', in A. Imam, A. Mama and F. Sow (eds.) *Engendering African Social Sciences*. Dakar, CODESRIA.
Mapanje, Jack. 1995. 'Orality and the Memory of Justice', *Leeds African Studies Bulletin* 60: 9-21.
Mapanje, Jack. 2002. 'The Orality of Dictatorship: In Defence of My Country', in H. Englund (ed.) *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Medalie, David. 1999. '"The Context of an Awful Event": Nadine Gordimer's The House Gun', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25(4): 633-644.
Mkamanga, Emily. 2000. *Suffering in Silence: Malawi Women's 30 Year Dance with Dr Banda*, Glasgow, Dudu Nsomba.
Moore, Henrietta L. and Todd Sanders. (eds.) 2001. *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Post-colonial Africa*. London. Routledge.
Moto, Francis. 2001. *Trends in Malawian Literature*, Zomba, Chancellor College Publications.
Mphande, Lupenga. 1996. 'Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Writers Group: The

(Un)Making of a Cultural Tradition', *Research in African Literatures* 27(1): 80-101.
Mwaria, Cheryl B., Silvia Federici and Joseph MacLaren. (eds.) 2000. *African Visions: Literary Images, Political Change, and Social Struggle in Contemporary Africa*, Wesport, Conn, Praeger.
Nazombe, Anthony. 1995. 'Malawian Poetry of Transition: Steve Chimombo's A Referendum of the Forest Creatures and Jack Mapanje's The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison', in M.S. Nzunda and K.R. Ross (eds.) *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-94*, Gweru, Mambo.
Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. 1997. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2002. '"A Child is One Person's Only in the Womb": Domestication and Agency in the Cameroonian Grassfields', in R. Werbner (ed.) *Post-colonial Subjectivities in Africa*, London, Zed Books.
Ogden, Jessica A.1996. 'Producing Respect: The "Proper Woman" in Post-colonial Kampala', in R. Werbner (ed.) *Post-colonial Identities in Africa*, London, Zed Books.
Okeke-Ihejirika, Philomina E. and Susan Franceschet. 2002. 'Democratization and State Feminism: Gender Politics in Africa and Latin America', *Development and Change* 33(3): 439-466.
Oyèwùmí, Oyèrónké. 1997. *The Invention of Women*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
Phiri, Kings M. and Kenneth R. Ross. (eds.) 1998. *Democratization in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Blantyre, CLAIM.
Ribohn, Ulrika. 2002. '"Human Rights and the Multiparty System Have Swallowed Our Traditions": Conceiving Women and Culture in the New Malawi', in H. Englund (ed.) *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute.
Ross, Hester F. 1998. '"All Men Do is Love, Love..." Context, Power and Women in Some Recent Malawian Writing', in K.M. Phiri and K.R. Ross (eds.) *Democratization in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Blantyre, CLAIM.
San Juan, E. jr. 2002. 'Post-colonialism and the Problematic of Uneven Development', in C. Bartolovich and N. Lazarus (eds.) *Marxism, Modernity and Post-colonial Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Schoffeleers, J. Matthew. 1992. *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. A.D. 1600*, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press.
Sow, Fatou. 1997. 'The Social Sciences in Africa and Gender Analysis', in A. Imam, A. Mama and F. Sow (eds.) *Engendering African Social Sciences*, Dakar, CODESRIA.
Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
Vail, Leroy and Landeg White. 1989. 'Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi', in L. Vail (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
Vail, Leroy and Landeg White. 1991. *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History*, London, James Currey.
Weedon, Chris. 1997. *Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell.
Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 1992. *Smouldering Charcoal*, Oxford, Heinemann.
Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 1996. 'Banishing Words and Stories: Censorship in Banda's Malawi', *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1: 10-15.
Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 1997. 'Visions of Freedom and Democracy in Postcolonial African

Literature', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25: 10-35.
Zingani, Willie T. 1984a. *Madzi Akatayika*, Blantyre, Dzuka.
Zingani, Willie T. 1984b. *Njala Bwana*, Limbe, Popular Publications.

Harri Englund
Institute for African and Asian Studies
P.O.Box 59, 00014, University of Helsinki
Finland
E-mail: Harri.Englund@Helsinki.Fi

African Sociological Review, 8,1,2004, pp.00-00.
Darlene Miller
South African multinational corporations, NEPAD and competing regional claims on Post-Apartheid Southern Africa

Introduction

With democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, South Africa has been poised for leadership of a new *African Renaissance*. The political responsibility attached to democratisation was that South Africa would be a leading force for the economic revitalisation of the entire continent. Post-Apartheid South Africa represented an economic hope for Southern Africa and Africa, increasingly marginalised in the world economy. Discussions on the new South Africa's policies in the region expressed both optimism and concern. Many countries in Africa hoped that South Africa's economic strength as a semi-industrialised country would generate benefits for the continent as a whole. These views rested on a number of suppositions. First, that political democracy would enhance South Africa's economic position in the global economy. Second, that economic growth in South Africa would benefit the continent as a whole. Lastly, that South Africa would definitely have the option of fundamental socio-economic transformation if the ANC and the great leader Mandela took power (Adedeji, 1996).

Post-Apartheid Southern Africa is *a new regional space* opening up within Africa. South Africa's democratisation has opened up a new era for the Southern African region. As the region's economic powerhouse, South Africa has asserted its regional political leadership, immediately assuming a major role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU), key institutions for regional economic and political collaboration. At the same time, South Africa's huge conglomerates are initiating a new round of investment that extends beyond their traditional sectors and trading partners into areas north of Sub-Saharan Africa, and that includes some of the largest direct foreign investment into the region. The international prestige attached to South Africa's transition has conferred a new respectability on the region's policies and projects. Most of all, the inspiring political struggle of the South African majority breathed fresh air across a continent tired with political degeneration, economic survivalism, ongoing ethnicised civil war and new social convulsions of AIDs and growing crime.

This paper analyses the territorial expansion of South African capital into Southern Africa in the post-Apartheid period, and the role of this capital in integrating the Southern African region. Critiquing the narrow conceptual framework of regional integration, this paper attempts to foreground the role of multinational corporations as agents of regional integration. The paper first argues that regionalism entails social contestations over how capital accumulation proceeds in the region, both in terms of capital's material practices and its styles of representation. This approach draws on concepts developed in human geography that see physical space as socially contested. Regional integration perspectives focus on the role of states in making geographic regions cohere or fragment. Spatialised notions of geographic regions privilege a variety of social actors in regional formation. This paper thus contends that regions are implicated in a 'politics of scale', with different social classes making claims on the post-Apartheid region. The particular focus of this paper is the multinational corporation as the agent of regional capital accumulation. Capital accumulation in post-Apartheid Southern Africa is not a disembodied process of foreign direct investment represented in technical terms. These flows of capital have

consequences for what regionalism is and how regional integration proceeds in post-Apartheid Southern Africa.
In the first section I discuss the global resurgence of regionalism and, building on the perspective of human geography, theorise regionalism as a spatial claim. In the second section I analyse the characteristics of the new investment flows from South Africa into Africa and Southern Africa. This section of the paper discusses the structural features of post-Apartheid South African investment in post-Apartheid South Africa and the centrality of South Africa in this expansion. The failure of independent nation-states in Africa to effectively challenge foreign economic domination failed and provided the basis for the current regionalist phase of multinational activity. The paper attempts a characterisation of the new investment from South Africa. The role of the South African state in supporting and initiating private investment is also discussed in this section. The third section of the paper discusses the representational or ideological dimensions of spatial claims and boundary-making, (or the 'ways of life' of South African capital), focusing on the '*African Renaissance*' and NEPAD. Notions of 'modernisation' underlie the new universal African claims of South African corporations and the programmatic initiative - NEPAD - that accompany these 'Africanist' claims. I argue that the *African Renaissance'* and NEPAD (New Partnership for Economic Development) are ways of representing these spatial claims. The conclusion draws out these contradictions between programmatic initiatives and the material and representational practices of multinational corporations.

Global resurgence of regionalism

> I fear Globalisation. The true future of the world is not Globalisation. The future of the world is regionalisation. With Frelimo we put all our faith in the nation-state. We have reached the end of the nation-state (Interview, Investment Advisor and ex-Frelimo Minister of Information, Maputo, August 1999).

A 'radical reawakening' is upon us again. Like an old man awakened from his slumber, regionalism has been dusted off and dressed up to come to the globalisation party. This old geographic lever, however, has to shift gear. The inward protectionist focus of earlier regionalisms has to give way to the 'port of entry' vision (Omae, 1995). The supranational region today is imagined as a global gateway - an entry-point - to the 'information highway'. Meanings attached to regionalism bear the mark of global power. What we imagine to be politically possible for regions reflects dominant discourses about globalisation. These dominant discourses prioritise the creation of regional havens for capital. Supra-national regions are envisaged as prisms for capturing capital by creating favourable conditions for investment. Such neo-liberal globalisation insists on regional blocs as a step up the Darwinian chain of competition. If a nation aligns itself with other countries, it has a better chance of being an economic winner, rather than a loser (Oman, C., 1994). Through regionalism it is hoped that global competitive advantages will be enhanced (Storper, 1997: 4). The geographic region has become a further strategy for global inclusion; an additional lever in the quest for global competitiveness.
There are a number of reasons why regionalism has again assumed greater importance in the 1990s. The disruption of Cold War political geometries by the 1990s has changed global political fault-lines, opening up a new moment for political realignments. Global capital

accumulation entered a phase of 'fast capitalism', leaving Africa in a 'redlined' situation, written out of these swift circulations of financial capital. The final crumbling of 'Third Worldism' in less developed countries and political democratisation also contributed to the shifting global geographies of power. Regionalism has thus emerged in the 1990s as one response to what Arrighi and Silver (2000) characterise as a global counter-revolution unleashed with the crisis of the US hegemon. The global shifts, they argue, are related to the US's declining ability to stabilise global power relations. In this fluid global context, regionalism has been delineated as a key nexus of power, with some claiming that these shifting global geometries are creating a 'regional world' (Storper, 1997; Mattli, 1997; Le Clair, 1997; Omae, 1995; Axline, 1994).
The turn to regionalism has coincided with a shift away from the developmental state. Global systemic-wide challenges have been discredited by the Soviet experience, the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kagarlitsky, 1999) and the failures of Third World national liberation movements. The idea of state-led development has declined as the nation-state has been jettisoned as a channel for popular aspirations. If nation-states have become less effective as a lever for popular demands, other levels of power take on greater strategic significance. The undermining of the state's developmental role and shifting global power allegiances opens up a space between the nation-state and global structures, namely, that of the regional power-bloc.
The crisis of the nation-state and global claims has created the opening for different scales of power to gain in importance. The squeezing out of the nation-state relocates the levels at which power is expressed.

> Combined with the internalization of world-scale processes of production and exchange within the organizational domains of transnational corporations and with the resurgence of suprastatal world financial markets, these unprecedented restrictions and expectations have translated into strong pressures to relocate the authority of nation-states both upward and downward (Arrighi, 1994: 330).

As global and national claim-making have been delegitimised, regional economic formations such as the European Union, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) have been one response to this crisis. Swyngedouw (2000), echoing Arrighi's argument, terms these processes of regional regulation the 'upscaling of governance'. Storper (1997) goes further and argues that territorial development today is creating a 'regional world'. While Storper's attempts to characterise regionalism as the dominant world order are less convincing, what is relevant is that regionalism has been one response to a global counter-revolution. Through regionalism countries hope that national competitive advantages will be enhanced (Storper, 1997: 4).
But these rescaling processes are not benign. Regionalism is not rhetoric only but also a coercive reality, embodying new power relations and new forms of political sanction.

> The double rearticulation of political scales (downward to the regional or local level; upward to the EU, NAFTA, GATT, etc; and outward to private capital) leads to political exclusion, a narrowing of democratic control, and, consequently, a redefinition (or rather a limitation) of citizenship rights and power (Swyngedouw, 2000: 70).

Systems of regional regulation 'imply mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion' that disempower some while empowering others (ibid.). Swyngedouw shows the coercive material effects of social regulation at the regional scale in the case of the European Union. The breakdown of national welfare systems has been the hallmark of the global neo-liberal counter-revolution. The

European Union has been an agent of such deregulation (Swyngedouw, 2000).[1] Regional regulation thus becomes the means to deregulate and privatise and to cheapen wage labour and lower environmental standards in a number of national economic systems in one sweep.
While regions have had different hegemonic and counter-hegemonic meanings over time and space, Eurocentric concerns of regional integration in the European Union have cast a long shadow over perceptions of a new regional order today.[2] Looking over their shoulders at the consolidation of regional power-blocs in the global order, less developed countries are scrambling to form or revive regional institutions such as SADC and MERCOSUR, or to seek accommodation within dominant regional arrangements such as the European Community. Regionalism has become a catchword for nation-states who act as chief executives of capital. These states are intervening with large amounts of money to subsidise all new private capital projects, they are opening up new sites of investment through privatisation; they are cutting loose protectionist exchange controls over national currencies and industrial sectors. The advice of the Frelimo ex-Minister of Information turned Investment Advisor to turn to the region (quoted in the opening section) echoes this disenchantment with the political capacity of the nation-state and the global turn towards regionalism as a geographic lever in global competition.

Regions as 'spaces of rights' and 'spaces of claims'

The next section of the paper critiques the statist emphasis of regional integration, advancing an alternative conceptual framework for regionalist analyses. The argument is that geographic spaces embody dynamic social relations that are contested by a variety of social agents. This argument tries to establish the premises for an enhanced role for South African multinational corporations in our understanding of regional integration. This section begins with a discussion of Lefebvre's 'production of spaces' by Niemann (2001), who characterises the region as a 'space of rights'. This is a revised emphasis on the social rather than statist dimensions of regionalism. This revision is further elaborated through the argument that the region is a 'space of claims', a conceptual approach that I advance as a framework for understanding the competing social agents that make and bound the geographic space of the region. These formulations insist that geographic spaces are social in nature and are formed through political contestations by competing social classes and agents. While nation-states are key actors in these social contestations regional formation and regional integration are by no means reducible to the actions of nation-states.
Challenging the 'International Relations' perspective that underlies Regional Integration approaches, Niemann (2001) argues that supra-national regions are spaces that embody more than physical distances to be overcome. Space is a contested terrain in the manufacture of consent. In a novel application of Lefebvre, Niemann utilises spatial representation to understand Southern Africa regionalism. In so doing, he seeks to free Southern African regionalist analyses of the Eurocentric precepts of regional integration theory. Conceptualising regions as socio-spatial entities can transcend the static, statist assumptions of traditional International Relations (IR), he argues 'It is my purpose in this chapter to challenge this discourse and, instead call for a radically open dialogue about regionalization and the meaning of regions with a specific focus on Southern Africa' (Niemann, 2001: 59).
Appraising the resurgence of regionalism since the late 1980s, Niemann argues that the basic assumption in IR of the individual state as primary actor in creating regional or multilateral entities, continues to prevail. In these approaches, the state is crudely likened to an aggressive,

power-lusting individual. This Hobbesian notion is then extended to explain relationships between states. The 'rugged individual' notion of the state omits the way in which states depend on each other and develop in relation to each other.[3]

The consequence of state-centred analysis for regions is three-fold, argues Niemann (ibid.). It marginalises other non-state actors and gives the state a monopoly on relations between countries. It places emphasis on the state's role in shaping conflict or making contracts and it focuses on how states are integrated by means of free trade areas, customs unions and policy coordination. This analysis of the state excludes the spatial dimension of power relations.

Applying his revision of International Relations theory, Niemann (2001:67-72) provides a historical account of the production of spaces in Southern Africa since the 1800s and shows how a perception of the region as a coherent entity emerges through particular spatial practices. Out of a physical landmass at the southern tip of the African continent, a notion of a coherent geographic entity, a social space,[4] emerges over time that is intimately tied into the contests for economic control. Race formed one crucial demarcation in representational spaces of the region, with a corresponding set of segregated spaces of representation.

> Spaces were identified by the skin colour of those who were permitted to live through them. It was possible to read off the body of an individual whether or not that individual was in the proper space and the pass laws in South Africa, the housing of labour in hostels and compounds adjacent to mines and, later, manufacturing facilities all reflected this racialization of space in southern Africa (Niemann, 2001:74).

The bounded national entities that dominate the regional space are contradicted by the spatial flows of commodities, people and labour that create mutual dependency amongst the different societies within Southern Africa. There is a porosity in the borders of the region's countries that overflows the boundaries of nation-states and creates a societal level of interaction. In this sense, the region is also a 'counterspace' to inter-state relations.[5]

> We can therefore imagine regions not only as spatial constructs which facilitate the exploitation of the subcontinent; we can also imagine them as counter-spaces, as sites of resistance to such processes. One such imagination is to think of *regions as spaces of rights* (my italics) rather than spaces of flows or spaces of places... A region so conceptualized constitutes an integrated space not because of trade flows or institutional apparatuses but because its inhabitants share a commitment to struggle for the same enforceable protections against abuses be they committed by states or corporations... To conceive of regions as spaces of rights represents a direct challenge to the hegemonic consensus of liberalism. Such efforts transcend the traditional spatial organization by insisting that rights of persons be recognized outside and independent of the national state. They reject the position of the state as the sole arbiter of the rights of 'its' citizens and therefore create new spaces of reference (Niemann, ibid:75).

Contesting rights has a regional dimension that is shaped by the way space is produced and represented in the region. This entails a social process that is much wider than the purview of state foreign policy or regional practices. Niemann's discussion thus prises open narrow interpretations of regionalism to 'make space' for social actors beyond their position as national citizens.

While Niemann's revision represents a critical widening of the debate on regionalism, understanding the region as a 'space of rights' both opens up and closes down different

possibilities for understanding regionalism. On the one hand, it opens up regions as social spaces that may be contested. The role of civil society as a competing regional agent and a central force for alternative regionalisms is illuminated in his discussion. Hidden dimensions of regional working class formation and the racialised contours of Southern Africa that evolve out of its systems of wage labour are elaborated historically. On the other hand, he locates this discussion back within liberal theory and the framework of 'rights'. This political emphasis keeps the social dimensions of regional identities and perceptions opaque. The relational processes that shape regional integration still require elucidation. Seeing regions as 'spaces of rights' ignores the spatial and scalar problems that regionalisation poses for regional identities against particularistic identities. Xenophobia, for example, may be analysed as a desperate clinging to place and locality in the face of destabilising regional and global forces. Such particularistic or place-bound identities contrast with and oppose the regional and Pan-African universal claims of the *African Renaissance* project. Attachments to place and localities or sub-regional identities can become stronger as spatial barriers crumble and local areas are subjected to global forces in a more direct way. While global forces seem out of reach and more difficult to control, communities attach more vociferously to local places (Harvey, 1996). Extending the discussion of 'rights' to the spatial claims of different social classes allows for a more expansive discussion of regionalism in Southern Africa.

To expand Niemann's discussion, I represent the region as a 'space of claims'. In this paper I develop the discussion on the politics of scale in relation to social claims on the region.

Regions as 'spaces of claims'

I would like to build on the direction taken in Niemann by exploring the concepts of social scale and geometries of power. Scales are a basic way of differentiating human activity from the local scale such as the household, the workplace, the city, the globe. In daily, lived experience, multiple scales exist simultaneously: '...scale is a set of abstractions through which we make sense of social processes making and remaking these material landscapes' (Smith in Jonas, 1994).

Geographic spaces are produced by abstractions that form these entities into a particular scale - global, national, regional or local. Scale is also political, a way of 'fixing power' within institutions.

> Scale distils emancipatory and oppressive possibilities of space and provides a distilled expression of spatial ideologies, racism, xenophobia... The representation of scale lies at the centre of spatialised politics (Smith, 1990:173).

Limited by a specific geographic scale or level of accumulation such as the nation-state, a rescaling process ensues at the local, sub-national, multilateral regional or global scale, for example. Spatial representations and material practices exist in a dialectical relationship (Smith, 1990; Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 1996).

> The social relations of capitalism invariably take on a geographical expression... What is often less clear is the precise way in which spatial form is related to social forces (Wolch, 1989:5).

In the same way that globalisation is a 'societal construct' (Keet, 1999), regionalism and the formation of regions is a social process, entailing institutional power, a shared geographic

identity, regional labour markets and always relentlessly driven by capitalist accumulation and framed by the power and command of money. Who is to be integrated, how and on what basis is not simply a question of contractual regional arrangements but a question of the spatial 'geometries of power' (Massey, 1992). Shifting power geometries and their spatial representations are underpinned by the spaces of production and reproduction. Capital's constant reterritorialisation and expansion is driven by overaccumulation (Harvey, 1999), and these internal contradictions have geographic consequences.

Multilateral agreements are not simply an arithmetic agglomeration of inter-state arrangements. If South Africa is the dominant power in the region, then any regional integration arrangement will reflect this unevenness. Powers of inclusion, exclusion and disciplinary power will cohere in any formal regional arrangement, irrespective of how egalitarian the terms of such an agreement might be. Power relations are also spatialised. Massey analyses these sociospatial power struggles as shifting geometries of power (ibid:144). What is significant in these discussions is the way that capital's constant reterritorialisation and expansion has social and political consequences. Space is produced through the constant 'reworking of the geographies of capital circulation and accumulation' (Swyngedouw, 2000). These changes in the spatial configurations are accompanied by changes in the scales of governance. A group of nation-states, sometimes geographically contiguous but not always, combines to form a particular geometry of power. Regionalism invokes a claim over a bounded geographic space that is also a social space. Hegemonic class forces in the region present their claim to the regional social space as in the general interest. Bounding the region as a group of historically and economically tied countries that should act together for a particular economic strategy produces a spatially determined power structure that demarcates the region. As social power relations reconfigure, these changes produce new meanings about a specific geographic scale, marginalising some while thrusting others into centre stage.

> Most importantly, however, these scale redefinitions alter and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening the power and control of some while disempowering others (Swyngedouw, in Cox, 1997:142).

Workers in Southern Africa, for example, are devalued socially as a regional 'cost' rather than a regional 'benefit', while those engaged in regional trade and investment are eminently respectable regional agents (Mhone, 1997). Forums for discussing future regional arrangements will thus reflect the social dominance of the regional 'insiders'.

What is significant here is not that social inclusion and exclusion processes happen, but that these processes take spatial forms and have spatial consequences. A new meaning is given to a particular social scale - the nation, the region, the global system - in line with shifts in power relations. Regions, then, are more than physical demarcations. They entail a social claim to a geographic space between the scale of the nation-state and the global system. Against the Euclidian notion of 'space-as-container' or space as fixed, regions are dynamic entities, not just static groups of contiguous states. Social space according to Lefebvre's conceptual 'triad' is constituted by 'the perceived, the conceived, and the lived' (Lefebvre, 1991: 39).

The foreign investment of South African companies in post-Apartheid Southern Africa can be understood as a claim on the region. Capital's ability to command power over space and social relations is a central dimension in the way that the region is integrated, how regional power is accumulated and which regional forces are marginalised. Geographic claims have important consequences for the way that the boundaries of social inclusion or exclusion are drawn. The

paper now turns to the regional role of South African multinationals.

Post-Apartheid Regionalism and New South African Investment in Southern Africa

South African-based or South African multinational corporations have played a central role in constituting Southern Africa as a regional entity. Much of this capital flowed through or from South Africa, allowing part of the regional surplus to fuel South Africa's economic development. Regional development has in many instances implied South African development in the region's past. The regional omnipresence of South Africa as well as the integrating role of its multinational corporations is an important feature of post-Apartheid Southern Africa.
South Africa's ability to command capital and labour flows in the region through these powerful multinational corporations accelerated South Africa's economic growth, creating tremendous regional unevenness. South African capital has established a strong claim to the regional space of Southern Africa, both in the present and in the past. The historical geography of capital accumulation in Southern Africa has placed South African capital, through its multinational corporations, at the center of these accumulation processes. Currently comprising 14 countries[6] that are members of SADC (Southern African Development Community), Southern Africa is dominated by South Africa, the region's economic sub-hegemonic power. Sometimes referred to as 'enclave economies' or economic islands (Martin and O'Meara, 1995; Seidman and Makgetla, 1980), capital accumulation develops the most profitable sectors of the economy to the detriment of other sectors, creating uneven capital flows. South Africa has been the chief beneficiary within the Southern African region of unevenness in regional flows of capital accumulation, comprising $130bn of the ten main countries $160bn in 1998 output.
Global accumulation processes centred on South Africa shaped the boundaries of the region. The concept of Southern Africa as a coherent geopolitical entity can be traced back to the first 'Scramble for Africa'. As cycles of world hegemony have evolved, Africa has been the site of renewed scrambles and reterritorialisation of capital. South Africa's regional domination goes back to the phases of early mining and finance accumulation under colonial expansion. The initial expansion that centered on South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia occupied a central place within this new formation. Combining with these territorial expansions were also the imperialist expansion of the capitalist type (Harvey, 2003:33-36), entailing large investments in rail and road networks. This phase of Southern African accumulation coincided with the period of the Great Depression, initiating a new phase of capital's reterritorialisation in Africa. (Vieira, Wallerstein and Martin, 1992)
This phase (1873-1920) saw the British consolidate political control over the areas of mineral wealth in Southern Africa and form political boundaries that endure today. The capital for this investment came from the global hegemon of the time, Britain. Gold mining in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Johannesburg Reef (South Africa), copper mining in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and Kimberly diamond mining absorbed capital surpluses from London financial and commercial corporations and commodity surpluses of British manufacturers. Despite this regional economic integration through the London- and South African-based capital, political divisions inscribed regional fault-lines. White settler regimes in South Africa, Rhodesia and Mozambique were isolated internationally in the period during the two World Wars and after World War II, bequeathing to the region a racially divided historical geography.
Africa had a very different approach to the global political order in the post-colonial period beginning with the 1950s, as compared with the present. The politics of national liberation

influenced these global orientations in Africa. Post-independence states looked to political allies in Africa for political and economic co-operation. Some of these political alliances were based on greater independence from dominant imperialist regions such as Europe and North America. The radical critique that influenced African political leaders at the time drew on the dependency theorists in Latin America. They argued that Africa, Latin America and other Third World countries were in a relationship of dependency with the global economy. The idea that modernisation awaited Africa with time and steady economic development was fundamentally flawed, they argued. Instead, the parasitic relationship of the First World to the Third World would see wealthy nations become richer as they siphoned surpluses out of Africa.

Third World national liberation movements, inspired by the radical critiques of the dependency theorists, declared a New International Economic Order (NIEO) aimed at breaking this cycle of dependency. Africa's economic growth relied on the export of primary minerals like gold, diamonds, copper, and agricultural produce like coffee and tobacco. As the global prices of these commodities fell, this impulsion to break the economic domination of the First World grew. Ideas of developing the intra-African export markets and 'delinking' from the dominant 'North' animated these post-colonial Africanist programmes. The NIEO perspective inspired many Africanist programmes in the 1960s and 1970s. 'Collective self-reliance' was a strong principle in the programmatic perspectives for Africa at that time. One example was the Lagos Plan of Action, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1980 and proposed by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Throughout this period of national self-determination in some parts of Southern Africa, multinationals continued to use Apartheid South Africa as a base for their investment activities in Southern Africa. Some of the capital surpluses that flowed through South Africa during this period were trapped in South Africa, partly through the protectionist policies of the Apartheid state, allowing South Africa's economy to expand faster than other countries in the region. In the 1960s and early 1970s, there was a new scramble in Africa, this time led by the TNCs who sought new sites of investment for overaccumulated capital. As countries became politically independent, South Africa was a stable launching-pad for investment into the region (Seidman, 1980:45). Protected by Apartheid, global multinationals formed joint ventures with South African companies. In the 1960s, eight of South Africa's top eighteen industrial companies had major ties with transnational firms (Seidman, ibid.). Regional economic integration proceeded despite these political barriers. While political geometries demarcated the region into white settler states, on the one hand, and Frontline (independent) black states on the other, the territorial independence of African nation-states after their national liberation struggles interrupted but did not halt continued capitalist expansion. Nationalisation operated unevenly in economies that allowed multinational investment often via and from South Africa.

At the same time as the incumbent President Thabo Mbeki declared his *African Renaissance* in the 1990s, many Southern African countries embraced economic liberalisation and privatisation more actively than their 1980s efforts, putting state enterprises up for sale to mainly private, foreign investors. Their economic opening converged with restless South African capital. South African companies seized the political opening and went upstream, opening up new hotels, buying up old mines, transforming old breweries, and building new shopping malls with supermarkets and clothing stores. The new post-Apartheid region coincided with a global turn towards regionalism.

Although South African MNCs have invested in Africa since the scramble for Africa in the second half of the 1800s, investment in the last decade displays a number of new features: First,

new foreign direct investment in Africa has South Africa as a primary source, in particular the dominant South African multinationals. Much of Africa's new FDI comes from *within the continent*, a crucial aspect of African development in the 1990s and something that has a critical bearing on the continent's development strategy. (A number of these new investments are tied into a multinational holding company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.[7]) Economic surveys show that South Africa now accounts for 43 percent of Africa's $1.3bn FDI outflows in 2000, making it the largest source of FDI in the continent and overtaking Germany, the US and Japan, Africa's traditional key trading partners (*Business Map*, 2000; *Business Map*, 2001; Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan, 1998; Nel and McGowan, 1999). From Table 1 we can see that South Africa is the most active investor in the region in terms of the number of deals concluded, hence its high visibility in the host countries. SA accounts for 40.7 percent of the number of new investments, followed by the USA and the UK.

Table 1 (Appendix) shows that South Africa's total investment in the SADC region has increased from 11.18 percent to almost 40 percent in the course of three years, a massive increase of 29 percent. While the proportion of South African investment in Lesotho is part of South Africa's traditional relationship with its SACU partners, it is noteworthy how much new FDI in Angola (76.9 percent), Mozambique (28.8 percent), Tanzania (99.58 percent) and Zambia (58.1 percent) was sourced from South Africa in this three year period (1996-1998).

Investment also extends beyond the traditional trading partners of South Africa in the region. The countries in the South African Customs Union (SACU) - Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland - and other countries in Southern Africa were the key trading partners for South Africa. New investment extends as far north as Egypt and Morocco, finishing Rhodes's incomplete Cape to Cairo trail. This increasing command over space in Africa reinforces South Africa's position in Southern Africa, bolstering its regional hegemony as South African multinationals expand their monopolistic reach.

Although a number of the new South African investments are within the new services sector, traditional sectors like mining continue to be an important aspect of investment, often accounting for the largest investments in money terms. This continued prevalence of mining and a limited degree of manufacturing investments show the continued reliance of African countries on primary exports. New sectors in which a significant portion of this investment has taken place are banking, retail, tourism and mining. In retail there are companies like Engen, Woolworths, Kwikserve, Profurn, JD Group and Shoprite. During Apartheid, Anglo, De Beers and Rembrandt still traded and invested in Africa. But there has been a new surge of direct investment (Miller, 2003; Daniel, J., Naidoo, V. and Naidu, S., 2003). Most big South African companies have initiated new expansion plans into other parts of Africa. SAB has bought up major shares in the national breweries of Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique (and are already in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland). Shoprite Checkers (Pepkor subsidiary) has 18 stores in 11 African countries outside of South Africa and has opened up shopping centres in 10 of these countries. Some of the new investments are also very large (IDC $600m in Mozambique; Gencor $500m in Mozambique). South Africa's regional expansion has both continuities with the past (some interrupted as in the case of Anglo American in Zambia) and new articulations with host economies.

Shoprite Checkers (Pepkor subsidiary) has 18 stores in 11 African countries outside of South Africa and has opened up shopping centres in 10 of these countries. Retail sector investment are visible adding a fresh dynamic to urban capital accumulation and consumption processes. In the services sector, hotels, petrol service stations, car hire services, shopping malls, clothing stores

and fast food outlets have expanded consumer choices dramatically. A pattern in this new retail investment is the opening up of new shopping malls with a supermarket as an anchor store. These shopping malls make a dramatic change to the local consumption and urban environments. The Shoprite group has spearheaded this kind of development in 11 (one in five) African countries. Shoprite forms a joint consortium with a local minority shareholder. The consortium owns the new shopping mall. Other companies, primarily South African, rent retail space in these stores, from which a significant proportion of Shoprite's profits derive. A characteristic cluster of stores is Hi-Fi Corporation (belonging to the ProFurn group), Truworths, First National Bank, Game Discount stores, Edgars and the fast food stores like Debonairs and Steers.

While this paper does not examine patterns of retail accumulation, one question that arises is what the consumption markets for these new retail outlets are, given contracting African economies. While little is documented on retailing and consumption in Southern Africa, interviews with key respondents in Mozambique and Zambia (Interviews with Shoprite managers, government trade representatives, media analysts and trade unionists, August 2003) helped to shed light on local consumer markets. Internal consumer markets are highly heterogeneous. Despite high levels of general poverty, internal elites have significant savings and consumption capacity, sometimes generated by earnings in foreign currency (dollars, rands). Local expatriates, government elites and middle class professionals are significant customers for the new supermarkets. Some of these markets have local peculiarities. For example, Angolan diplomats and international community workers cross the border for olive oils, bakery items and other specialist items at the rural supermarket in Solwezi in Zambia, a market that Shoprite Zambian management have learnt to cater for in this branch. Trade unionists also argued that there was pent-up demand that had no outlet while the retail and services sectors were run by poorly stocked, state-owned enterprises. People had money, they report, but had to go to South Africa to buy commodities that they now can find inside Zambia at South African companies. Tourism is also one new area of demand that explains the shifting patterns of consumption in many African countries. The prevalence of tourism in recent economic activity demonstrates the nature of Africa's economic growth sites. Foreign and South African tourists are propelling a highly skewed economic development that caters for the activities and consumption activities of leisure classes while local development is neglected. Middle class consumers in Mozambique may shop at the same South African store in the capital, Maputo, or in the Johannesburg border town of Nelspruit.[8] Working class consumers have made use of Shoprite's promotional activities to buy basic consumer items (fish oil, eggs, washing powder, rice, bread, milk) although these appear to be less now as the company is more established and tax breaks for the company's first five years in both countries are over. The informal market sources some of its goods from Shoprite in Zambia, hence the conversion of one store in Lusaka into a primarily wholesale store, catering for small shop owners from rural areas as one of their key markets. In rural areas where Shoprite has outlets, informal traders buy from Shoprite and resell to local consumers, sometimes just outside of the company's premises.[9] In the Copperbelt, Anglo American's pull-out in 2002 led to smaller businesses going under and Shoprite's capture of local market share that had previously gone to these competitors. While it may be more efficient in some ways if Shoprite adopted a style of wholesale stores rather than shopping mall supermarkets, Shoprite is wedded to its brand image and the new consumer environment that this brand creates in less developed African locales outside of South Africa.

This expanded African market is absorbing surplus capital in South Africa, surplus labour in the

host countries, and commodity surpluses from South Africa, expanding the manufacture of goods inside South Africa. South African companies are benefiting from regional economies of scale, rather than just national economies of scale. This is a step in their global expansion. They have said that they want to use Africa as a way of strengthening their position in the global market, and this is exactly what is happening: Africa is a 'spatial fix' (Harvey, 1999) for South African companies. With falling rates of profit in South Africa, they can increase their turnover and profit rates in Southern Africa and beyond by drawing African consumers into their market. Regional distribution chains centralised in South Africa also expand the number of outlets supplied by South Africa.

New South African investment takes place in the context of an ongoing decline in growth and investment in Africa which has been called the 'global redlining' of Africa. The continent is increasingly marginalised and disconnected from the global economy. John Saul (2002), commenting on our quasi-capitalist condition, points out that in Africa we have only three percent of the world's trade, one percent of its GDP and one fiftieth of the income per person in the OECD countries. While other regions such as East Asia have enjoyed periods of boom since the global crisis of the 1980s, Africa's overall decline has been constant (Arrighi, 2002). This parlous contribution to global economic growth stands in stark contrast to our continent's natural wealth. Despite colonialism's capitalist penetration of Africa, most of the continent has household-based agrarian economies. Many economies continue to rely on cash-crops and primary minerals for export, rather than the informational networks that characterise late-capitalism in many other parts of the world. As advanced capitalist countries found new products that supplanted primary minerals, demand for Africa's natural products declined by about two percent per year (African Development Report, ADB, pp. 33 and 47-48).

> ... the result is relegation to the margins of the global economy, with no visible prospect for continental development along capitalist lines... It simply means that Africa's development, and the dynamics of global capitalism, are no longer convergent, if they ever were (Saul and Leys, 1999:6).

The decline in external foreign investment enhances the importance of South African investment in Africa.

Critics of the 'new scramble' point out that, at the same time that this new investment was taking place, there were massive pull-outs by companies. A more recent example was Anglo's pull-out from Zambia's Copperbelt, involving around 10,000 jobs. Zimbabwe's textile industry was gutted. Also, in money terms, the size of the investments was relatively small. Critics also pointed to the potential 'recolonisation of Africa' that this new wave of post-Apartheid investment represents. Others argued that massive retrenchments, the closure of large mines and factories and continuing regional inequalities negate any positive effects of this investment (Bond, 1999; Saul, 1993; Keet, 1999).

Notwithstanding these valid criticisms, this new investment is politically and socially significant despite the relatively insignificant amounts by global standards (Adebayo, 1996; Miller, 2000; Miller; 2002; Lodge, 1999). Against this overall decline, there are sites of 'lumpy capitalism' (Cooper, 2001) where dynamism and change prevail over stagnation. The new South African investment extends geographically beyond South Africa's traditional trading partners in the region (Davies, 1996). Viewed from a macro-economic perspective, flows of capital from South Africa into the rest of the continent are not enough to reverse the 'redlining' of the region. From below, however, from the perspective of African citizens, these spurts of new South African

investment bring dynamic new developments, but they carry with them uneven capitalist development's contradictions of dynamism and destruction.

Private investment by multinational corporations is not the only material claim on regional space in Southern Africa. The South African state is also implicated in regional investment through a strategy of public-private partnerships. The South African government has articulated its investment objectives in Southern Africa through 'Spatial Development Initiatives' (SDIs), of which the Maputo Development Corridor is a leading example. South Africa's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has taken practical responsibility for a regional economic restructuring that has a neo-liberal export-oriented perspective. Behind the DTI strategy is faith that the SDIs will create development along 'corridors' that link key nodes of accumulation (especially Johannesburg-Maputo) with features of 'Export Processing Zones' (EPZs). The DTI project seeks to identify potential port/rail/EPZ complexes in an underdeveloped target area that could attract investors and promote local business. These initiatives would target infrastructure investments as a key component of public-private partnerships. The partnership would entail significant outlays of public funds by the state joining up with private investors.[10]

Regional institutional mechanisms are being marshaled to give effect to this regional strategy. The prevailing official consensus around the SDI strategy demonstrates the neo-liberal regionalism envisaged amongst Southern African policy-makers. The aim is that such a regional strategy will be achieved through institutional frameworks such as SACU (Southern African Customers Union) and SADC (Southern African Development Community), structures increasingly involved in the organisation of free-trade deals in Southern Africa under the strategies of regional integration, cooperation and harmonisation. As early as 1989, SADCC committed the region to becoming a free-trade area, but progress has been slow. Aside from SADC, other parallel and occasionally competing institutional arrangements for the region include the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, the South African Customs Union (a long-standing free trade deal between South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Namibia) and the Common Monetary Union. WTO membership will open up other regional and bilateral relationships. All such bilateral and multilateral deals are premised upon export-orientation, not inward industrialisation, and upon increasingly 'flexible' and 'competitive' labour markets (Bond, et al, 2001).

One of the frameworks for national development in Mozambique is the Maputo Corridor, a public-private initiative for development (Pareja and Pretorius, 2000). As mentioned earlier, the Maputo Corridor is one of a host of 'Spatial Development Initiatives' launched by the South African government. Consisting of industrial and construction enterprises clustered around the N4 road that stretches from Johannesburg directly to the port of Maputo, the Maputo Corridor was jointly launched two years ago by the Presidents of Mozambique and South Africa.[11]

Regionalism is the catch-word for nation-states which act as chief executives of capital, intervening with large amounts of money to subsidise all new private capital projects, opening up new sites of investment through privatisation and dangerously cutting loose protectionist exchange controls over the national currency.

'African Renaissance' and NEPAD as competing regional claims

When workers make their claims on the Southern African region, they are not the only ones doing so. Alongside the material claims of South African capital, a host of other regional programmes and initiatives may be understand as competing regional claims. Emanating from

both the state and South African capital, these ideological and programmatic initiatives reside within the hegemonic power blocs of state and capital. I hence characterise these competing regional claims as hegemonic regional claims that compete with the counter-hegemonic claims of workers. South African investment in the 1990s takes place against the ideological backdrop of the *African Renaissance*, which has a bearing on the strategies of South African multinational corporations.

The geographic claim of South African capital is not taking place in a political vacuum. From within South Africa, the state has also laid a claim to the African continent through both an economic programme, articulated in the 'New Partnership for Africa's Development' (NEPAD), and a mobilising ideology, the *African Renaissance*. To understand the relationship between the African claims of the South African state and that of South African capital, we need to do a brief overview of NEPAD and the *African Renaissance*.

Lodge (2002) highlights two political axes in the *African Renaissance*: the first is modernity, the second is the African heritage (pp 228-230). A strong technological determinism underpins the first idea of modernity (Bond, 2002). Heritage, culture and Africanity are the cluster of ideas that forms the second axis of the *African Renaissance* ideology and rhetoric. These concepts draw on the notion of a unique African democracy that endures in African societies today from pre-colonial social formations in Africa. The term *ubuntu* has been coined to connote these communal underpinnings of society. Shared values rather than individual strivings, co-operative systems rather than hierarchical institutions, and, of paramount importance, the principle of humanness in social interactions. The embrace of tradition is propagated as a bulwark against modernity's powerful 'Western' impulsions towards impersonal interactions motivated by pecuniary gain.

The interesting tension residing within the *African Renaissance* ideology is its contrasting notions of development, what may be called a *modernity-ubuntu dichotomy or binary.* Modernity is forward-looking while African identity is backward-looking. African identity looks backward towards tradition and retention of the past. Modernity, powered by progress and enlightenment ideas, pushes forward, on the other hand. In the context of post-colonial Africa, racial meanings attach to these binaries. Modernity and 'whiteness' go together, while African traditionalism and 'blackness' are reciprocal. This geographic claim to Africa thus brings together different spatio-temporal moments, different moments in time and geographic space, creating an opening for contrasting and potentially conflicting appropriations. We will return to this point later in the argument. The tension between modernity and Africanism underpins this 'new, pragmatic Africanism.' This fusion of old and new is meant to foster a dynamic form of African development, where modernising capitalist development is infused with traditional, humanistic values, thereby leading to a more humane kind of capitalist growth.

These new ways of thinking about African identity have unintended consequences, and the self-representation of South African capital as 'economic bearers of the *African Renaissance*' is one such unanticipated meaning. 'To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings'. (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* in Schoenberger, 1997:211). New language creates new ways of doing things. President Mbeki has declared the era of an *African Renaissance*, of economic and political renewal that will uplift Africa's peoples. In line with the new ways of doing things, South African capital has mutated and grown another head - an African one. South African firms claim that their investment in post-Apartheid Southern Africa is part of the *African Renaissance*. Through their actions they purport to promote a shared, non-racial, democratic value system, (termed 'Ubuntu' in South Africa) and a set of

universals that apply to Africans - as consumers, people and workers.

The companies who were engaged in the 'new scramble' in Africa were quick to see the political opportunities of the *African Renaissance*. Whereas in the past they were not welcome in other parts of Africa because of their association with the Apartheid regime, white-led South African business could now take their search for profitable investment into the continent. This expedition could now be cloaked as an economic renaissance, for which they were quick to re-invent their African roots. A recent survey on NEPAD and the perceptions of top CEOs at major South African corporations makes this link between the African expansion of companies and South Africa's 'renaissance' ambitions (*Business Day*, 1/10/02).

In post-Apartheid South Africa, South African business has discovered its African roots. African identity and *ubuntu* pervade the post-Apartheid language of these mainly white male businessmen and financiers. With this new identification South African capital is staking a claim to the *African Renaissance*. When Pepkor, one of the major South African investors in Africa, expands its African operations, it declares that it does this with the objective of Africa's revitalisation. South African capital today expands into the region with the political authority of a democratic government. Investment is no longer coming into the region from a pariah state. The political responsibility attached to democratisation is that South Africa will be a leading force for the economic revitalisation of the whole continent. In short, one meaning attached to South African companies is that they are the economic bearers of the *African Renaissance*.

Through NEPAD and the *African Renaissance*, South Africa is making a geographic claim on the post-Apartheid region and continent. The *African Renaissance* is more a mobilising ideology than an economic programme. President Thabo Mbeki has advocated this idea in public addresses locally and abroad since 1997. Lodge (2002) highlights the 'liturgical status' that this idea now enjoys. He notes that a range of social events, gatherings and institutions take the *African Renaissance* as a reference point. The New African Partnership for Development led by President Mbeki of South Africa and his allies (Nigeria, Senegal, Egypt), aims to have 'a new framework of interaction with the rest of the world, including the industrialised countries and multilateral organisations'.

The targets set in the NEPAD programme are for an African GDP growth of seven percent per annum, even more ambitious than the target growth rates set during Africa's 'development decades'. The core elements of the NEPAD include more privatisation, especially of infrastructure, multi-party elections, information and communications technology, peace-keeping, more and better managed aid, debt relief and more equitable trade relations between developed and developing nations. Underpinned by modernist visions of telecommunications and infrastructure development, NEPAD argues that technological progress will be the route to Africa's economic regeneration. Securing inflows of capital is therefore crucial to this process. South Africa and its allies have attempted to woo dominant 'Western' powers to back financially and politically the investment initiatives of NEPAD. Through the NEPAD and the African Union, South Africa has drawn together other regional superpowers into a leadership core. This leadership core is the lever for claiming economic jurisdiction over the African geographic entity. In this way, NEPAD has become a tool for Africa-wide economic discipline to global, neo-liberal dictates. This initiative has been given institutional clout through a dedicated NEPAD secretariat within the South African government.

Like the national programmes of the democratic South African government (GEAR and the RDP), NEPAD has economic objectives that target the entire continent. It is saying that it wants to strongly influence the economic practices of the continent. It wants to be able to tell global

powers like the US, the World Trade Organisation and the G-8 that key African powers are able to exercise a degree of control over African states. To this end it has launched NEPAD as an economic programme. The programme has a practical, economic objective: to entice investors to put their money into joint projects with African governments. Public-private partnerships are therefore a central plank in this edifice. Its outputs will be measured quantitatively. Politically, NEPAD demonstrates a shift away from national autonomy. In terms of the programme's objective, a combined effort is required by African states. National economic sovereignty has to be subordinated to Africa-wide economic objectives. African economic combination is a clear objective. Economic policies of African states should converge and facilitate global neo-liberal integration for African economies. Each state cannot fashion its economic policies independently of the regional and continental good. The African state has to strive towards a synergy between national and continental economic polices.[12] In the context of NEPAD, South African investment attains a political importance beyond its economic impact. South African MNC investment in Africa is not a depoliticised economic act but becomes linked politically to the NEPAD objectives of growth and investment in Africa.

Conclusion

While NEPAD looks to the North for partnerships between African governments and private investors, a primary source of investment emanates from within the continent itself. NEPAD advocates often argue that the programme is internally self-reliant and can proceed with or without the support of Northern countries, yet the role of South African capital in investment on the continent is often overlooked.

NEPAD programmes and practices will be linked to the activities and interventions of white, South African capital. But these South African MNCs may be less interested in *ubuntu* for Africa and more in their role as modernising agents. If their tendency is to emphasise their role in Africa's 'economic upliftment' and progress, as it appears to be, the humanistic component of the Renaissance is then suppressed. This approach to their 'economic Renaissance', however, means that predominantly white economic agents are involved with the *African Renaissance*. Post-colonial Africa will continue to have the racialised contours of colonial Africa, in terms of which white men bring modernity to Africa. The bizarre outcome of the economic and ideological interventions of South African MNCs in Africa is that the *new Africanism* and the *African Renaissance* will take on a white, racial hue.

The Council for Development and Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) called a meeting of African scholars and activist intellectuals in April 2002. In contrast to NEPAD's claims of representing an 'African solution' to African problems, CODESRIA academics and activists cautioned that the neo-liberal framework of current development crowded out alternative African development thinking.

> Over the past decades, a false consensus has been generated around the neo-liberal paradigm promoted through the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation. It is in this context that the proclaimed African initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was developed in the same period as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's compact for African Recovery, as well as the World Bank's Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?, were discussed ('TWN-Africa/CODESRIA Declaration on Africa's Development Challenges', 26/4//2002, www.twnafrica.org).

A common criticism levelled at the NEPAD process is the way it consulted bourgeois parties, then formalised and institutionalised the process, and then only began to draw 'civil society' into the discussions. During the formulation of NEPAD, no trade union, other civil society, church, political-party, parliamentary, or other potentially democratic or progressive forces were consulted. In contrast, extensive consultations occurred with the World Bank and IMF (November 2000 and February 2001), transnational corporations and associated government leaders (at Davos in January 2001 and New York in February 2002), the G-8 (in Tokyo in July 2000 and Genoa in July 2001), the European Union (November 2001) and individual Northern heads of state (AIDC Notes to Cosatu CEC, 24 April 2002).
Challenging the 'partnership with the North' that powers NEPAD's objectives, the Declaration by TWN/CODESRIA premises its position on a 'hostile global order':
(i) First, terms of trade are against African economies,
(ii) Second, IFIs (International Financial Institutions) impose 'unsound' macro-economic policies through structural adjustment conditionalities on African economies,
(iii) Third, an unsustainable and unjustifiable debt burden cripples Africa's economy and negates African ownership of development strategies ('TWN-Africa/CODESRIA Declaration on Africa's Development Challenges', 26/4//2002, www.twnafrica.org: 1).

While NEPAD bargains for better terms of trade, this Declaration takes these unfair terms of trade as a political given in the global economy. These are structural constraints to Africa's development. NEPAD is trying to push the boundaries of these structural constraints by improving Africa's export conditions. But this comes with a political tag, (as Pettigrew's scoldings showed): act as the continent's political and economic gatekeeper for our global dictates or there is no deal or partnership. White Northern sensibilities are horrified by Robert Mugabe and his old style of dictatorial Third Worldism. This era is supposed to be over, and NEPAD has to ensure this break with the Third Worldist past. If it cannot perform this minimal political conditionality, it is not worth the North's while to support the process.
The first observation is that South African companies, whether we like it or not, represent South Africa. South African companies like Anglo, MTN, Vodacom, Steers and Shoprite Checkers become the bearers of the *African Renaissance*, of South Africa's post-Apartheid reintegration with Southern Africa and Africa. But what does it mean when this same company embarks on an exploitation that is so brutal that it undercuts gains such as the 10-hour working day won by the working class in the 1850s? How can you be the bearer of modernity and an *African Renaissance* when you plunge black workers back into the dark ages of early capitalism and the satanic mills? NEPAD calls for partnerships between African countries. If some are more equal than others, is post-Apartheid South Africa the architect of a new regional racism? Racism has its geographies, both inside countries and between countries of the region and the continent, between weaker and stronger nations. If the *South African Renaissance* is led by this kind of white naivete that has no conception of an African past, we are brewing a lethal regional cocktail. We cannot see our workplaces as only South African, or Namibian, or Mozambican, or Zambian. Our histories are tied together, our present and our futures as Southern Africans and Africans are being intertwined again. NEPAD and South African capital have an ideological convergence: the programme and material practice form part of a neo-liberal Africanist appropriation of Africa in the 1990s. Geography and politics are brought together in an attempt to discipline Africa into neo-liberal global capitalism. The ideological commonality in NEPAD and South African investment in Africa is a newly-fashioned, neo-liberal Africanism.

Ideological convergence, however, does not preclude a divergence between NEPAD and South Afrcian capital in Africa. First, different appropriations of African identity are possible within such a neo-liberal Africanism. The African identity of white-led South African capital embraces modernisation notions of development that are a throwback to colonial times. *African Renaissance* ideology, on the other hand, has a pre-colonial and anti-colonial sentiment. Second, NEPAD's programmatic goals rest on investment partnerships between African states and foreign capital, yet Africa's biggest and expanding investments come from within the continent, namely from South Africa. A potential divergence exists, therefore, between policy objectives and real material processes. State policy idealists cast their eyes across the oceans and wish for a turn-around in global capital towards Africa, yet right before their eyes South African MNCs are transforming Africa and forging a NEPAD and an *African Renaissance* in their own image. While utopian visions for Africa's future are crucial, it is at this level of real, material processes that neo-liberal *Africanism* will need to be challenged.

Notes

1. NAFTA similarly has seen regional integration become a force for hypercommodification of women workers (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Lorena-Cook, 1997).
2. Mattli (1999) surveys the various phases of integration fever in Europe. Regional integration today is more evidently regional and global reintegration.
3. Kropotkin's notion of mutual aid is an interesting counterpoint to the Darwinian/Hobbesian notions of evolution through competition (see Harvey, 1996:161).
4. Other authors also emphasise the 'social construction' of the region. Wallerstein refers to the 'social construct' of Southern Africa (Vieira, Sergio, Wallerstein, I., and Martin, William G. [1992] *How fast the wind?: Southern Africa, 1975-2000*. Africa World Press. Trenton. N.J.). Leysens (1998) similarly refers to this social dimension of regionalism through a 'Coxian approach'. The theorisation of space is the specific innovative dimension of Niemann's contribution to this debate.
5. See Bond, Miller and Ruiters (2000) for how the space of regional working class formation is shaped by the region's political economy.
6. Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia,de Zimbabwe.
7. Some companies have re-established the old, imperial geography of these South African-based MNCs by listing on the London Stock Exchange.
8. Many Mozambicans used to make a week-end's leisure activity of shopping there but increased crime rates are making this less attractive leading to growing deindustrialisation of central town areas and the relocation of businesses.
9. This is a tension-ridden collaboration as one incident in Solwezi showed when one of these traders came into the store and loudly shouted slogans protesting against Shoprite. This incident was partly provoked because the shop was regulating the amount of its supplies to the traders.
10. By the end of 1999, only two of the fourteen proposed SDIs were operative.
11. Four years were allocated for the construction of the wide N4 road. At this stage of the project, the smooth, tarred freeway begins in Johannesburg and ends in Maputo. The border posts are still narrow dust-bowls. The road is swiftly traversable by the luxury coaches that carry the frequent human traffic between Johannesburg and Maputo. For the Frelimo Minister of Information turned Investment Advisor, regionalisation is Mozambique's answer to

globalisation. (Interview, Maputo, August 1999). Returning to South Africa on a Saturday, the South African border post entry to Mozambique had a long queue of cars and many trucks that were carrying construction materials (mostly steel posts and cement) for use in Mozambique. Along the N4 on the Mozambican side, there were small pockets of construction work on the road, with high-tech trucks and machines manned by black, male workers. Small tent-sites in the adjacent veld with no infrastructure seemed to provide the temporary housing for workers on these sites.

12. The issues of collective action and state sovereignty in the sphere of political democracy highlight the ambivalence in the NEPAD leadership. There is a historical reluctance to interfere with the political autonomy of sovereign states, a characteristic of the 'African old boy's club'. Although African governments are willing to support a programme for economic co-operation, they share this interest in non-interference in their governments.

Appendix

Table 1: Total and South African FDI into SADC (excluding South Africa), 1996-1998 (USDm)

[PUT TABLE I AROUN D HERE OR ON FACING PAGE IF NECESSARY IN LANDSCAPE - SEPARATE FILE]

References

Adedeji, A. (ed.) 1996. *South Africa & Africa. Within or Apart?* Cape Town, SADRI Books, London and New Jersey Zed Books, Ijebu-Ode, ACDESS.

African Development Bank. 1996. *African Development Report 1996*, Abidjan.

Ahwireng-Obeng, F. and McGowan, P. 1998. 'Partner or Hegemon? South Africa in Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16,1.

Arrighi, G. and Silver, B. 1999. *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, Minneapolis, London, University of Minnesota Press.

Arrighi, G. and Silver, B. 2000. 'Global Inequalities and "Actually Existing Capitalism"', Paper submitted to *Social Problems*.

Arrighi, G. 2002. 'The African Crisis: World Systemic and Regional Aspects', *New Left Review.* May-June, www.new.leftreview.net.

Axline, A. (ed.) 1994. *The Political Economy of Regional Cooperation. Comparative Case Studies*, London, Madison, Pinter.

Bond, Patrick. 1999. 'Globalisation, African Economic Crisis and South African Vulnerabilities', *African Communist*, October.

Bond, Patrick, Miller, Darlene and Ruiters, Greg. 2001. 'The Production, Reproduction and Politics of the Southern African Working Class: Economic Crisis and Regional Class Struggle', *Socialist Register 2001: The Global Working Class at the Millenium*, London, Merlin Press, and New York, Monthly Review Press.

Bond, Patrick. (ed.) 2002. *Fanon's Warning. A Civil Society Reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development*, Africa World Press, Inc. AIDC.

BusinessMap. 2000. 'SADC INVESTOR SURVEY. Complex Terrain', BusinessMap SA Report, Johannesburg, South Africa.

BusinessMap SA. 2001. 'Regional Investor Survey 2001', BusinessMap SA Report. Johannesburg, South Africa.
Cooper, Frederick. 2001. 'What is the concept of Globalization good for? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs*, 100, 189-213.
Daniel, J., Naidoo, V. and Naidu, S. 2003. *State of the Nation. South Africa 2003-2004*, Cape Town, HSRC Press.
Davies, Robert. 1996. 'South Africa's Economic Relations With Africa: Current Patterns and Future Perspectives', in Adedeji, A. (ed.) *South Africa & Africa. Within or Apart?*.
Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Massachusetts, Oxford, Blackwell.
Harvey, D. 1999. *Limits to Capital*, New York, Oxford, Blackwell.
Harvey, D. 2003. *The New Imperialism*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.
Jonas, Andrew E.G. 1994. 'Editorial', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 12.
Kagarlitsky, Boris. 1995. *The Mirage of Modernization*, New York, Monthly Review Press.
Keet, Dot. 1999. 'Globalisation and Regionalisation: Contradictory Tendencies, counteractive tactics, or strategic possibilities?', Foundation for Global Dialogue, Occasional Paper No 18, April.
Leclair, M. S. 1997. *Regional Integration and Global Free Trade. Addressing the fundamental conflicts*, Aldershot, Brookfield USA, Singapore, Sydney, Ashgate.
Leysens, Anthony. 1998. 'Southern Africa: The Case for a Coxian Approach', Centre for Southern African Studies, School of Government, University of the Western Cape.
Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell.
Lodge, Tom. 2002. *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Philip, Oxford,. James Currey, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
Martin, Phyllis M. and O'Meara, Patrick. (eds.) 1995. *Africa*, Third Edition, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, London, James Currey.
Massey, D. 1992. 'The politics of spatiality', *New Left Review*. No. 196, 65-88.
Mattli, Walter. 1999. *The Logic of Regional Integration. Europe and Beyond*,Cambridge University Press.
Mhone, G.C.Z. 1997. 'An approach to the impact of trade and investment on employment in Southern Africa', Report for ILO, Harare, Zimbabwe. April.
Miller, D. 2003. 'NEPAD and SA Multinational Corporations in Africa - whose "African Renaissance"?' ILRIG Occasional Paper, February.
Nel, Philip and McGowan, Patrick. 1999. *Power, Wealth and Global Order. An International Relations Textbook for Africa*, Cape Town, UCT Press.
Niemann, M 2001. 'Unstated Places - Rereading Southern Africa', in Vale, P., Swatuk, L. and Oden, B. (eds.) *Theory, Change and Southern Africa's Future*, Hampshire, New York, Palgrave.
Omae, Kenichi. 1995. *The end of the nation state: the rise of regional economies*, New York, Free Press.
Oman, Charles. 1994. *Globalisation and Regionalisation: The Challenge for Developing Countries*, Paris, OECD.
Pareja, P. and Pretorius, L. 2000. 'Deepening Regional Integration and Development through the Public-Private Partnership in Southern Africa: a case study of the MOZAL aluminium smelter project', Seminar presentation at School of Government, UWC. September.
Saul, J. 1993. *Recolonization and Resistance in Southern Africa in the 1990s*, New Jersey, Africa World Press.

Saul, John S. and Leys, Colin. 1999. 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Global Capitalism', *Monthly Review*, Special summer issue on Global Capitalism.
Saul, John. 2002. Paper presented to IGS Conference, The Political Economy of Africa Revisited, Johns Hopkins University, April.
Schoenberger, E. 1997. *The Cultural Crisis of the Firm*, Massachusetts USA, Oxford UK, Blackwell.
Seidman, Ann & Seidman Makgetla, Neva. 1980. *Outposts of Monopoly Capitalism. Southern Africa in the Changing Global Economy*, London, Zed Press Connecticut, Lawrence Hill & Company.
Smith, Neil. 1990. *Uneven Development. Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Oxford, Massachusetts, Basil Blackwell.
Storper, Michael. 1997. *The Regional World. Territorial Development in a Global Economy*, New York, The Guilford Press.
Swyngedouw, E. 2000. 'Authoritarian governance, power, and the politics of rescaling', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2000, Vol 18.
Swyngedouw, E. 1997. 'Neither Global nor Local: "Glocalization" and the Politics of Scale', in Cox, Kevin R. *Spaces of Globalization*, New York, London, The Guildford Press.
Vieira, Sergio, Wallerstein, I., and Martin, William G. 1992. *How fast the wind?: Southern Africa, 1975-2000*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press.
Wolch, Jennifer. 1989. *The Power Of Geography: How Territory Shapes Social Life*, Boston, Unwin Hyman.

Darlene Miller
Department of Sociology
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
South Africa

African Sociological Review, 8,1, 2004, pp.00-00.
BOOK REVIEWS

Mats Lundahl, Colin McCarthy and Lennart Petersson. *In the Shadow of South Africa: Lesotho's Economic Future*. Aldershot. Ashgate. 2003.

Thabisi Hoeane
Rhodes University
Grahamstown, South Africa

The publication of this book on Lesotho is timely, given the current debates on the African continent in general and the Southern African sub-region in particular, around the serious economic and political problems that accompany a globalising environment and the need to address them. Contemporarily, these debates have been buoyed by the establishment of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). These institutions and programmes have been advanced as a signal of commitment by African states to confront the continent's political and economic problems.

In this regard, the book is welcome, because it engages Lesotho's precarious position as an enclave within South Africa - positioning it within this milieu. What is important about this debate is the extent to which this new political and economic environment that is being introduced continentally as a panacea for the continents ills, will seriously benefit disadvantaged states like Lesotho. The main value of this work is that it qualitatively takes debate forward on Lesotho's 'hostage' situation within South Africa after the demise of apartheid by engaging its past, contemporary and future economic prospects.

The first three chapters go over mainly familiar terrain in capturing Lesotho's 'dilemma' as the authors put it - as a small country totally encircled by its large neighbour South Africa, providing a general background to developments in that country up to the late 1980s. The following four chapters analyse Lesotho's specific problems in the last quarter of the past century, dealing with its structural economic problems, internal and external factors, and the its failed growth strategies in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

The most critical contribution that the work makes at this point is that it is a coherent systematic exposition of Lesotho's efforts to deal with its precarious economic and political status within South Africa and the region, in the era of serious changes after the destruction of apartheid and the onset of globalisation. It captures fully the irony that has been wrought by the end of apartheid in that, contrary to popularly held beliefs in the 1970s and 1980s, its end has not brought forth benefits for the region, especially for countries like Lesotho.

In fact, in chapter nine and ten, the authors address this matter and consider how the South African factor and regional integration have actually continued to be a stumbling block to Lesotho's development - further ensuring the 'hostage' nature of Lesotho - now to an apartheid-free South Africa.

New and serious challenges have faced South Africa in the post-apartheid era leading to inward looking policies, as that country deals with its with its own massive internal problems brought about by the legacy of apartheid - leading to a serious impact on Lesotho's economy. This book emphatically indicates the extent to which, over and above the rhetoric of 'solidarity' of African states, and despite the oft-repeated view under globalisation of the disappearance of state influence, states are still powerful actors and they continue to have an interest in self-

preservation at any cost. South Africa's own interests have clearly taken precedence in pursuing its survival over the concerns of other states in the region, especially with respect to vulnerable states like Lesotho.

Inasmuch as this book is very welcome, it is also at the same time very frustrating. As noted, it cogently engages the 'shadow' that Lesotho has to deal with in the form of South Africa, but fails to deal with 'its economic future' as its sub-title suggests. The title gives the impression that the authors are going to discuss the ways in which Lesotho can practically deal with this 'shadow'. But they do not do so convincingly and this is only perfunctorily attempted in the last chapter.

Thus, readers looking for plausible and concrete answers to Lesotho's 'dilemma' to deal with this 'shadow' will not find much assistance in this work. For example, as the authors clearly state at the end of the book, they have not dealt with perhaps the most critical question that needs to be addressed regarding Lesotho economic future, given its unfortunate geographical position vis-à-vis South Africa: incorporation or not.

The value of such books as this one is that - in not confronting this issue head on - they indicate the urgency and imperative to stimulate research into profound questions that need to be asked and answered in Southern Africa with regard to the constitution and existence of 'states' and 'borders'. In this situation of the continuation of domination of South Africa over countries like Lesotho, to what extent and of what use are the existence of states and whose interests ultimately does the continued existence of these states serve?

Lastly, the books' serious drawback is that although it deals with Lesotho's economic issues it profoundly neglects to take into account the influence and importance of politics in the debate around the country's past and future prospects. Without centrally bringing in the political factor in their analysis, the authors have robbed the reader of a broader understanding of the complex questions that underline Lesotho's tribulations. No analysis of Lesotho's future economic prospects can be addressed without engaging the influence of the political environment, which is a very crucial determinant in understanding that country.

Mekuria Bulcha. *The Making of Oromo Diaspora: A Historical Sociology of Forced Migration*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Kirk House Publishers. 2002. pp. 272, Paper cover, Price $25.

Alemayehu Kumsa
Charles University
Prague, Czech Republic
kumsa@ruk.cuni.cz

This highly valuable book, which is the result of almost a quarter of a century of research by the author, is an account of forced migration from Oromoland (now known as Oromia) over a long period of time. *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora* examines the socio-political and economic factors, which led to the uprooting and scattering of thousands of Oromos at different times and different directions (p.13). It focuses on what the author calls the bygone Oromo diaspora which was created by the Red Sea slave trade as well as the contemporary Oromo Diaspora resulting from socio-political and cultural oppression perpetrated by consecutive Ethiopian rulers since the creation of the modern Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century. The author put his study of forced Oromo migration from their homeland in a chronological order, covering six time periods.

Divided into three parts, the book has nine chapters. The author gives, schematically, a history of forced Oromo migration over the last four centuries: (i) before 1870s wars between the Abyssinian state(s) and the Oromo people produced captives who were sold by the Abyssinian rulers and soldiers to Arabs and Ottoman Turks; (ii) between 1870s and 1900 slave raiding expeditions and wars of conquest carried out by Menelik, the architect of the modern Ethiopian state, caused large scale uprooting and channelled Oromo and others war captives into the slave market; (iii) slave raiding and slave trading continued until the mid 1930s leading to internal and external migration. In addition, the harsh colonial-style rule imposed on the Oromo and the other peoples conquered by Menelik and incorporated into Ethiopia also caused refugee migrations across international borders. The suppression of the Oromo uprising in the province of Bale and of the Macha Tulama Association, a pan-Oromo organisation, sparked off small-scale refugee migration from the early 1960s to 1974, the date of the Ethiopian revolution which overthrew the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I. (iv) The policies of the military regime (Dergue) which usurped political power after Haile Selassie and ruled the country from 1974 to 1991 caused the of flight over 500,000 Oromos, most of them to the neighbouring countries in Northeast Africa. Since 1992, the violation of human rights committed by the ruling Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has been causing a large exodus of Oromo refugees from Ethiopia (p.16).

The author lays out, also in Chapter One, the theoretical framework he uses in his historical and sociological analysis of slavery, the slave trade as well as the concepts of Diaspora, captive and refugee. Those who became captives and slaves were forced across a bridge which took them from freedom to subordination in which they lost the right of protection as human beings and were exposed to castration and rape as well as punishment to death by slave traffickers.

Chapter two provides a short history of slavery in Abyssinia. It analyses the ideological and cultural underpinnings of slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia. It reveals that the ideology of slavery was deeply rooted in the Abysinian religious dogma and customary law. The chapter documents historical records from the16th through the 19th century, explaining how the economic interest of the ruling class of the Abyssinian kingdom in the slave trade hindered the expansion of Orthodox Christianity to non-Abyssinian peoples whom the Abyssinians raided for captives. (p.47)

The author argues that the persistence of slavery and the slave trade deep into the twentieth century shows how deeply inculcated it was in their history, and how it survived in reduced form up to the end of the 20th century in the north-west core land of Abyssinia. He discusses the important roles that three categories of actors had played in the Red Sea slave trade: the Abyssinian rulers organised and in some cases participated directly in slave-raiding expeditions against neighbouring peoples; Muslim, often Arab, traders who traded between interior of the country and the Red Sea coast transported and sold the captives; and finally the upper and middle classes in the Islamic societies who needed slaves for different kinds of services. According to estimates cited by the author, about four million slaves were exported across the Red Sea from 650 A.D. to 1920. It is maintained that this figure represents a major percentage of the global slave trade and that the Oromo constituted a large portion of the captives exported from Red Sea ports between 1500 and the 1920.

In Chapter Three the author discusses the links between the slave trade and fire-arms in Northeast Africa. He maintains that the revenues from the slave trade enabled the Abyssinian rulers, particularly Menelik II, to amass fire-arms and build the Ethiopian Empire at the end of the 19th century and participate in the colonial Scramble for Africa. Theoretically the author's

arguments are well organised and based on meticulously researched historical and empirical sources. It is argued that one of the results of the accumulation of fire-arms by the Abyssinians and the distortion of the balance of military power in Northeast was the perpetration of genocide against a number of peoples they conquered between 1876 to 1900. Based on the records made by observers of the time as well as by foreigners who served in Menelik's army during the colonial wars or visited the conquered territories, the author notes that the Oromo population was reduced from ten million to five million, the Kaficho to a third of their pre-war number, the Gimira from about hundred thousand to only about twenty thousand, and that the Maji people from forty-five thousand to only three thousand, or six percent of their pre-war number (p. 72). The author indicates that the Oromo refugee problem started during this time when many Oromos and others crossed into the British colonial territories of Kenya and the Sudan to escape slavery and serfdom which were imposed on them by Menelik II.

The next chapter discuses the general situation and the psychological trauma of those who were kidnapped and sold into slavery. The slave trade from Africa to Middle East and Asia can be compared to the Atlantic slave trade; the former took a longer time and displaced 17 million souls, whereas the latter uprooted about 12.5 million African who were exported to the Americas. The author pieces together, in a very fruitful and unique way, disparate information and examines the demographic characteristics of the Red Sea slave trade and experiences of captives in the transition from freedom to bondage. He indicates the lack of research on the outcomes of the Red Sea slave trade compared to the Trans-Atlantic trade and calls for more attention to the topic.

Chapter Five provides four biographical vignettes. The vignettes are short histories of four ex-slaves: Malik Ambar, Mahbuba, Onesimos Nesib and Aster Gannon, who reached the highest position in foreign countries by their own efforts. Malik Ambar (1550-1626) whose birth name was Shambu, was born in the eastern Oromoland. He was sold many times before reaching the Kingdom of Bijabur on the Indian sub-continent to become one of its legendary 'military commander[s] or strategist... without an equal in military art' (p.118). Bililé or Mahbuba (1825-1840) was a young girl who together with her sister was abducted by slave raiders who also killed her parents. She was bought in 1837 at the age of about 13 years in a slave market in Egypt by the German prince, Hermann von Puckler-Muskau. He brought her to Europe and she died in Germany in October 1840. Onesimos Nasib (1855-1931) was kidnapped at the age of about four years and was sold into slavery. Freed at the Red Sea port of Massawa from slavery in 1871, he was educated by Swedish missionaries who sent him in 1871 to Sweden for further education. He became the father of Oromo literature. Aster Ganno was Onesimos Nasib's student and colleague in the diaspora. She translated both religious and secular literature into the Oromo language. Her role as educator and evangelist in Western Oromoland in the beginning of the 20th century was very important.

Chapter Six explores the contributions made by ex-slaves such as Onesimos Nasib and Aster Ganno in creating Oromo literature in the diaspora during the latter part of the 19th century and their role in the expansion of Oromo literacy and modern education in Western Oromoland in the 20th century.

Chapter Seven provides the history of forced Oromo migration from 1900 to 2001 by continued oppression under different Ethiopian regimes. The chapter reveals that the regimes of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974-1991) and of Meles Zenawi (1991-) have caused the largest uprooting in the history of the Oromo people, leading to the creation of modern Oromo diaspora across the globe. In this chapter Professor Bulcha raises and discusses many issues pertaining to the

Oromos' struggle for rights, respect and identity, both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora. Chapter Nine provides an excellent summary of the book.
The Making of the Oromo Diaspora is a great contribution by an authority on the affairs of the Horn of Africa and particularly on Oromo socio-political history. It provides one of the best references on Ethiopia and particularly on the Oromo people who are the second largest African nation after the Hausa of West Africa. Students of Ethiopian affairs, regional studies, comparative colonialism, conflict studies, the problems and causes of poverty and famine and finally on the question of national movements in Ethiopia will find this book very useful. The books includes pictures and maps.

Garth A. Myers. *Verandas of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa*. New York. Syracuse University Press. 2003. xxii+199pp. ISBN 0-8156-2997-4 (paperback). Space, Place and Society Series.

Godwin Rapando Murunga
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois,
USA

This is a study of the production of urban space in Africa. It focuses on the production of colonial urban order in Nairobi (chapter 3), Lusaka (chapter 4), Zanzibar (chapter 5) and the post-colonial rebuilding of Zanzibar (chapter 6) and Lilongwe (chapter 7). These four cities are connected, in part, by the imprint of British colonial planning and structures, and, in this study, by the authors' interest in the historical actors (British, Indian and African) whose ideas, plans and actions motivated, influenced or were translated into the layout and structures of these cities. The study follows the careers of Eric Dutton in Nairobi, Lusaka, and Zanzibar as a private secretary, assistant Chief Secretary and Chief Secretary (1918-1979), that of his protégé, Ajit Singh, as an architect in Zanzibar and Lilongwe (1937-1979), while matching these careers with how local people, represented here by Juma Maalim Kombo in Zanzibar, experienced the imposed colonial order, and inflected and transformed it. Myers uses these three people as representative of three different 'verandahs of power' showing how they are connected in an obvious 'interstitiality of colonial lives' (chapter 2).
Actors do not operate in a vacuum, rather, they are inextricably bound to the power relations in society within which they operate and the cultural universe that produces them. Myers uses the notion of 'verandahs of power' to show the different levels of power at play in the production of urban space in Africa. He identifies three different verandahs: the colonial and post-colonial elite (represented by Dutton), the colonised middle (represented by Singh), and the urban majority (represented by Bwana Juma). These verandahs encapsulate unequal *uwezo* (power) which impacts differently on spatiality and produces different spatial scales. The study shows that power makes and remakes cities in a continuous process of what Frederick Cooper aptly termed 'the struggle for the city' in Africa. Myers argues that the production and reproduction of spatiality involves dialectical (he does not use this term) processes of *enframing* and *reframing* the landscape, these two being notions he borrows from Timothy Mitchell's study of *Colonizing Egypt*. He adopts Mitchell's three *enframing* tactics to show how colonial plans enframed cities in Africa 'to create, reflect and reinforce the colonial order' (p. 7). The tactics include: (i) changing Africa's 'orders without framework' into a settlement design reducible to a segmented

plan usually based on race and class; (ii) creating a fixed distinction between inside and outside in domestic architecture and urban design that imposes restrictions on customary ideas of neighbourhood; and (iii) creating a central place from which the individual could observe and survey the city (pp. 8-9). But this enframing process is contained in an overall idea of rule by the colonial state in which domination, accumulation and legitimation are critical. Indeed, Dutton similarly thought of the colonial order as involving *rule* (domination) with *goodwill* (legitimation). But did the colonial elite (Dutton) manage to establish a perfect system of control?

For Myers, the colonial/post-colonial elite held sway in enframing African cities in a western image largely because of their *uwezo*, while the colonised middle occupied the middle echelons where they functioned in transferring colonial ideas. The power of the colonial/post-colonial elite, however, comes with 'internal contradictions' that work against its aim of establishing a perfect system of control. In particular, the idea of a segmented city imbued with the 'intrinsic racism of colonial space' (p. 88) limits the intended element of goodwill, that is, the goal of the colonial/post-colonial elite to improve the life of the urban majority. In Dutton's intention to help Africans, for instance, he always assumed a natural 'geographical and racial apartness' (p. 163), an assumed separateness that was reflected in how the city was segmented. This, in turn, alienated the urban majority from the centre of the ordered city into overcrowded, high-rise apartments in which the basic provision of water was limited and local movements and sense of neighbourliness was restricted. For Myers, the elimination of the verandah (p. 117) from the new segmented towns is a case in point. The verandahs were spaces where local *desturi* (custom) of good neighbourliness was fostered, but the new town plans excluded them. Thus, it turns out, that the last enframing tactic of establishing a central place of observation and surveillance created a powerful state order and post-colonial revolutionary ideology that *ruled without goodwill* and that assumed it knew the needs of the urban majority without consulting them. In all the cities discussed, Myers shows the importance of the observance and surveillance place represented by Nairobi's Government House, Lusaka's Ridgeway Government House, Zanzibar's Raha Leo Civic Center/Michenzani Complex, and Lilongwe's Capital Hill (p. 77). These central places aimed at providing the urban majority 'with constant reminders of the dignity and prestige of the Crown and its control over their political lives'. But this was control that produced overcrowding and crime and, in the specific case of Zanzibar, interfered with the local sense of *ujirani* (neighbourliness).

Myers presents the overall argument of this study in clear prose and accessible language. He associates the 'orders without framework' with the urban majority in Nairobi's Pumwani, Old Lusaka, Zanzibar's Ng'ambo and Old Lilongwe. In spite of elite power to enframe, Myers shows that the state proceeded in all the four cities by 'ignoring the everyday spatial life-world of the majority of the residents' (p. 160) thereby opening the window for the 'the persistence of disorder' because the urban majority reframed colonial spatial orders. However, Myers notion of 'orders without framework' and 'persistence of disorder' seems conceptually problematic and sits uncomfortably within his thoughtful and well-crafted framework of understanding the reframing process of the urban majority. It inadvertently sets up an image of a colonial order imposed upon an evidently disorderly local reality, even as he attributes this disorder to poor planning and neglect.

Myers shows that the urban majority verandah (African) makes its decisions by utilising the highly unequal individual power, local customary practices, and religious faith to reframe the urban form. He develops the Swahili terms *uwezo* (power), *desturi* (custom) and *imani* (faith)

into a triad through which he explains the reframing process. He shows in virtually all the cities, the urban plan never really took the shape they were intended by the colonial elite because these were always circumvented by the urban majority in Nairobi's Pumwani, Lusaka's George, Zanzibar's Ng'ambo and Lilongwe's Chinsapo. While it is true that these four areas were and still are disorderly, Myers notion of persistence of disorder is questionable at the conceptual level because it is discussed as though the colonial/post-colonial elite verandah is formal and therefore orderly and the urban majority verandah is informal and therefore disorderly.

Finally, enframing and reframing as conceptual tools have enormous value, but they assign reactive rather than proactive roles to the urban majority. Reframing lacks independent existence apart from the enframing process. It is only after the towns are enframed that they are reframed. Yet Myers would have considered framing as a common denominator upon which enframing and reframing were built. African cities were framed before they were enframed and reframed. And where there were no cities like Nairobi prior to colonialism, a conception of the meaning of place and space would have been a useful starting point. Such a perspective calls Myers to consider a more elaborate study of the tactics used to frame indigenous urban forms or so-called empty spaces. There are two possible advantages of such an extended analysis. First, it recasts the idea of persistence of disorder into a more positive and historically oriented notion. For instance, Vance's description of pre-capitalist land use processes as reflecting 'order with proportion' is a better alternative. (James E. Vance, Jr. 'Land Assignment in the Precapitalist, Capitalist, and Postcapitalist City', *Economic Geography*, Vol. 47, 1971).

Second, it emphasises the idea of continuity and change as with Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch that has been used to show those aspects of pre-capitalist urbanisation in Africa that endured into the colonial era and how they played out in reframing the colonial segmented plan. Overall, this book tackles a topic that historians and geographers need to pay more attention to and is highly recommended.