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SOCIAL STATUS, WEALTH AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE YORUBA¹

By WILLIAM R. BASCOM

IN VIEW of the current sociological and anthropological concern with problems of culture and personality, it should be of interest to consider the manner in which individual differences, particularly those associated with status, are viewed in another culture, in this case that of the Yoruba of the kingdom of Ife. Intentionally, no attempt has been made to reconcile the categories in terms of which the West African Yoruba classify individuals with the current concepts of psycho-ethnography, which were still unrefined in 1937-38¹ when these data were collected. The Yoruba categories, rather, are presented as they were recorded in the belief that it may be profitable to examine a different point of view, in this case that of the Yoruba themselves toward members of their own society.

Secondly, this paper concerns the effect of wealth on social position in a pecuniary African society. As will be seen, the classifications of individual differences reflect social and economic status as much as, or perhaps even more than, differences in individual personality. The analysis of these categories leads immediately to a consideration of the important factor of wealth, as well as that of hereditary or ascribed status. Birth into one of the patrilineal clans (*idile*)² in itself gives an individual a certain status, while it may also make him eligible to hold one of the hereditary political or religious offices. Hereditary offices, as the term applies among the Yoruba, do not pass directly from father to son, but are generally open to any member of the clan, at least in theory, since there may be requirements as to sex, age or seniority, wealth, character, or other qualifications. Individual differences and wealth are only two of many factors which effect social position; that of seniority has been considered elsewhere,³ while others require a more complete discussion than can be devoted to them here. The major objective of this paper is to analyze the relationship of individual differences and wealth to social status ascribed on the basis of birth.

The Yoruba people number some 3,500,000 and inhabit the southwestern

¹ Field work in Ife and Igana, Nigeria, in 1937-38, was made possible by a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council of New York City, under the sponsorship of the Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University. Acknowledgement is also made to The Viking Fund of New York City and the Committee on Research of the Graduate School of Northwestern University for assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

² In the established orthography of Yoruba, used in this paper, *ɛ* represents *e*, *o* represents *o*, *ʃ* represents *sh* or *S*, *p* represents *kp* and *n* represents nazalization except where it occurs between two vowels. ³ Bascom, 1942a.

corner of Nigeria and part of eastern Dahomey. Their economy is based on sedentary farming, supplemented by animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, gathering, handicrafts, and trade, with money, markets and middlemen. Despite the basic importance of farming, they are largely an urban people,⁴ with large cities and city government. They are divided politically into a number of independent kingdoms of varying size under hereditary rulers, including *Oyo*, *Egba*, *Ijebu*, *Ijesa* and *Ifẹ*. In terms of its size today, Ife is relatively small compared to the other Yoruba kingdoms mentioned above, but it is recognized as the origin of all the Yoruba people and its king, the *Qni*, ranks as the highest of the Yoruba kings by virtue of seniority.

Like their immediate neighbors, the Yoruba have a complex and highly stratified social structure.⁵ Rank depends upon a series of factors other than an individual's personality or capabilities, including wealth, sex, his station as free or slave, his relative age or seniority, the rank of the clan into which he is born, the political or religious office which he achieves or inherits, and the social position of his relatives, friends and associates. All of these effect the pressure which he can bring to bear on others, through his ties with the king and the chiefs, in the event that he becomes involved in a dispute with them. The social structure of the city of Ife, with its 27,000 inhabitants, is thus a hierarchy of social positions which are graduated too finely to be adequately represented simply in terms of its major social strata.

Within the major strata or levels of the social structure, individual differences are recognized, and distinguished by special terms. In a pecuniary society where economic differences are important, it is not surprising that some of these terms refer to differences in economic status. At the upper end of the economic scale are the "wealthy man" (*qlqrq*) and the "rich man" (*qlqla*) or "man of money" (*olowo*). The first term is said to have been most commonly used in olden times, while the last two, which are synonymous, have become popular since European contact. As these terms are used today, the rich man is an individual who has both property and considerable ready cash. The wealthy man, who enjoys slightly higher status, may have even greater economic resources, but they are not liquid, so that he may have to sell a chicken, a goat or, in former times, a slave in the case of a minor emergency.

At the other end of the economic scale are the poor man (*talaka*, from Hausa), and at the very bottom the destitute (*otoyi*). A poor man may have handsome features and a fine body, but he counts for nothing. He knows how to behave in the retiring manner befitting his position, and he generally associates with others of his own level. Beggars (*alagbe*), who fall into another category, have been known only since the appearance of the Hausa people of northern Nigeria in Yoruba territory.

⁴ Bascom, 1948.

⁵ Herskovits, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 137 ff.; Nadel, 1942, p. 420.

A lazy person (*qlq*) is criticized and insulted, and Yoruba children are deliberately taught to be industrious. Although the importance of industry is recognized, however, the amount of property an individual accumulates is not thought to depend simply on how hard he works. Just as a man with four wives may have no children, it is pointed out, so some people who work hard from morning until evening are poor, while others who work little become rich. Differences of this type are explained by the factor of luck, which is associated with the head. Luck is not considered as an impersonal quality, but is related to the multiple souls or spiritual guardians: the "creator" (*elēda*) and the "owner of the head" (*olori*). A lucky person (*olori rere, el'eda rere*) is one who has a good head or a good creator, while an unlucky person (*olori buruku, el'eda buruku*) has a bad head or creator. To a lucky person good things come with little apparent effort, while an unlucky person is not only unfortunate in his own affairs, but brings bad luck to those with whom he associates as well.⁶ To call someone an unlucky person is regarded as a curse against him and his guardian spirit, and is likely to lead to a fight.

A person's luck and his success in economic and other affairs is also a matter of destiny (*ayanmqe, ayanmq*) or fate (*iwa*), which is also known as "to kneel and choose" (*akunleyan*).⁷ Before a child is born its soul is said to kneel (*kunle*) before the deity *Olodumare* and choose (*yan*) its fate on earth. Those who humbly make reasonable requests for food, money or children receive what they ask during their life on earth. However those who make their requests as if they had the right to expect whatever they wanted, do not receive them. Thus those who say indifferently or in an independent manner, "You may give me money," or "You may give me food," receive neither. A person whose destiny on earth is poverty may be able to acquire some money by working hard, but he will never have very much. Diviners of various kinds, especially the *babalawo* or priests of *Ifa*,⁸ are consulted to find out what is in store for the future and what can be done to avert evil or insure a favorable outcome. An individual may go to such a diviner as an adult to find out how his life will be or what kind of a career he should follow in order to prosper; but while the diviners may be able to recommend sacrifices (*ebq*) which will influence events in the immediate future, they cannot alter the course of one's life or change his destiny.

Distinct from the above categories are those of the "gentleman" (*gbajumq*)

⁶ Some people, especially women, who consistently bring bad luck to their friends and neighbors are known as *elise gbēdo-gbēdo*. Bad luck is believed to come to anyone who even enters their house.

⁷ Other words for fate or destiny, such as *kadara* and *ise* are also used by the Yoruba; the Yoruba Dictionary identifies *abafu* as "luck, fortune (good or bad), fate"; and *abada* as "the changes and chances of life." See *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*, 1937.

⁸ See Bascom, 1941, 1942b, 1943, 1944, pp. 25-29.

and the "man of principle" (*enia pataki*).⁹ A gentleman may not be wealthy, but a poor man could never become a gentleman. A person in this category dresses well and always keeps good company, associating with wealthy and important people, and is well known in his community. He must have some property, but he may have only enough liquid assets to take care of his normal needs; if he needs to borrow money, he will have no difficulty.¹⁰

The man of principle has all the characteristics of a gentleman, with the added qualities of fearlessness, leadership and social responsibility. He dresses well, is well known, and keeps good company. He has money, although informants differ as to the amount required. According to one, a man of principle must either be a man of money himself, or he must be backed by a large family and a large group of friends. According to another, if an individual were both a man of principle and a man of money, he would be the most respected person in town and everyone would flock to his house; a good family in which there are no notoriously wicked individuals is necessary to back him, but since nearly every family in Ife has a man of principle among its members, this qualification is not very limiting. In either case, "man of principle" is a title which an individual must earn for himself by fearlessly doing something with which he has been entrusted or by speaking the truth when it may be dangerous for him to do so. Thus whereas the man of principle will criticize the king, when criticism is justified, the gentleman waits until someone else speaks up and then joins in the chorus. This is the basic difference between these two categories, and it is explained by the Yoruba in terms of differences in the nature or personalities of the individuals concerned.

As an individual's luck is located in his head, so his nature is associated with his stomach. A good-natured or kind-hearted person (*oninu rere*) is one who has a good "belly" or inside, while a bad natured or hard hearted person (*oninu lile*) has a hard "belly." A kind-hearted person is cheerful and friendly, greeting everyone he meets, helping others if he is not busy, who does not envy those who have money or hold grudges. On the other hand a hard-

⁹ *Pataki* is defined by the Yoruba Dictionary (*op. cit.*) as an adjective meaning "chief, principal," and was translated by my interpreter as "important"; *enia* means person or people. *Gbajumq*, *olowo*, *qlqla* and *qlqrq* may be used as nouns, predicate adjectives, or adjectives qualifying a noun, but in the latter case the normal word order (noun adjective) followed in *enia pataki* is reversed. Thus one must say *gbajumq enia* (gentleman person) or *gbajumq baba* (gentleman father); *baba gbajumq* would mean "father of gentleman." *Olori rere*, *qlqda buruku*, *oninu lile*, etc., may be used as nouns or adjectives with the normal word order (*enia olori rere*), like *pataki*, which is only an adjective. These words are terms of reference and not of address. If someone called out one of these terms everyone would turn around to see who was being addressed, and if the term were coupled with a person's name he would feel he was being jeered at. However, one may tell a person that he is an *olowo*, for example, although the compliment would be denied out of modesty: "Where have I got money? I have none."

¹⁰ *Omqluwabi* or *qmqluwabi* is said to be synonymous with gentleman. Freely translated it means free born or well born.

hearted person is bad-tempered, easily offended, wilful and stubborn, doing what he likes and paying no attention to what others say. When, an informant illustrated, an ordinary person in anger would throw a small lump of dirt, a hard hearted person throws a large stone.

Worse than the hard-hearted person is one who is "wicked" (*ika*). A wicked person loves no one but himself; he advises others to sell things for less than he knows they are worth; he injures others and destroys their property without cause. Still worse is the "criminal" or "sinner" (*elẹṣṣe*), including the liar (*opuro*, *eleke*), the murderer (*apania*), the thief (*ole*), one who commits incest or breaks other taboos (*ewo*), one who holds a grudge, and one who makes a charm against a companion or uses magic to prevent someone else from getting a job. Prostitutes (*qoqoko*),¹¹ "witches" (*aje*), "wizards" (*ofo*), ugly persons (*oburewa*), busybodies (*olofoto*),¹² slanderers (*elenini*), and treacherous people (*odalẹ*)¹³ fall into other undesirable categories.

In the face of danger, and in former times in intertribal warfare and slave raiding, one may prove himself a brave man (*akin*) or a coward (*ojo*). Through his daily acts, or when decisions must be made, one may be shown to be a wise man (*olqgbqn*) or a fool (*were*).¹⁴ *Were* also means as "insane" person, also known as *asinwin* or *osinwin*. Six different types of "insanity" are distinguished in terms of their symptomatic behavior, which is given below as described by a Yoruba doctor or medicine man (*ologun*) who specialized in such cases.¹⁵

The most important type (*were elegan*), has varied symptoms and four subtypes are described, all of which are treated in the same way. The patient may laugh continuously, making jokes and acting in a humorous way; he may cry continuously without stopping; he may talk incessantly, keeping up a constant stream of chatter; or he may claim that he is a king, or someone else other than himself. The second type (*were elẹwẹlẹ*) is a milder form of the first, and differs in that the symptoms are said to occur only with every new moon. The third type (*were onihoho*) talks and walks about incessantly, tearing off his clothes as he walks. The fourth type (*were alaṣo*) also talks and walks

¹¹ Also known as *panṣaga*, *agbere*. See Yoruba Dictionary (*op. cit.*).

¹² Also known as *abaiyeje* or *qbaiyeje*.

¹³ Also known as *abanije* or *qbanije*.

¹⁴ Also known as *qoqoko*; see Yoruba Dictionary (*op. cit.*). A foolish and stupid person may also be spoken of as a monkey (*qba*), a she-goat (*ewure*), the child of donkey (*qmq kẹlẹkẹlẹ*), or if he offers no good advice but follows the advice of others without thinking, as a female sheep (*agutan*, *aguntan*). "Child of donkey" also means stubborn, while to refer to someone as a donkey (*kẹlẹkẹlẹ*) signifies that he is strong; one may also say that someone is stubborn "as a mule" (*bi ibaka*) or strong "as a horse" (*bi eṣin*). To refer to a person as a cat (*ologbo*) implies that he is suspected of being a thief; as a dog (*aja*) that a woman is a "bitch" or prostitute, or that a man is a fighter.

¹⁵ This man, the pastor of a C.M.S. church in Ife, had gained a wide reputation through the success of his cures, and received patients from distant parts of Nigeria. The method of treatment cannot be discussed here, nor the comparison of these categories with recognized types of neuroses and psychoses.

about incessantly, but keeps his clothing on. The fifth type (*were akindinrin*) acts as if he were in a trance; he says nothing at all but does whatever he is told without thinking and without any inhibition, undressing in front of others if told to do so. The sixth type (*arijagba*) is violent and may have to be shackled; he tries to fight everybody, and may go berserk, killing whomever he meets with a cutlass or any other handy weapon.

* * *

Wealth, in former days, came largely from slave raiding and trading, and was invested in slaves (*eru*), "pawns" (*iwofa*), wives, cows, horses, goats, chickens, sheep, pigs, and consumption goods such as clothing and houses. Wives, of course, were not chattels and are not "purchased"; but each wife represents an investment of money paid to her father as "bride wealth." "Pawns" are debtors whose work serves as interest until the loan is repaid. Different preferences in investment are clearly recognized by the Yoruba, as the following proverb indicates: "That which pleases a man is sufficient wealth (riches); a person who owns twenty slaves dies, his wives are only one; a person who has twenty wives dies, his cloths are only one." That is, while some may think that a man with twenty slaves should have more than one wife, or that a man with twenty wives should own more than one garment, individuals differ in what they think is the best thing to do with their wealth, and a man is satisfied only when he thinks he has enough.

Today wealth comes mainly from trading and cocoa, the principal cash crop. Slavery and pawning are illegal, while cattle are no longer raised in Ife. In addition to wives, clothing and domestic animals, trucks or motor lorries have appeared as a new form of investment. None of these, however, is considered as reliable a measure of wealth as the house in which a man lives. A rich man has a two-story house built of bricks with a roof of corrugated iron sheets and rafters of *iroko* planks; it must be airy, nice looking, neatly kept, and have European furniture at least in the parlor downstairs. In 1938 there were a number of two-story houses in Ife and one with three stories; only a few thatch roofs were left, but many houses were built with mud walls while the "pan" roofs of the poor rested on bamboo rafters. Though formerly less important than at the present time, houses were nevertheless an indication of wealth. They were judged in terms of their state of repair and their number of patios, a feature of the traditional Yoruba dwelling which is rapidly disappearing with the increasing number of new houses built in an adaptation of the European pattern. The only apparent basis in the traditional Yoruba culture for the present association between social status and the "upstairs house" of a new design, is the fact that the gate to the palace of the king or highest ranking chief of any town had a gabled superstructure higher than any house.

Wealth, obviously, is an important factor in distinguishing between these individual differences. It is not the only factor involved, however, nor is the ownership of property in itself sufficient to win prestige and social status. The gentleman and the man of principle, as well as the wealthy man and the rich man or man of money, must not only own a certain amount of property, but he must also spend money (*na owo*). The social importance of spending money is reflected in the Yoruba salutation often heard, *ẹku-(i)na(o)wo*, a greeting (*ẹku*) on the spending (*ina*) of money (*owo*). He must spend money on his house and on his clothes so that he can be well dressed. He must spend money on entertaining at the time of his annual religious ceremony, contribute generously to the ceremonies and funerals of his close relatives by birth and marriage, and entertain his guests and the members of his club in a manner befitting his means. A principal rule of Yoruba hospitality is that a man must offer food and drink to anyone who comes to visit him,¹⁶ according to his own means and his opinion of his guests. It is clearly recognized that even a rich man cannot give money to everyone who comes to visit him; his money would not last, in the first place, and secondly people would consider him a fool. "He is stupid," they would say, "go to him and you will get money." Each individual must choose for himself those on whom he will spend his money; these individuals respect him while those whom he refuses dislike and criticize him.

A man who owns property but does not spend money on himself and on his friends is called stingy or a "miser" (*alaroro*). He is considered even worse than the poor man, whom no one respects, and is described as the kind of person who goes from one house to another to eat with his friends when they are performing their religious ceremonies, but never entertains guests when he performs his own. He may have much money, but keeps it buried in a pot; or may own a great deal of property, but lives in a poor house, and dresses in old clothes. Stingy persons who have wealth enough to rank as men of money are extremely rare; but if they are unwilling to spend their money there is no reason to respect them, since they will have few friends and there is little danger that they will risk assuming the expenses of a quarrel which might end in court.

To be recognized as a man of principle, one needs economic resources on which he can draw in case he becomes involved in a dispute through the defense of his principles. He also needs enough money so that he does not have continually to borrow small amounts from his friends. Although a personality factor is definitely involved, it is only through expenditure of money that this status is achieved, and a man who might otherwise be known as a man of principle is not so recognized unless he spends money. If he has money but does not spend it, he is a stingy person; while if he cannot afford to dress well, he is despised as an unlucky person. The man of principle does not hesi-

¹⁶ See Bascom, 1951.

tate to loan money to his friends or to give them outright financial assistance in time of need. If a deserving person calls on him dressed in rags, he may give him a cloth to wear. He generously entertains his friends, and will use his last six pence or borrow money to provide food and drink for his guests. It is of even greater importance for the "wealthy man" and the "rich man" or "man of money" to be generous. Only the good-hearted man does not need money, since he is the kind of a person who shares what little he may have; and though he may be widely liked, he has no real importance or power except that which comes through the wealth and influence of friends who are willing to stand behind him.

A person spends money "so that people will know him" and so as to attract a large number of followers. One of the important measures of social position is the number and rank of the individuals who associate with him, and particularly who accompany him when he goes about town. No man of high rank would be seen in the streets alone, while an ordinary individual invites the members of his club (*egbe*)¹⁷ to his house for food and drink at the time of a religious ceremony, funeral, wedding, or any other important event, so that he may have a large crowd dressed in fine clothes following him when he goes in the streets. This is one of the principal reasons for joining a club, and it is also related to the great interest of the Yoruba in children and large families. Both men's and women's clubs have their own distinctive clothing by which their members can be recognized, and one of the typical features of Yoruba religious ceremonies are the groups of about forty to sixty men or women, dressed alike, who are honoring one of their members as his or her guests.

Before government suppression of what it regarded as "bribery," gifts were given openly to the chiefs who served as judges in legal cases in hopes of winning their support.¹⁸ According to informants, this practice did not formerly result in frequent miscarriages of justice or mean that the wealthiest man could "buy" the decision of the court, since a chief had no obligations to the giver of the gift. It was entirely ethical for a chief to accept competing gifts from both parties, and then to judge the case impartially. However, to the extent that the value of the gift might win his favor and support, wealthy individuals could enjoy a certain amount of immunity in their personal behavior. Far more important than this was the degree of immunity which they could secure by using their wealth to pay the fines customarily imposed by the courts as punishment.

* * *

Wealth, seniority, and the individual differences which have thus far been discussed are less important than membership in one of the nine social levels of Ife, which for the vast majority of people is determined by the clan into which they are born. Important as these three factors are in governing relations

¹⁷ See Bascom, 1944, pp. 65-66.

¹⁸ These gifts were known as *jqgbami*.

between individuals of the same stratum, they can be ignored completely in relations between those of different levels. Similarly the gradations in rank of the various offices represented in the four top levels and between offices of minor chiefs and lesser priests in the lower levels are important only in dealing with others of the same stratum.

The nine strata of the social structure of the city of Ife may be represented as follows:

1. The king (*Qni*)
2. The town and palace chiefs (*Ijoye Qni*), and the members of the royal compound from which the king was chosen
3. The major priests (*Oniṣoro*)
4. The men of leisure (*Lodḡkḡ*); the king's body guards (*Ogungbḡ*); the king's messengers (*Ẹmḡḡ*); and members of the *Ogboni* society, without higher titles of their own.
5. The *Mḡdewa* clans, from which the palace chiefs are chosen.
6. The *Ifḡ* clans, or townspeople, from which the town chiefs are chosen.
7. The royal clan, whose members are known as children of the king (*ḡnḡba*), from compounds other than that from which the king was chosen.
8. The "strangers" (*ḡlu*), or Yoruba from other parts of the country.
9. The non-Yoruba (*kogbḡde*), or Hausa, Ibo and members of other tribes.

The top four levels may be regarded as achieved positions, with two principal qualifications. Many of the offices are hereditary within certain clans or lineages and are thus not open to all. Secondly, the members of the royal compound¹⁹ enjoy their high position by virtue of the fact that someone else in their group holds the office of king.

Limitations of space prevent more than a summary treatment of what is perhaps the most interesting feature of this system, the fact that the members of the royal clan from which the king is chosen are split between strata which are close to the bottom (7) and next to the very top (2) of the social hierarchy. When a king dies, his successor is chosen by the chiefs from the members of the royal clan, which includes some 22 compounds and numbers probably about 5,000 individuals. Each of the eligible compounds campaigns for its own candidate to be chosen, by spending money in entertaining the chiefs and deferring to all those who might influence the chiefs who make the final choice. As long as the king is from a different compound, they must be careful of their behavior lest the future chances of their own candidate be spoiled. If their candidate becomes king, however, they enjoy a period during which they can with complete immunity exercise the prerogatives of rank over all but the town and palace chiefs, knowing that the king will stand by them in the event that any complaints are made against them.

¹⁹ The compound is a residential unit housing some 200-300 individuals and occupied by part of a clan, their wives and children, and usually a few outsiders. For further details see Bascom, 1944, pp. 9-20.

Within this social hierarchy each stratum derives its rank and power from its influence with the king. The *Mqdewa* depend on their influence with the palace chiefs to whom they are related, and the Ife townspeople count on the town chiefs. Although the palace chiefs were considered junior to the town chiefs, they exercised greater power by virtue of the fact that they had direct access to the king, whereas the town chiefs could not enter the palace and had to rely on the palace chiefs and king's messengers to express their wishes to the king. The palace chiefs could transmit their messages and the king's replies in a way which best suited their own interests, with little chance of being detected if they were prudent. Even today, when the king is no longer confined to his palace and when the town chiefs meet within its walls, the *Mqdewa* have an advantage over the Ife townspeople in that they can hear the palace gossip and the discussion of present problems and future plans before the results are made public. For this reason the *Mqdewa* clans rank higher than those of the Ife, while the town and palace chiefs are regarded as belonging to the same stratum.

At the bottom of the scale, the "strangers" depend on the bond of common language and common culture, while the non-Yoruba rely principally on a sense of justice and the desire of the chiefs and people of Ife to maintain a good reputation for their city, "to keep the name of Ife good." One of the eight town chiefs is responsible for the interests of the "strangers," as five others, who also have hereditary titles, are responsible for representing the five wards or "quarters" into which Ife is divided. Two town chiefs, finally, can be chosen from any Ife clan and from any ward. Only one of the eight palace chieftainships is restricted to certain compounds; all of the others may be held by any *Mqdewa*. The minor priests and ward chiefs and those who hold lesser titles fall in the last five strata, and their rank is recognized only within their own stratum.

The five lowest strata, comprising perhaps 95 per cent of the population, represent positions which are ascribed on the basis of the clan into which an individual is born. This is qualified by the fact that, while the status of *Mqdewa* is hereditary, it can be achieved through the purchase of the title of "man of leisure." The few original *Mqdewa* clans trace descent from ancestors whom the king once brought to Ife and allowed to live within the palace walls out of gratitude for their assistance in time of war. However, the status of *Mqdewa* has been achieved by an increasing number of individuals, with the result that this is now said to be the largest of all the strata, followed by the Ife, the "strangers," the royal clan, and the non-Yoruba.

The title "man of leisure" (*Lodqkq*, *Idqkq*) may be purchased by anyone who is able and willing to spend the necessary amount of money, excepting only the members of the royal clan. There are no qualifications as to age and there is no limit on the number who may hold this title. There are two stages in its acquisition, both of which are very expensive in terms of Yoruba

income, involving the entertainment of the sixteen town and palace chiefs and all the other "men of leisure," who numbered over 100. First a man must *raraṣṣṣn*, which involves providing a huge amount of yam loaves costing as much as five to seven pounds (\$25-35) in 1938, or about twenty-five shillings in earlier times. He must also provide forty kola nuts, two hind legs of an antelope (*ekiri*), and large quantities of palm-wine (*emu* and *ogoro*) and other liquor (*olin*). Then he is ready to *dokko*, which costs far more and without which he still has no rank. He provides ten yam loaves and two hind legs of antelope (*ekiri*), while each member of his family also contributes two yam loaves. In addition, he provides eight more legs of antelope, eight hind legs of monkey (*owe*), sixty kola nuts, forty walnut-like nuts (*awusa*), four empty native bags, four calabashes (*igbademu*) and twenty-five shillings. Finally he kills a he-goat and again entertains all the town and palace chiefs.

As a man of leisure a man ranks just above the king's messengers and he is exempt from their duties and from free labor for the chiefs and king. In earlier times the men of leisure engaged in no work whatever, but today they pass food to the chiefs and do other small tasks for them. They spend their days associating with the chiefs in the king's palace, or attending religious and secular ceremonies, sharing in the food and drink and participating at times in the dancing. They are less subject to having their property appropriated by others, and they have the advantage of hearing the discussions of the chiefs. They also have the opportunity of cultivating the friendship and patronage of the palace chiefs, who represent them as *Mqdewa*, in which capacity they rank higher than the Ife townspeople and are eligible to be selected as one of the palace chiefs themselves. Thus becoming a man of leisure is regarded as the first step toward chieftainship.

When a man of leisure dies he must be buried in a wooden coffin, a sheep must be provided for the chiefs, and his heirs must duplicate the expenses of his initiation. The status of a man of leisure is not hereditary, and despite this second payment, his son must start from the beginning if he wishes to achieve it. The status of *Mqdewa*, however, is inherited, so that the direct descendants of a man of leisure may be *Mqdewa* even if all other members of their clan are Ife. Furthermore, when a man of leisure dies, one of his sons is eligible to be chosen as a king's messenger, one as a king's guard, and one as a member of the *Ogboni* society. A striking example is furnished by the highest ranking of the palace chiefs, the late *Lowa Ijaruwa*, who was in office in 1937-38. Before he took office, his compound (*Ile Lowa Ikogun*) was Ife like the other compounds of the same clan. His father became a man of leisure; he also held the title of a war chief and was one of the chiefs of *Ilode* ward (*Ṣingbunṣin*). At his father's death *Lowa* was chosen as a king's messenger and served in the palace from the time he was a very young boy until his death. When, as in this case, a member of an Ife compound becomes palace chief, all the mem-

bers of his compound are raised to the status of *Mq̄dewa*. It is said that they would still be eligible to be chosen as one of the two non-hereditary town town chiefs (*Jagunoṣin* and *Ejesi*), but that only the individual chosen would resume the status of Ife, since for the others it is advantageous to remain *Mq̄dewa* and in effect enjoy a dual status.

Despite the great expense involved, many Ife have become men of leisure because of these advantages. Each of Ife's five wards has its own head man of leisure (*Olori Lodq̄kq̄*), with the one from *Mq̄rẹ* ward ranking as head for the entire town and officiating at the annual sacrifices to *Ql̄qsẹ*, the special deity of the men of leisure. The men of leisure from *Mq̄dewa* and "stranger" clans are organized separately and hold their own ceremonies, but there is less reason for a man who is *Mq̄dewa* by birth to become a man of leisure, while the members of the royal clan cannot do so.

* * *

Social position is more than a matter of the simple grading or ranking of the various segments of Yoruba society; it involves also the privileges, obligations and patterns of social interaction between individuals. The differences in rank between and within the social strata are expressed in a number of forms of behavior. The obligation to kneel or prostrate oneself before those of higher rank, and the special forms of address which are employed need only be mentioned here.

One of the privileges of high position, which like all others must be exercised in proper moderation, is arrogance or pride (*igberega*). A rich man who becomes too proud is criticized for being proud only because of his money. While anyone is free to be proud (*gberega*), he would be laughed at if he were arrogant to someone of higher status. "What is he doing?" people would say, "A poor man being proud to a rich man!" On the other hand, when a person asks "Who is this proud man?" and is told that he is a man of money of his own stratum, or a member of the royal compound, he thinks to himself that the other man "ought to be proud." An Ife rich man cannot act arrogantly toward a *Mq̄dewa* or a member of the royal compound for fear that they will find a way to involve him in trouble and cause him to spend all his money. The gentleman and the man of principle cannot express their pride, and the good hearted man by nature is not proud, while toward all these three the wealthy man and the rich man or man of money can behave arrogantly.

Related to pride is insolence (*afajudi*). Here the man of principle, the gentleman, the man of money or rich man, and the wealthy man are all equal except that a man of principle may criticize a gentleman harshly if he feels that it is deserved. Otherwise, if any of these were to behave insolently toward the other, it would lead to empty threats which could not be fulfilled and, if not stopped, to a serious dispute. The king, of course, can speak to

people in any manner, regardless of their wealth, and can order the richest man to leave town if he wishes.

Another prerogative of the man of rank is the right to make others stand aside for him to pass, or to give up a preferred seat or position. This privilege is ordinarily exercised only when a large crowd has assembled, for example at a religious ceremony which is open to the public, or when the market is crowded. On one occasion when a *Mqdewa* man of principle was clearing a space so that a religious ceremony could be witnessed, he struck a small boy with a switch which he carried for the purpose because the boy had paid no attention to what he was saying. When the boy turned around, the man saw he was one of the children from the king's own compound. Immediately, he began to beg forgiveness, apologizing humbly that he had not been able to recognize who it was. Conversely, a *Mqdewa* boy of fifteen years can "flog" (*na*) or "drive" (*le*) an Ife man of forty years who gets in his way in the market, and a poor *Mqdewa* can "drive" a rich Ife. It is not that the Ife fear the *Mqdewa* boy or poor man, but they are afraid of the revenge the *Mqdewa* can induce the king to take for them.

One cannot take advantage of his rank, however, to "flog" people without reason. If a space is to be cleared for someone to pass, or for someone to dance, or for any other reason, one should first ask the crowd to stand aside. If they do not comply with this request, as often happens, the next step is to find a switch; seeing this they usually move back of their own accord. If they do not stand aside when told to do so a second time, then the switch can be used with discretion, usually on the legs and arms. However, if a *Mqdewa*, for example, began to strike people without giving any warning, those present would begin to criticize and insult him, even if he had struck a Hausa or other non-Yoruba.

It is beneath the position of an important person to drive people out of the way himself, since this is done for him by one of his subordinates. Whoever is designated acts as if he himself held the rank of his principal. Thus the king's messengers represent the king, and can make anyone in town stand aside, and a representative of an important *Mqdewa* man can "drive" not only all the Ife and others of lower strata, but also all *Mqdewa* of lesser rank, regardless of his own status as an individual.

Another privilege of high status is the right to mulct (*reje*) or "shave the head" (*fa ori, se fa ori*) of those of lower rank, whether or not they are related to him. In English there is no exact equivalent of these terms, which cover taking the best and largest shares of food and drink that are being passed, impressing others into work without pay, and appropriating their property without compensation. Although it is often translated as "to cheat" by English-speaking Yoruba, it differs clearly from cheating in that it is expected and accepted as the right and due of those of higher rank. Within the compound or kinship group where seniority operates as a basis of rank, any man

may mulct his junior. Food and drink are served in the order of seniority, and any individual can take the best piece of meat from the plate when it is passed to him without asking permission and without returning anything for the younger people who remain to be served. At one compound meeting which was attended, the elders kept two pots of palmwine for themselves, leaving only one pot for the younger men who were more numerous.

The king, at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy, can appropriate the property of any of his subjects. When he wishes to give a sheep, a dog, or a goat as a sacrifice on behalf of the town, he sends his messengers or his bodyguards into the streets to catch an animal. It is not necessary to enquire who owns it, to ask permission, or to pay compensation; and nothing can be said in criticism, although if its owner happens to be present at the time, he may beg them not to take the animal and it may be spared. Appropriations for sacrifices for the good of the town are not referred to as *reje*, nor is there any special term by which they are designated. There are limits on the confiscation of property, however, even by the king, who could not, for example, take a man's horse for his own use without cause. Town and palace chiefs, by virtue of their own position, can also exact free labor from those beneath them and appropriate their property, with the exception of the wealthy man, the rich man or man of money, the man of principle, and even the gentleman, whose powerful friends may come to his assistance. Rather than appropriate their property and risk their revenge, which may take many different forms, the chiefs, if they wished to exploit any of these individuals, would find a way to involve them in a court case from which they would receive gifts and fines.

Within the same social stratum the wealthy man and rich man can mulct those of lower rank, while the man of principle and the gentleman can only take advantage of their status among their own relatives. If a man of money were to attempt to appropriate the property of a man of principle or a gentleman of his own stratum, a friend might warn him of the other's status; he could then decide to disregard the warning and appropriate the money despite his position, but there would always be a fear of revenge through influential friends. There would be no hesitation in appropriating the property of a handsome man, a good hearted man, or even an elder who is unrelated. There is no reason not to mulct an old man, so long as he belongs to a different kinship group; in fact an old man is even more open to exploitation than a contemporary of one's own age.

These privileges of social position are also measures of rank. In terms of an individual's pride (*igberega*) or insolence (*afajudi*) to others, and whether or not he can drive (*le*) and flog (*na*) or mulct (*reje*) them, and in terms of the number of his followers and those who respect (*bqwo fun*) him, it is possible to rank the higher statuses within the same stratum as follows:

1. The wealthy man (*qlqre*), who has the greatest amount of property
2. The rich man (*qlqla*) or man of money (*olowo*).

3. The man of principle (*enia pataki*)
4. The gentleman (*gbajumo*)
5. The lucky man (*olori rere*) unless his luck has brought him higher status
6. The good hearted man (*oninu rere*)

This ranking varies somewhat depending on which of the criteria are considered. It also varies with the personal qualities and behavior of the individual concerned, and depending upon his relations with others. One has more respect for a gentleman or man of principle who is good to him, than for a man of money who treats him badly. The rating of individuals in terms of esteem thus varies from one informant to another depending upon personal relations, regardless of their ranking as expressed by these status terms. "One respects the one who respects himself" is a revealing remark frequently heard in discussions of position and rank, either within or between social strata. A man must care for his appearance, show that he has pride in himself, and otherwise take reasonable advantage of the privileges of his position, or no one will respect him. In other words, an individual is not esteemed unless he adopts the behavior patterns expected of those of high position. According to a Yoruba proverb, "A house is good, there remain its rafters; a person is good, there remains his behavior (or character)."

In the foregoing analysis position has been considered exclusively from the male point of view. The status of a woman depends on that of her male relatives; she takes the rank of either her husband or her father, whichever is higher. If a *Mqdewa* man were unknowingly to start a quarrel with an Ife woman who had married into the king's compound, a friend would probably warn him to be careful, naming her husband, and the *Mqdewa* would immediately change his attitude. Women only infrequently exercise the prerogatives of rank that have been discussed above. However, with the exception of the king's wives *Aya-(q)ba*, whom no one dares to strike, they occasionally become involved in fights in the market. In such fights they must be careful whom they strike, for a woman will try to get revenge through her husband or her father.

Slaves and "pawns" ranked very low within the kinship groups to which they were attached, but in outside relations they shared the rank of the owners or creditors who stood behind them and were responsible for their actions. In relations with members of other clans or strata, they hold the same rank as their master's sons, whose status was likewise derived from their father. The slaves of a *Mqdewa* not only could insult an Ife and drive him out of the way, but they did so insolently and ruthlessly, since they did not have to worry about the consequences. Slaves are said to have had neither gentleness nor modesty, and to have been the most impertinent and arrogant people in all of Ife.

Thus despite the importance of wealth, social position is not simply a

matter of how much an individual owns or even of how much he himself spends, as the position of the slave clearly indicates. Wealth is rather one of a variety of forces, including the ties of family and friendship with those of power, and even the relations of "pawn" to creditor and slave to owner, which can be employed to bring pressure upon those whose behavior is resented, or upon others who attempt to seek revenge for the manner in which they have been treated. Wealth is also a means of increasing one's rank within the social stratum of his birth, and of raising his own and his family's position to the stratum of *Mq̄dewa*. It is also important in achieving the offices represented by the highest ranking titles. The spending of money is an essential part of being chosen for and installed in any office, regardless of whether or not the title is hereditary, including those of the town and palace chiefs and even that of the king. While it is good to have a title, or to be recognized as a good hearted man or a man of principle, it is best of all to have money, since with money one can do many different things. Despite the fact that wealth is ignored when different social strata are involved, a high ranking king's messenger and a high ranking king's diviner said that they would prefer the position of man of money to their own, and even to that of town or palace chief. This attitude may reflect the increasing importance of money as a result of European contact, but it is also expressed in two Yoruba proverbs: "If there is no money, a person is not fine"; and "Money says that if he didn't exist, no one could say anything."

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