Irigwe and Rukuba Marriage : A Comparison *

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An interesting feature of a number of tribes of the Jos Plateau of Nigeria is that the network of marital rights and duties is vested in several husbands of one woman and thus is more diversified than in most other known African societies. Many of these tribes, including the Irigwe and the Rukuba, achieve this diversification through the institution of secondary marriage which is defined as follows by M. G. Smith : "[secondary marriage is] . . . the union of a wife with a man other than her previous husband, which does not follow or give rise to divorce, and is legitimized by betrothal payments made to the woman's father or guardian by her new spouse".¹

It will be seen that secondary marriage, which by definition implies the notion of primary marriage, is only one possibility employed by the Irigwe and the Rukuba to circulate women. Primary marriage, i. e. the first marriage of a girl (but not necessarily the first marriage of her husband), and secondary marriage are found in both tribes, but the relative importance, social function, frequency rates, and accompanying ritual and ceremonial, of these different kinds of marriage contrast greatly between the two tribes. Our task is to point out and whenever possible account for both similarities and differences. In addition, the Rukuba have a preferential, some may say prescriptive, marriage deriving from an elaborate pattern of premarital relationships, whereas nothing like this is found in Irigwe.

Irigwe and Rukuba share a common boundary, Rukuba being due north of Irigwe and in spite of so-called inter-tribal wars both tribes were usually on peaceful terms and kept fairly close contact with each other. These tribal interrelationships were both highly formalized, as in the case of intertribal invitations to each other's annual hunts and other recurrent rituals, and were also informal and on a person-to-person basis as in intertribal trade and barter. Each tribe claims to harbour groups originally members of the other which serve as bridges through which some inter-tribal matters are carried out. Both languages belong to the "Plateau languages" group but to different sub-groups, the Irigwe being classified in Group 2 and Rukuba in Group 4.² The two languages are not mutually intelligible.

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1. Michael Smith, "Secondary Marriage in Northern Nigeria", *Africa* XXI (1953): 323.

2. Joseph Greenberg, *Languages of Africa* (Indiana University, 1966), pp. 8-9.

The Rukuba tribe numbers around 12,000 people and the Irigwe population is somewhat over 15,000. Rukuba and Irigwe share substantially the same ecology: the area belongs to the Guinea Forest Zone of West Africa with slight alterations due to the relatively high altitude ranging between 3,500 to 4,000 feet. The rainy season starts in April and lasts through September or October, with its peak in July-August. The average rainfall, calculated for the town of Jos situated about 20 miles west of the geographical centres of both tribes is 58.43 inches per annum.³ The dry season lasts from October through March with the cold northern wind known as the harmattan blowing from November to February.

Both tribes practice subsistence agriculture and rely on late millet (*pennisetum spicatum*), sorghum (*sorghum vulgare*) and fonio (*digitaria exilis*) for their staple diet. In addition yams (*discorea*), sweet potatoes (*ipomoea batatas*) and coco yams (*colocasia antiquorum*) contribute substantially to their diet. Husbandry is confined to goats, fowl, dogs for hunting purposes, and a few horses which in both tribes were more numerous before the advent of British rule in 1905. Cash is obtained by selling crops or by working in the nearby tin mine fields which utilize open pit extraction: members of both tribes seek employment in these mines for periods ranging from one to three weeks at a time when currency is needed.

1. THE IRIGWE MARRIAGE SYSTEM⁴

A meaningful description of the Irigwe marriage system must be prefaced by a brief outline of the principal features of the tribe's social organization: for, as it will be seen, the rules and constraints regulating marriage are inexorably intertwined with several other major features of Irigwe social life.

Irigwe Tribal Subdivisions

The Irigwe repeatedly utilize the idiom of generation and sex (i.e., parent-child and male-female) to characterize and classify aspects of their world, both social and geographical. There are 24 agnatically based Irigwe subdivisions or "sections", as the Irigwe call them, each with its own shrine house, called a *branyi*, which is presided over by the senior man of the section's seniormost lineage. Each section regards its *branyi* as sacred, as its center of strength and regeneration, and skulls and other relics of warfare and hunting are preserved therein. The 24 Irigwe sections are grouped into two geographically discrete divisions. Rigwe, the "parent" division, which lies south of the River Ngell, has 10 sections, which together control most of the important tribal ritual. Nyango, the "child" division, with 14 sections, is north of the Ngell. Also, sections are regarded as either "male" or "female". There are eight male and two female sections in the parent division, and nine male and four female sections (plus one section which to my knowledge cannot be clearly classified as either) in the child division. Each section has its ritual specialization of significance to the entire tribe. Female sections share the responsibility for most of the wet season planting and crop growth ritual, whereas male sections direct the ritual regulating

3. Harold Gunn, *Peoples of the Plateau Area of Northern Nigeria*, IAI (London, 1953), p. 21.

4. Much of the following description of Irigwe social organization and marriage repeats or paraphrases information given in Walter Sangree, "Going Home to Mother: Traditional Marriage among the Irigwe of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria", *American Anthropologist* LXXI 6 (1969): 1047-54.

hunting and most other dry season activity. Parent division sections are felt, with one exception, to have ritual status superior to that of child division sections. This one exception is the section called "Red Earth" which is the seniormost female section, and is situated in the child division.

Most sections in the parent division are regarded as having distinctive agnatic origins. The male sections in the parent division are ritually ranked and specialized according to their putative arrival sequence in Irigwe. The seniormost male section, Nuhwie, presides over the most important dry season and planting rituals for the

entire tribe. The more junior sections in the parent division have their own relatively minor ritual specializations which are for the most part connected with dry season activity. The two female sections in the parent division are of essentially equal ritual status ; one carries out planting ritual for one of the important grain crops, and the other has ritual to control the lightning.

Rae ("Red Earth"), the seniormost female section, as noted above, is situated in the child division. The Red Earth section presides over the principal farming and first fruits ritual for all of Irigwe.

Most Irigwe sections are subdivided into several exogamous lineages (*énūcte*). Although extended family compounds of any particular lineage and section tend to be spatially clustered, there are many cases of compounds which adjoin or are surrounded by compounds of other lineages of even other sections. Thus it is not possible to identify either a compound's lineage or section affiliation solely by its location. Sections vary greatly in size ; the largest comprises at least 98 separate extended family compounds, and the smallest has only two. A compound (*ari*) usually has about 25 members, but they too vary greatly in size from as few as three people to over 150.

The Yearly Work and Ritual Cycle

Farming activity is carried out primarily during the rainy spring and summer months (April-October) principally on an extended family basis. Each extended family which farms together has its own granary under the charge of its seniormost male member. Pre-planting hoeing groups, however, consist characteristically of one or two dozen agnatically related young men from the same or neighboring compounds who hoe in turn the fields or their younger members' fathers-in-law-elect. Harvesting, which extends well into the dry season for the late millet, finds the same agnatically linked families, including the wives and daughters assisting each other, this time not in the fields of the future in-laws but instead, in harvesting their own crops.

Hunting which is carried on throughout the dry season (roughly from October to April) is organized principally on a section basis, but it is usual for the section in charge of a particular hunt to invite other sections to join if they wish. The high point of the hunting season is a three day pan-tribal hunt and celebration (*Zaraci*) held near the end of the dry season. In the organization and ceremonial arrangements of this big hunt the Rigwe "parent" and Nyango "child" divisions of the tribe are explicitly counterposed, with the elders of Nuhwie, the "great father" section, and those of Zobwo, its Nyango counterpart, running the two halves of the hunt. The tribe's passion for hunting finds its principal ceremonial expression, however, after this great hunt, during the early planting season, when each section in turn holds a three day ceremonial (*hūi rihūi*) to purify and praise their hunters who during the preceding season have brought heads of big game (and formerly human enemies) to the section shrine house. Sometimes two or three smaller sections hold ceremonies concurrently. Only heads of certain dangerous game are preserved as relics thereby qualifying their takers as "heroes" (*šūa*) to be thus honored. Not since 1905 when the tribe was pacified by British troops have enemy heads been taken, and in recent decades, game animals have become increasingly scarce.

Nowadays a section must often wait several years before a member bags any of the requisite game and they can hold the *hūi rihūi* ceremonial. Nevertheless close to a dozen ceremonies were held in the spring of 1964 and 1965. Arranging and

holding or attending these spring celebrations seemed to keep everybody in a state of excited activity for over a month, and before the ceremonies are over on several occasions we overheard people saying that the coming farming season's hard work of ridging the fields and transplanting millet seedlings would be a welcome change.

The Irigwe Hero Cult, Women, and Section Solidarity

Irigwe notions of heroism are not confined to hunting. Men renowned for their skill as farmers become known as "heroes of the hoe", (*šüä icie*), and those with many wives as "heroes of women" (*šüä mbru*), or sometimes less reverentially, as "heroes of the vagina" (*šüä süäá*). Every time a man takes a new wife his accomplishment is honored by his friends and fellow section members who hold a beer party and dance for him and sing his praises. No special ceremonial honors heroes of the hoe, but everyone agrees that being known as a great farmer is a major asset in attracting wives.

Marriage in Irigwe is generally patrilocal, and to our knowledge, never uxorial. Married women, however, not infrequently return to visit for a day or two at their paternal homes, and a woman with no living sons may choose to "retire" to her paternal compound in her old age, and later be buried in one of the underground burial vaults of her patrilineage. Also a woman after being widowed returns to her natal compound for a few months where she is ritually cleansed. She must then contract a new marriage unless she is elderly and prefers to remain as a widow either with one of her sons or at her paternal compound. A widow may never become a leveratic wife in her deceased husband's compound or section. Only on two occasions do married women return to gather *en masse* at the shrine center of their patrissection: one occasion is to attend the mortuary rites following the death of their patri-section's ritual elder, and the other is to attend the *hüi rihüi* ceremonials honoring the latest hunting "heroes" of their patrissection. Women live away from their natal compounds once they are married, with the exceptions noted above, but a woman nevertheless remains throughout her life, both in terms of sentiment and explicit obligations, "our daughter" (*kowembru nji*) not only to members of her natal compounds but also to her patrilineage (*énücie*) and patrissection. We shall now review those aspects of the annual sectional three day *hüi rihüi* ceremonials which highlight and help strengthen solidarity within and competition between the sections, in hunting and over women.

On the first day of *hüi rihüi* the seniormost women of the section return from their husbands, or from where they are in retirement, to take up residence in the shrine house for the three days of the ceremonial; the younger women of the section go to sleep at their paternal compounds. That evening the women gather at the section shrine center to witness and assist in the preparation of a special gruel. To the accompaniment of singing and dancing by the girls the gruel is cooked, pounded, and finally poured into special jars to ferment until the following afternoon.

On the second day the rituals begin with the "heroes" of the year being escorted to a special ceremonial bench placed in front of the shrine house where each in turn is anointed and blessed by the elders of the section. In some sections it is customary for the hero's wife or wives to sit with him on the ceremonial bench and also be blessed; if the hero is a youth who has not yet married, a pre-adolescent girl may be chosen to sit beside him and go through the ritual with him.

After the heroes of the hunt have been blessed and honored by their section leaders, senior male representatives of every section of the tribe gather in front of

the shrine house for a special supper. Meanwhile, the young people move out to the section dance grounds where the girls start to dance and sing praise songs honoring past and present heroes. The food for the supper is supplied by the host section, but representatives from a ritually senior "female" section may be asked to supervise its final preparation, and elders from a ritually senior "male" section are invited to serve the ritual fare which includes : honey, grilled sesame seeds, a special red millet beer, and the fermented gruel prepared the previous evening.

During the supper, elders from each section of the tribe are in turn called on to view the skulls of the big game bagged that year by the host section, to comment on them and praise the prowess of the hunters who took them.

Dusk finds both men and women dancing around a tall drum (*bi*) brought out only at *hüi rihüi*, with the crowd finally thinning out after nightfall as both spectators and dancers go to visit and eat (if they still have appetites) with friends and relatives in the host section. The second night of *hüi rihüi* can be most aptly summarized as one great slumber party. The young people sleep out near bonfires in the shrine center compound ; those who cannot find space there visit and sleep out by fires in one or another compound of the section. Older guests lodge for the night in the huts of relatives or friends. Unmarried teen-age sweethearts may seek secluded corners for lovemaking, but the desired privacy is hard to find ; conviviality and catching up on family gossip are the keynote activities, and they usually leave little time either for lovemaking or sleep that night.

The third and final day of *hüi rihüi* is devoted entirely to visiting, feasting, and beer drinking, and, in the afternoon as dusk approaches, to dancing and praise singing by the girls and younger women of the section. The latter, which is the final pageantry before people disburse and head for home, is a very impressive affair. Wives married in, married daughters returned for the ceremonial, and resident unmarried girls — sometimes several hundred in all, — form a huge circle and slowly dance in a clockwise direction as they clap and sing lyrics of praise and remembrance in unison. Spectators, who include men and women who wander in from other sections, may rush into the dance circle to "dash" (i.e. give) performers who please them a penny or even sixpence. An unmarried dancer can count on being dashed by her fiancé, that is, by the youth who is doing bride service for her father, and she can also expect to receive some article of jewelry from him that evening. Her suitor for secondary marriage may also "dash" her. The elder men of the section, exhausted by 48 hours of continuous conviviality, beer drinking and sleeplessness, seek refuge on the tops of boulders at the edge of the dance ground, where safe from jostling and above the dust, they can survey the pageantry while warming their bones in the evening sun. We heard one reclining elder chortle, "Those girls and women, mine mine, all of them mine — isn't it wonderful !"

This boastful revery was in fact quite in harmony with some of the principal features of Irigwe marriage. Not only are the men of each section in competition with those of every other section for wives, but in addition each section has a fiercely possessive attitude towards its own daughters. And it will be seen that older men in Irigwe hold certain ongoing rights to bestow in secondary marriage the already married daughters of their section.

The Irigwe Marriage Guardian

Every Irigwe woman through her life has a man from her extended lineage (*énücié*) who oversees and receives compensation for her marriages. Normally a woman's

own father does this until a ceremony called *sá tēse* is held generally during her first pregnancy ; after that he often selects another man from his lineage, who is known thenceforth as the woman's "father-at-hand" (*bae bi nva*), to serve in his stead as her marriage guardian. Upon the death of the father or "father-at-hand", another "father-at-hand" from the lineage is selected to be the woman's marriage guardian by the lineage elders. A woman's marriage guardian bestows her sexual service, but never her exclusive sexual service, to whomever she marries. Indeed he may throughout her life give her in marriage to as many men as he can arrange for and she will agree to. Since there is no divorce, a husband competes with his wife's other husbands for her sexual favors ; he also competes with them for the paternity of her children.

As Laura Bohannan pointed out in her classic paper on marriage in Dahomey,⁵ rights *in uxorem* and rights *in genetricem* are handled as legitimately separate and distinct entities in some marriage systems ; and it will be seen that this distinction is implicit in Irigwe marriage practices. Perhaps the outstanding feature of the Irigwe marriage system is that the right to bestow a woman as a sexual partner remains inalienably, in the hands of her patrilineage (*énūcié*) — a group into which she is forbidden ever to marry —, whereas all rights to and control over the parenthood of a woman's offspring are bestowed once and for all upon her husbands, present and future, by her marriage guardian and lineage early in her marriage career. This is a principal function of the ceremony called "putting aside" (*sá tēse*), already alluded to above.

Sá tēse, usually held during a girl's first pregnancy, is always held after she has left her parental home to take up residence with one or another of her husbands. The ceremony takes place at the shrine center of her own (i.e. her patrikin's) section, and is attended not only by their immediate agnates and the ritual leaders of her own section, but also by the father of the husband with whom she is currently residing. Her husbands, however, do not attend the ceremony. *Sá tēse* marks on the one hand the surrendering of all claims to the paternity of her future offspring by members of her patrilineage, and on the other hand the ceremony reasserts her patrilineage's lasting interest in and involvement with her children, especially her children's health.

Irigwe Primary and Secondary Marriage

There are two basic types of Irigwe marriage. One type, arranged by the parents of the couple prior to their adolescence, is known by the men as *fo 'wena* ("taking a girl"), and by the women as *nyinyira* ("a from-to"). The other type, initiated usually by the couple themselves, is called *fo mbru* ("taking a woman or wife") by the men, and *vwevwe* ("sing-sing") by the women. We shall simply call the former type "primary marriage", since it ideally starts a girl's conjugal career, and the latter "secondary marriage", because it conforms, as we shall see, to the general definition of secondary marriage already given.

Arrangements for primary marriage are begun by the boy's family usually when he is still very young or even an infant. Sometimes a boy's mother or grandmother may initiate the plans. We know one case where the boy's paternal grandmother arranged for his engagement to the granddaughter of one of her cowives (a granddaughter by one of the co-wife's other husbands, it should be noted). Usually a family arranges one primary marriage for each of its sons, but occasionally a youth has

5. Laura Bohannan, "Dahomean Marriage: A Revaluation", *Africa* XIX, 4 (1949).

more than one primary type marriage arranged for him. Although a girl may never consummate more than one primary type marriage, it is common (and held to her credit) for a popular girl as she reaches puberty to become engaged for secondary marriages to several other men prior to the consummation of her primary marriage.

When the boy is old and strong enough to do a good day's hoeing in the fields, and when the girl's breasts are beginning to grow, the boy's father visits the girl's father and is shown fields for his son to prepare for planting. Early the next planting season the boy with the help of perhaps a dozen of his lineage brothers does about 24 man-days of work on the fields assigned by his father-in-law-elect. A great deal of the annual pre-planting field preparation is carried out by these work bees of youths and young men of the same lineage helping with the bride-service of their younger members.

Usually after three or four years of farm service, but never before the girl is well into puberty, the marriage is consummated by her taking up residence with her espoused in his father's compound. Sometimes the marriage is consummated before the boy has reached puberty; we are well acquainted with two such cases. After this no further work is due the father-in-law. Since primary marriages are characteristically arranged between families that are distant agnates and belong to the same section, or between families linked by "friendship", it is important to the girl's patri-kin that the marriage be consummated without mishap. An Irigwe girl after she reaches puberty may feel inclined to defy parental authority and go to live with one of their secondary marriage suitors even before she has consummated her primary marriage (secondary suitors have inevitably attained puberty); thus a prudent father hesitates to postpone his daughter's primary marriage much after she reaches puberty even though additional years of farm labor are at stake. A girl's mother, on the other hand, free from many of her husband's pressures of family or friendship, may counsel her to drag her feet and postpone leaving home at least until her primary fiancé has grown up a bit. A mother's control over her children, both male and female, is reinforced by the Irigwe belief that your matri-kin, that is, your mother and her patrilineage (*ne tekwe*), are your best source of aid in case of illness or any other mishap, and a child learns early to heed the counsel of his mother and her agnates. Thus, although the mother lacks formalized rights of control in the matter, it is often she who decides when her daughter should take up residence with her primary husband; indeed a substantial gift in cash or kind from the boy's family to the mother usually shortly precedes a girl's consummating her primary marriage. It should be noted that in those cases where a girl takes matters into her own hands and goes to a secondary suitor first, she inevitably feels obligated minimally to fulfill her parents' primary marriage commitments for her by taking up residence later with her primary husband for at least several weeks.

The initiative in arranging a secondary marriage, in contrast to primary marriage, is taken by the suitor himself. He generally uses a male friend as a go-between when first sounding out a girl (or woman), and she may either refuse or encourage his overtures. If encouraged the suitor must seek out her marriage guardian (i.e. her father or "father-at-hand") to ask his consent. The marriage guardian usually agrees after checking with her unless he finds the union would be prohibited by custom, that is unless it would violate an Irigwe rule of incest or exogamy.

Primary and secondary marriages are prohibited between lineage-mates, between cognates with a common great grandparent, between persons born in the same compound regardless of kinship, and with women of one's mother's compound.

Marriages by a man, and by another man from his compound, with more than one daughter of a compound are also prohibited. Also men from the same section may never marry the same woman so long as both men are alive ; nor may a man marry a widow of a man of his own lineage until she has first gone to marry a new husband of another lineage. The section is not an exogamous unit, and primary marriages in particular are often contracted between distant agnates as well as between other distant consanguines.

Secondary marriage suitors cannot be members of her living husbands' or husbands-elect's sections. As Irigwe men put it, "You can take a girl (*wena*) but never a wife (*mbru*) from your own section." In addition a man cannot take a wife from his mother's section, or his mother's mother's natal compound ; that is he cannot contract a secondary marriage with a woman who is already married to these categories of his kinsmen.

Each Irigwe section in effect forms a discrete "wife-taking unit". Although primary marriages frequently occur between different lineage members of the same section, no man may take in secondary marriage the wife of any other member of his own section. A man is free, however, except where prevented by his particular cognatic affinal, or friendship ties, to take in secondary marriage the wives of men of all sections other than his own.

Secondary marriage arrangements are by Irigwe custom formally concluded and become binding when the suitor makes a marriage payment to her marriage guardian ; the amount of the payment is usually 30 shillings. After that the girl is committed to leave her prior husband and spend a night with her new secondary husband at his compound. Usually she does this within several month's time. Unless, however, the girl's mother also favors the union and, as with primary marriage, has been given a gift of perhaps 10 shillings, the girl can be expected to postpone repeatedly going to the secondary husband.

When a woman goes to a secondary husband she leaves behind everything except the clothes and jewelry she is wearing (occasionally an older woman will take one or more of her younger children with her). Generally her prior husband fetches her back the morning after she has forsaken him for a secondary husband. On a subsequent visit, however, the woman may choose to stay and take up residence with her new husband. The husband receiving her must be prepared to supply her with a hut and everything she needs for housekeeping if he expects her to stay more than a night. If she stays with a husband from planting time on through the harvest season he can be counted on to give her grain for dry season cooking needs and her own small granary to store it in. Young girls who have just consummated their primary marriages go off to their secondary husbands any season, although they favor the hunting and early planting seasons when drumming and dancing are allowed. But once a woman has stayed with a man long enough for him to have given her a granary and grain she seldom leaves him for a secondary husband before the beginning of another farming season when she has already used up the grain.

At dawn after a man has received a new secondary wife the women of his compound announce the fact by shrill ululation. Before long the prior husband, or one of his brothers, shows up to call her back. She then promptly returns to her prior husband's compound, accompanied by a stream of ululating girls if she herself is still a young girl. The prior husband tarries at the wife-taker's compound to drink his fill of the beer that custom demands must be offered him. It is considered bad manners for a prior spouse to sulk or give direct expression to his annoyance, but he never

misses a chance to criticize the quality of their beer, while at the same time encouraging lots of people from his own compound to follow him there to drink up as much as possible. Later in the day the girls from the wife-taker's compound, if the wife has come to him for the first time, announce his success by begging pennies at the compounds of his friends and from others of his section.

A woman is not obligated to sleep with a secondary spouse for more than one night, and she must return to her prior husband when he comes for her. But her reputation will suffer and she may incur the wrath of her father or marriage guardian if she isn't willing to go to the secondary husband two or three times. She probably won't go to him a fourth time, however, unless she has decided to shift her residence from her prior husband to his ; and at that juncture the prior husband usually doesn't bother to call her home to him any more. In any case the prior husband isn't served beer by the secondary husband except the first time he calls her back. The traditional Irigwe marriage system has no divorce. A woman's prior marriages are never formally terminated by her switching residence to another spouse ; she may return to any of her spouses at any time and usually finds herself welcomed back and given a hut and everything else she needs for housekeeping.

In order to be a real success at the secondary marriage game a man needs to have two or three reliable friends outside his own section who, being able to move freely and partake of festivities in compounds where he would be suspect, can sound out possible secondary marriage prospects, carry messages for him, and the like. The *quid pro quo* of such friendships is to give reciprocal aid in courtship, and never to take wives from each other's compounds. Friends may, however, marry daughters from each other's compounds. Women, for their part, depend heavily upon their co-wives, including their husbands' siblings' wives, when planning and carrying out secondary alliances. Indeed the Irigwe word *uri* means just two things : "a man's friend", as described above, and "co-wife". Two people calling each other *uri* (both two men who are friends, and co-wives) often in later life further consolidate their relationship by arranging for a primary marriage between each other's children or grandchildren. Exogamy rules, however, strictly circumscribe the opportunities for arranging such a primary marriage.

An Irigwe woman, as mentioned earlier, always has the right to refuse any secondary marriage proposal prior to the marriage payment from the suitor to her marriage guardian. She must not, however, contract a marriage without her marriage guardian's consent ; few Irigwe women will risk the epithet of *mbrúnjē* (promiscuous woman) and the accompanying loss of further desirability as a wife which sexual relations without her guardian's permission quickly brings.

Polyandry, Shifting Residence, and Paternity

All older Irigwe women (the recent Christian minority excepted) have had a plurality of husbands. In a complete census taken of five compounds, totalling over 250 people, every girl pubescent or older had had a primary marriage arranged for her ; all women past their teens had at least one secondary spouse, and most had had two or more ; fully half of the women middle aged or over had borne children for two or more husbands. A girl's primary marriage is merely her marital debut whence she usually leaps into a round of secondary marriages, gaining thereby not only the excitement and pleasures these afford, but also the admiration of both peers and parents. Fathers are pleased and proud to have a daughter who has four or more

secondary marriages to her credit, and co-wives admire such a woman. Some young women, however, soon become very attached to one or another secondary — or even primary — spouse, and go on to take other husbands only to avoid annoying their father or “father-at-hand”; for it is believed that a father’s annoyance, even unexpressed, may lead to his daughter’s barrenness, illness, or even to the illness of her children.

It is usual for a woman to settle down for a relatively protracted period with a husband for whom she has borne a child or two. Sooner or later, however, she almost inevitably moves either back to an old or on to a new husband. Often she is prompted to do so by a diviner’s diagnosis that her own health or that of one of her children needs the change. The Irigwe consider it a prime duty of both parents to go visit any of their children who have fallen seriously ill, and then to stay on until the child’s health improves, or until the funeral. This is a society where about half of the infants healthy at birth die from illness before their sixth birthday. Thus occasionally her own health, but more frequently the health of her children, becomes a prime factor sometimes in abetting and other times in inhibiting a mother’s marriage mobility. “Spoiled stomach” (*owie 'dzio*) is the Irigwe idiom generally used to denote grief, including homesickness and bereavement. On several occasions we saw just that literally occur to a child upon the departure of the mother for another husband, and once the child got sick enough so that the mother postponed her planned shift of residence.

A child’s paternity is usually without contention bestowed upon whichever husband the mother was residing with when she was pregnant and when she bore the child. A woman seldom shifts to another husband while pregnant. If it turns out a wife went to another husband about the time she conceived, the prior husband’s paternal rights to the child are not disputed provided he called the wife back to him promptly, and provided he took responsibility for the baby’s infancy rites. The infant’s permanent section affiliation is the same as the *pater’s*, that is, it is reckoned agnatically. When a wife makes it clear that she is shifting her residence to another husband, the husband she is leaving generally asserts his right to keep all the children she bore him except for those under three or four years of age who he may demand back later, and then he puts out the welcome mat for her return. Wives come and wives go, but a man lives on in the familiar surroundings of his ancestral home with the company of his sons and unmarried daughters. In his old age he is supported by his sons and cooked for by their wives if he has no resident wives of his own, while he turns his energies to ritual and judicial affairs which include looking after the marriages of his daughters and/or marriage wards.

Co-Husband Avoidance

The Irigwe have a belief which they use as the basis of a sort of litmus paper test as to whether or not a man should consider taking any particular woman as his secondary wife. The belief is that if a man who is ill or injured is visited or approached by a man with whom he has shared a woman’s favors (if, for example, he is visited by a co-husband) he will take a sudden turn for the worse and probably die. This belief enjoins men to be particularly sure they know all a woman’s husbands before taking her in secondary marriage, so they can avoid inadvertently becoming the co-husband of anyone such as a friend or section-brother with whom casual and friendly relations are desired or ritually prescribed. It also leads a prudent man to choose his hunting

partners with care ; and whenever he is hunting with people from other sections he feels it wise to seek out a "friend" or close uterine kinsman to stay nearby and lend him assistance if he should accidentally be injured.

Open accusations of witchcraft or sorcery in Irigwe, although they occur, are rare, and we have no cases of their arising between rivals for a woman. On the other hand, fights between hunters over division of game, especially between men of different sections and rivals for the same women, are very common, and resultant bodily injury occurs all too frequently. We never, however, were able to uncover an example, of intra-tribal homicide in Irigwe, and elders claim that there was no traditional compensation, retribution or punishment for murder or homicide within the tribe.

Irigwe Marriage Mobility and Social Solidarity

Irigwe is a segmentary society which brings its own refinements to the use of marriage as a social mechanism for establishing ties between segments. In many segmentary societies in Africa cross-cutting ties are forged by "marrying your enemies", i.e., by marrying the daughters of outsider clans. The Irigwe system, however, serves directly to reinforce intra-segment solidarity while also forging inter-segment links. The Irigwe marry their friends and distant kinsmen in primary marriage, and then they marry wives of rival section members in secondary marriage, with most of the secondary marriages being between men and women of differing sections.

Marrying endogamously in Irigwe, that is, marrying daughters of different lineages of one's own section can best be viewed, we believe, as an optional practice ; desirable and advantageous in further cementing inter-lineage and inter-family ties in some cases, but usually an event of little larger social import. Marrying daughters of other sections, however, and conversely, having ones daughters marry men of other sections, weaves networks of affiliation and conconrelate easy communication between compounds belonging to otherwise hostile and competing sections. The mother's brother can be always freely "filched from" ; and more important, the mother's natal compound is a person's chief source of support in all situations where paternal aid is not sufficient, or is cut off. Thus members of a compound have little to lose, and relatively much to gain in the long run by having their sons' marriages establish an ever increasing network of such ties with compounds of other sections. The balance sheet appears less favorable, however, when it comes to daughters marrying out, since most of the responsibilities and commitments favor the daughters' children at the expense of her father and brothers.

Power and status of families and lineages is neither achieved nor affirmed by expeditious marriages, so far as we can ascertain. Why then does the pattern continue of Irigwe fathers and fathers-at-hand marrying their daughters and marriage wards to ever more men ? Men may be called "heroes" for acquiring many wives, but we have never heard praises sung honoring a man because his daughters have acquired many husbands. On the other hand, there is no son-in-law — father-in-law avoidance in Irigwe, and every new marriage is not only assurance of beer and hospitality for the bride's marriage guardian in the new son-in-law's compound, but also increased assurance of beer and hospitality for him and his friends in compounds the ward has already married into ; for every canny husband knows that his wife's marriage guardian has the greatest control over whether she returns to stay mostly with him or some other husband. Irigwe marriage, with its well established pattern of secondary marriages, each involving indefinite, and often very short terms of, co-

residence, seems from European (and also from Rukuba) perspective, very transient and fickle. It must be remembered, however, that with no traditional divorce or annulment procedures, every marriage, such as it is, is for life : thus some aspects of Irigwe marriage are very permanent indeed. As mentioned above, the relationship between a woman's marriage guardian and each of her husbands becomes closer with every additional marriage she makes. Also each new marriage a woman contracts results in a lasting truce between the new husband and all her other husbands, and this is a crucial element in Irigwe tribal solidarity.

A man can be and often is openly competitive and hostile towards any new suitor of his wife. They may even fight at beer parties, involving often their respective kin groups, or they may "accidentally" nick each other on the arms and legs with knives or spears during a hunt. But once a wife has gone to sleep with her suitor and thus has consummated the marriage all hostility between the new co-husbands is replaced, once and for all, by general avoidance behavior, and the most formal show of amity where avoidance is not feasible. It will be recalled that for the Irigwe avoidance of fighting between co-husbands is quite literally a matter of life and death, because they believe that if a man gets injured or sick in the presence of one who has slept with the same woman as he, he will quickly take a turn for the worse and probably die.

Often we have heard Irigwe, both young and old, discuss the importance of differing sections not fighting with each other, pointing out that even though nowadays they no longer have to unite for self-defense, they still all need the ritual of every other section to be healthy, successful in hunting, and have good crop harvests. And it is frequently said that the old men are the peacemakers of the tribe : they intervene, it is pointed out, with admonitions of tribal "family unity", and if necessary with sanctions of supernatural retribution, if hostilities between men of differing sections threaten to get out of hand. We have never, however, heard Irigwe give credit to their old men as peacemakers for having married their daughters so widely. We judge this latent peacemaking function of Irigwe secondary marriages to be the keystone to the persistence of the marriage system, and a crucial element in maintaining traditional tribal solidarity. Elderly Irigwe men, since they usually have several living co-husbands, not infrequently find themselves in the presence of one or another of their co-husbands when they are at market place beer drink or any other gathering of people from varying sections. Fear of injury while in the presence of a co-husband, plus the desire for peace when there is possibility of being treated to beer by a prospective or actual son-in-law, serve as strong incentives to elderly men to see that inter-section brawls do not occur on such occasions. Thus we have another instance of a marriage system helping to maintain "peace in the feud". The Irigwe case differs from most, however, because the hostile units, instead of taking each others' daughters, take each others' wives — but with similar unifying results for the tribe as a whole.

Irigwe sections lose their daughters' children to other sections, but of course they retain a special avuncular relationship with these offspring which among other things precludes wife-taking between the compounds so connected for at least two generations. Also, it will be recalled, lineages always retain the right to bestow each of their daughters in marriage again and again, with the consequent possibility of each daughter's establishing maternal ties with several families of different section membership. And when a woman dies, the husband or son she was resident with may choose to bury her in a crypt of his lineage, but her lineage of birth can always intervene and demand the body back if they choose. Thus in a sense both symbolic and practical,

a lineage and section never gives up its daughters ; it only gives up its daughters' children. Irigwe men would appear to draw an intense satisfaction from holding veto power over the whereabouts of their daughters, a veto which contrasts vividly to a man's limited power to keep a wife with him, and to a child's inability to hold onto mother — except by getting sick. The Irigwe system of marriage mobility exacts its personal psychic tolls, probably different from, but perhaps no more severe than those of other marriage systems.⁶ The system does, however, weave prolifically wide-flung webs of inter-compound, of inter-lineage, and inter-section ties ; and, as we have seen, it even serves to enhance tribal solidarity by proscribing open hostility between co-husbands who are always of differing sections, in effect motivating fathers-in-law to help keep the peace at inter-section gatherings.

II. THE RUKUBA MARRIAGE SYSTEM

*Outline of the Social Organization*⁷

The Rukuba tribe can be said to be bisected, for marriage purposes, into two exogamous moieties whose members marry each others' girls in primary marriage. The moieties are in turn both divided into about 20 groups, each with a distinctive proper name, which take each others' wives in secondary marriage. We may call these groups "wife-taking units". Every wife-taking unit has its own ritual ground where all members of the unit must undergo the *aso* initiation ceremonies, and each also has a pool of water which is the dwelling place of all the spiritual "doubles" of all the "sisters' children" of the wife-taking unit (cf. Fig. I, a).

One of the teachings of the *aso* ceremonies is the forbidding of wife-taking and adultery within the wife-taking unit. This prohibition is backed by mystical sanctions, and formerly an apprehended adulterer was sold into slavery outside of the tribe. Membership in a wife-taking unit is normally ascribed agnatically by birth. Moiety membership is also ascribed agnatically by birth, a child (male or female) belonging to the same moiety as the father, and the opposite moiety from the mother.

It should be noted that the Rukuba wife-taking unit is exogamous in two distinctive and contrasting contexts : 1) a man is not permitted to marry a girl or woman in either primary or secondary marriage who belongs by birth to his own wife-taking unit ; 2) nor may a man marry a woman in secondary marriage who is already married to (i.e. is the wife of) another man belonging to his own wife-taking unit. Similarly regarding moiety exogamy it is helpful to note that since a man may never marry a girl of his own moiety (i.e. a woman who by birth belongs to the same moiety as he) he always perforce takes in secondary marriage wives of *husbands* who belong to the same *moiety* as he, but to different wife-taking units.

Every wife-taking unit is divided into a certain number of agnatically based clans whose members usually claim common putative agnation, and whose head, chosen amongst what is recognized to be the senior "house" of the clan, performs on behalf of the whole clan the compulsory recurrent farming rituals. Clans of the

6. Sangree, *op. cit.*, pp. 1054-7.

7. The following description of Rukuba social organization and marriage in part restates and amplifies material briefly presented in Jean-Claude Muller, "Preferential Marriage Among the Rukuba of Benue-Plateau State, Nigeria", *American Anthropologist* LXXI 6 (1969): 1057-61.

same wife-taking unit, or even in some cases the clans of two or more distinct wife-taking units of the same moiety, are often assumed to be linked ultimately by common agnation, but no explicit geneological links are traced back more than two or three generations removed from the eldest living member of a given agnatic line. Some clans, however, are said to have been parts of other tribes initially; thus, as the Rukuba see it, common *aso* initiation rather than agnatic descent is what binds together members of a wife-taking unit.

Figure 1A

DIAGRAM OF THE RUKUBA MARRIAGE SYSTEM

(Only three wife-taking units are represented for each moiety)

- Primary marriage allowed
- - - - - Secondary marriage allowed. The members of any 'A' wife-taking unit can contract marriages with wives married into any other 'A' wife-taking unit and can marry previously unmarried girls from any of the 'B' wife-taking units. The reverse applies to the 'B' wife-taking units
- Wife-taking unit

The basic Rukuba territorial tribal division is the village, each with its own chief called *utu*, who is selected secretly by the elders of the chief's clan from among the eligible members of the "senior" house. There are more than 20 of these village chieftaincies in Rukuba. A village chieftaincy characteristically contains one numerically and ritually dominant wife-taking unit. The clan heads of this dominant wife-taking unit have complementary ritual duties pertaining to the well being of the village as a whole. Generally, in addition to the dominant wife-taking unit, a village also has a minority group or groups of people belonging to the other moiety living within its territory. These minority groups of the other moiety within a village are politically dependent upon the chief of the village where they reside, and they act as "ritual assistants" for the dominant wife-taking unit of the village (cf. Fig. 1, b).

Village minority groups are said to have various origins. Some claim to be assimilated Irigwe, others are said to be descendants of "children of lovers" (cf. *infra*) ; but the majority of these groups are merely said to have settled along with the major exogamous group of the village at the end of the Rukuba migration which lead the tribe to its present territory. Some village minority groups, when fairly sizeable, have their own *aso* initiation ground and a pool of water for the "doubles" of their "sister's children", and they are in all respects fully fledged wife-taking units. When not numerous enough, the members of the minority group share the initiation ground and the pool of water of the major exogamous unit of the village, and their belonging to the opposite moiety is reflected and made explicit through the initiation ceremonies which follow a different timing from those of the major exogamous group. Other village minority groups, usually less sizeable minorities which are said to have migrated from established villages at the end of the last century, remain ritually dependent upon the wife-taking unit they came from and subject to its prohibitions since they continue to share its initiation ground ; nevertheless they are politically dependent upon the chief of the village where they have settled. The minority groups of a village are always of the opposite moiety from the dominant group ; it must not be assumed, however, that being of the opposite moiety from the dominant group is a prerequisite for immigration into a village, for immigrants of the same moiety may have been quickly assimilated into the dominant group and this fact no longer remembered after two or three generations' time. Usually there are two wife-taking units in each Rukuba village, one ritually and politically dominant and demographically the more numerous, and the other unit, always of the opposite moiety, serving as the "ritual assistant" group. Occasionally one finds a village with no resident "ritual assistant" group, and in such instances help in ritual matters is provided by a sister's son of the village chief's clan. Other villages, where "strangers" have come to settle from wife-taking units of the other moiety politically dominant elsewhere, may contain two or more ritual assistant groups each of differing wife-taking units. In such cases wife-taking may be prohibited between these ritual assistant groups by the village chief on the grounds that they are all politically dependent upon him. The position regarding this matter, however, varies from village to village.

The Rukuba marriage moieties have no names, but every village has its own proper name which it is known by. For marital purposes every member of a village knows in which marital relationship he or she stands with the major exogamous group of any other village, i.e. whether they are allowed to contract primary marriage or secondary marriage with each other, the relationship with any particular minority group within a given village being automatically the reverse.

Premarital Relations

Each wife-taking unit is faced with the conflict between group endogamy and group exogamy, i.e. keeping the wife-taking unit girls for themselves versus circulating them among other groups of the other moiety. The Rukuba have worked out an ingenious way to solve this problem by a system of institutionalized premarital relations before a girl marries into the other moiety. For premarital relationships purposes each wife-

Figure 1B

VILLAGE STRUCTURE IN RELATION TO MARRIAGE

- Primary marriage allowed
- Secondary marriage allowed
- Clan delineation
- Sub-Clans. Premarital relationships are allowed between the sub-clans of the same moiety within the same wife-taking unit

taking unit is comprised of a certain number of units called *unko kiko* which we translate as "subclans". These units do not allow premarital relationships amongst their members because of putative "close" common agnation which is not supported by genealogies.

The youths of each wife-taking unit carry out premarital relationships amongst themselves but outside their own sub-clan until the girls finally marry out. These premarital relationships are highly institutionalized; a girl is permitted to have only one lover at a time although she may have several in succession whereas a boy or a married man may have several girl friends at the same time. After formal courtship and the payment of a goat or a hoe by the boy to the girl's father the lovers are bound by a set of rights and duties including farming service by the boy on his girl friend's father's farms and on his girl friend's farms. Traditionally no children could be born from such unions and, if abortion failed, the child was killed at birth except in very rare cases. Nevertheless if a child was spared it would legally belong to the mother's father, and live in its mother's father's house; but it would belong to its mother's and biological father's opposite moiety. If a male, the child's descendants might eventually found a group of ritual assistants.

Premarital relationships can last for several years and the marriage age of Rukuba girls is usually high; it is not rare to find girls aged about twenty to twenty two still unmarried and enjoying premarital relationships in their father's compounds, in a hut built for that purpose by her first lover after the latter has been accepted as such by the girl's father.

Girl's Primary and Preferential Marriage

Until 1956, the preferential relationships pattern went along with a preferential betrothal in which the eldest daughter of a set of uterine sisters was betrothed to her mother's last lover's son or, failing a son, to a member of the mother's last lover's sub-clan who matched the girl in age or was a little older. Subsequent junior sisters were betrothed preferentially in other sub-clans of their mother's natal wife-taking unit excluding the mother's natal sub-clan. The mother's last lover had a right to only one daughter for his son whereas the remaining daughters were assigned a preferential groom by their mother's brother. Although Rukuba hold that only the first two or three daughters of a set of uterine sisters were expected to be betrothed to members of their mother's natal wife-taking unit, the mother's brother having latitude to give away other daughters in preferential betrothal to members of other wife-taking units, a sample revealed that about 94% of the girls were in fact betrothed in their mother's natal wife-taking unit. The betrothal was usually effected when a girl was about nine to ten, before she could have premarital relationships within her natal wife-taking unit. No prestations were requested from the preferential groom after the betrothal ceremony.

Despite this early preferential betrothal a girl was allowed to be courted in addition by any man from the opposite moiety with the *proviso* that no suitor should be a consanguine to the girl or belong to her mother's natal sub-clan, that no two men from the same clan should compete for the same girl, and that the preferential groom was the only man from his own wife-taking unit allowed to court her. She could marry the latter, if she liked him, or she could simply marry another suitor from the right moiety as her first husband. Marriages between members of opposite moieties of the same village, although very common, do not carry the same prestige as a primary marriage with a wife fetched from spatially far away.

Whoever she chooses to marry as her first husband, whether her preferential groom or a non-preferential suitor, the bridewealth is paid to the girl's father. A preferential groom, in theory, must pay more bridewealth than a preferential suitor if the girl elects to marry him as her first husband. The bridewealth, consisting of goats, hoes or money or a combination of these three items amounts roughly to £8 as an average. There does not seem to have been any increase in the bridewealth since the beginning of the century. In addition to the bridewealth, the primary marriage of a girl entails numerous prestations and counter-prestations between the parties which are carried out during special ceremonies. These include farming bees on the girl's father's farms during the first rainy season following the marriage. Primary marriages are always contracted in the late dry season.

Only 10% of the girls married their preferential grooms as their first husbands, but a girl who chose a non-preferential husband as her first husband was nevertheless obliged soon thereafter to marry her preferential groom ; after having spent one or two months with her non-preferential husband she was handed over after an elaborate ceremony to her preferential suitor with whom she had to spend one month as a sort of trial marriage. Should she like her preferential suitor (now promoted to husband), better than the husband she married first she could stay with him after the mandatory stay of one month. In such a case the bridewealth paid by the first husband was not refunded and the preferential husband had no more bridewealth to pay.

A girl had to stay for at least a year with her first husband or with her preferential husband if she chose to remain with the latter after the compulsory one month's stay. Except for the mandatory stay with the preferential husband a girl had, and still has, great latitude to choose her first husband from among her suitors. Parents may intervene for or against a particular suitor, but as Rukuba say, "A strong willed girl always has her way".

Secondary Marriage

After the first year of her marriage a woman has several choices open to her : 1) she can stay on with the man she was in residence with ; 2) she can go back to her preferential husband or to her first husband depending on whomever the wife had chosen to stay with the first year of her married life. In this case the husband the wife goes back to has no more bridewealth to pay ; 3) she can contract a secondary marriage with any individual of the right moiety whom she could have married otherwise in primary marriage as her first non-preferential husband. Arrangements for a secondary marriage are initiated by the prospective secondary husband who seeks the approval of the woman and her father. Bridewealth, amounting to approximately a third of the average bridewealth paid for a girl's first marriage is paid to the girl's father.

The deserted husband has no claim to any refund of the bridewealth, for there is no divorce in Rukuba society ; a woman is the wife of any of her husbands, primary and/or preferential, or secondary, until she dies, and she can resume cohabitation with any of them or contract further successive secondary marriages of at least one year's duration provided that she does not contract a secondary marriage in a wife-taking unit where she already has a husband. However, it is rare for a woman to have more than three secondary marriages.

A woman is bound to farm on fields provided by the husband she is in residence with, and she is expected to contribute towards feeding herself, her children and her husband. Children belong to the husband in whose compound the conception took

place except in a rare few cases where they belong to the preferential husband. If the woman contracts a secondary marriage when a child is small she takes her child with her until it is old enough to be returned to its father. On the one hand a woman retains permanent rights to go back to any man she is married to if she feels inclined to, and, on the other hand, she is bound to go to her preferential husband for a few days, if she is not staying with him, at the time of some certain specific recurrent ritual occasions. She is also duty bound to attend parts of her son's initiation ceremonies in her son's father's compound regardless of which husband she is staying with at the time of her son's initiation.

At the death of a husband she is in residence with a woman can stay on in her late husband's compound and is free to entertain one or more lovers at the same time, lovers belonging to the right moiety but not necessarily either kinsmen of the deceased or co-members of the deceased's wife-taking unit. Children born to the woman, if any, belong to the deceased. Widows who choose to stay in their late husband's compound keep their late husband's farm and properties in trust for their sons. The same rights apply to a widow whose husband's death occurs when she was staying with another husband and who decides to return to the late husband's compound.

Women can always refuse to be moved around in secondary marriage if they do not feel inclined to. There is, however, an exception to this. A pregnant woman may be requested by her father to serve as ritual wife to an initiand undergoing the *aso* initiation ceremonies. This includes only her sleeping for a night with the initiand (aged between seven to fourteen) against payment of a goat and some baskets of grain to her father. A ritual wife has to be secured among women standing *vis à vis* the initiand in relation of a potential secondary wife, i.e. she must be sought for by the initiand's father in another wife-taking unit of the same moiety : and after this ritual marriage she is still considered married to the initiand. Each Rukuba boy has to be ritually married in this way. Although only tales about one or two ritual wives ever resuming cohabitation with their ritual husbands have been heard, — the woman being at the minimum several years older than the initiand —, the ritual wife is forbidden to contract a further secondary marriage in her ritual secondary husband's wife-taking unit. Should a woman refuse such a ritual marriage — which is indeed very rare — she could be supernaturally punished by losing her children. This supernatural punishment is thought to be sent by the man who stands as the guardian of all the children of women born in his own wife-taking unit, the guardian who is the head of one of the village clans and the custodian of the pool of water where the "doubles" of the village's sister's children have their abode. In a sense we may say that a girl fulfills her matrikin's expectations by marrying her preferential husband in her mother's natal wife-taking unit, and fulfills her duties to her patrikin, if requested only, by contracting a ritual secondary marriage with an initiand when pregnant.

Comparison Between the Different Kinds of Rukuba Marriages

A girl must have a preferential husband in her mother's natal wife-taking unit, and a boy has to start his marital career by symbolically contracting a marriage with a secondary wife as his first marriage ; in short, ritual secondary marriage is compulsory for a boy just as preferential marriage is compulsory for a girl. Ritually speaking preferential marriage and secondary marriage are given equal recognition. In practice, however, things work out in the following way :

Rukuba men put great emphasis in marrying girls in primary marriage regardless of whether the wife is preferential or non-preferential. Men are supposed to start their proper marital career by marrying an unmarried girl as their first wife. Although this rule does not seem to be followed to the letter nowadays the great majority of men (86%) have married a previously unmarried girl as their first wife.

Ceremonies for a girl's first marriage are very elaborate, whereas nothing is done for a secondary marriage which, comparatively, carries little prestige. In ritual matters, however, a preferential wife, whether or not she was married preferentially in primary marriage, ranks higher than her non-preferential co-wives for several purposes. A chief should be born from such a preferential wife, and a preferential wife married in the chief's clan has to perform certain ritual duties during important ceremonies. As long as a man is young and attractive the incentive is for him to try to marry girls rather than to try secondary marriages. Although a young man who has married a primary wife can start marrying secondary wives, this kind of marriage is best left to men who are past thirty or thirty-five. The bridewealth for a secondary marriage is about two-thirds less than a primary marriage, and men are expected to marry unmarried girls whenever they can.

Sixteen percent of the men of a sample never contracted secondary marriages (we omit here the ritual marriage with a pregnant woman). On the woman's side, around 44% of a sample of women past bearing age did not contract any secondary marriages and stayed permanently with their first husband, either the preferential husband or the husband they married first after the compulsory stay with the preferential husband. At what can be considered the end of their marital career 60% of the women were staying with the husband they had married as their first husband after having contracted secondary marriages or after having spent some time with their preferential husband. Twenty-five percent of the preferential husbands had their wives in residence for at least a year, in addition to the mandatory stay of one month and the compulsory stay of the preferential wife with her preferential husband at certain ritual times.

Many a woman who left her first husband did so because she failed to beget children with him. There is no incentive for the woman's father to move his daughter around without her agreeing. Public opinion is against a father who tries to move his daughter to a secondary husband she does not favor. A woman who tries to contract an unusual number of secondary marriages (more than three or four) is thought a very loose woman and is badly talked about together with her father who has allowed such a thing to happen.

Some Structural Implications of the Rukuba Marriage System

In conclusion we shall briefly place the Rukuba marriage system in the context of the major ritual and political tribal subdivisions not directly connected with the marriage system.

It will be recalled that the Rukuba moiety divisions, so important to Rukuba marriage regulations, have no names. Indeed they have no corporate existence; they are in effect nothing other than working rules, structural artifacts, if you will, of the marriage system. The Rukuba village chieftaincies are the principal politico-ritual divisions of the tribe with corporate attributes. Each village in effect is an autonomous or semi-autonomous political chieftaincy, self-sufficient as regards the annual ritual subsistence cycle, and each chieftaincy has its own political as well as ritual chief.

Prior to the coming of the British the different village chieftaincies occasionally had affrays between each other. The question of how these affrays were resolved prior to the coming of the British, and a sense of tribal unity maintained through the years, would necessarily range far beyond the limits of this paper; it must suffice to note here three crucial elements in the maintenance of Rukuba tribal unity. First, the Rukuba have a pan-tribal ritual sequence which takes fourteen years to complete its cycle before it may start again. Second, the whole tribe is divided into five ritual sections, each comprising a number of villages most of which have their dominant exogamous group belonging to the same moiety, and many of which are said to have originated from the head village of the ritual section. The head village is sometimes ritually, and always, in theory at least, politically dominant in its ritual section. These ritual sections are localized and form thus a cluster of villages whose main wife-taking units are from the same moiety and marry each other's wives. These villages are united for some common rituals, some performed at the head village of the ritual section and some at other villages. This elaborate sharing of different parts of the ritual cycle of a ritual section by the various villages of any given section varies from section to section, but the main point is that since they are dependent upon each other when performing some important rituals the villages of any given section derive a sort of *esprit de corps*, ritually speaking, in spite of the intra-section jealousies arising from the possession of parts of the ritual performed during the fourteen year cycle. Third, each of the ritual sections performs the rituals of the cycle in turn according to a recurrent schedule which also arranges for the performance of some rituals by the whole tribe on the same day, thereby enhancing tribal solidarity.

Each Rukuba ritual section is virtually self-sufficient. This ritual self-sufficiency among the Rukuba sections is nevertheless dependent upon a ritual calendar under which each section plays its role at its own time. Rituals performed by the five sections are the same but they concern the whole tribe through a pattern of dance exchanges between villages and prescribed invitations to kinsfolk, making every ritual performed by a section an event eagerly awaited by the whole tribe. However, for one ritual only (*kugo*), the whole tribe may be said to be hierarchized and dependent for the performance of this particular ritual upon two ritual sections (each predominantly of different moieties). The whole tribe performs part of the ritual, but the most important and secret parts are the prerequisite of two ritual sections which perform the ritual in turn so that neither of these two sections can be said to be superior to the other. Each of these two sections remains convinced, however, of historical claim to superiority over the other section.

Against this web of ritual which unites the tribe must be projected the elaborate network of cross-cutting ties spun by the marriage system. The moieties, together with the wife-taking units, set up a marriage reciprocity pattern which can be phrased as: daughters are exchanged for daughters and wives for wives between two different sets of partners. But the wife-taking units are not con correlate with the five ritual sections, or with the village chieftaincies. Thus the marriage exchange system results in ever varying reciprocity patterns which neither further reify existing ritual divisions and sections, nor set village chieftaincies against each other.

III. THE RUKUBA AND IRIGWE MARRIAGE SYSTEMS COMPARED

We have just reviewed the principal Rukuba tribal divisions (pp. 47-48), and it will be helpful to start our comparison of the marriage systems of the two tribes by briefly reviewing the Irigwe tribal divisions as well.

Figure II schematically depicts the size (number of compounds) and "sex" of the 24 Irigwe "sections" and also indicates whether they lie in Nyango, the "child" division, or Rigwe, the "parent" division of the tribe. It should be noted that the major pairs of groupings of the tribal sections, namely, as "child" or "parent" and as "male" or "female", have ritual significance, but they have no corporate status and no bearing on wife-taking practices or other aspects of the marriage system. There are no moiety type divisions in Irigwe of relevance to the marriage system comparable to the Rukuba moieties. Irigwe sections tend to be roughly clustered geographically

around their respective shrine centers, but they are never geographically separated from adjoining sections by open bush as Rukuba villages generally are one from another.

Irigwe sections (*kla*, *rekla*) are the principal tribal subdivisions with corporate status; their corporate activities are primarily ritual, and less frequently administrative and juridical in nature. Each Irigwe section has to a greater or lesser degree an indispensable role to play in the annual ritual-subsistence cycle of the entire tribe. No section feels it can "go it alone" and still survive; the absence of any tradition or record of inter-section feuding or warfare attest to the strength of this sense of interdependence. Consequently the 24 sections have a sense of common destiny which serves as a basis for their uniting as a tribe against all outsiders in the absence of any other traditional formalized political arrangements.

The Irigwe marriage system, in contrast to the case in Rukuba villages, serves to highlight section distinctiveness and enhance inter-section competitiveness; for each Irigwe section forms a wife-taking unit which may take wives in secondary marriage from husbands in all other sections. When an Irigwe man violates the wife-taking tabu and takes a fellow section member's wife (a rare but not unknown occurrence) the section ritual chief and other elders of the section inevitably intervene to urge the man and his newly acquired wife to stop their illegal cohabitation, and abstain from further such activities on pain of ostracism. Also, it will be recalled, all section members are invited to come and join the celebration put on for a man by his family and friends whenever he takes a wife in secondary marriage. Thus wife-taking from other sections is, to some degree a corporate concern of each section.

Irigwe and Rukuba Wife-taking Units Compared

The Irigwe section (*kla*), already described at some length, forms the Irigwe wife-taking unit. A detailed examination of wife-taking in Irigwe would reveal instances where special ties of a ritual nature prohibit wife-taking between certain lineages of different sections, but it can be demonstrated that these exceptions serve to highlight rather than weaken the sections as the basic wife-taking units. The situation in Rukuba is considerably more complex because the Rukuba wife-taking unit does not coincide with a major ritual-political tribal subdivision.

It will be recalled that there are over forty wife-taking units in Rukuba, each moiety having around 20 of them. Each wife-taking unit is a distinctive ritual unit with its own proper name, ritual ground, pool, and *aso* ceremonies. A major concern of the wife-taking unit in both tribes is preventing intra-unit wife-taking and adultery; but in contrast to the Irigwe wife-taking units, wife taking from other units is not a corporate concern of the Rukuba wife-taking unit. When a Rukuba man takes a wife from another wife-taking unit there is no semi-official dancing and celebration by the whole unit as there is in Irigwe; the woman is simply removed to the abductor's compound without ado after (rarely before) bridewealth has been paid to the woman's father.

Rukuba wife-taking units have no political roles or directly political functions; instead political roles and activities are inevitably structured in terms of the village chieftaincies. Village chieftaincies have definite territorial boundaries, whereas the wife-taking units do not. It will be recalled that one usually finds two wife-taking units represented in each village (cf. p. 40), one which includes a clan politically and ritually dominant in village affairs, and the other, always of the opposite moiety, containing a clan which serves as the "ritual assistant group" of the village; and these

two units, being of opposite moieties, perforce do not marry each other's wives. The Rukuba wife-taking units are politically subordinate in every instance to village chieftaincies. Cases where two or more ritual assistant groups of differing wife-taking units reside in the same village chieftaincy and the village chief prohibits their marrying each others' wives underscore this political subordination of the Rukuba wife-taking units to the chieftaincies.

The Irigwe traditionally have no fixed hierarchy of tribal leadership other than the loose "family" ranking of the section ritual elders according to the relative "age" and "sex" of their respective sections. Irigwe ritual elders of each section are eligible to assume office within their section strictly on the basis of seniority. A man may choose, however, to forego his right to the office; thus the ritual elder of a section is always the senior male of the senior-most lineage who is willing to accept the responsibilities of the office. One does not find a formalized division between political and ritual affairs in traditional Irigwe society. The nature and functions of the tribal administration imposed on the Irigwe after the coming of the British in 1905 lies beyond the scope of this paper. The Irigwe section wife-taking units, even though their formalized functions are mostly ritual in nature, are the principal *de facto* traditional political divisions of the tribe, and remain to this day units of major political significance.

Political leadership in Rukuba is complex, but it has no direct connection with the Rukuba wife-taking units. Instead each *village* has its chief whose powers are both ritual and political. The village chief has to be drawn from the senior sub-clan of the chief's clan, and the selection (which is secretly made) rests upon the elders of the chief's clan. Preference is given, whenever possible, to the son of a preferential wife. To prevent in-fighting between the "houses" of the chief's clan or sub-clan, some villages follow the policy of giving two or more "houses" the chieftaincy in rotation. Sometimes the village chieftaincy appointment is in the hands of a particular sub-clan of the chief's clan which is disbarred from producing a chief but which alone holds the right to be the chiefmaker. No formal political authority and leadership are exercised by the Rukuba wife-taking unit; rather these are provided primarily by the village and clan, as just outlined.

In summary it can be stated that largely ritual activities of the wife-taking units in Irigwe serve to delineate social units of direct and explicit political significance to the tribe, whereas the wife-taking units have no direct political significance in Rukuba.

Rukuba and Irigwe Endogamy and Exogamy Compared

The terms endogamy and exogamy are used conventionally simply to denote "marriage between partners within a group", and "marriage between partners belonging to different groups"; group membership in each case, unless otherwise specified, is assumed to be ascribed by birth. The situation becomes complicated in Rukuba, Irigwe, and other groups practicing secondary marriage, because two kinds of exogamy are practiced concurrently; one based on birth-ascribed group membership which applies to all marriages, and one based on marriage-achieved group membership which applies only to secondary marriages. To keep our terminology as simple and clearcut as possible we shall henceforth use the unqualified terms "endogamy" and "exogamy" only in the conventional sense concerning marriage where group membership is ascribed by birth; we shall use the term "wife taking-exogamy" to denote those additional secondary marriage exogamy rules devolving from marriage-achieved group membership. The situation in Rukuba is

further complicated by the practice of formalized lovership ; for here we find endogamy and exogamy rules where group membership is ascribed by birth, but where the rules apply to formalized lovership instead of to marriage. Thenceforth we shall denote all cases of this as "lovership exogamy" and "lovership endogamy"

In Rukuba the wife-taking unit is the basic exogamy group, whereas this is not true of the wife-taking unit (section) in Irigwe. In Irigwe the sub-section or lineage (*énucié*) is the basic exogamy group ; so far as we know all Irigwe sections contain two or more sub-sections which may intermarry, both in primary and secondary marriage, but we lack conclusive evidence of this in case of one or two of the smallest Irigwe sections.

The Rukuba work an ingenious compromise between lovership endogamy and conventional exogamy which allows them "to have their cake and eat it too", that is to get double service from their women. The compromise is clearcut : lovership endogamy within the wife-taking unit during the lovership period early in the girl's sexual career is followed by wife-taking unit exogamy in all her marriages — primary, preferential and secondary.

The *de facto* moiety division of Rukuba into two exogamous groupings which lack any corporate attributes is a structural artifact of the marriage system, but it is not an explicit marriage rule or regulation. Although a few educated Rukuba are given to explain their system of primary marriage in terms of moieties, using the well-known A and B anthropological device, most of the people express their marital rules by saying that in those units (described in the abstract as "places") where they can "marry a girl", they cannot "marry a wife" (i.e. an already married woman), and where they can marry an already married woman they cannot marry a girl in primary marriage.

There is no institutionalized lovership in Irigwe, and there is no clear-cut pattern favoring wife-taking unit (section) endogamy or exogamy in either primary or secondary marriage. The system works in such a way, however, that most Irigwe during their lifetime contract at least one section-endogamous as well as one or more section-exogamous marriage(s). Primary marriages in Irigwe may be arrangements between families of differing lineages within the same section ; we cannot speak of preferential primary marriage section endogamy, however, for over half of the Irigwe primary marriages we have record of are between couples belonging to differing sections, and no rule or expressed preference favors section endogamy for primary marriages. Nor are secondary marriages in Irigwe necessarily section-exogamous :

Irigwe men, it will be recalled, must never take wives of men of their own section, but sometimes the wife a man takes from a man of another section is a woman from his own section who has never before been married endogamously. Our census material reveals that most Irigwe marry section-endogamously as well as exogamously, but a small portion of Irigwe do reach old age without ever marrying endogamously ; we know of only one old man, and no old women (of sound mind and body), however, who never married section-exogamously.

The rule among the Rukuba that a woman minimally must marry preferentially parallels the insistence among the Irigwe that a girl, in addition to her primary marriage, must contract one or more secondary marriage(s) ; for the effect in both cases is to assure that each woman marries at least once outside her own wife-taking unit. Through institutionalized lovership Rukuba wife-taking units utilize their daughters' sexual potential first to consolidate internal solidarity ; then through marriage they further utilize their sexual, together with their childbearing capacities

to form a web of ties with other wife-taking-exogamy units. The Irigwe, although they prohibit lovership, also doubly utilize their daughters' sexual and childbearing capabilities to further social integration both within and between wife-taking units by insisting on a plurality of marriages for each daughter which almost always results in a marriage within as well as marriages between wife-taking units.

The Sex versus Childbearing Dichotomy in Rukuba and Irigwe

It can now be seen that the Rukuba, like the Irigwe, make a *de facto* distinction between a woman's sexual and child-bearing capabilities, a distinction all the more clearcut in Rukuba because there a woman's childbearing capabilities are explicitly disallowed in the wife-taking unit lovership-endogamous relationship, whereas both sexual and childbearing capabilities are inseparable aspects of all her wife-taking unit exogamous marriage relationships.

In Irigwe, it will be recalled, the separation between a woman's sexual and childbearing capacities involves a differentiation between the legitimate rights of bestowal of these two feminine attributes, but never, as in Rukuba, an active prohibition of an interference with the natural female biological sequence of sexual intercourse and childbearing. The Rukuba, however, having explicitly prohibited and prevented through abortion the procreative aspect of sexuality in the lover relationship, then turn around and reinstate it symbolically and socially as a displaced and delayed aspect of lovership through their institution of preferential marriage: for in preferential marriage, which is mandatory for all Rukuba females, a man's senior uterine daughter must marry the son of her mother's former lover, and all subsequent sisters are expected to be preferentially married into their mother's natal wife-taking unit. The relationships involved in Rukuba preferential marriage can in Rukuba frame of reference be cogently expressed as:

A delayed wife exchange between wife-taking units, whereby the sister's daughters of a wife-taking unit must be married preferentially in their mother's natal wife-taking unit.

Thus it can be seen that lovership in Rukuba, with its concomitant separation of a woman's sexual from her procreative aspects, does much more than help intra-wife-taking unit solidarity; it also establishes irreversible commitments to the establishment of new marriage ties between certain wife-taking units. If the Rukuba system were confined exclusively to lovership followed by preferential marriage the result would be another variation of exchange marriage. The institutions of primary and secondary marriage, however, introduce an openness to the system. All Rukuba women must be married preferentially regardless of whether or not they are children of preferential marriage unions; most Rukuba women marry non-preferentially in primary marriage, and the result is a check upon the hardening of social alliances on the basis of established marriage exchange relationships.

Primary and Secondary Marriage in Rukuba and Irigwe Compared

We have seen that in Irigwe a youth and girl ideally start their marital careers in a marriage involving bride service that is arranged for them by both sets of parents. It is not uncommon for a secondary marriage, in which the boy's parents are not involved, actually to be the first marriage which a boy or girl consummates. Our census

material shows that most girls consummate the former type of marriage before going on to consummate any secondary marriages, whereas more than half the youths consummate a secondary marriage first. All Irigwe agree, however, that it is considered best for all secondary marriages to be preceded by a marriage of the arranged type, and self-respecting families work hard to try and see that this ideal is achieved with both their daughter and their sons. Thus, although the Irigwe arranged marriage involving labor service to the bride's family is in many cases not the first marriage individuals consummate, we feel it may best be labeled "primary marriage" because of the expectation of, and positive value placed on, its being the first marriage a person consummates.

In Rukuba we have utilized the term "primary marriage" to denote strictly the first marriage a girl contracts. What is the first or "primary" marriage for the girl may in fact be a subsequent marriage for the man; for Rukuba place a high value upon a man's marrying a girl who has never been married before (although both the young man and the girl have already had their lovership relationships). Rukuba say they have free choice as to whom they marry first, and the statistics would seem to bear this out since only 10 percent of the women in our Rukuba census sample married their preferential husband as their first husband. In the case of the 90 percent who do not marry preferentially first, each woman is conducted, with due ceremony, to her preferential husband after one or two months with her primary husband. The preferential husband of course in such cases belongs to a different wife-taking unit from the primary husband; thus the institution of preferential marriage in practice assures that most women marry into a minimum of two wife-taking units. Then after a mandatory stay of a month or six weeks with her preferential husband the woman may choose to return to her primary husband. Preferential marriage has no true counterpart in Irigwe; but in one aspect it is similar to Irigwe primary marriage, namely both marriages are mandatory arrangements carried out for the couple by elders in their families.

The Rukuba emphasize primary marriage whether or not the primary marriage is preferential. Although the preferential betrothal is usually done early in a girl's life, the actual marriage age is late for a girl, and she has plenty of time to choose any suitor she likes from all wife-taking units outside her own wife-taking unit which also belong to the opposite moiety. No effort is made, in contrast to Irigwe, to see that a woman contracts additional "secondary" marriages; in those cases where a girl marries her preferential husband in her primary marriage she often makes no further marriages; among those 90 percent who do not marry preferentially in their first marriage, the majority return to their primary husband after the mandatory month's stay with the preferential husband, and many never go on to take any additional secondary husbands.

In Rukuba all wife-taking units of one moiety stand as potential wife givers and wife takers for primary and preferential marriage *vis à vis* all the wife-taking units of the other moiety; also each of the wife-taking units of one moiety can marry wives from any other wife-taking unit of the same moiety, but they can never take wives from wife-taking units of the other moiety. On the one hand it is reasonable to assume that the dissemination of women between the two moieties would serve to strengthen tribal unity, but on the other hand it would seem that the wife-taking pattern would lead to fights between wife-taking units of the same moiety — particularly in those cases where the wife-taking involved two wife-taking units within the same village. But this is not the case. "We do not fight over women" is a statement we

heard very often in the course of field work in Rukuba, and this statement is corroborated by an analysis of past internecine affrays which revealed that all but one originated from reasons quite different from wife-taking. Some aspects of the situation seem quite similar to Irigwe. A husband whose wife absconds with a secondary husband may not be particularly pleased, but any public display of anger would be scorned first by the deserted husband's agnates, and then by his own runaway wife, thus jeopardizing the husband's chances of ever seeing her return to him. Co-husbands in Rukuba must not fight, but they do not as in Irigwe avoid each other. When a woman decides to return to a former husband she is given departing gifts by the womenfolk of the husband she is leaving, and he then has traditionally (the practice has been dropped in the past few years) the task of escorting her back to her other spouse. Should a woman with more than one living husband die the husband or husbands not living with her go to pay a visit at the husband where she dies to commiserate and speak to each other about "Our thing who has died". The spirit of competition between wife-taking-exogamy units is not fanned in Rukuba by anything comparable to the Irigwe hero cult; nor do Rukuba women have to contend with the wishes of a marriage guardian for them to make more and more secondary marriages. Compared to Irigwe Rukuba secondary marriage is comparatively rare; many Rukuba never contract secondary marriages, and when secondary marriages do occur they are usually taken as "just one of those things about marriage" rather than as a spur to similar action by deserted husbands. We considered using the term "wife-taking-exogamy unit" instead of "wife-taking unit" in this paper because the principal corporate concern of these units in both tribes as regards secondary marriage is to prevent wife-taking within the unit; and in Rukuba there is no explicit encouragement of the wife-taking activities of these units.

The Contrasting Nature of Irigwe and Rukuba Wifely Roles

The standard view of Irigwe marriage held by many Rukuba is that the women marry whomever they wish whenever they wish, and do no farmwork; and they feel that Irigwe men are not to be admired for having let a situation arise where (the Rukuba feel) the women are both promiscuous and lazy. Irigwe generally take little notice of Rukuba marriage, but they widely believe (with marked misgivings) that Rukuba are a tribe full of "doctors", with many medicines, including those to produce abortions. Also the Irigwe think it amusing that Rukuba women should "try to farm" with a spurred hoe, a tool which Irigwe feel only men have the strength and skill to use really effectively. After over 60 years of peaceful neighborly co-existence there is still almost no inter-marriage between the two groups. It seems probable, though we lack much clear cut evidence, that the sharply contrasting marriage institutions, especially as they affect the roles of women, are a major factor contributing to this continuing rarity of intermarriage.

We have seen there is no required minimal length of stay in either a primary or secondary Irigwe marriage beyond three or four not necessarily consecutive overnight visits, whereas in Rukuba the initial sojourn with the primary husband, and also with the preferential husband, is of at least a month's duration, and any subsequent stays with these husbands and with all secondary husbands require continual residence for a minimum of one year in each case. The Irigwe wife's role in farming is also much more limited than the Rukuba. Irigwe wives are not customarily given any fields to attend on their own except for some small garden patches near the compound which

the men hoe for them. An Irigwe husband may farm some large outlying plots for his wife (i.e., he agrees in advance that the yield will be exclusively for his wife's use) in order to please her, and to entice her to return quickly from sojourns with any of her other husbands, but such a practice is not the rule. Rukuba wives, in contrast, are assigned their own large outlying plots which they themselves hoe and are responsible for. The men also keep plots which they farm for themselves; both husbands and wives, however, cooperate widely with each other in nearly all phases of farm work including the hoeing. A Rukuba woman has more responsibility in general around her husband's compound than an Irigwe wife, and she also typically takes more initiative in those areas of domesticity which affect them jointly. For example a Rukuba wife is expected to acquire or make for herself her own cooking utensils, pots, bags and baskets, whereas in Irigwe the basic cooking utensils are supplied by the husband.

The Rukuba have a tersely dramatic way of imposing the basic norms of their sex and marriage patterns upon their sons, namely their ritual marriage (see p. 44). The ritual phase of the *aso* initiation which every Rukuba boy must undergo prior to puberty is that each initiand must co-habit for one night with a pregnant woman (who is the wife of a man of another wife-taking unit of his own moiety), namely a woman whom he might have married had he been older. He then becomes the fictional father, with naming rites, of her infant when the infant is born. Thus every boy, prior to his undertaking the wife-taking endogamous lover relationship undergoes a ritual "marriage" which graphically depicts to him what lovership *is not*; for that ritual marriage, in contrast to lovership, is with a woman outside his wife-taking unit, and involves child-bearing and paternity. For a girl preferential engagement and marriage serve some of the functions of ritual marriage for a boy; for they teach her that marriage is not solely her own business (and that she has certain responsibilities towards her matrilineal kin). Then, when pregnant, she must fulfill her patrikin's wishes by entering a ritual secondary marriage, if asked, with an initiand. People can run their own marital lives only to a certain extent; preferential marriage and certain rituals are there to remind women of some basic duties to their maternal and paternal kin.

The Irigwe have no initiation ceremonies for their youths; nor do they have ritual marriage as such. All Irigwe primary marriages, however, can be viewed as principally ritual — symbolic unions which teach the youth the "facts" about Irigwe marriage; clearly the parents who arrange the whole thing have no expectation that it will be anything more than a fleeting union. It is easy to see in gross economic terms why every father would be in favor of (and in fact does arrange) a primary marriage for every daughter, since he stands to gain a lot of farm labor from the arrangement. Also Irigwe are universally outraged at the thought of any family not arranging a primary marriage for every daughter, and we never heard of a family failing to do so. Conversely they assert it is unknown, indeed unthinkable, for a family to arrange more than one primary type marriage for each daughter. For the boys, however, where there are no direct economic benefits, but instead labor service commitments for the boy and his family, people do not proclaim any moral compulsion to arrange primary type (bride service) marriages; yet the overwhelming majority of parents do arrange bride service marriages for their sons, and in some cases two or more for each son, and the only explanation we ever received as to why they do this for sons was, "Because we want to. We like to" (*nji cé!*).

It is clear that Irigwe primary marriage serves the latent social function of making the marrying couple poignantly aware of what some aspects of marriage in

Irigwe are really like ; the girls learn from the first that the wishes of the older generation as regards marriage are most important, and that their sexual satisfaction is not a guiding consideration in marriage arrangements ; the boys learn that getting a wife involves work, and also that getting a wife is no assurance of keeping her. By the time an Irigwe father has children who are old enough for him to consider having them engaged for primary marriage he has himself learned that the only way an Irigwe man ever really gets to keep a woman is by begetting a daughter and/or becoming a father-at-hand ; for a man retains control, partially at least, of the marriages of his marriage wards. Sons' primary type bride service marriages offer a father the solace of some additional control over women too for the father has considerable say in arranging them, and thus in bringing into his family, if only fleetingly, the girls united in this manner to his sons. Also they are the only occasions on which fathers have a hand in their sons' marriage arrangements.

In conclusion it seems fitting to contrast widowhood in the two tribes. An Irigwe widow, after the mortuary rites for her deceased husband are concluded, has nothing more to do with her deceased husband's compound unless she has a son there and chooses to "retire" in his compound under his care. In Rukuba when a man dies it will be recalled that his wives in residence have the right to stay on and take lovers from the proper moiety to bear children in the deceased husband's name (see p. 46). Even his widows not in residence may return to do the same ; or a widow, if she chooses, may simply "retire" to her deceased husband's compound. Rukuba women may not go back to their natal compound to live after menopause or after a husband's death as they may in Irigwe. Once married out always out in Rukuba, whereas in Irigwe one might say a woman is always married, usually absent, but never really out of her father's compound. A Rukuba girl starts practicing homemaking even before she is a bride during her lovership ; an Irigwe woman, however, is always a bride, but never truly a homemaker.

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