

MENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS.

Many Europeans, in varying moods of sadness, disillusionment, impatience, and contempt, have expressed the opinion that, "You can't read a Native", or "You can't get at them", or "I cannot understand what makes them tick". This represents a need, for it is difficult to be of real use to people if one cannot understand them.

Yet, by patient listening to their words and manners of speech, and by patient observation of the way they behave, one finds certain recurrent patterns. This very recurrence in widely differing individuals and different situational contexts shows that they have a more universal meaning for the women, and that in these words, behaviour-patterns and phrasings something of what "makes them tick" is expressed. The impression is gained that far too little serious attention is paid to what they want to say, and often say so badly.

From the beginning of this investigation such recurrent patterns of speech and action have been collected. They are here submitted as a first attempt and possibly as an inspiration for someone, for instance our Bantu linguists, to undertake a more specialised study of a subject which is not only fascinating, but may well be rewarding in throwing light on attitudes and value standards.

As always, the explanation of these attitudes must be found in one or more of the interacting forces coming from the three main fields of motivation: the tribal past, the European example, and the field of reactions and over-compensations of a suppressed people. One finds ill-understood or badly imitated European patterns, left-over from partly superceded and partly adjusted and transferred African notions, as well as "the return of the oppressed".

The various aspects of these transitional and inter-acting forces have been dealt with under separate headings, but in reality they are closely interwoven. They never exist alone and cannot be explained in isolation.

They are not meant as generalisations from particular events. The idea is not that African women are so, but that some women sometimes behave and speak in this way, which may sometimes be explicable in this way.

Evidence/.....

Evidence, however, suggests that the attitudes explained below are more frequent in occurrence than mere appearance would make one think.

All these attitudes will come up again in the analysis of the various organisations whenever they seem pertinent. They will be seen again in one or another of their many facets. Here only the main lines are traced and some general examples are given.

The notion of "Strength".

This shows itself, for instance, in such expressions as:

"A popular leader is strong".

"An organisation with many members is strong".

"A hostess whose entertainments are liked and who has many guests is strong".

"A Church member who pays in much money is strong".

A member said to be about her Chairlady, a dominant, dictatorial person, "Oh, yes, she is strong, magically so".

It is expressed in the following sentence: "After all, a mother wants to give her strength to her children", and if one then inquires in what this strength exists, one may receive an answer like: a business or education.

This notion "strength" as the essential quality of all things, mineral, vegetable, human, as well as divine. All of these possess this "strength" or "life-force" in varying degrees and kinds. It is the basic notion of Bantu ontology. It constitutes the essence of things. (1) It also constitutes the essence of Man who, only to the degree to which he possesses it, is "MNTU" (which is apparently not "homo", but rather "humanus").

As against our static, the African has a dynamic ontological principle, and since the concept of "essence" implies a teleological and epistemological and evaluational principle, he has a different conception of the purpose of life, of what constitutes knowledge, and what has essential value. It is difficult to know the extent

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(1) I have found sporadic mention of this. Diedrich Westermann "The African To-day", Oxford University Press, 1934, pp. 184/188. A.W.Hoernlé, "Magic and Medicine, Chapter X in "The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa", Ed. I. Schapera, London, 1937, p.222. It is the theme of a book by P. Flacied Tempels, O.F.M. "Bantu Filosofie", Antwerpen, 1946. My thanks are due to Professor Kenneth Kirkwood, Chairman of the Regional Committee of the South African Institute of Race Relations in Durban, for having drawn my attention to it.

to which he is maintaining this, his own metaphysical view of man and the world, or the extent to which he has absorbed the European concept. Probably he merges both conceptions, or he applies one to the things he acquires through Europeans and "Europeanisation", amongst these particularly European education, and the other the more intimate things of his life.

Certain phenomena of the women and the women's organisation are explicable in terms of this essential quality "power" or "life-strength" which - and this is important - can increase or decrease, and even further, can be increased or decreased by influences from other life-powers.

Aged people possess a large amount of this "power", specially those in leading positions. The first-born's strength is always greater than that of the later born: for these forces are ordered according to "status" and "first-bornness". Children have little of it of their own and this mainly through maintaining an inner dependence on their father and mother. Ancestors are, of course, the first to whom God gave this "life-force". The ritual rôle and the essential meaning of cattle is based on this. (1)

It is at the basis of magic and witchcraft which, as distinct from this more fundamental notion, has been, and is being, studied extensively and enthusiastically.

It was and still is at the root of the respect for the European, and is also, because of better understanding of Europeans and European technology, beginning to undermine this respect. "To the Bantu, the Europeans, probably because of their materialistic outlook, lack the essential quality of human beings, which is best conveyed by the Zulu word "UBUNTU", writes Selby Mangani Ngoobo. (2)

The notion of "knowledge".

What the traditional African concept of "knowledge" is, can be deduced from the concept of "essence": it is knowledge of this life-strength, and only such knowledge as leads to life-strength, is real and true knowledge. It is also knowledge of the ways and means to increase or decrease it, or to make use of it. The ancestors naturally had more of this knowledge, and the elders had proportionately more, so one goes to the ancestors and elders for advice. But, while it would seem that much of this concept of life-force underlies motives for
action/....

(1) See Winifred Hoernlé: "Religion in Native Life", in "Thinking with Africa", New York, 1927, p. 95.

(2) "The South African Way of Life", London, 1953, p.56.

action and criteria of values, the idea of "knowledge" has become confused. It has, for instance, not become clear what a woman means when she says: "I know, yes, I know".

Sometimes one has the impression that she never says that she knows a thing, unless she has been expressly taught that very thing.

A dressmaker, for instance, who sews beautifully and has learned from her mother who was a dressmaker, will tell you, "But I really do not know it, I just do it". A woman, for years a member of an organisation and a regular attendant at its meetings, will tell you that she does not know it. Yet, prolonged questioning and some hard thinking on her part shows that she knows the broad facts about it quite well. (1)

Possibly the word "knowledge" has come to stand only for verbal instruction and memorising of concepts which, since one receives full marks for them at school, has been taken to be the meaning of knowledge. On the other hand, this very formal school knowledge has been given the old feeling-content of that other, more "magical" knowledge.

There is certainly an immense confusion, which communicates itself necessarily in an investigation which consists so often of questions like: Do you know.....? What do you know about.....? Tell me what you know of.....?

Whilst some research has apparently been done on the African's mode and manner of perception, his motivation, his senseperception, it seems as if the study of his mode of conception lags behind. (2) Here is a rich and rewarding field of research.

It could be suggested that the relationship between perception and conceptual knowledge, and the interchange between these two should receive attention. There appears to be a complete lack of integration of these two sources of knowledge. They seem separate (3). With African women, information and instruction received perceptually does not necessarily become conceptual knowledge, and vice versa. The confusion brought about by our lack of understanding of this, and our consequent lack of adaptation of the means of instruction, shows disastrous results in
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- (1) Cases where she says she does not know because she does not want to tell are excluded.
- (2) Intelligence tests are not meant here.
- (3) The seriousness and the consequences of this was clearly demonstrated in the recently held Conference on the Training of African Nurses. Some aspects of this problem have been touched upon in my Nurses Report.
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the failure of European education and the split between educated and non-educated, as well as in the complete divorce of so many educated Africans from their own life, which might account for the dearth of African leadership which, after all, must come from the ranks of the educated.

It may seem far-fetched to bring in such fundamental problems in an investigation of African women's organisations, yet both these notions, the ontological and the epistemological, furnish the general atmosphere in which the drama of the organisations takes place; in both are hidden very great and urgent and belatedly recognised needs; they enter vitally into the life of the women.

Whenever one touches the problems of the women, for instance the children and the women's helplessness about them, they will say, "Nobody taught us what to do with out children, so how are we to know?"

Or, another instance: things may happen, quite obtrusive things, at a neighbour's house, and they know nothing about it because, "She did not tell me". They just do not seem to see things. They do not easily learn from experience or observation.

Very few women were found who would experiment with a crochet stitch or a recipe. She must be "told" or "taught" things.

Only when an African woman has been "given the words", does she seem to know ⁽¹⁾. And words seem to give rise to "action", not to thought ⁽²⁾.

Another point which belongs in this context is the difficulty arising from the fact that the semi-educated woman finds it hard to distinguish past and present from future; further, the factual and normative are the same.

She will tell you: "In our society we do...", which may mean:
 "We did it once, but it did not work so we gave it up".
 "We wanted to do it but we did not succeed".
 "We should do it".
 "We would have done it, but..... or if.....".
 "We may do it and we intend to try it..." and finally -
 "You would like to hear me say that we do it".

Hence/.....

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- (1) According to Dr. M.A. Marwick all nouns for "words" are as if the word were a commodity.
- (2) Dr. Agatha Schmidt, Ethnologist, who has done some interesting personality tests (Wartick) amongst the Venda of the Northern Transvaal and the Nsei in the British Cameroons, tells me that the African children "switch off and on" one or other source of knowledge. "Once they are school children, they are school children. They put themselves in the attitude of learning and nothing else enters. When they do not go to school, they are much more resourceful and learn from experience. When at school, there is nothing but school, their natural development is stopped. When they return to the kraal, their school knowledge drops off, and their way of learning conceptually is switched off, and they fall back to the usual way of learning of the kraal."
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Hence, statements which seem generalisations from particular experience, are often statements about desired situations or intended activities, which is a real difficulty in trying to investigate the activities of an organisation.

Also, things were done yesterday as they are done today and will be done tomorrow. So what is the difference between yesterday and tomorrow?

Once the birth of a sense of history was experienced by me and how it occurred in a woman. It was a tremendous event. She was trying to explain what was wrong in the dramatisation by the Girls' clubs of traditional African stories and why it was wrong and how it should be put right.

She began by saying: "It is a very good idea, but there is one thing, they do all these tradition-things and that does not work always. They mix tradition with the things of nowadays, but tradition does not work nowadays. They do tradition and town-life like that", (and she struck with both flat hands on one spot on the table). "What I mean is this: I would do tradition things from here," (she touched the far end of the table's edge with both hands) "then we move," (both hands moved along the table's edge), "and this on," (here the tradition-hand stayed behind and the town-life-hand moved further and came to rest), "now here, now we live under this".

"That's it," she said then, satisfied. "Not as things that exist. It is like a story".⁽¹⁾

The notion of "Luck".

Things are not the result of hard work, better planning or more skill or knowledge, but "just luck". It is, I believe, not generally realised how much African women believe in, hope for, and explain everything, by "luck". It may stultify persistent effort, for if something fails after one trial, it was just "bad luck", and that is the end of it. Also it maintains unfounded expectations: "I may have luck one day".

One/.....

(1) This woman had passed Standard VI, and taught Literacy classes.

One general example must be given: One of the first things the Matron of the Native Women's Hostel in Greystreet, Durban, did on her installation, was to call together all the women over 60. About 50 of them came. She found that 20 of these women were entitled to old age pensions. Yet some of them lived in the same room with women who did not get old age pensions, knowing that they had them. When the Matron asked them why they had never enquired, they said, "I just had no luck!"

The happenings in their lives are not related as cause and effect⁽¹⁾. For some women, there exist old age pensions and for other women there is no such thing. Why? They do not ask that, It is just a matter of luck.

The happenings in their lives are not related as cause and effect.⁽¹⁾ For some women, there exist old age pensions and for other women there is no such thing. Why?. They do not ask that. It is just a matter of luck.

Man's ways are irrational.⁽¹⁾ And certainly European ways. They do not even try to understand.

It is possible that this word "luck" may have come to be used by Africans as the best fitted word in the English vocabulary to express their notion "strength".

Once I nearly fell over a stone, but just managed to save myself. A woman with whom I was walking said "Ah, Madam has got strong". (She was uneducated and her English was bad. The word "strong" was all she knew for what she wanted to say, probably either "luck" or "strength".)

"The revolt against the exceptional" ⁽²⁾

There is an immediate and, as it were, instinctive reaction against the woman who distinguishes herself from the rest. Some recognise it, without, of course, being able to explain it, and will say, for instance: "African people are always undermining each other". African women do not like other women "shining too much", as the expression is, or "African people are always pulling each other down". ⁽³⁾

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- (1) The only cause perceived by them; is a personal cause.(see "The Predominance of Personal Relations".
- (2) B.Mary Holding mentions this in an article "Women's Institutions and the African Church", in The International Review of Missions Vol.XXXI, No.1 and 3, July 1942, pp.290-300, and concludes: "The lurking fear of an accusation of witchcraft, if her behaviour is markedly different from that of the rest, dies hard". Also, Keiskamma Hoek Rural Survey, Vol.3,p.193. It is the general opinion amongst observers that urbanisation and education do not diminish the belief in and practice of witchcraft. Some persons even say that the more educated, the more they believe in witchcraft.
- (3) See case No: 26, "Dora".
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Much of this is normal human jealousy, of course. But that is not the whole cause.

It is at the root of much of the loneliness of the few out-standing travelled and Europeanised women. They arouse in the other women an instinctive hatred, and fear.....

This is how it was explained by one of these, who had had more than her due share, because she had had the courage to return to her birthplace and work amongst her own people. (Could this not be amongst the many reasons why nurses after training sometimes do not like to go back to their own village unless they have definite obligations to support relations. Nurses are often considered "funny people".) This woman said: ".....and then you get the persecution and the jealousy of the men. Men's jealousy is large - well..... they think about the old social order, when the women were submitted to polygamy, and they think: these women, they come to disturb our world of security..... but from the women, it hurts more, you think they would push you up and up. But they don't, they want to push you back...."

And I explained to her how I had learned to see it, that in a communally directed tribal society, individual achievement was not appreciated. Moderation was the thing to strive for, and the norm was esteemed. It was not desirable that someone should work longer and better and produce a better article than his colleagues; it was not wanted. There was no reward for outstanding capacities, i.e. outstanding beyond your "station". On the contrary, if somebody's fields yielded more and better produce, it was not because he had worked harder and more efficiently, no, it was because he had a better "medicine": he must be a wizard! It must be like that in a society where equilibrium is everything, and no excuses can be tolerated because they disturb this equilibrium. Conformity with the prescribed pattern is the highest virtue.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, society must turn against the exceptional individual.

She listened with avidity, and then sighed deeply and said: "And you have found that out! Oh yes, you are right. You're so right. Knowing this makes one smile instead of being hurt by it..... How I laugh at them, because I understand...."

This/.....

(1) The wise Chinese have a proverb: The genius is a public nuisance.

This is amongst the reasons why certain African women (even when they are capable of it, as increasing numbers are) are not keen on taking on positions of authority, unless a European supports this authority.⁽¹⁾

An experienced European once said to me: "It would be interesting to get positive evidence of my impression that "Tagathi" in the schools is often directed against the brightest pupils...."

How this combines with the tremendous pride and the very real elation displayed when one of a group is singled out for exceptional favours or honours, is not clear.

Since such attitudes are connected with prevalent European attitudes, it is not easy to distinguish which of the two, the tribal part or the European example, is the determining factor in the motivation.

In organisations this behaviour pattern causes great difficulties, for it may make it dangerous for a woman to "rise from the ranks." For instance, in the Wayfarers Association it markedly hinders the appointment of more African Higher Superintendents. It is easier when the leader to be appointed comes from outside.

It is often the reason why so many leading personalities prefer to be known as "the organiser", and leave the positions of status to others.

The "sense of reciprocity".

The tribal society, the code of behaviour is based on reciprocity. If you do not do the right thing towards your neighbour, he, in his turn, will not be willing to do the right thing towards you. Hence, infringement of the societal laws and customs carries its own punishment, for the offender will ultimately find himself alone.⁽²⁾

And being alone is equal to death.

It is interesting, as will be shown later, how strong this code still is in the purely "African climate" of the Funeral Societies.

Further/.....

(1) See for this also under Youth organisations, p.

(2) Exactly the same phenomenon was noticed amongst the Laps. When people live few and far between and climatic conditions make life hard, it becomes a matter of sheer survival to receive and expect help. The Laps also have a strong code of reciprocity, which also fades away as and when they become integrated in Finnish or Norwegian society.

Further, the whole "Stockfel" is based on it. In the more European-structured organisations it loses its force.

In the urban environment, with the give and take of its money economy, it becomes perverted, as will be demonstrated below.

The "terrible feeling of equality"

The belief that every one must benefit equally and individually, and must contribute equally and individually is carried through ad ridiculum in the Stockfel and plays a strong part in most organisations.

In tribal life, I am told, when the women come together to help with a house or a field job, they must all start together. And they will never start until everybody has arrived. For none of them would like to have done more than a later arrival.⁽¹⁾

It shows itself in organisations, in the fact that older members who have paid their contributions and conducted their activities since many years object to newer members who have as yet only contributed little, having nevertheless the same benefits from the organisation's efforts.

The notion "common good" is not an abstract, it is not a universal, so that money collected for the "common good" can be fitfully spent on one or some members of the group representing this common good. For African women this notion is concrete, it stands for the complete enumeration of particulars. It means each and everyone of the members equally and individually.

It may, therefore, sometimes be advisable, specially in dealing with a less evolved type of woman, to allow them a personal stake in a common enterprise. (See also under "The necessity of a direct object").

The attitude to "LAW"

Many books state that the Africans are fundamentally law-abiding peoples. There is more in this, however. Laws to them are not an expression of man's ideas about things, or the consequence of man's growing experience and knowledge as to how to regulate behaviour in the best possible way. "Laws always were", is the stereotyped answer. Laws to the tribal African were not man-made, and subject to errors, and consequently to changes and improvements like all man-made things.

"Laws/....."

(1) Oral information from an anthropologist.

"Laws always were". Laws are not questioned, they are followed and obeyed. Laws are not results but causes. Laws do not only regulate behaviour, laws explain behaviour.

For many women, laws are still an explanation for phenomena, and an entirely satisfactory and final explanation. One can ask a woman: "Why is this like that?", and she will answer: "It is the law". (1)

And it is these people who, more than any other people I know (except possibly the Euslms), could have been helped and supported in their difficult transitions by adaptative laws, which they would have obeyed and followed and revered as they did their tribal laws. (2) It is these fundamentally law-needing and law-respecting people, who have been entirely left in a vacuum. Not only have they been given unjust laws, but confusing laws, laws they do not understand, European laws, based on fundamentally different principles. And more often than not, "there just are no laws" in many an aspect of a women's life, in which she had been used to follow a law.

How this vacuum is being creatively filled by many African organisations of a religious nature, will be shown in discussing the Manyanos, and then naturally, the process goes to extremes. Africans are increasingly again making their own laws, for instance, in the sects arising everywhere, and these laws again rest on a religious basis. And these laws are such that Africans understand them, they are detailed prescriptions, particularised injunctions (3), covering particular aspects of life separately and expressly (4).

"The predominance of personal relations".

"Behind every occurrence there is for him (the African) the one who causes" (5) The interrelation between the belief in witchcraft and magic and the predominance of personal relations is obvious (6); for inner necessity and natural causes is substituted a personal will.

Anything/.....

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- (1) See, for instance, the conversation reported under Mrs. Kh. Case 13
 (2) The ethical/legal field as strongest motivating force was established by Dr. Biesheuvel in a test done amongst the students of Kilnerton.
 (3) See, for instance, under Youth Organisations, p.3.
 (4) One of these aspects has been dealt with in the Nurses Report.
 (5) Diedrich Westermann "The African To-day" Oxford University Press 1934, p.37.
 (6) This is beautifully demonstrated by Godfrey and Monica Wilson, "Analysis of Social Change", pp. 97/6.
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Anything that befalls a woman may be due to the good will or bad will of persons.

"If you tell them they've done wrong", says a missionary, they say: "Father hates me".⁽¹⁾

In organisations, group cohesion and enthusiasm is maintained through personal adherence to the leader. Leadership is a matter of personalities. Personal likes and dislikes may make or break an organisation. An organisation IS the leader.

This is a very real difficulty, specially in those organisations which have to work with voluntary European workers, who tend to be unreliable and fickle in their work and efforts; they come and go. Hence very much better results at less expense are achieved by missionary enterprises, where one person does the job and continues doing the job for years and years.

Things are done because of personal attachment to the teacher or the social worker, and if things go wrong it is the leader who is blamed.

"If you want an organisation to run well, the only way is to make them attached to you personally," remarks a competent welfare worker⁽²⁾. More than anything else, more even than money, organisations need the right type of European, who will stick to the job. It is the whole secret of the success of the Zenzele YWCA Clubs.

An interesting example from my case records is the following:

At the Annual General meeting of the People's Co-op, the Treasurer (a European) announced his resignation. The members (all women) were terribly upset for two reasons. Firstly, they were very worried because the Treasurer "is leaving us in a mess, when we do not yet know where we are". They quite naturally thought that with this, the club would be broken up, and the "books" (the precious books!) would be lost for ever. Even the Chairman, an evolved, highly educated, woman, expressed her doubts on this point. The Treasurer tried to answer, but missed the point of the women's worry. Whereupon the Chairman, now understanding it, explained at length that the books "would be properly handed over, and the Co-op would not cease to exist".

Secondly/;;;

(1) See also Case No: 26, "Agnes".

(2) Hence the very real advantage which Continentals and Americans have in working with Africans. They are also inclined to express and seek a personal element in their relationships.

Secondly, they had the feeling that it was all their own mistake. "Maybe if we had worked better, the Treasurer would not have resigned". "Maybe we made so many mistakes that the Treasurer is fed up with us now,"

It was impossible for them to understand, or believe that the Treasurer might have had impersonal reasons for his resignation.

That an institution or an organisation has a continuity independent of persons is difficult to realise. To Africans it appears much more natural that every new officer, every new president, should start anew and afresh, without continuing the work of his predecessor.

The permanence of written records over generations of human beings is unknown to them, and often, when trying to explain it, I found that they just did not believe it. That this is one of the reasons for secessions has, I believe, not been mentioned. When a Chairlady is transferred, the new Chairlady naturally starts a new society. But some of the members "remain faithful to the former Chairlady", however far away she may have gone, and just wait for her return....

Amongst my case records are several examples of a similar behaviour pattern amongst men. For instance, in the Advisory Boards, where newly elected members do not know and do not make an effort to know what last year's members have done or tried to do.

The group as the carrier of an abstract idea, which the group hands over in its progressive stages of development for other individuals to continue, is as yet beyond the conception of many women.

"The necessity of a direct object".

"The women just cannot see beyond the immediate present," is a common complaint. "Only when a problem touches them immediately they try to do something about it".

Many leaders will tell one the same thing. An organisation started with tremendous enthusiasm (and any new organisation is a treat in itself), after a while, falls peacefully asleep. It cannot keep on existing because it cannot maintain the women's interest in such general and abstract aims as "furtherance of....", "maintenance of..."

Every now and again its peaceful slumbers are rudely

awakened/...

awakened when there is something concrete to do, or a definite aim to strive after. "You think we have ceased to exist because we do not do anything at the moment," said an organiser, "but when something special happens, or something dangerous, or a new interest, then they all turn up." "African people can only work for a definite project which takes so long and no longer, a concrete object to be realised within a definite limited time".

An evolved African School principal relates: "I was President of the Teachers' Association and, with my American experience, I was struck here by the expectations the people have of an organisation, which the teachers also had of theirs. They asked: What is the point? Are you going to improve the teachers' salaries? If you would have said: yes, then they would have come. It takes a long time to educate our teachers otherwise. A general aim does not strike their imagination".

The natural tendency is to create an organisation for a specific concrete purpose, to be realised within a limited time. Then when the aim is achieved, the organisation peters out and dies. When another need calls for action, they will put up an entirely new organisation, which again will cease to exist after fulfilment of that one purpose.

This problem is particularly in evidence in the Community Service groups and the Home Makers Clubs. Their general aim means very little. After the crèche has been built and the cake recipe has been learned, the need for that organisation has ended.

The Stockfel satisfies this particular need and is attuned to this tendency.

In the opinion of Mr. Donald Mtinkulu, Principal of Chlange, the only way for Europeans to help is:

- 1) To try to teach the women that it is good to organise and have a permanent group, but this is not easy;
- 2) To help the women by breaking down a general, abstract aim into certain smaller recognisable concrete aims, which can be achieved within not too long a time. And while they are nearing that aim, one must already show them the next step.

It is only fair to state that this tendency seems equally evident among Europeans. Instead of working through existing groups and organisations, the tendency is to establish a new organisation. The reasons are complex, but the necessity to have a concrete aim is one of them.

It/.....

It seems, therefore, to be wiser to keep the women's organisations rather small and the attainment of their aims not too far away. Co-operatives, for instance, should be small, and their benefits distributed in frequent, small, amounts, rather than at longer intervals. Women are inclined to lose themselves, their aims and their benefits when the scale is too vast. And they should be enabled to keep track of these.

They always want to be able to see something.

"Money? Money? I ask: for what? I want to see something.

African people first want to see something."

"Only when they see a movement going, they become interested.

When they see you are really doing something for Africans.

Only collecting money and without any proof of what you are doing, then they are not interested."

"The mutual distrust"

The above is, of course, related to the women's ingrained suspicion about money. There is some justification for this: they have been cheated all too often. All those many "get-rich-quick" schemes, to which they committed themselves blindly and crazily, have made them extremely suspicious of anybody who wants to collect money. All too often the Treasurer has run away with the cash! "A poverty-stricken nation always falls an easy prey to people who come with promises", said a sensible Service Committee Chairlady to me. So many people have come with suggestions: let's do this, and the result was always that they pocketed the money "and now run in big cars and no one can ask where is my money".

This natural distrust makes organising very difficult, for they have no great faith in discussions and plans; they want to see something first in order to be convinced.

From this distrust, the Europeans are not excluded. Besides the more general distrust of European motives and ways, there is also financial distrust. Although it is frequently true that they like their treasurers to be Europeans, on the other hand, they can make the wildest accusations of European dishonesty (1). They must be

forgiven/;.....

(1) It may be helpful, nevertheless, to give one example. For a while the story, originated by one of the leading figures, went around in the Service Committee of the Association of European and African women, that Europeans "are very keen on all the materials that are given to the Association". Mrs. B. was seen in a blouse made from material which was given to the Association! Verily, things have gone far indeed!

forgiven. They simply cannot imagine that Europeans have other motives for assisting them than personal benefit. (Of course, Europeans assistance is also often seen as a round-about and clever way of suppression).

It is too often forgotten that, before the women come in contact with the kind social worker, their ideas about Europeans have already been formed by their experiences with other species of the Genus Homo Europeans.

"The outburst of individualism" (1)

This again is partly associated with the former. It shows itself in such stereotyped answers as "Mind your own business" or "It is no business of yours", which were given to Youth leaders who urged the mothers to try to see that their children attended more regularly, or when the civic guards were trying to stop the children from gambling in the streets. Parents resent all interference with their children, which is the direct opposite of the tribal pattern.

If one asks a woman to find out something (something quite innocent and superficial) about another organisation, she often answers: "They will say, why poke your nose in other people's affairs". This has not facilitated this investigation.

The women say this, "all being by themselves" and "everyone for himself", came into existence with the arrival of the Europeans, and "it is the European regulations which brought this". The women live precariously on the edge between legal and illegal activities, and are always on their guard; you never know how "the police" will be brought in.

"African people are banned from being sociable by the way they are treated. Their minds are always worrying about those funny laws... said another woman.

The typical Chette mentality results: frustration turned inwards in mutual aggression and hatred and suspicion.

"It is an interesting paradox that Africans who have from time immemorial led a communal life, are bigoted individualists when

it/.....

(1) The expression is borrowed from Dr. Ray Phillips: "The Bantu in the City", The Lovedale Press, p. 28.

it comes to commercial life. Everyone wants to have his own little shop with a little stock bought from a retailer. Co-operative or collective methods do not appeal to these small traders. Even co-operatives buying from a wholesaler does not seem to have won our trading people." Thus commences an article in the Bantu World on "African business".

Conscious and planned co-operation is difficult to arrange amongst the women. The matron of the Greystreet Women's Hostel in Durban says that in the hostel every woman buys and cooks her own food. Even women living in the same room would not share their cooking by forming groups. She has tried to make them see the advantages of common buying and cooking, but they just will not do it. "They are anti-social. Not that they will not sit together and chat and gossip, but they won't join work or any other serious activity together".

"Yes they take the wrong emphasis in Western Civilisation", an African explained to me. "The being individual of the European is here over-emphasised. And the more civilised an African is, the more likely it is that he behaves individualistically". (1)

Three forces inter-play: the European example, the Ghetto mentality, and the over-compensation from long collective existence with its suppression of the individual.

Yet, with their limited financial strength, they must learn to co-operate. In Durban, some women do, and successfully, and in very small numbers, some three or four together.

"The struggle for position".

This is one of the best known facts, since it shows itself most clearly in its outward manifestations. "Ofcourse", said a welfare officer, "they are position-seekers. If they have no position, they are not in on the job".

In an organisation, everyone wants to have a position, to hold an office, and the enormous jealousies and rivalries resulting from this struggle for positions are wellknown. Some women blame this on the Europeans, because "Europeans only take notice of the office-bearers", but this is, of course, not all.

This/.....

(1) The women say selfish is the meaning of "individualistic".

This tragi-comic phenomenon is linked with the inordinate importance of "Status". For people who have been used of old to have a well-defined, well-honoured "Place" (the word often used for status is ISIKUNDHLA, the Zulu word for "place") in a strictly hierarchically structured community, the loss of status in town must be terrible: like a ship that has lost its moorings in a storm.

In the tribe, apparently, the concept "status" did not exist as such (1). But the word "status" has entered into the urban African's vocabulary with a vengeance! The best definition of "status" given (of course by a semi-educated woman) is: "It is that people know who you are". And in town nobody knows who you are, so you must begin by making this obvious and unmistakable by a delegate's rosette, a membership badge, a university degree, a recognised profession, a uniform, a resounding title such as "Recording Vice Secretary" or R.W.A.S.S.Y.W. - (Right Worthy Assistant Secretary to the Secretary of Youth Work).

"She wants to make a name for herself," as the women very correctly say.

Anyone in contact with African organisations knows such cases as this one: the society has twelve members, ten of whom have official titles and the two left out are consoled by being called "Committee members".

This avidity for titles and offices is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in organisations; it tends to keep the groups small, and it encourages secessions and branch-formation. On the other hand, it is the greatest incentive for organisational activity. For, second to education, and even more than just wealth, organisational activity confers "status" upon the women. Many women, like their European sisters, only organise for the sake of getting their name in the Press, and being able to say they are "Founders" of "Chairlady" of such and such an organisation, which then sometimes consists of that person only!

All this is inevitable in a society which affords little occasion for real status, and amongst people who have been used to the security of "their allotted place". Furthermore, "status"

is/.....

(1) There can be "rank" without the word denoting it, or there can be half a dozen words all denoting various kinds of "rank". Sometimes a notion of importance in a culture has no word, because it is so important as to be all-pervasive, a normal presupposition of all social life. Africans could only give me words for "status" in the negative, for someone not knowing his place, or not paying due regard to status.

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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