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URBAN LOBOLO ATTITUDES: A PRELIMINARY REPORT¹

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SYNOPSIS

Lobolo is far from dying out amongst urban Africans, in spite of the fact that in the European form of marriage, which is increasingly entered upon by urban Africans, it must lose what some writers have considered its primary function, namely the transfer of the status of the children to the lobolo-payer's group. This indicates that the lobolo has assumed other functions, some of these apparently new functions, by which new urban needs find, at least temporarily, some satisfaction. At the same time the changing urban social structure and the changed kinship relationships have necessitated considerable changes in procedure, owing to the fact that an institution deeply embedded in a tradition is being adapted to the requirements of an increasingly individualized society. This results in a number of new features in the procedure and the operation of the lobolo-institution. In this paper only the new functions are indicated, whilst in a later paper the new features will be dealt with.

In her analysis of these new functions and new features the writer distinguishes between lobolo-as-such and lobolo-in-marriage, and it is only the latter she discusses here. As a starting point the attitudes of a group of professional women have been analysed, and the point of view of the women has been stressed since the writer believes that the changing status of the women as daughters, wives and mothers is the key factor in most of the changes in the urban lobolo. This study, a first exploratory investigation, reveals that lobolo in its modern setting is still—in the less detribalized strata of the population—a child-price, in so far as it transfers the custody of the children to the husband, and again—in the most detribalized strata—an instrument for uniting the two families. It also functions to stabilize urban marriage, to compensate the girl's parents for educational expenses and the loss of their daughter, to provide them with economic security, to create a security-link for the daughter with her parental home, to express social status, to pay for the wedding expenses, and finally, as a symbol of Africanism.

"Which of the African customs do you think are still good?" I put this question again to a group of women. They could be Youth Leaders, nurses, members of a Homemakers' Club, or just some friends and neighbours gathered around the table. Of whatever social class or educational level, married women will answer with few exceptions, "lobolo". Generally everyone agrees, "Yes, lobolo, that is a good custom".

"It is a sense of pride for the girl," says a mature lecturer and educationist to me. "If she is not highly lobola'd the other girls look down on her." Then she adds, "That

is one school of thought amongst our people, but the other school thinks that it is crippling in its effect on the young couple".

One can assume that the representatives of these two "schools of thought" have been arguing their case ever since money began to replace cattle. With money, a series of new factors arise, for although some of the prestige and taboos surrounding cattle have become transferred to money, the permanence inherent in cattle has been destroyed, and replaced by the mobility and elusiveness of money. "Money," as the women assure one, "is not like cattle. Cattle remain and,

¹ I should like to thank Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys and Professor M. G. Marwick whose advice and comments on an earlier draft of this paper were most valuable.

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moreover, increase, but money disappears and, if ever reclaimed, it is gone, spent, and there is nothing left."

Money, moreover, is a practical necessity which cattle never were. "You always need money," say the women. Unlike cattle, money becomes with elapsing time more difficult to refund, and even if payment is made in cattle, these are sometimes sold as we shall see later, and the money spent. Furthermore, and possibly also unlike cattle, the amounts asked for *lobolo* have shown a persistent tendency to rise with the rising standard of living. Finally, the *lobolo* payable in money becomes pervaded with the competitive spirit of the West, and has introduced new possibilities for commercialization. Money makes any exchange between people seem like a purchase.

The change which has come over the *lobolo* institution, however, cannot be entirely explained in terms of the transition from cattle to money, as the women seem to think. Much more drastic changes have been, and are at present being, effected in town, and this paper aims at bringing out some of these changes which appear to be less well known, yet are of greater significance. In order to recognize their full scope, it is necessary to give a brief description of the function (or functions) of the tribal *lobolo*, and to extract therefrom its main features.

Tribal Lobolo

The function or functions of the tribal *lobolo* have been variously described as child- or bride-price, as a guarantee for the stability of the marriage, for the good treatment of the wife, and the good behaviour of the husband, as a compensation for the bride's group for her loss, as a legalization or validation of the marriage, as part of an elaborate system of exchange, or any combination of these functions. It would seem true that, in the great variety of tribal and local *usus* one can always find customs which appear to

support one or another of these views¹, and which render any generalization invalid.

There seems no doubt that the primary function of *lobolo* itself is the transference of the status of children from their mother's to the *lobolo*-payer's group or family, as is stated by Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys, who has adduced an impressive mass of material to substantiate his statement.² Also Professor Margaret Read writes, "The essential feature of the *lobolo* system is the legal custody of the children".³

Defined in such terms, *lobolo* appears as an institution separate and independent from marriage and, according to Dr Jeffreys, *lobolo* and marriage can and do exist independently. Each has a different function, i.e. different aims and consequences in tribal society. The *lobolo* transaction transfers the woman's child-bearing capacity from her father's to the *lobolo*-payer's family: *lobolo* "buys" the womb, not the woman. The communal marriage feast transfers the woman from the legal custody of her father to that of her husband: by marriage, the husband becomes, in the tribal sense of these words, the "master" or "owner" of his wife.⁴ *Lobolo* makes a woman into "mother", marriage makes her into "wife". When *lobolo* and marriage become combined as is generally the case in the normal Bantu marriage, it needs a legal expert to separate the two cultural traits and their functions.

In practice, the "womb" is difficult to separate from the "wife". Different customs with regard to widows of child-bearing age show this clearly. The Rev. H. A. Junod⁵ describes the ceremony of the adjudication of the inheritance of a deceased family head and how the widows are included in this inheritance and redistributed, although not entirely without their consent, amongst the heirs. Here, amongst the Thonga (Tsonga), the "womb" and the "wife" remain indivisible. Amongst some of the Transvaal Shangana-Tsonga, however

¹ E. Torday, "The Principles of Bantu Marriage", *Africa*, 2, 1929, 255-90.

² M. D. W. Jeffreys, "Lobolo is Child-price", *African Studies*, 10, 4, 1951, pp. 145-184.

³ Margaret Read, "Native Standards of Living and African Culture Change", Supplement to *Africa*, 11, 3, 1938, p. 33.

⁴ Meyer Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, Oxford University Press, 1949, p. 103, where the difficulties arising from the equation of the rights in *personam* with the rights in *rem* are discussed.

⁵ H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, MacMillan & Co., London, 1927, I, pp. 207 ff.

they seem to be kept distinct. A Tsonga family head died recently near Tzaneen, Transvaal, leaving three widows and fifteen children. His male relatives in Johannesburg told me that they do not "marry" the widows again amongst the heirs. The women must stay together with their children lest "the village be broken up". They may have no "husbands", but can have "boy friends", with the proviso that they "cannot follow their boy friends", and that the children are born and stay in the village, for they belong to the deceased's family. Here we see the freedom of the "wife" and her sexual activities, as against the un-freedom of the "womb" and the seed-raiser's child-bearing capacities.

Also in other respects, the tribal Africans do not appear to have always distinguished clearly between *lobolo* and marriage, and their respective legal consequences. Meyer Fortes¹ draws attention to the difficulties arising from the difference between theory and practice.

Anthropologists, however, have consistently attempted to avoid all association with ideas of "purchase" and "payment", and have been at great pains to define the *lobolo* when combined with marriage, as a "transference" of cattle or other valuables from the bridegroom's to the bride's family, generally adding that the native word for *lobolo* never implies a "buying" in the European sense. Yet, when statements of members of a tribe studied had to be translated in European languages, these experts had apparently to have recourse to such expressions as "buying a wife" or "paying for a woman" when referring to the *lobolo*-transaction in marriage.

The urban Africans certainly have no such scruples, and neither do they distinguish between the legal consequences of *lobolo* and marriage.

Case I: In town, a man from the labouring or domestic class will tell you, "When I pay *lobolo*, the children are mine, and she's a wife,

and if I don't pay *lobolo*, she is nothing (this with a gesture of throwing something away). She is like a girl friend, and the children belong to her". Upon one's further queries regarding the difference between a wife and a girl friend, John might say, "With a wife, when she follows another man, that man must pay me £25, that's like a fine . . .". In a European environment, values are expressed in money, and punishments are in money fines.

Yet, for the purpose of this paper, it is useful to distinguish clearly between *lobolo-as-such*, and *lobolo-in-marriage*. Whilst *lobolo-as-such* has remained even in town, pretty closely what it always was, a child-price (Jeffreys), it is the *lobolo-in-marriage* which has undergone radical changes, as natural concomitants to the radical changes in the marriage-concept.

Urban Marriage

The Native Administration Act of 1927, as amended in 1929², draws a clear distinction between what it terms a "marriage" and a "customary union" entered into by Africans. A "marriage" is a union according to the Common Law of South Africa, and a "customary union" means the association of a man and a woman as husband and wife according to Native Law and Custom. Either one or the other of these two kinds of marriages is open to Africans, but not both at the same time—that is, legally. If both have been entered upon, successively or simultaneously, the Common Law marriage prevails, though not always.

A "marriage" has a clear legal definition; the act or acts which complete a "marriage" have been legally established, as well as the act or acts by which a divorce becomes a fact. A "customary union", at least in the Transvaal, has no such clear legal beginning, nor end. Its registration is not compulsory. Hence it is sometimes difficult if not impossible to decide whether a "customary union" did take place, as well as whether such a union has been dissolved.³

¹ Meyer Fortes, *op. cit.* p. 103 ff.

² In all legal matters I follow Julius Lewin, *Studies in African Native Law*, The African Bookman, Cape Town, 1947.

³ Julius Lewin, *op. cit.* pp. 33ff and 39ff.

"The existence of two forms of marriage, one under the Common Law and the other under Native Law, and both open to the same people, produces many situations unprecedented in other legal systems."¹ It leads to many anomalies and much confusion. The legal consequences of the two legally recognized forms of union are entirely different and often in conflict, such as the rights of property, grounds for divorce, rules of inheritance, custody of the children, etc., etc.

"No doubt it was originally believed that Natives living under tribal conditions would retain customary unions . . . while those domiciled in urban areas or who had assimilated Western civilization to at least some degree would prefer to marry under the Common Law."² In practice, however, the situation is not so clear-cut. In the in-between stage of our urban Africans, very few partners to a "customary union" are thinking and acting entirely in terms of tribal law. They perform a great many acts not provided for in tribal law. They lend or borrow money, they buy goods, they make hire-purchase contracts, they take out insurance policies and open savings accounts. Briefly, they act or desire to act as persons, and refuse collective liabilities and responsibilities. On the other hand, very few spouses in a Common Law marriage have absorbed a completely European attitude and European ways. In many vital respects they adhere to tribal ideas, ways and values. The bulk of the population is, in reality, somewhere between the two extremes.

Adaptive legislation has lagged behind with the result that the emotional insecurity inevitable in times of culture change, and from which parties to urban marriage suffers, is heightened by legal insecurity. It is also in this context that the urban *lobolo* must be considered.

The question is generally not whether legal protection, legal redress, legal action or legal appeal would be possible or fruitful. Often the question is not even whether an act or situation is legal or illegal. What counts is the force of personality, the possi-

bilities of intimidation, the physical and economic strength with which either one or the other partner can push through any claim which seems advantageous to him or her, and for this claim he or she will appeal to either of the two systems of law, depending on which of the two promises him or her the greatest benefits in a particular case.

Case II: Many a location superintendent can tell one, for instance, "To my office comes Dr X, who has trouble with his wife. First he tries all European points of view; when that does not succeed he goes over to African arguments. Maybe it is twenty years ago since he thought in tribal terms; maybe he has forgotten everything tribal, but somehow, when there is trouble, the old comes up again. They try to get the best of two worlds."

On the whole, and for obvious reasons, a man will appeal to his tribal rights, whilst a woman will seek protection by appeal to the Common Law. Whether the Common Law can always protect her is another matter.

Case III: As illustration may serve—the case history of Martha, as told by her best friend. Martha is a Xhosa, an Anglican (Church of the Province), a fully-trained nurse earning £22 per month. She married according to Common Law, and her *lobolo* was £70. Her first baby was sent to her husband's people in the country, because at that time she was doing her midwifery course. By the time the second baby arrived "there was no more harmony between her and her husband". Amongst other factors in their conflict, her husband wanted his wife to leave Johannesburg and live with his people, "as is the custom", he said. But she wanted to stay with him, and keep the baby in Johannesburg with her. In 1952-3 they went through the Divorce Court. "The judge was quite sarcastic", and said to the husband, "You can't have it both ways. You are married according to Christian rites, and so if your wife wants to stay with you and have her baby in Johannesburg, she can do so. But you want to be a Native husband, and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

² *Loc. cit.*

send your wife and children to your people." Ultimately, the judge awarded the custody of the children to the mother, "but her elder baby is still with her husband's people and she is pining after it . . .".

Any lawyer will here say impatiently, "What's she worrying about? She can apply for a writ asking the man's parents to hand over the child." In reality, however, Martha is a gentle person, who is hesitating between age-old habits of thought and her new urban rights. No wonder she thinks *lobolo* is bad, "One is forever in the hands of one's parents-in-law . . ." A mother to be awarded the personal custody of her own children is still too revolutionary a thought for this rural-born young woman. In the excitement of the divorce case, and "strongly talked to" by her friends, she could fight for her mother rights. After all the agitation was over, she could not sustain the new spirit.

In discussing the insecurity of marriage, a distinction must be made between *de jure* and *de facto* insecurity. I shall deal mainly with the latter: the insecurity, not as an objective fact but as a subjective sentiment, in which *lobolo* has its own peculiar function.

As always, in times of rapid and violent societal changes, the women are the worst sufferers of the legal insecurity. For instance, unlike a Common Law marriage between two Europeans, a Common Law marriage between Africans, does not automatically imply a marriage in Community of Property.¹ Africans desirous of marrying in this way are required to make an express declaration to that effect. If this is omitted, the distribution of property at death follows Native Law and Custom, i.e. the wife cannot inherit anything. Although an increasing number of women are aware of this, there are still large numbers of women ignorant of it and many prospective husbands unwilling to assist at such a declaration.

Another instance, illustrating the serious consequences of the general "laissez faire" policy is cited by Julius Lewin. If the husband is killed in an accident at work in a

factory, the widow in a "customary union" can obtain compensation. If he is run over in the street by a careless motorist, a "customary union" widow cannot recover damages, although she could do so had she been married to him under the Common Law.²

Following general African custom, I shall, for brevity, speak of the two forms of legally recognized unions as "European marriage" and "Native marriage". The most usual form of marriage of the people dealt with here is European marriage plus *lobolo*.

Urban Lobolo

Keeping in mind the distinction established above, between *lobolo*-as-such and *lobolo*-in-marriage, it is obvious that, legally, the latter loses what the above-mentioned experts consider as its primary function, as soon as marriage itself confers the rights of fatherhood on the husband. This happens in the form of marriage called "European marriage". Moreover, and possibly for this reason, *lobolo* in a European marriage is not legally recognized, and in case of divorce the husband has no legal means to recover the amount paid. In some cases of Native marriages, the Courts have refused to enforce a *lobolo* agreement, where they considered the amount demanded to be excessive. In a European marriage, however, the Courts will only interfere if the husband has made an express agreement to pay *lobolo*.³ On the whole, therefore, and although *lobolo* is not illegal in a "European marriage" the Courts, as the urban women say, "always forget about *lobolo*".

In spite of all this the *lobolo*-in-marriage has continued in existence, and this fact alone would show that *lobolo* has come to assume other functions, possibly new functions, or that some of the functions mentioned earlier and which were possibly of secondary importance, have assumed a new significance in the general insecurity of the legal and factual marriage-position in town.

In fact, *lobolo* is fast becoming a new institution with altogether different functions

¹ Julius Lewin, *An Outline of Native Law*, R. L. Esson & Co. Ltd., Johannesburg, 1944, p. 13.

² Julius Lewin, *Studies in African Native Law*, p. 46.

³ Julius Lewin, *An Outline of Native Law*, p. 24.

around which new and different customs and conventions are arising, and from which the people are expecting different need-satisfactions. Some of the changes are inevitable and permanent, others seem accidental and possibly temporary. The changes are many and the patterns confused; some are dependent on group attitudes; and others, on the individual personalities concerned: and in trying to extricate some from amongst the entangled mass of new urban patterns one cannot possibly hope to be exhaustive in this stage of the transitional process.

There would be some justification in saying that the urban *lobolo* hardly deserves to be called any longer by the same name as the tribal *lobolo*. Since, however, Africans themselves adhere to the same name, I follow their usage while at the same time making it clear that whenever a distinction is required I shall talk of "urban *lobolo*" and "tribal *lobolo*". "Urban *lobolo*", then, means the *lobolo* institution as found functioning in Johannesburg amongst Africans in various stages of detribalization, and "tribal *lobolo*" stands for the *lobolo* as it functions in tribal society according to anthropological literature. It does not stand for the *lobolo* as it may function at the moment in some tribal areas. Inevitably changes effected in the towns must filter through to the country areas, and similar developments may occur elsewhere. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that the growth of new patterns will be found further advanced in the towns, and certainly in a leading "modern" city like Johannesburg. In talking about the *lobolo*-institution, the *lobolo*-transaction, or simply the *lobolo*, I mean, unless otherwise stated, the *lobolo*-in-marriage in its barest operational definition, as "the transference of cattle, money or other valuables, from the bridegroom's to the bride's family or group".

Principal Sources of the Changes in Lobolo

My personal experience has brought me into contact with two principal sources of changes, which may not exhaust the full range. First, there has been the adoption and part-assimilation of European concepts—of the family, of marriage, and of the

marriage-relationship, of women as wives and daughters, and, in general, of the "Rights of Man". This involves, amongst other things the change from marriage as an affair between two families to marriage as primarily concerning two persons (in the legal sense of *personae*); the decrease in the sense of kinship obligation and the fragmentation of the tribal family to the barest nucleus of, not only father, mother and children, but, even further, of mother and children only; the resistance against collective or "familial" duties and responsibilities which imply the interchangeability of individual members of a family by which the liabilities incurred by one member can be discharged by another member; the changing emphasis from cultural or social fatherhood and motherhood to biological parenthood; and the growing emancipation of the women—in *summum*, the increasing individualization and personalization of the members of a once collective society. Out of all this is emerging a multitude of new features unthinkable in the tribal *lobolo* which was, after all, deeply embedded in a collective society.

Secondly, there is the peculiar penury of urban Africans which confronts them with new insecurities and new needs. No new institutions for satisfying these have as yet been able to emerge and find general acceptance; and Africans have thus far made an erratic response to European attitudes and institutions that might be appropriate in the new circumstances in which they find themselves.

In the attempt to satisfy certain new needs by means of the *lobolo*, this ancient institution has been charged and overloaded with expectations, ideas, values and sentiments, which have assumed the significance of entirely new functions which *lobolo* is expected to perform.

In this paper I propose to deal with both these new features and these new functions. In so doing my aim is to draw attention to the importance of a future scientific and exhaustive study of *lobolo* for our knowledge of institutional change in cultural transition. Also, and exactly because the *lobolo* is the

only institution which has survived, essentially intact from the general wreckage of the tribal structure, a penetrating study of the *lobolo* in town will uncover something about the as yet almost entirely hidden relationship between old and new systems of beliefs and values. Also in this area I hope here and there to make a contribution.

In formulating my hypotheses, I have followed the qualitative approach; my evidence is merely illustrative. In times of rapid change, even a single instance (and none of my examples stand alone) may herald a new orientation, a new development. For the significance does not lie in how many persons think, say, or act in a particular way, but who does so and under what circumstances. If the circumstances are known to be recurrent or even habitual, and if the person concerned occupies a leading position in her community, and the response observed proves to have been successful and adequate to the challenge, others are sure to follow the example.

The Functions of the Urban Lobolo

My initial hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the findings from a cluster of questions on the *lobolo*, inserted—actually as an afterthought—in a questionnaire applied to 48 nurses of the Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg. The general aim was to discover the needs of the urban African nurses (which was part of my general study on the needs of urban African women). The general trend of the information sought concerned family background and home life, reasons for choosing the nursing profession, opinions on Johannesburg, work and study, leisure-time occupation, further wishes and future plans, attitudes to sex, illegitimacy, marriage and husbands, use of wages, personal worries, etc.

The questions aimed at inducing the respondents to talk freely. All key questions were open-end ones; some were even purposely vague and open to different interpretations, and the way in which they were interpreted gave significant information. A point was only to be pursued if it had meaning for the respondent. Full scope was left to

the uniqueness of the individual, and, while this made precise statistical analysis difficult if not impossible, it led to much new and unexpected insight.

The selection of the informants was done by investigators and influenced by considerations of ease of contact. There was no question of scientific sampling. The main trends had to be uncovered in the shortest possible time.

The investigators were four highly graded persons amongst the African nursing and teaching staff, selected with the help of the matron, mainly because they commanded prestige, confidence and goodwill amongst the nurses. None had any previous experience of the task required nor any sociological training. Hence they brought to the job, besides a high degree of natural intelligence and a thorough knowledge of the nursing and hospital background, a fresh approach and a curiosity undimmed by routine. There was no check on investigators' bias as regards *lobolo*. In fact, two were neutral, one was a violent pro-*lobolo* crusader, the other was "dead against". I myself did not apply a single questionnaire fully, although I did some partial probings. Racial tension, particularly in the nursing profession, ruled this out.

All responses were recorded *verbatim*. Classification and interpretation—the most important and difficult operation in cross-cultural research—was done afterwards in discussion-meetings of our little "study-group" (as we called ourselves) held regularly during the investigation. Gradually all initial mistrust and wariness disappeared; we became all "social workers wanting to help the poor nurses with their many, many problems"; we were all keen to discover and understand—in fact, in the process we became friends with an overwhelming interest in common. I make bold to state that the most important sources of information have been exactly these discussion-meetings. Sometimes new features emerged, sometimes explanations and interpretations were given which could never have been caught in a questionnaire. Sometimes the for-*lobolo* and the against-*lobolo* investigators quarrelled

freely, and these quarrels were again in themselves valuable information, showing the considerable emotional charge which urban Africans have put into the concept of *lobolo*.

The respondents were 48 nurses and student nurses, whose tribal and religious affiliations, representative of the main tribes and churches of Johannesburg, are here left out of consideration. The sample was too small to search for significant correlations. About half of the respondents were urban-born and about half rural-born.

<i>Educational level</i>		<i>Marital status</i>	
Matriculation	3	single	41
Teacher's Cert.	7	married	4
Junior Cert.	36	divorced	2
Unknown	2	engaged	1
	—		—
	48		48

Thirty-three of the respondents thought that *lobolo* was "a good thing", 13 thought it was "a bad thing", and 2 could not make up their minds. The arguments of these two were unfavourable; they were obviously veering away from an earlier favourable opinion, and they have been grouped with those who were against *lobolo*.

All respondents without exception gave their reasons, and many of them more than one reason. The "Custom" argument occurred more often singly than any of the other arguments. These arguments for or against were classified and the main categories which emerged were "Value" and "Parents", "Custom" and "Guarantee".

The two most frequently mentioned reasons, i.e. the "Value" and the "Parents" arguments, were cited both in approval and disapproval of *lobolo*. The "Value" argument, for instance, was used in two ways: "If he has paid for you, he can ill-treat you as much as he likes", and "If he has paid for you he will not maltreat you",—a typical symptom of transition.

The reasons given in approval of *lobolo* would appear to be indicative of new functions, whilst the reasons in disapproval of *lobolo* would seem to point to new features.

These findings will first be analysed as

"the nurses' point of view". Subsequently, they will be related to the points of view of the other parties concerned with the *lobolo*-in-marriage. Finally this will be placed within the total of the urban African situation with special reference to the general insecurity. Needless to say, and paradoxical as it may seem, the women and girls, who traditionally had no say in *lobolo* matters, who took no part in the *lobolo pourparlers* and who were not consulted in its use, are in the urban situation the key factors in the changes that have taken place.

The Nurses' Point of View

The nurses' answers are presented in the accompanying table (p. 51). The following general points emerge.

Not one of the respondents mentions the question of the children's status. It is not known whether, on further questioning, they would have mentioned it. All of them are "Christian", at least have indicated adherence to one of the Christian Churches; all are advanced women belonging, or going to belong, to the best-paid and most highly esteemed women's profession, and conscious of it. They all anticipate a "European" marriage with an educated husband, and aspire to European attitudes towards marriage and children. *Lobolo* as child-price has lost its function on this social and educational level.

This attitude can be contrasted with cases found amongst the less educated young women, such as domestic servants.

Case IV: Women like Mary, for instance, who is a laundry woman going about her job with her baby on her back. Her husband married her according to Native Law and *lobolo* was paid. "£65 . . . oh no! That is not too much for we got this for it!", and with a loving smile she points with her head to the baby on her back.

A commercial terminology is used without apparent embarrassment. Words like "paid for you", "bought you", "price", "getting you cheaply", are used freely. The idea that the girls should feel this as a lowering of human dignity, would seem to be a European construction. With the exception of one

nurse who "does not like being bought", those who regard the "Value" argument negatively do not seem to do so because a woman cannot be measured in terms of money, but because her real value would be too high a price for anyone to be able to pay.

With regard to the two arguments occurring both for and against *lobolo*, more reasons are advanced for than against *lobolo*. This is in my opinion more important than the relation between the pros and cons. My explanation, given conjecturally, is that the arguments in approval are socially conditioned, well established, and easily verbalized, whilst the arguments in disapproval are directly related to personal experiences with sisters or cousins, and therefore, not yet quite articulate.

Indications are that there would have been considerable differences in attitude to *lobolo* amongst those engaged, married, unmarried and divorced. The sample was, however, too small to establish significant results.

The following more specific points emerge.

(1) The *lobolo* enforces the husband's "respect". It is not easy to perceive what this actually means, except as the opposite of "ill-treatment". It may imply either or both of two meanings, the respect due to a wife as against the attitude to a girl friend, in which case it would corroborate the men's attitude, as quoted on p. 36 (Case I), that a non-*lobola'd* wife is "nothing", or the respect one has for an "expensive article", as against the nonchalance displayed towards something cheap or something given for nothing.

Another point is whether the girls' certainty that *lobolo* will inspire respect from the husbands, is really so or whether the girls only believe it to be so. The four investigators were convinced that this was a fact rather than a belief, and even the anti-*lobolo* investigator expressed her fear that the *lobolo* was a contributory factor to the husband's respect, but she believed that the men could be educated to see things differently. I shall return to the husbands' side later.

(2) Another consideration is that the husband's "respect" symbolizes for a girl

the "public opinion" regarding *lobolo*. No mention is made regarding *lobolo* as a prestige factor in the girl's social group and amongst her girl friends. Yet this is an important factor which I mentioned on page 34 in the words of a mature and intelligent woman educationist. The desire amongst the young brides-to-be not to be outdone by their friends, accounts to some extent for the ever rising amounts asked. "If there is no *lobolo*, they think that you are hard up for marriage, and you are therefore giving the girl away for nothing", it is said.

Case V: The everlasting shame and stigma attached to the low *lobolo'd* woman came out clearly when discussing a woman whose explanation of why she thought *lobolo* a bad thing had been "because it always makes you feel inferior". When this was read out at a meeting, the investigators asked at once, "How much did he pay for her?" When it was answered, "£47", they all exclaimed in one voice, "No wonder, if he paid so little for her!" The case was all the more striking since it concerned here a woman, a trained nurse, who lives with her husband and four children in a four-roomed house, and earns £22—and more than her husband. I shall later return to this.

(3) The *lobolo* is a compensation for the girl's parents. From the nurses' statements and the investigators' discussion this compensation is considered to be due in view of three losses: (a) the loss of the daughter's earning capacities, (b) the loss of her children and their *lobolo*, and (c) the loss of the money spent on her education.

As to (a), many girls, when unmarried, support their parents, and this is greatly hindered, if not rendered impossible, by her marriage. Many married women nevertheless help their parents, and in some cases it is this need which induces her "to augment my husband's wages", as she calls it, either overtly or secretly, and which often makes her lie about the full amount of her earnings. Many women have complained to me that the salaries or wages of their professions are

too well known to enable them to help their parents secretly.

As to (b), this is of very great importance in view of the high rate of what would have to be called "illegitimacy", and the frequency of the unmarried girl's parents' claim on her children. To this I shall return later.

As to (c), this furnishes an interesting example of new features of child upbringing not yet integrated in the tribal parent-child relationship. Also this later.

(4) In the discussions on this "Parents" argument, an entirely new feature came up. One of the investigators said: "We women are always the losers. We are married in community of property, and we are minors. In marriage we have little or no say over our earnings, and our husbands always think of their own family first. In divorce we always forfeit our moneys and our savings. Then, when *lobolo* has been paid, that is at least something. Of old, in cases of divorce, when the woman was in the wrong, the *lobolo* had to be paid back. But nowadays the Court decides everything, and the *lobolo* is generally forgotten. The girl then goes back home, and if there has been *lobolo* her parents will welcome her better, at least so she thinks".

The significance of this statement is enhanced by the fact that it was said by the anti-*lobolo* investigator, somewhat *à contre coeur*. Since then I have had occasion to receive corroboration of this pro-*lobolo* argument. The unreturnable *lobolo* money acts as a security link between the girl and her parents, promising her a refuge in case of marriage trouble. This is a new orientation in the old security-function of the *lobolo*-in-marriage and an important one, although not mentioned by the respondents.

(5) The belief that *lobolo* is a guarantee for marriage stability does not appear very strong and, in fact, it rests mainly on the expectation of a returnable *lobolo*. With experience that this may prove ungrounded, the argument turns the other way round. Naturally, the feeling that *lobolo* might hold up divorce is felt to be good, if there is fear that the husband might leave, but bad if

the wife would like to leave. It is an instance of the observation made above (Cases I and II) that ancient values are brought forward by whoever has advantages by them.

(6) That *lobolo* helps to pay for the wedding expenses is mentioned, significantly, by the one girl who is engaged to be married. If more girls had been in this state, it would certainly have been mentioned more often. The *lobolo* money, or at least some of it, is generally spent on the wedding expenses and it is a stronger argument in favour of *lobolo* than the investigation shows. Significantly, the anti-*lobolo* investigator has since changed her mind, exactly because of this new function of the *lobolo* money.

There are various conventions as to who pays for the white dress, the going-away costume, the church fees, the registration costs, the costumes of the wedding attendants, and the wedding feast itself. Group sanctions seem to operate most fully and compellingly in the social necessity for large and ostentatious weddings. Africans vie with one another as to the number of attendants—the bridesmaids, best men, flowergirls and pages—as to the clothes and fees required for the due celebration of the Christian marriage rites, the number of guests feasted and the wedding presents displayed. And all this culminates in having one's bridal picture taken and finally published in the Press. All this grandeur together with the high *lobolo* for the bride is duly savoured for weeks afterwards in women's gossip. The Christian marriage ceremony, far from having replaced the *lobolo* has, on the contrary, increased the need for it. In many cases, as the young men assure me, even the *lobolo* itself goes up with a European wedding. For the "real" European wedding is the Church ceremony, that is "with white dress and so on".

On the other hand, a large and grand wedding induces the guests to give big sums of money for the bridal couple and these enable the husband next morning to "cut down the high bill of *lobolo* which is before him, perhaps for many years to come . . ."¹.

¹ *The African Eagle*, 17.9.1957, by one of its correspondents.

Thus, and paradoxically, the more ostentatious and expensive the wedding, the greater the need for a high *lobolo*, but the more likely that the wedding helps to pay towards the *lobolo*.

(7) Finally, of the other answers, the saving which the *lobolo* forces on to the bridegroom-to-be was considered an important argument in favour of it by all four investigators. From my combined experience I know how great is the young women's fear of losing their painfully won status and self-respect by marriage with what is generally called the "wrong" husband. In view of the widespread custom of having "boy friends", the lack of seriousness in the young men, and their reluctance to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, the *lobolo* provides an opportunity to test their honest intentions.

I now propose to deal with the points of view of the girls' parents and the husbands, the two parties concerned in the two most important functions mentioned by the nurses, in order to see whether these two parties can provide confirmation of the nurses' statements.

The Parents' Point of View

Two points emerge from a study of the parents' position with regard to *lobolo*. First, the parents reap all the advantages and few of the disadvantages of the *lobolo* institution. In tribal life, a daughter's *lobolo* paid for the son's. In town, it is generally not the boy's parents who pay the full amount of their son's *lobolo*, and quite often they do not contribute at all towards it. This is specially the case if the son is "first generation in civilization", as the urban Africans put it, and his parents are dependent on him for their support. Yet, the girl's parents always receive the whole payment of their daughter's *lobolo*. Secondly, economic insecurity is a very real factor in their attitudes. Like "proletarians" the world over, their only real security is in the support of their grown-up and earning children. If, with their marriage, the parents are in uncertainty whether a son or a daughter will continue his or her regular support, then the

lobolo money becomes their only old age insurance.

To these new urban considerations, must be added certain factors originating in ancient tribal attitudes. First, there is the prestige of age and seniority, one of the dominant notes of the Bantu social structure. Although the parents complain bitterly about its disappearance in town, the power which they have over their grown-up sons, and particularly daughters, is still considerable, and far greater than is generally known. Secondly, according to tribal law, the "illegitimate" children of a daughter "belong" to her parents, and her parents are generally far from unwilling to claim their ancient rights. Hence, if their high *lobolo* demands prevent their daughter from getting married they not only maintain their daughter's financial support, but in addition can look forward to receiving their daughters' daughters' *lobolo*. In fact, the parents are the social group most favoured by the continuance of the *lobolo*.

No wonder that the combined experiences of missionaries and social workers show that the social evils resulting from the *lobolo* institution must be laid at the door of the parents, especially amongst the lower strata of our urban population, where the financial needs are greatest, and the parent-child relationship is still according to the ancient patterns.

Case VI: "The cook at our creche", says a missionary, "has three illegitimate children, because her father wants £100 *lobolo* and the prospective husband simply cannot afford that much." Such cases are legion. Whether the young woman in question would be able to appeal to Court or not is irrelevant, since there are few young women indeed who would dare to go to Court against their parents.

The power of the parents and the submission of the daughters are well illustrated by the following case.

Case VII: Friends of mine had a woman servant, whose lover was a cook in another household. The first child she had by him died, but the second lived. Her employers suggested to her that now it might be better

to get married. Her lover agreed, and so did her parents, but the *lobolo* asked by them was far too high for the lover to be able to pay. There were protracted negotiations in which her employers, her parents and her lover, and finally a European minister of religion, who was willing to marry the young couple in his church, joined in. Although the lover and the young woman were eager to get married, and only too willing to drop the *lobolo*, the parents were adamant. The full *lobolo* had to be paid and not a penny less, especially since there was already a child. To cut a long story short, the parents won. The girl, over 21 years of age, did not dare to resist them in spite of all assurances by her employers and the European priest. Like so many other girls, she succumbed to her parents' tyranny. Worse still, they took it upon themselves to prevent all further contact between her and her lover. They forbade her to go on living with her employers, and forced her to live with them in Meadowlands. The poor girl has to leave every morning at 4 a.m. in order to be in time for her work. Whilst before she gave part of her wages to her parents, now she gives all and, needless to say, her child "belongs" to them.

Since it is commonly supposed that a girl who has already a baby finds it easier to acquire a husband, many parents are tempted to encourage their daughters' promiscuity. If then the hoped-for high *lobolo*-payer does not present himself, the girl is doomed to continue the once-taken road. Prevented by pregnancy and baby care from holding a job, even if she wanted to, she becomes totally dependent on them.

Case VIII: During one of my visits, a mother said that her daughter was working, while the daughter was, at that very moment, lying in bed recovering from childbirth. When I asked her, she said proudly, "Of course, I am not working. I have these . . ." pointing to her new-born baby, and to another slightly older infant lying nearby on a mattress.

The evil goes still further. Parents are sometimes indulging in lucrative and well-

planned rackets, such as here described by a missionary.

Case IX: "There is a boy working for Crown Mines Ltd. in their office. He came to see me the other day, saying that he was married. I had known him for a long time and I asked, 'According to Christian rites?' He said, 'No, I paid *lobolo*. £50.' Then, 6 months later, he came again; he was broken-hearted and he told me that after a while he had found out that he and his wife had got 'in a quarrelling mood' as he called it. Things went wrong between them, and then he discovered that he was the third man to be done down. The girl who was his wife had been already *lobola'd* by the father twice before him. Each time *lobolo* had been paid, and she had after a while sought a quarrel and had gone home, until her father *lobola'd* her to the next husband."

Needless to say, by tribal custom it is an offence to hold simultaneously more than one *lobolo* on a daughter¹, and the case could have been taken to the Native Commissioner. Whilst the young man might have been able to retrieve his money, he would very likely have lost his wife who, as a dutiful daughter, would have sided with her parents. In this case the young husband wanted more than anything else his wife. The missionary rushed them off to a Church wedding which, if it is a registered church, includes civil registration and, since this needs a proper divorce before the father can *lobola* his daughter again, it is, therefore, in such cases a certain safeguard.

Anyone with knowledge of urban Africans knows that such cases as those cited above recur. It is difficult to find out in how far the girls' co-operation in their parents' schemes is given willingly or under pressure. It is, however, quite clear that no legislation is of any avail for which the people lack the underlying systems of beliefs and values.

In the above cases, the persistence of ancient tribal values makes it possible for the parents to exploit the *lobolo* institution to their own advantage, thereby *delaying* marriage. There are also many instances of parents using the *lobolo* to prevent marriage of their sons and daughters.

¹ G. M. B. Whitfield, *South African Native Law*, Cape Town, 1948, pp. 100-02.

Fear to lose the son's support is shown as the main reason in the following case.

Case X: Talking to a son who works in a factory, and is staying with his mother, I put the question to him why he does not get married. He seems of marriageable age.

"I wouldn't think of it—I have no money . . . Of course, I've got a girl friend!"

"Would you marry her if she'd have a baby?"

"Never!" He is now quite genuine, "It might not be mine, after all. Oh no, I wouldn't do such a thing . . . and then," this with an air of arguing again an already much argued case, "if I got married I wouldn't be able to help my parents. . . ."

"But don't you want your own home?"

"It's too hard to start. You've got to get a house first, and then the furniture . . . You need money for all that, and I haven't got any."

This particular young man gave his mother £2 15s. per week and it is doubtful if he would be able to continue this quite generous support if he had a family of his own.

In the next case, fear to lose the son's support combines with dislike of an urban daughter-in-law.

Case XI: Mother has three unmarried sons in the house.

"Why don't they get married?" She shrugs her shoulders, because of the hopelessness of the situation for her, and also because of the irritation the question causes her.

"They prefer to amuse themselves," she then says. "That's why! They have girl friends. That's how it is—and then, I am old; they must look after me. I can't stay alone. Who would help me?"

"But if there were a young woman in the house to help you?"

"No, it's better this way . . . and then, I don't want a daughter-in-law here." She is now quite resentful.

"But wouldn't you want grandchildren?"

"Eeeeeeh, yes!"

"Then what . . .?," but by now she is really angry.

I shall refer to these cases again, because

some of these women do have "grandchildren".

In tribal life, a mother could hardly wait till she acquired an obedient and hard-working daughter-in-law, and the status resulting from her position as mother-in-law, whilst filial obligations assured her old age. In town, daughters-in-law are becoming increasingly unwilling to submit to their mothers-in-law's "nagging", as they call it and, possibly therefore, the fact that they are rival claimants to their sons' wages stands out in stronger relief. In town, and quite often, a son's marriage means a mother's loss. There is seldom a house near to hers, and so her son goes away and sometimes far away, and there generally follows neglect and always loneliness. The high *lobolo* the son would have to pay, here reinforces a mother's arguments to keep possession of him.

Similarly, I know cases where the girl's parents, and particularly her mother if she is a widow, prefer to have full control over the entire amount of their daughter's wages, plus the expected *lobolo* of her daughters, to receiving her *lobolo* now.

Case XII: The woman in question is 31 years old, is employed full-time by one of the Reef municipalities, receiving a salary of nearly £30. Her parents claim her full salary and she feels unable to refuse. She cannot hold anything back from them, for they know exactly what she is earning. She has recently started gambling on the race course, because her meagre winnings from this source are the only income she can hide from her parents and she can, therefore, keep as pocket money. Being a considerable wage earner she does not lack suitors, but "each time a man wants to marry me, my parents ask more *lobolo*", she says. All my efforts to try and strengthen her into some kind of independence from her parents have so far been unavailing.

Even this brief survey of the parents' position regarding *lobolo* confirms fully its function in the battle of the older generation to maintain their ancient rights, and to find new safeguards for new insecurities. That this function is, as we have seen, largely

maladjustive, if tested against European values, is, of course, not due to *lobolo* itself or alone. No factor works singly in a situation made up of an entangled mass of interrelated causes and effects. The low wage structure, the housing shortage, the lack of seriousness in the young men, as well as their general drifting, all work together with the egoism of the parents, and the large number of lonely elderly women. In the struggle for survival, and unable to find a new relationship, the two generations cling together like people in a shipwreck.

The tribal *lobolo* was, after all, an institution expressive of a particular aspect of the Bantu social structure, namely, the Bantu attitude to females. This attitude persists in town. I have here dealt with the parents' attitude to daughters, and we shall now investigate the husbands' attitude to wives.

The Husbands' Point of View

The husbands' argument in discussions on the *lobolo* most frequently runs like this.

"Would you consider your coat (or jersey, or jacket) to be yours, if you hadn't paid for it?" It is a rhetorical question to which no reply is required, and the men generally continue, "Well then, it is the same with one's wife". The husband's comparison of his wife with garments does not seem to be confined to urban husbands. Dr. Agatha Schmidt, a German ethnologist, mentioned that the men in the various tribes studied by her, often use this comparison, saying, for instance, "A woman is like a dress".

The nurses' "value" argument seems to reflect this general male attitude. It would then appear that the men's sense of "belonging" cannot be made operative except by the idea of property for which one has paid. The husband's pride in a wife is still, as it would seem, very much based on "having paid for her", and will inevitably be greater, if he has paid a higher price for her.

The husband in town, then, seems to need this feeling of "owning" or "possessing" his wife—all the more so since the loss of his tribal functions—vital functions which he has not yet been able to replace by new ones

—as well as the humiliations of the colour bar in all its aspects, his restricted earning capacities, the increasing independence of the women and their growing status as persons in their own right, have given the men a sense of their own futility and uselessness. If he has paid *lobolo*, his wife's advanced ways, her earnings, her public activities and status, "belong" to him. Her very independence is "his", and it all goes to buttress his tottering ego. Moreover, if he has paid *lobolo*, he feels himself justified—according to the new urban conventions—to dispose of her earnings. He can still, as the women say, "lay down the law", and be master in his own house.

This, in many an urban marriage, *lobolo* gives the husband a much needed confirmation of his male superiority, and this again, in the polarity of the relationship between the sexes, gives the often rebelliously inclined urban woman a feeling of security.

Some marriages of younger professional couples who, for economic reasons, waived the *lobolo* are known to me, and inferiority feelings abound. One example must suffice to illustrate what seems rather an "impressionistic" statement.

Case XIII: The young woman in question is 31 and a B.A.Soc.Sc. She fell in love with a boy who was in his last year at the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work. She had wanted to postpone marriage till he had finished his studies. Although she as a University graduate would always earn more than he, he would at least be earning also. But he "insisted so much", and one day she arrived at her work and sprang the surprise that she had married. She waived the *lobolo* because "he couldn't afford it", and the wedding party because it was "a waste of money". Feeling slightly ashamed of this, she had not said anything to her colleagues at work, and these took it rather badly. During their engagement she had already sometimes helped him financially with minor expenses such as train fares, and she had consented to get married mainly for the reason that she would be able to help him less obtrusively when they had a common

budget. For this reason also she married in community of property, so that he would be less conscious of being the lesser earner, and she waived the safe-guards of ante-nuptial contract.

They lived with his mother, partly because they could not at once get a house and partly because his mother insisted. When she was transferred to one of the Reef towns where a better paid job was offered her, she tried to get a house there, but, since he was not employed in the same town, there seemed little hope of a house. From the beginning her mother-in-law "caused difficulties". Since no *lobolo* had been paid, she told her son that his wife "did not really belong to him", and, since without *lobolo* she could not really assert her tribal claims on her daughter-in-law, she told her son that his young wife was "too independent" and "disobedient". She resisted all her son's attempts to find a house for him and his wife, saying that he was her "sole support", and "what would become of me?" The young husband who was "already from the first days of the marriage, moody", was torn between two loyalties.

Then there was the burglary. One night while in bed, the young couple were burgled and everything was taken from them. After that he began to blame himself that "he had not been able to defend me". He now feels he has no right "to own me", and when I saw her last, he had started drinking.

Another related factor is what was well expressed by one of the most highly qualified African men in Johannesburg. He said: "When *lobolo* has not been paid, they do not really know whether they are married or not". What he meant is this. In a *lobolo*-marriage both partners know the required behaviour, for this was laid down by tribal wisdom centuries ago. Both partners know their respective duties and rights, and this is the basis of mutual respect. In a union without *lobolo*, the partners are lost in a network of confusing and only half-understood conventions of a vaguely Western type, and there is no precedent of time-honoured and custom-sanctioned behaviour. Husband and wife are like actors in an unrehearsed play. *Lobolo* is the only element

which "makes" a marriage. It is that by which, emotionally, the urban marriage is recognized as basically the same institution as of old.

For the men it is that which distinguishes a "wife" from a "girl friend". In the large number of unions, not legalized according to either of the systems of law, this is a necessary function. Missionaries confirm, moreover, that in a marriage without *lobolo*, even though the marriage has been entered upon by Common Law, the husband finds it difficult if not impossible to feel any responsibility for the children. Similarly, if he has not "paid for" his wife, he is often inclined to neglect her, for instance when she is ill.

For the women, only *lobolo* can give them the "feel" of being really and truly married. A wife knows she "belongs" to him, because "he has paid for me". Only *lobolo* makes her truly part of his life, and subservient to his interests. If *lobolo* has not been paid, or not been paid in full, many a woman denies her husband any say over her children.

All this applies, naturally, to the bulk of the population, and there are exceptions amongst the most highly advanced couples. Yet, one cannot be too sure, for in a marital crisis or a big quarrel, beliefs and values which had been considered left behind, may again appear on the surface.

Thus in the new marital relationships of our town, *lobolo* seems to fulfil a new function as a marriage stabilizer of an as yet very shakily based European marriage concept which has to be tried out by the partners against the heaviest odds.

Lobolo as National Symbol

It is exactly amongst the more highly educated and politically advanced Africans that *lobolo* has come to assume an entirely new function.

In all the fruitless discussions on *lobolo* between Africans and Europeans, there is always a moment when the Africans will say: "White people are white people, and have white people's customs. Africans have their own. The European will never understand the African. It's no use trying to explain, or even trying to understand each other . . ."

Here we touch upon *lobolo* as a symbol of Africanism.

When an article appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation* (Feb. 16th 1957) entitled, "The Fight against Slavery", in which Brian Carney mentioned the bride-price in the context of "slave-brides", there promptly followed a protesting letter signed by Omobolanle Akpata, a Nigerian girl with a London address. In it she wrote that the term "bride-price", was not applicable to *lobolo*, "This [the *lobolo* money] is done mainly to keep the age-long tradition, and not to buy the bride . . .". The European custom of dowry, she wrote, similarly does not make the bridegroom into a "slave-bridegroom". Neither, she continued, does the *lobolo* make the bride into a slave. "This is one of those problems emanating from people trying to substitute English phrases for things that are purely Nigerian."

Case XIV: Recently, two young people belonging to well-known families, became engaged. The girl's father, with obvious pride and pleasure, explained to me the whole protracted ceremony in which the girl is asked in marriage by the boy's family's emissaries, the *lobolo* is finally fixed after prolonged *pourparlers*, as well as the accompanying presents. He explained how wonderful it was to enact such ancient African protocol and how much enjoyment everyone had found in it.

Here the money transaction and the old African ritual give a pattern upon which the two families can become acquainted. This getting to know each other was here desired and consciously fostered, and without the *lobolo* there would be no easy form to be found for such a meeting. It functions like the European first dinner between the future parents-in-law.

Amongst the nurses, this "Custom" argument was used nine times, it was the third in numerical importance, in favour of *lobolo*. From the answers it cannot be inferred whether it arose out of a simple, unquestioning acceptance of what was supposed to be "done" or whether it came from a new conscious re-adoption of an old institution.

Since I was not aware of the importance of this distinction at the time, I pursued the matter no further.

Out of the wreckage of the tribal past, one institution has survived, and could survive, because it never met with prohibitive legislation nor a well determined common policy from the churches. Although many experts have written against it, *lobolo* has remained free from associations of "barbarism" and "savagery" with which other tribal institutions have become marked. Hence even educated Africans, Westernized Africans who would turn away from age-sets, initiation schools, polygyny, war dances and magic, could remain *lobolo*-adherents without feeling "backward" and "primitive". Thus, *lobolo* was there, ready and waiting, to remind Africans of their African origin, and not only that, but to be accepted purposely as the one institution that connects that strange new person, the modern African, with his historical past.

As such *lobolo* has a new function to fulfil in this nascent society. In the necessary process of re-Africanization, in which Africans must rediscover their lost soul, *lobolo* is becoming the rallying point. It is becoming a sign of the African distinctiveness, a symbol of African solidarity, of what Leopold Sedar Senghor, the great modern African poet calls, "négritude".

Concluding, and although my findings may be of a kind that, at least for a moment, cannot be supported by statistical evidence, I would like to submit that the urban *lobolo* as *lobolo*-in-marriage appears to show the following functions:

(1) The old function, giving the husband the rights of fatherhood over his wife's children is still existent, particularly amongst the less detribalized Africans. (Illustrative evidence has been given in Cases I and IV). Even amongst more urbanized Africans, it may still be an important element, especially in moments of marital crisis, in supporting the husband's family's claim to the children (illustrative evidence in Case III).

(2) The old function, of bringing about a connection between two families, may again

achieve a new significance, particularly amongst the most highly urbanized and most stable urban families (illustrative evidence in Case XIV).

(3) It gives stability and pattern, both greatly needed, in the emotional insecurity of urban marriage. As to the husbands, it enforces respect for their wives, and responsibility for their children. As to prospective husbands, it affords the possibility of distinguishing between a wife and a girl-friend, between a marriage and a liaison. It is a greatly needed test of a suitor's honest intentions and his capacity as a future provider. The insecurity of biological fatherhood requires confirmation by *lobolo* of his cultural father-rights. In the decline of male self-confidence it is a seal of male superiority, and it anchors the often rebellious and fickle woman to her home.

(4) It represents for the girl's parents a greatly needed old age insurance against the insecurity of old age and the decreasing sense of filial obligations. In this function it fills the void existing in town by the lack of old age homes, the inadequacy of old age

pensions and the insufficiency of saving capital, especially amongst the older immigrant population.

(5) It is a measure of the girl's value and the girl's family's social status. In this function, the money of the *lobolo* replaces the cattle as establisher and confirmer of status.

(6) It pays for the wedding expenses, the brunt of which is generally borne by the girl's parents. The necessity for a large wedding is again a status requirement.

(7) It acts as a security link between the wife and her own home and people. With frequent divorce, separation and desertion, this is an important factor and a consequence of the fact that the *lobolo* money can, as a general rule, not be reclaimed.

(8) It is becoming, especially amongst the most urbanized and politically conscious urban Africans—here possibly stripped of all its former and present functions—a symbol of being African and proud of it.

In a later paper I propose to deal with the new features of urban *lobolo*.

TABLE

33 Respondents: Lobolo is "a good thing"

15 Respondents: Lobolo is "a bad thing"

REASONS VALUE	No. of times stated	Specimen answers	No. of times stated	Specimen answers
	18	<p>"You could imagine a man getting you cheaply, and kicking you about."</p> <p>"One does not value what one gets for nothing."</p> <p>"A husband will not ill-treat you when he has paid for you."</p> <p>"They feel they must struggle to get something of value."</p> <p>"Anything you have sweated for, you value more than a free gift."</p> <p>"A man won't respect you, if he did not pay."</p> <p>"If it did not exist, many men would neglect their wives."</p>	6	<p>"The man feels he's bought you, and this is why he will ill-treat you."</p> <p>"The man feels you've been bought, in some cases he even says so. Since he can never give you enough to buy you, he should pay nothing."</p> <p>"I don't like being bought. I do not see the necessity. I think that is why sometimes a wife is badly treated by her husband. He thinks he has bought you."</p>
PARENTS	12	<p>"Your parents have brought you up and paid for your education."</p> <p>"It is a little consolation, because you leave them."</p> <p>"Parents must have something, as you will be leaving them for good. A man, after marriage, always clings to and supports his own family, and you cannot do anything any more for your own."</p> <p>"After marriage all money goes to your in-laws."</p>	4	<p><i>Parents</i>: "Parents claim to have educated you, but the boy's parents have also educated him."</p> <p><i>Parents-in-law</i>: "If the man has paid lobolo, everyone has a say in your life."</p> <p>"One is forever in the hands of one's parents-in-law, and his people always have a say in the running of the house."</p> <p>"You are forced to stay with your in-laws, and if you are unwilling they say lobolo has been paid and you must do as you're told."</p>
CUSTOM	9	<p>"It is our custom. It is funny to marry without."</p> <p>"It is traditional."</p> <p>"It is expected and accepted by everybody."</p>	—	
GUARANTEE	2	<p>"A husband cannot leave you so easily if he has paid lobolo."</p> <p>"A man cannot play around with you, he will know he is losing his money."</p>	3	<p>"Lobolo is no guarantee for a good marriage."</p> <p>"Though lobolo is paid, yet divorce arises; with our fathers it meant something."</p> <p>"The husband says you can't run away, because I have paid lobolo for you. When quarrels come, the man claims back his lobolo, and your parents may not have it any more."</p>
WEDDING EXPENSES	1	"The money serves to finance the wedding expenses which I could not afford."	—	
MARRIAGE EXPENSES	—		3	"With lobolo all savings go to the parents, and the couple has nothing to start marriage with."
OTHER REASONS	6	<p>"It introduces a relationship between the two parties."</p> <p>"It creates better understanding and living."</p> <p>"Most of our men are poor, they must first show that they can raise the money."</p> <p>"Because our parents are still in the stone age."</p>	5	<p>"It is useless, some fathers take the cattle and sell them, and nothing is left."</p> <p>"Once a man believes in lobolo, he is inclined to want more wives."</p>
TOTAL No. OF REASONS	48		21	

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