

Indianen betreffen en voegt daaraan toe: "As a department within the national household, Indian affairs was cast in the role of the unloved orphan".

Ik kan mij moeilijk verenigen met zijn uitspraak dat de Canadese Indianen zich eerst recentelijk van hun precaire positie inzake het grondbezit bewust werden. Immers, de in deze zeer belangrijke Nishga Petition dateert van 1887 en sedertdien zijn de Indianen terzake bijzonder op hun hoede gebleven, zoals ook enkele jaren geleden bleek uit de reactie op de regeringsverklaring van Premier Trudeau waarin de eertijds gesloten verdragen dreigden te worden opgezegd.

McNickle beschouwt een in 1971 in het kader van de Settlement Act getroffen regeling als een precedent voor toekomstige overeenkomsten. Daarbij werd het grondbezit van in Alaska wonende Indianen erkend en bood men hun ter compensatie voor de exploitatie van de minerale hulpbronnen o.m. een aandeel in de baten.

In het geheel bezien geeft dit vlot geschreven boek onmisbare informatie voor een goed begrip van recente gebeurtenissen en ontwikkelingen. De in de appendix opgenomen demografische gegevens zijn ontleend aan de census van 1970.

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CHRISTINE OPPONG, *Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite. A family study of Ghanaian senior civil servants.* Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 8. Cambridge University Press, London 1974. 187 pp., map, tables. Price £ 4.50 in U.K., \$ 13.95 in USA.

SJAAK VAN DER GEEST

Mary Douglas' question some years ago of whether matrilineality is doomed to disappear in Africa is still being answered by anthropologists today, this time by Dr. Christine Oppong, Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. Her Ph.D. thesis, *Aspects of Conjugal Relationship among Akan Senior Civil Servants in Accra*, has been published in an abridged and slightly revised form under the more graceful title *Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite*. If participant observation is the key to successful anthropological research then Dr. Oppong, who has spent many years in Ghana and is herself "conjugal related to an Akan senior civil servant in Accra", is a good case in point.

The author states in her introduction that, during her preliminary investigations among elite couples, she was struck by two types of emphatic statement which were made repeatedly in connection with urban elite marriage. The first was that matrilineal type unions are fraught with serious problems of incompatibility, and the second that these problems tend to reduce greatly between spouses who are second — or third — generation educated.

The latter statement marks out a well-defined area of research with an independent variable (number of generations educated) that lends itself to exact measurement. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most

lucid conclusions of the study are those pertaining to the influence of formal education on marriage and kinship relations. So Dr. Oppong has discovered *inter alia*, that the number of generations educated correlates positively with "closure" of the conjugal union, jointness of financial management between spouses, and participation of the husband in domestic chores.

The former statement, on the other hand, points the way to an extremely intricate complex of social dynamics on which numerous anthropologists have tested their talents and there is no denying that Dr. Oppong has added an important contribution to the bulk of matrilineality studies produced by anthropologists such as M. Fortes, Audrey Richards, Kathleen Gough and D. Schneider.

The author had three aims in view when starting her investigation, viz.: 1) to contribute to the "growing body of data on marriage and family life among urban, educated West Africans"; 2) to conduct an experiment in methodology by "documenting and comparing two major aspects of conjugal family relationships: the division of labour, resources and power between husbands and wives, and the extent to which the conjugal family is a functionally discrete unit . . ."; and 3) "The examination of marital continuity and change among educated, urban migrants from a region characterized by *matrilineal* descent and inheritance" (p. 1; *my italics*).

In the first chapter an account is given of the research methods and the theoretical framework. The author places herself in the tradition of Farber and, more particularly, Bott by utilizing the concepts of 'openness' and 'closure' with respect to conjugal unions, and 'jointness' and 'segregation' in relation to conjugal roles.

The second chapter is devoted to the social traditions of the matrilineal Akan with respect to kinship and marriage, and to the main factors of change that have given rise to the present urban elites.

In the next chapter members of these elites are shown to be torn between rural and urban obligations or, in other words, between the modern economic system from which they derive their occupational status and their particular kind of conjugal ties on the one hand, and the demands of kinsmen on the other. The problems of this dichotomy are presented through the medium of a number of cases that illustrate how the respondents in question achieved their high status, got married and set up their household, and what role their matrilineages played in these processes. These cases provide a wealth of information, in fact, more than could be dealt with in the analysis.

The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the main subject of the study. Here the allocation of resources (financial provision, financial management, and participation of the husband in the household tasks) and the processes of conjugal power and decision-making (joint or segregate) are analyzed and assessed and related to the degree to which kinship ties continue to cut across conjugal bonds (i.e., whether the marriage is open or closed). The hypothesis that joint conjugal roles are connected with closed marital unions, and segregate roles with open unions

is confirmed by the situation in this West African — elite — setting.

In the final chapter the author gives special attention to a thread running through the entire study, namely the theme of tension and change. She attempts to shed more light on these concepts by fitting them into the sociological models of Stouffer and Merton. The study ends with the thought-provoking statement, "... we do not see such changes to be simply the result of 'Christian influence', 'culture contact' or the 'copying of European models', as a number of previous commentators appear to have believed, but as explicable in terms of adaptations within the system of domestic relationships, serving to adjust it to the economic and demographic changes, which have been taking place and are still continuing" (p. 159).

Another intriguing contention is that, in spite of supposed female emancipation among the urban elite, the married elite woman has lost three crucial resources providing the basis of the relative autonomy of Akan wives in a traditional setting. These resources are: financial independence, the possibility of recourse to the matrilineage and — *in cauda venenum* — freedom to divorce and enter into a new marriage (pp. 116-9). The last point is particularly intriguing. The argument here is that an elite woman who has lost her youthful glamour lacks the traditional facilities to withdraw from marriage, since the conditions for remarriage are not as favourable.

A few critical remarks about the book do not seem out of place. Compression of the original text has not always been conducive to bringing out clearly the main threads of the argumentation, particularly in the last three chapters. It would, moreover, have been better if the various cases had each been printed under a special heading and in a different letter type rather than interweaving them with the main body of the text. Further, the author seems rather over-optimistic about the accuracy and adequacy with which the traditional matrilineal kinship system has been described and analyzed (pp. 21 and 30). There is reason to believe, as has also been noted by Van Velsen, that conjugal and kinship ties in semi-literate societies are less stereotyped than has been suggested by some pioneer anthropologists. Personal investigations among the rural Akan, for example, support the view that there is a wide variety of sexual unions in rural communities and that there is considerable freedom of choice in the election of heirs.

The book has an elaborate index and is published in hard cover only. It is to be hoped that a paperback edition will follow soon, so that this elite study will also be available to non-elite students.

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CHRISTINE OPPONG, *Growing up in Dagbon*. Accra-Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1973. 79 pp., map. Price \$ 5.00 (£ 2.00).

SJAAK VAN DER GEEST

Most sizeable ethnic groups in Northern Ghana have their "own" ethnographer. The Tallensi have Meier Fortes, the Lowiili and Lodagaa