

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA

Overview report¹

(1938)

by

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¹ This report brings together the 'findings' or observations Savineau made in her 17 field reports also accessible in this section of the website.

² Africans who had completed some French education were known as 'évolués', translated here as 'educated Africans'. The translation loses the colonial implication of the original which implies that an individual has 'progressed' or 'evolved' developmentally as a result of receiving a French education.

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PREFACE

Having been given the responsibility of producing a study on the situation of women in French West Africa, I felt that I could best define the role that African women have been playing in society here by looking at their social environment, be this African or mixed-race, in its entirety. The present report has been produced with this objective in mind. It sets out the major problems, and situates them in their social and human context, while keeping the primary focus on those aspects of life that particularly affect women and children.

Following the directives I was given, I have pointed out where we are finding our job here difficult, and where we are making mistakes. I have done this frankly but without any malice intended. Rather than criticising, I would like to bear witness to the immense efforts have been made and the remarkable successes that have been achieved. My goal is to help those I have seen struggling so valiantly at their almost superhuman tasks, and I have considered it my duty to draw attention to the obstacles they are encountering and to present to them, with all due modesty, what advice I can offer from my own varied experience.

This report is the result of a year spent studying African customs, including some seven months of

travelling, along with all my previous experience of African village life.³ The Report relates to the colonies of the French Sudan, Niger, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and French Guinea.⁴

³ Denise Savineau worked for four years in French Equatorial Africa before taking up an administrative post in the Education Department of the French West African colonial administration in Dakar in September 1936. The author had already published a book under her own name, Denise Moran, *Tchad* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), in which she had criticised aspects of the colonial system in Chad. A copy of this edition of the book is held in the British Library, London.

⁴ Savineau also visited Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) in the winter of 1937-38 and Casamance in Southern Senegal in the spring of 1938 on her way back home to Dakar. The countries she lists here, now known as Mali, Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, gained their independence from France in the period known in French as 'les Indépendances' between 1958 to 1960.

PART 1

CUSTOM AND LAW

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Europeans often talk about 'real African tradition' as if this were a building constructed in its entirety by some ancient sage in prehistoric times who fixed its customs for all time.

There is no such thing as 'real African tradition'. On the contrary it is a collection of ever-changing practices that reflect changing values. The isolated or sedentary human group explores its environment and explores itself, and by so doing it develops its sense of society. Invasion or exodus renews its environment and suddenly presents changes that cause it to take a great leap forward towards more knowledge. Each phase is as interesting as the next, and this includes the European phase in the case of colonised countries.

French occupation has had a profound impact on Black Africa. There is not a village that has escaped our influence, given that all of them have to work to raise the wherewithal to pay their tax⁵. Once they have paid the tax some of them go back to their old activities and their wise or cruel customs, though probably this will not last much longer. In other villages we can see changes are taking place but not in an orderly fashion. This will lead to anarchy if we are not careful.

⁵ The page numbers within the body of the text refer to the pagination of the original report and correspond to the pagination given in the contents pages.

⁶ In the interwar period the French authorities introduced a head tax in French West Africa to help fund regional development works, such as building roads.

The Administration⁷ is intervening in the way local communities develop and taking local customs into account. This is not a straightforward task and at times gives cause for concern.

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I shall try to convey briefly the complexity and the diversity of human relations in the Black communities of French West Africa, and to indicate how these are changing as a result of our presence and activities here.

i. Groupings

In this section we will be looking at the populations of the arid regions, the savannah, the forested coastal lands, and the mountains. These people once lived from hunting, fishing, gathering, or even pillaging, and have become crop and livestock farmers in the more or less recent past. They have formed various groupings organised in a wide variety of ways.

Forest dwellers

The people we call 'forest dwellers' typically possess one or other of the following sets of characteristics:

1 - Independence and equality, where the young people go off on their own at an early stage or govern the older people. The women are sturdy and capable of

⁷ The 'Administration' refers to the specifically French civil service, an extensive organisation which ran the French colonies as part of the French State. The French term has been adopted here rather than the generic equivalent 'civil service' to indicate that the service was not identical either in conception or practice to other European colonial civil services in Africa.

⁸ The dotted line indicates the end of a page in the original document.

looking after themselves. They enjoy the fruits of their own labour and considerable sexual freedom.

2 - Fathers and husbands use violence to dominate the womenfolk who are subjected to unlimited work. These men are turning their sexual freedom into a form of prostitution.

Crop farmers

Of all the groupings that populate the fertile plains, the most 'democratic' are the extended families of crop farmers. Their work is motivated by a spirit of collaboration rather than servitude, .../...

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and they consume the produce of their labour communally. Sometimes the wife remains independent from her husband. The children, be they boys or girls, belong to the Chief, who retains permanent rights over them.

These rights are shared out by the brothers and the cousins, either on the mother's side or on the father's side. This hierarchy is becoming more complicated now that the eldest is taking on the role of a father to whom the younger ones must defer. This situation is extending to the women, where the first to be married assumes authority over the others, and her children are sometimes also taking precedence. This is creating a tendency for the chief to become all powerful and the last born of the last wife to be destined to a life of servitude. After them come the concubines and their children, and lastly the slaves⁹.

⁹ The term used in French is *captifs* which suggests either prisoners or slaves. The tradition in the area was to enslave prisoners taken in war or ceded by a neighbouring chief.

The crop farmer's extended family is different from the forest dweller's in that the latter observes a very strict hierarchy and tolerates no deviations or exceptions from the rule. The crop farmer's family operates on a widely-accepted principle of equity and the family can divide up. The sons are allowed to farm for themselves during part of the week or set up on their own. The result has been the emergence of a new, much smaller family unit that is quite different from the former. The smaller type of family often remains attached to the extended family through the payment of rents, and the observance of marks of respect and religious rituals. The head of the new family always tries to recreate a patriarchy but this time as a totalitarian regime rather than a communitarian one. If he becomes rich and important he manages to carry this off.

Women in farming communities

The situation of women in farming families merits particular attention. While women who live .../...

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in patriarchal forest communities have no rights or property whatsoever, women living in farming communities have retained some autonomy. This is a throw-back to the time when these people were hunter-gatherers, the women being the gatherers. Gathering, and the growing and processing of condiments, have remained the preserve of women, even in the most communitarian families. The women sell any surplus condiments from their harvest and buy themselves goods, such as domestic utensils, jewellery or other finery, or small livestock. This right has allowed

women on occasions to generate enough trade to amass a fortune.

Livestock farmers

Life among the livestock farmers of the arid regions is governed by their flocks and herds. Though the animals cannot be sold, their numbers are kept in check by epizootic diseases. The goat farmers are poor, low-ranking Tuaregs called Dagas. The husband's work includes transporting goods, with the help of a few donkeys. The wife sells the milk. During the whole of the dry season men and women live in separate groups. The women enjoy considerable personal freedom, the right to personal possessions, and liberty from any higher authority.

Camel breeders who have become rich have done so thanks to raids which provide them with that other form of livestock - slaves.

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As the free men and women are now relieved of the burden of manual work, the men can travel and the women have taken control of the goods and run the camp. The woman is the real head of the household. Indeed the explorer Nachtigal commented on Tubu women having a masculine character.

It is likely that Tuareg women were once very active too. However in the North they have adopted the habit of being fattened up, though this has not meant that they have lost all their authority.

Cattle farmers occupy a place somewhere between camel breeders and goat herders. They are Peuls, who also enslave prisoners. They have a more communitarian lifestyle than either the Tuaregs or the Tubus, but they

are more hierarchical than the Dagas. The women play no role in the community, but each is mistress of her own home.

Slavery

Whether they live in the family or as a separate group, slaves have played an important role in African society for a long time.¹⁰

It would not be possible to eradicate it in a short period of time, and some have argued in its defence by claiming that slavery is not invariably an unhappy state for the slave. Of course the fate of slaves captured for the slave trade was quite different. There the master took over all the slave's rights, even the right to life, and could sell off fathers, mothers, and children separately. On the other hand, the 'house slave' is born into the master's family and is part of the household. Often he enjoys a measure of freedom, and sometimes has the right to make decisions.

There are no longer any prisoners being captured for the slave trade .../...

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and, as witnessed by the complaints of former masters, there are fewer and fewer house slaves.

However, we can still see some painful vestiges of this institution, particularly among people from the light-skinned races¹¹. These should warn us off making optimistic generalisations about slavery. There are

¹⁰ These early pages constitute probably the least successful section of her report and give the impression of hasty incomplete summaries. The themes she raises here are dealt with more effectively in the longer narrative accounts that follow this introductory section.

¹¹ The author uses the term 'race blanche' here. She is referring to light-skinned Africans from the Saharan regions rather than to Europeans.

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Bellah people living along the Niger River who are being taken prisoner by Tuaregs. Most of them are women who already have responsibility for taking care of their own children and elderly mothers, and are living in miserable little groups without their husbands. They hire out their labour to Songhay farmers and can barely feed themselves from their earnings because they have to pass on a large part to their Tuareg masters. These women do not want to free themselves. "We are not ashamed", they say. In a sense they are voluntary slaves, which makes their fate even more lamentable. I wonder what we can do for them without alienating the Tuaregs, who are already reluctant to come round to our way of thinking. It would seem that the authorities are rather too prone to abandon these women to their fate and look at this issue from a purely Targuy¹² point of view. For instance, an effort should be made to encourage these women to use maternity wards. It would only take a few little presents to bring them round. Also, would it really threaten the peace of the region if we stopped the Tuaregs collecting their dues from the women when they are working, particularly when they are carrying wood in the Diré settlement¹³?

The situation facing Bellah men does not seem to be so worrying. They are increasingly finding refuge .../...

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in the liberty villages¹⁴ being set up for them. The freed Bellahs are particularly numerous around Timbuktu. Thanks to farming they are becoming more prosperous. Their wives

¹² Savineau appears to use the term 'Targuy' interchangeably with 'Tuareg'.

¹³ The settlements were areas being actively colonised under French management.

¹⁴ The French began setting up liberty villages for freed slaves in the last quarter of the 19th century. The liberty village policy expired in 1911 but some liberty villages were still in existence in the 20s and 30s. Source: Bouche, Denise. *Histoire de la colonisation française: flux et reflux (1815-1962)* (Paris: Fayard, 1962).

prefer trading to working in the fields, however exhausting and unprofitable it may be, because at least this way they keep their independence. You do not need to ask them what they think about a life of slavery. You can see their answer in the sense of fulfilment they exude.

With the exception of the Tuaregs, many former masters have become farmers. Now they are trying to get their wives and children to grow their food. Djerma¹⁵ women are refusing to accept this, while Fulah women have agreed to take it on. Both are motivated by a desire to increase their independence. During the crisis¹⁶ Fulah women fed their husbands and now they want a more modern lifestyle. They want to be free to go out and socialise.

Bonded labour

Free people were not always exempt from a life of servitude, because the chief had the right to hand over a child, a sister, or a wife into bonded service as a way of honouring a debt. The work of the bondservant did not pay off the debt, and in the case of a girl the creditor often also had rights over her body.

It is an evil that has been greatly curtailed thanks to our efforts in developing and diversifying crops, and opening new outlets for a wide range of products. But the practice has not died out completely. There are cases being heard of bonded labour in the Fouta-Djalou¹⁷, and among the Mossi and Minianka people. .../...

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¹⁵ Also known as Zarma or Dyerma. Djerma lands are located in western Niger.
¹⁶ In the mid 1930s French West Africa was hit by the economic depression. Savineau refers to this period throughout her reports as 'the crisis'.
¹⁷ A mountainous region in central Guinea.

The authorities there have managed to get the local notables to accept the principle that a bondservant's work should progressively pay off the debt. Many people have been able to free themselves this way. We could apply this policy in the other territories.

The judicial system

Taken overall, the African system of justice was always rigorous, regardless of whether it was being applied by a large council, a small council, or a single chief (we will exclude those bloodthirsty potentates who meted out arbitrary and sometimes sadistic justice from this overview). The traditional penalties included ruinous fines, beatings, mutilation, excommunication, enslavement, trial by poison, torture and death. But this said, the penalty was only imposed after long deliberation and with a heavy heart on the part of the judges, the family and the tribe.

It is a long time now since travellers, traders and missionaries first arrived in the coastal regions of West Africa, and over the years their presence has attenuated the harsher aspects of this system of justice. More recently the Administration has been successful in outlawing the most violent punishments, in spite of opposition from chiefs, fathers and husbands. Fines are increasingly being used in place of corporal punishments. Not only this, but sometimes we can even divine a sense of relief and gratitude among the former power-holders that we have delivered them from the burden of this tradition. This feeling is particularly noticeable among progressive chiefs, and is witness to the positive impact of our legal system.

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The power of religion

To understand the power and weight of traditional customs we have to go back to their origins, these lie in the cult of the ancestors. The ancestor dictates both custom and ritual. The descendant obeys out of fear rather than devotion, because the dead are jealous of the living. The deceased wishes his descendant more harm than good, and is always ready to send anyone who neglects the traditional customs a reminder of where his duty lies. Nevertheless the living have strong instincts, particularly the instinct to dominate, and they feel constrained by the custom. It is clear that the living have taken many liberties. Customs and rituals have been developed to hoodwink the ancestors and release the descendants from their obligations. But is not without fear and trepidation that such daring actions are undertaken, which is why our arrival is sometimes welcomed, because we can speed up the process of change and take on the attendant risks ourselves.

Unfortunately some rituals do not depend on the power of the ancestors but rather on those who are well and truly alive and capable of taking revenge. Here I mean the rituals of the secret societies. There are still crimes of cannibalism and ritual poisoning going on in some remote parts without us knowing what is happening. One missionary claims that people rarely die a natural death in Kissi, that old and ill people are being put down. The only remedy is to extend our presence into these regions, which brings us to the question of roads. We have more roads than ever before, but this has led to the footpaths being abandoned because the Administrators¹⁸

¹⁸ Each colonial region had its own French administrator who directed the development of colonisation in his capacity as representative of the French State. See glossary.

are travelling about in cars (they say that any other form of transport is too slow). Those regions we should be keeping an eye on are being neglected. We need to build more roads .../...

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not just for commercial purposes, though commerce must necessarily come first, but as a means of bringing civilisation.

ii. The Marital Group and Children

After the initiation ceremonies (which we will examine in the third part of this report under 'Cultural Developments') adolescents are destined for marriage. At this point the boys can either be brought together in a communal hut where the girls will join them and they pair up, or alternatively the girls are not allowed to engage in any relationship until either the engagement has been announced or the marriage has taken place.

Children born out of wedlock

Depending on the case, a child born out of wedlock can be welcomed and cherished. It also happens that mother and child suffer such cruel opprobrium that they have to leave the community. The Djerma people seem to be the strictest in this regard.

The regions where girls are required to remain chaste are also those where we find abortions (often carried out by the mother on her daughter), infanticide and the abandonment of children. In responding to these crimes the Administrator, supported by the court

assessors¹⁹, is all too often taking the family's side. He should be trying to get them to see the causes of this evil. To do so would really help the women involved. They need reassuring .../...

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that we can offer them support if they become pregnant. Doctors, midwives and visiting nurses all have a role to play in this.

Engagement

A young girl who has been playing among boys since puberty will sometimes marry the one she likes best. But it is more likely that she has been engaged since childhood, or even since before she was born, either to someone of her own age or to an adult, who will be an old man by the time she marries him.

The marriage would probably have been agreed on between the heads of the extended families or between fathers. Mothers are often consulted and sometimes their opinion holds sway. On occasions a mother will choose her son-in-law. As for the couple themselves, and particularly the girls, all too often they have no choice in the matter.

Forced marriage

Recently the administration has been taking a stand against forced marriage and we are now having an impact on this practice. Girls know we are offering protection

¹⁹ The decree of 3 December 1931 provided for the establishment of a local court (*tribunal du 1er degré*) in each commune, or electoral ward, of French West Africa. It also provided for a county court (*tribunal du 2ème degré*) in each *chef-lieu* or county town of the Circle (*Cercle*) as the district was called. Assessors were African notables appointed to the local commune court by the French to help judge cases, much in the manner of magistrates. Source: Houis, Maurice. *La Guinée française* (Paris: Editions Maritimes et Coloniales), 1953.

and are coming forward to complain. Married women who are unhappy with their husbands are citing non-consent to the marriage as grounds for divorce.

In the Mossi region, the court has agreed to release these wives in return for part of the dowry. But they still find the idea of consulting a woman on the question of her marriage utterly comical.

A Gourmantche husband was not happy to take back the dowry and release the wife. The assessors.../...

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accepted the husband's decision. In their custom a woman who runs away or just complains can be beaten and clapped in irons. But the husband was warned by the assessors in front of his wife that if he invoked these rights he would be punished. After the rebellious wife ran away several times the husband gave up and took back the dowry. This shows us that even where abusive customs are the norm, if we keep trying we can have an impact on them. The Administrator needs to talk with the elders and not just impose his decision on them.

Educated Africans and forced marriage

In traditional indigenous households girls suffer more than boys from forced marriage, because boys can choose other wives.

This is not the case in progressive households. The young man almost always wants to establish a European-style monogamous household. He considers it an absolute disaster if he has to take a wife who is not capable of keeping house or bringing up children or understanding her husband's work, and is dominated by a mother even more backward than herself. Polygamy offers no solution

here. The first wife is in charge, any educated woman who agrees to join the household might have some influence, but she will not be able to change the family regime. It is up to us to liberate our pupils from the awful burden their fathers impose on them.

Christian marriage

The circular stating our opposition to forced marriage was very well received by Christian priests, .../...

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but they are interpreting it in their own way. They acknowledge the right of young people to decide for themselves but they fail to recognise the obligation to get parental consent.

This has given rise to numerous complaints from fathers who have promised their daughters to another man, and fiancés who have paid part of the dowry only to see the object of these negotiations slip away. These conflicts should serve as a lesson to fathers and suitors and discourage them from making such arrangements at the expense of a third party. It would not be out of place to point this out to them. But the missionaries use force rather than persuasion and non-Christian Africans quite rightly find it irksome to have to submit to an authority which does not come from the administration.

This is not all. The missionaries are all too often acting in the place of parents and choosing Christian husbands for Christian girls. In the case of orphan girls they do not deign to impose a dowry, in fact they use the girls as bate to convert young men. There have been cases where civil servants have colluded in these goings-on.

This makes it more difficult to find a workable solution. The main regions where these abuses have been identified are the Upper and Lower Ivory Coast, Lower Guinea and Casamance²⁰.

Dowry

I have just mentioned the sum paid in exchange for a girl. This is inaccurately called the 'dowry' but I will continue to use this term .../...

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as this is the accepted sense nowadays.

To understand what 'dowry' means, and the obligations it involves, we need to go back to its origins:

From the moment a girl leaves her family, it is deprived not only of her labour but also of the children she will bear. So, offerings must be made to the parents and to the ancestors, who will be deprived of descendants. These offerings take two main forms, services rendered and exchange.

Services rendered involve farm work undertaken by the fiancé for the future parents-in-law. The fiancé also offers the produce of farm work, hunting and fishing. It has become more and more common to offer goods in kind, and more recently livestock or money, but the tradition of working the in-laws' fields, even if it's just for one day, is still very widespread.

Exchange takes place when a girl has divorced or died. It involves either the provision of a replacement girl, or the return of the girl who was sent in exchange for the bride. This might have suited very extended

²⁰ Casamance is the southernmost region of Senegal.

families where there was an equal number of boys and girls but even then it was a difficult and complicated business, and worse in a small family.

Where a brother has several sisters he is allowed to marry several wives, but where several brothers have only one sister, only the eldest is allowed to get married. Among the Minianka people of the Sudan these surplus brothers have to leave the community.

The Aizo people living in the Allada Circle in Dahomey have found a creative solution to this problem, .../...

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which has created its own difficulties. For a woman, they exchange the woman's daughter, and if there is no daughter then her niece or grand-daughter. Young girls end up with old men and, failing a substitute being available, young boys can find themselves paired up with old women. Even a boy who is allocated a girl of the right age can still find himself thwarted by his own father who marries the girl himself. The Aizo can also barter engagements against engagements.

Most of the races have liberated themselves from this kind of marriage a long time ago and have substituted slaves, cattle, and most recently money, in the place of women.

Where old traditions are surviving, they are being maintained by women who will only agree to being exchanged for other women.

So this is how we ended up with the dowry. The dowry which replaced exchange was the most costly, but it was really a kind of security which had to be reimbursed if the girl returned home. This never involved any

speculation. Every girl was worth exactly what her mother had been worth.

Increased wealth among chiefs and nobles has led to the spread of polygamy practically everywhere, and this has raised the girls' value. The taste for virgins has exacerbated this upward trend. In the grazing regions, fathers have been demanding ever larger numbers of head of cattle. Along the coast, all the tempting merchandise of maritime trade is now involved, including rifles, second-hand uniforms, old hats, and alcohol. There are young girls being exchanged for bottles of gin on the south coast.

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During the process of arranging a marriage, it is not only the father who needs winning over, but sometimes also the mother, uncles, aunts and even the girl herself, so this is why presents have been added to the dowry.

The number of animals and objects provided for sacrifice has also grown enormously, and in a bid to dazzle the neighbours, more and more magnificent feasts have been laid on. Nowadays young men are finding it very difficult to cover the costs of the dowry, especially the progressive ones who are separated from their families and are not receiving any help from them. Fathers are trying to make money from their daughters. Some of them are making the most of an old custom which allows them to accept several fiancés. They accept the services and gifts of these suitors and then choose the most generous one, sending the others away without reimbursing them.

This is a sad state of affairs but it is understandable. We have turned the economy of these people upside down, and now they no longer know what

things are worth. We have seen for ourselves how they think that even the lowest class of white man is worth an absolute fortune. If we can get the heads of the families involved in the modern economy, we will be able to communicate more sensible ideas to them. The Provident Societies have started doing this.

The Marabouts have tried to control this dowry inflation by setting an upper limit of 1,500 francs. But they have aggravated the situation because now the presents are becoming inflated and these are not reimbursed after a divorce. They are now worth more than the dowry. This affects both rich and poor people .../...
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as no girl comes cheap nowadays, given that every notable and administrative clerk takes a misplaced pride in having his statutory four wives.

Generally it is not possible to pay off the whole dowry before the marriage. So we are seeing cases like the following one in Divo where the husband left the area to go and earn the amount he still owed. He returned three years later ready to hand over his savings only to find that the wife had married someone else and that they had even had children. The Court made them pay back the dowry to the first husband and let the woman stay with the second. But the story of the first husband is awful. The Administrator is rightly taking action against the cause of this problem, and is trying to get the dowry price reduced.

The more the dowry grows, the more its original sense is being distorted. Some fathers are using it simply as the price for a girl's virginity. Some husbands think it gives them absolute rights over their wives. No-

one is bearing in mind the original meaning of the contract, whereby the husband acquired possession of the children but only the use of the woman (sometimes this right extended to lending her to other men). So a very strange misunderstanding is emerging, except (and I only say this after consulting young intellectuals of several different races) in households where there is a capacity to think these things through. A father will not say of his daughter 'I sold her' but will say of his daughter-in-law 'I bought her'. The father watches to see how his son-in-law treats his daughter, but as for his daughter-in-law, it is her bad luck if there is no-one around to protect her.

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With our help, women are starting to look after themselves and even to fight back, as we can see in the way divorce is operating.

Marriage

The minimum age for a boy to get married is fifteen. In some cases, girls cannot be married before the age of eighteen or twenty but in practice they are often handed over at puberty or even earlier. We will read in the doctors' statements included later in this report what dreadful outcomes this can produce.

When the time for marriage arrives a girl who has been engaged for a long time is sometimes asked what she thinks about it. All too often this is a mere formality and persuasion or force is used to bring a rebellious girl to heel. We should not confuse this forced acquiescence with willing agreement.

The family rarely backs down because this would mean they would have to reimburse what they had already received. Even where they would be prepared to listen to the girl, the quarrels that would ensue with the rejected suitor's family would generally be enough to put them off.

However there are fathers who do not go to such pains. Some fathers are happy to hand the girl over to a lover with whom she has become pregnant (this is a matter of custom rather than a response to personal preferences). He then sends the fiancé away with the belt of cowrie shells that symbolised the girl's chastity.

I should point out here that marriage is often simply a case of moving the engaged girl from one house to another. However sometimes there are ritual ceremonies .../...

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(which I won't go into in detail here) where the father invites his son-in-law to treat his daughter well, though he does allow the son-in-law to beat her, so long as this does not result in bleeding wounds or broken bones. For her part, the daughter is advised to be entirely submissive.

Consummation of the marriage

Once the girl has arrived in her new household, the marriage can be consummated straight away, or at a later date. In the former case, it can happen that the husband's friends have the bride before the husband, or they keep hold of her while she fights back as fiercely as her mother has instructed her to.

An old woman can be present next to the couple, or just outside the hut, ready to confirm that she was a virgin.

After the sheet²¹ has been displayed, the celebrations can start. These can go on for seven days if the husband wants a prestigious affair, and can cost as much as the dowry.

If the girl is found not to be a virgin there will be no festivities or music. The young woman is sometimes admonished and beaten by her husband, or by her father, who will be furious at having to repay part of the dowry. It is possible that later she will be so insulted by her co-wives that she will run away from what can be an intolerable existence. More often that not, it is resolved in the following manner: the young woman names her lover who is required to pay a fine in proportion to the dowry. In this case the father-in-law has nothing to pay back. This monetary appeasement is increasingly used instead of reprisals, which at times went as far as death.

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Labour and profits

The households we have just been discussing are polygamous, or most of them will be if the husband manages to amass enough money to pay for more dowries. The household will be amalgamated into an extended family, or it will set up on its own. The wives either work together or independently. Their tasks fall into three main types:

²¹ The author used the French term *pagne* indicating a long piece of cloth usually worn as a wrap-around garment, but here used as a sheet on the marriage bed.

- housework, often enough this will also include spinning cotton, dying cloth, and making pots;
- farming, where they will work in collaboration with the husband;
- gathering and processing food products, which are usually shea butter and palm oil.

Some Muslim women just do the cooking and spinning. They also do their husband's washing whereas animist women are not required to provide any personal services other than cooking.

The husband is generally in charge of the harvest and provides the food for the family, pays the tax, and buys the clothes. Women provide condiments, sell their surplus harvest, and buy their own animals.

However, some women give nothing and take everything, and some women give everything and take nothing. Others still, mostly traders from Lower Dahomey²², maintain the home, pay the tax, buy the clothes, but also enjoy a great deal of independence. In the past their husbands used to hunt and travel. Recently they have taken up large-scale farming. They have become wealthy and are assuming an increasingly dominant role.

Housing

The type of housing varies according to the family grouping. In West Africa²³ extended families .../...

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²² This refers to the region of modern southern Benin.

²³ Savineau used the term '*la famille soudanaise*' which could mean Sudanese, in the sense of families from the French Sudan (Mali). However, the term is more frequently used at this time to refer to people from the whole West African region.

live in an enclosure protected by an entrance hall. Inside there are several courtyards surrounded by loggias, barns, and chicken runs.

The forest people live in their own huts. What is remarkable is how ingenious and even beautiful the huts are when only one woman is living in it. You see this among the forest people of Upper Guinea and among the Peuls in Niger. Where the family lives in a communal building they tend to concentrate exclusively on production and the buildings get very dirty. Furthermore, the Bobos seem to like living in darkness, and the Habbé people live surrounded by manure, which is one of their sources of wealth.

In the trading posts where the village is quite well off, you will see an increasing number of Africans opting to live in brick-built huts. These have the advantage of being solid, but are not as well ventilated as the grass huts which let air in through the roof. A brick hut should be built on a larger scale than a grass hut. The administration tends to forget this when it is building houses for its minor employees.

I should add that houses built by local builders for their compatriots are sometimes of such poor quality that they fall down. I was told that there are houses in the Ivory Coast built some ten years ago, and hardly any of them are still standing. In part it is the fault of the homeowner who had no idea how to maintain them, but it is also the responsibility of the builder. We need to train builders and give them qualifications; this should drive out the cowboys²⁴.

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²⁴ This is a British English term for an individual who sets himself up as a builder without the necessary expertise or qualifications.

Wife ranking

In polygamous households, there is almost always a hierarchy among the wives. The first wife is in charge, or at least she has the biggest role and has the most say. The husband's personal possessions are kept by the first wife. It is often she who holds the keys to the granary. When the title of first wife is passed on to the favourite, the latter can expect a life of luxury and ease.

Generally the first wife is treated with more respect and receives more presents, although she rarely monopolises them. She will often keep the easiest jobs for herself, and will give orders to the other wives. Conjugal rights are generally equally distributed. However, among some peoples of Upper Guinea, only the first wife has official rights. The others, although they have the same contract, are called servants and have to do as the husband wills. When the first wife dies the first 'servant' takes her place.

Among the Baule people, who used to be matriarchal, the husbands have been taking second wives from patriarchal Tagouna families, until very recently that is. Now the Tagouna women are refusing to marry Baule men.

Almost everywhere the last wife is a sorry creature with almost no status. As for the children, they take the rank of their mothers, or they are ranked by age. In the former case, a hierarchy operates among the children of the same mother. The power of the eldest over the youngest is often equivalent to the power a father wields over his son.

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Male opinions on polygamy

Among Europeans, it is the Christian missionaries who are the most critical of this institution. They say that polygamy wears a man out, that it results in fewer births and more infant deaths, and that it has a generally degenerative effect. Monogamous women, according to them, have more children than all the polygamous wives put together. They add that polygamy is humiliating to women, undermines the creation of emotional ties between children and fathers, and creates rivalry between the sons of the different wives. It is, in a word, the enemy of what we call 'family spirit' created from conjugality as opposed to lineage.

Some lay observers secretly harbour a certain sympathy for a system so ideally suited to making men's lives easy, regardless of the impact it may have on the lives of the women involved. They offer two main arguments in support of polygamy among African²⁵ people:

1. Whether it is legal or not, polygamy will always exist. Monogamy is just a system that favours one woman at the expense of others who then become isolated, take up prostitution when they are still young, and end up in poverty.

2. During pregnancy and breast-feeding, which sometimes lasts from three to five years, women refuse to have sexual relations with their husbands and, to make matters worse, they go back to live with their mothers, leaving the monogamous husband all alone.

²⁵ The term used in the original is 'Noirs'. As the term 'Black' has different connotations from *Noirs* as used by Savineau in the 1930s, the term Africans has been chosen as a translation here and at several other points in the report.

Those who flatter themselves that they are judging this situation from an objective and not a personal point of view, add a few more points, which unfortunately .../...

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reveal just what a short view they are taking:

firstly they argue that in some races there are fewer men than women, as few as 100 for every 120 women. Simple division tells us that this comes out to 1.2 women for every man.

Secondly, they argue that polygamy produces more children. Our missionaries argue the opposite. Perhaps they all only look at cases which support their own views and so end up exaggerating the situation. (If a polygamous husband can produce as many children with each of his wives as a monogamous one can, how does that make more children? The reproduction of the species depends entirely on the capacity of the female.)

African men are not particularly concerned about population statistics but are very keen on having large families. At least they have the excuse of having a personal stake in all this. They argue that sometimes a woman is sterile and this way the husband can give her co-wives. If these wives go on to have children, the sterile one can be subjected to merciless taunts, but if they do not have any children then that reveals that the deficiency lies with the husband. Sometimes a woman can go off and try her luck with another member of the family, or get a divorce. Impotence is also frequently cited in divorce cases, but despite the audacity of some of the traditional methods used to test this, it is not easy to prove.

We also see rich old men with young wives. These women are kept under close supervision and consequently they do not have any children.

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The number of wives is a sign of wealth, just like the number of head of cattle. Chiefs say it is a matter of status to have many wives. They argue that they also need them to prepare food for guests (a chore their servants could fulfil).

Some Muslims claim that the Koran *orders* them to have four wives. We know that on the contrary the Koran *limits* polygamy to a maximum of four wives.

I am at pains to describe these arguments in detail because they are made in bad faith and show men's desire to subjugate women. In a developing society it is necessary to curb this tendency.

Women's views on polygamy

Now let us see what women think about polygamy. In some cases they like being more than one because it means they can share out the chores and keep each other company, a pleasure not afforded them by men.

Sometimes an elderly woman may want a younger co-wife to act as her servant. In other cases, the proverbial hostility reigns between co-wives who are described as 'rivals'. The husband ends up exasperated by all the bickering unless he manages to use it to divide and rule the women.

Jealousies arise where women have more rights. They are so determined to defend their monogamous status that this can lead to them committing crimes. There was a case in Gagnoa of an old woman injured a younger wife; in Divo

a first wife slashed the second wife's wrists; in Bouak a second wife was poisoned; .../...

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in Niamey there was an attempted poisoning. A Fulah woman from Dalaba, whose husband had promised her a monogamous marriage, set fire to her co-wives' huts.

Developments in polygamy

There is no question of us fighting polygamy, either through the courts or by means of persuasion. Even missionaries are now tolerating it to a certain degree. In some parts it does seem that there has been a growth in polygamy, but on the whole the dowries being demanded by fathers, and the women's own demands for finery, is resulting in monogamy. However, as we shall see, it is also growing among educated Africans.

Parents-in-law

Where a woman is simply handed over to a family and not given in exchange for something or someone else, she will end up being badly treated by her husband and parents-in-law.

Where a woman can stay in contact with her family and can call on them to protect her from such abuse then she will be alright. In such a case she will be on the look-out for the slightest misdemeanour from the husband, as there are rules governing everything, and she may hope to find a reason to return home without having to pay back the dowry. Those few women who come from noble families can remonstrate about all and nothing, and Lobi noblewomen have the right to inflict beatings. Some Fon and Baule 'princesses' can engage in prostitution, even

when they are married, and can humiliate their husbands in public.

A husband has to keep on the right side of his parents-in-law if he wants to keep the wife that in some cases has cost him a lot of money, otherwise they might go looking for a better son-in-law.

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The husband, like the fiancé, is sometimes taken advantage of by parents-in-law who can be extremely insistent in their expectations of presents and favours, including expecting him to pay for trips they make to the daughter's home and buying offerings they make to their ancestors. It is a big relief to him if the uncles, aunts, and even cousins, do not have the right to make demands on him as well. Even if the wife dies, this does not automatically release him from these ties. Among the Toma people he will continue to pay his dues if the wife has produced children with him.

Pregnancy

As soon as they realise they are pregnant, the wife will often stop having relations with the husband. Some wives go home to their parents, either straight away or after a few months. There is a custom that dictates that the child should be born in the maternal grandparents' home. This rule is applied either to all the children, or just to the first few, or in some cases to just the first born. This custom encourages men to be polygamous, and hampers our ability to provide medical care, as we shall see later.

Childbirth

Childbirth customs are also hampering our provision of a Health Service. The place where the birth will take place is often prescribed by custom, and in some cases women will go off alone into the forest and return after the baby is born. Others retire to a special hut some distance away from their husband's and stay there a few days. Others are obliged to remain in their own hut but to stay only in one part of it.

According to custom, the birth takes place either on the ground or on a pile of rubbish²⁶. The woman is held in the strangest positions, either crouching or sometimes suspended from above.

In the forest or at home, the birth is either unattended or it takes place in the presence of a traditional birthing assistant. These helpers .../...
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sometimes confine themselves simply to imitating what the mother is doing. Sometimes they engage in dangerous manoeuvres such as pressing down hard or even stamping on the woman's belly. In any event, they are incapable of helping when faced with some complications.

In the case of a protracted labour, the problem is often attributed to the baby being the product of an adulterous relationship which is making it resist being born at the home of the mother's husband. The mother is obliged to name her lover who then has to pay a fine.

It is common enough that mother and baby die in childbirth. Custom often requires that the two are then separated. The gravedigger is paid to perform this chore.

²⁶ The original contains a handwritten superscript (1), after the typewritten words 'tas de détritius', and a note at the bottom of the page which reads: 'chez certains Dakarois', meaning 'among some people in Dakar'.

The fear of having to pay for this sometimes persuades families to bring woman to a maternity unit.

Twins

The birth of twins causes a real stir among Black people. They see it as a sort of miracle which can either augur well or ill. Sometimes one of the two twins is killed. Missionaries working among the Cognagui have been using their followers to spirit the condemned twin away and secretly baptise it.

Along what we used to call the Slave Coast, the death of a twin causes alarm because the dead twin can summon the live one to join him. To prevent this happening a small statue is made in the child's likeness and this is cared for by the mother.

Temporary Marriage

Marriage, even a consensual one, can be limited to the length of a single harvest or to the lifetime of the wrapper²⁷ the fiancé had provided.

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When a woman becomes pregnant and leaves for her parents' home this can become permanent, and if so the marriage contract will have to be renewed through the provision of another dowry, more presents and a sacrifice.

There is another type of marriage which defines a woman's rights over the man but not *vice versa*. Here the woman is entitled to go off and live with another man, and another, and have children with them. The children belong to the first husband who himself lives with other

²⁷ Wrapper is a term used in West Africa to denote a length of cloth worn as a wrap-around dress or skirt, it is generally known as a *pagne* in French-speaking African countries.

women. After several such experiences the wife can return home and will be warmly received. Lobi husbands are beginning to object to their wives leaving. They have even filed complaints, but some of the successful plaintiffs were beaten up on leaving court, and have not insisted on the sentence to being carried out.

Some Europeans call these marriages 'free unions' but that is because they are using the Christian definition of marriage as being indissoluble. This meaning is not present in French law, and even less so in society in general.

Marriage exists in the cases cited above because this is the convention and the custom. They can exist even where there has been no family agreement and no public announcement.

Authorised lovers

You will remember that some fiancées have real or platonic lovers before they are married. The role of these lovers does not end with the marriage. At the bride's or husband's request, an ex-lover can remain a devoted admirer and then marry his beloved's first daughter, in which case there is no question of any secret relations between mother and ex-lover. Here we have evidence of a very interesting custom .../...

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that reveals the sentimental side of Black people and refutes the common view that they have a brutish sexuality.

Plural marriage

A woman very rarely invokes her right to be with several men simultaneously of her own free will, but occasionally she has been obliged to do so. We have seen how a bridegroom's friends can have relations with the bride before the groom, but there is no evidence of this sharing being permanent. However, the husband's brothers and cousins can have rights over the woman, either whenever they like, or only where the husband is sterile or has left.

This situation can get worse where the husband avails himself of the right to lend his wife to whomever he pleases. Knowing how fiercely women cling to their sexual freedom when they have the right to choose, one can imagine how awful this must be for them. This situation denies them any sense of their own personality.

Adultery

In a household where a woman is owned by the family or a husband, she clearly does not have the right to make decisions for herself. To ensure that she does not get it into her head to assume this right, she is watched very closely and is given good cause to fear the consequences if she steps out of line.

We have seen that when she marries and at the moment of childbirth she is obliged to denounce her lover. In some communities, this ceremony takes place again at the husband's funeral. Alternatively signs are used to establish guilt, such as the way water runs over the head of the fiancée, .../...

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or the way a chicken dies during a sacrifice. Someone who is totally innocent can be declared guilty, and if she

denies the crime she can be subjected to trial by poison. It often happens that she makes up an accomplice, especially if he will be the one who is punished not her, as women are sometimes considered not to be morally responsible. Sometimes a husband will withdraw the complaint of adultery if his wife is going to be punished along with her lover. This is not because he feels any sympathy towards her but because he is worried about losing his cook. The fact that all this might give her cause to be afraid is not something he has given any thought to.

When a man agrees to his wife being punished it is because he is going to disown her. They think prison is too lenient a punishment. The assessors²⁸ in Allada have fixed the penalty at five months for women and six months for men, but they say this is not enough because adultery is still rife.

Punishments were sometimes worse under the old customs. Among the Toma people women were stoned and lovers had their throats slit or were thrown to the crocodiles. As these customs were more prone to attract the attention of the authorities, they were replaced by poisoning or at the very least by some sort of corporal punishment. Court assessors from the Toma tribes have only agreed to give up the death penalty in exchange for a payment equal to the value of the dowry.

The husband's right to claim financial compensation has led to some serious abuses. There are cases where a husband and wife in need of money have ensnared a naïve and solvent man, and then accused him of adultery. At N'Zérékoré, the presiding judge has been throwing out cases involving husbands who have been repeatedly

²⁸ See note 16.

bringing complaints, as often happens when the tax is due. At Bouaflé where these goings-on are commonplace, .../...

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complaints from husbands are no longer admissible.

These problems of adultery are really difficult for our Administrators to resolve. They need to work out how they can help these elderly men who are forced by their relatives to marry to very young wives.

Some ethnic groups do not allow the husband to commit adultery. The wronged wife has the right to leave and go home and then the husband has to offer gifts, excuses and promises in an effort to win her back.

In many cases a woman can punish her husband's lover but cannot take any action against her unfaithful husband.

Divorce

Although adultery does not always constitute grounds for divorce, there are many other cases that do. But here again there is no general rule. In some cases the husband is required to provide food and clothing for his wife, to abstain from inflicting grievous harm, to observe the conjugal 'turn' of each wife, and to attend the funerals of his wife's family, where he should offer animals and money. But not in all cases.

Sterility, impotence, leprosy, syphilis, and dementia are frequently cited as grounds for divorce, and we could cite many more exceptional ones. In the area around Abidjan women are not allowed to sue for divorce without their parents' consent. Here are the main reasons women give for wanting to leave their husbands:

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- being abandoned is a common grounds for divorce in the central regions. The husband goes off to the coast and leaves his wife without any means of support. This happens in Kandy in northern Dahomey, at Kissidougou in Upper Ivory Coast, and in Niamey. In Niamey, the departure of the husband is not in itself considered sufficient grounds. The assessors grant a divorce after one year where the woman has been left without resources, and after two years in all cases.

On the other hand women married to civil servants on the coast file for divorce to avoid having to accompany their husbands posted up-country.

Some women believe that after giving birth to three children they have paid for their dowries. Others despise their husbands for having paid only a minimal dowry. In Ouagadougou one woman preferred to separate and leave her children behind rather than stay with a man who had failed to fulfil his funeral duties. On the other hand, there are Fon women in Dahomey who are giving up their divorce cases rather than leave their children. The judge has been letting cases drag on so eventually the women calm down and give up.

We need also mention women who are sterile and suffer intolerably from awful taunting from co-wives and husbands.

There are grounds for divorce and there are also pretexts. A woman can complain of beatings, neglect and forced marriage to get away from a man she dislikes. Administrators are encountering this pretext everywhere, and in Zuenoula the plaintive has been sent to prison or

sent back to her husband in a bid to strengthen the family unit.

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In Divo a woman stabbed herself twice in the stomach to avoid being sent back to the marital home.

Men are filing for divorce far less frequently than women. They judge a woman on how useful she is to them. It is only when a woman runs off that they start making a fuss, not to get *her* back, but to get the dowry returned.

There are grounds for saying that it is unfair to expect a woman to return the whole dowry given that in some cases she has already worked for him for a number of years. The husband should proceed with caution in this case or he might find that he has to pay out more than he got for her. In Bouak for instance the court is granting women 200 francs for every four years of marriage.

In Kissidougou, there are African riflemen who have spent time in France and want to divorce the unfaithful wives they left behind.

What is clear is that there is now a wish for more independence on both sides. One has to ask oneself whether it is really moral and useful to family life to insist that people incapable of creating a family have to stay together, or to insist that women who want to leave have to stay with their children. Unless you believe that men are the 'natural' masters of women, a point of view refuted by ethnology, then this policy is not defensible in Black Africa today.

Let us look at a few more cases from Porto-Novo²⁹ which show just how clever some Dahomeyan southerners are at manipulating the system.

²⁹ City located on the south coast of Benin.

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A father of five was accused of negligence by his wife. He got out of it by arguing that the marriage was not legal because the parents had not given their consent.

A clerk who had 'married' two sisters tried to claim back some valuable gifts which had been given to their aunt. As it turned out, she had been the procuress. Three years into the marriage this husband found himself in straightened circumstances and tried to recoup his outgoings!

Divorce settlements

Divorce presents two problems; how to reimburse the dowry and who should get custody of the children. In general if the dowry was small or non-existent the children will go to the mother. If the dowry was large, the children will go to the father. There are exceptions, among the Agni people the children always go to the mother even if the dowry was very large. The question of whether either party was at fault rarely comes into it. Among Moslems, it is often the case that the mere fact of seeking divorce makes you the guilty party, and the dowry will be forfeited or returned. This generates no end of ruses, on both sides, designed to wear down the other party. But the custody of children remains the same, young children are provisionally left with the mother. Where a woman's father cannot reimburse the dowry the new husband will cover the costs.

Children born from adultery

The husband can claim these children. If he chooses to reject them they will go to the woman's family and the dowry will have to be reimbursed. Among the Guerze people of N'Zérékoré, a lover can buy back .../...

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his child for 75 francs in the case of a boy, and 100 francs if it is a girl.

There are many cases in the Courts at the moment involving rights over children. They are often brought many years after the separation, when the boys are old enough to work and the girls old enough to marry.

Widows and Widowers

In those societies where women are equal or superior to men, widowers are required to observe a period of mourning. Among the ancient Baule people he would be incarcerated for several days and then isolated for a few months. At the end of this time he would sit outside his hut and wait for a wife to come along and make an offer for him. There are still many cases where this traditional period of seclusion and chastity is observed.

In other ethnic groups³⁰ women do not have to wait at all, they can marry immediately. Sometimes obligatory widowhood is restricted to just three months, or in the case of a pregnant woman, to the birth of the child.

Inherited marriage

In cases where a woman was permanently transferred to her husband's family, being widowed does not mean she will then be free. The wives of the deceased are passed

³⁰ Here Savineau used the term 'races' in the original where nowadays we would use 'ethnic group' or 'communities'.

on to his heir or shared out between the heir and his brothers or nephews. These new husbands can take on the duty of adding to the progeny of the deceased or they can simply offer hospitality and protection to these new wives without engaging in any sexual relationship. Under no circumstances would a mother be allocated to her son. However, .../...

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she can live nearby and if she remarries the new husband will owe allegiance to the son-in-law.

Inherited marriage is not always obligatory, in such cases one or both parties are free to turn it down and the divorce will be announced. Sometimes the procedure of asking for the hand in marriage will also be announced. After the ceremonies marking the end of mourning are over, the widow sits outside her door, just like the widower had to do in the earlier example, where she waits for suitors. These are generally the husband's relatives who express their intentions by offering a gift.

If the widow goes back home to her parents, they will have to reimburse part or all of her dowry. If they cannot afford to do this, the debt will pass on to the new husband.

Remarriage

A widow who leaves the family of the deceased is free to marry again and will receive a gift for herself. Alternatively, if she is remarried by her parents, they will require a dowry, though this is generally lower than the original dowry. Remarriage does not involve a ceremony.

In some groups, a woman who becomes a widow several times is considered a harmful influence in the community and cannot remarry.

I should just add that in some Moslem communities, women are not allowed to remain widows. Even very old women are passed on to a man, whose only duty towards her will be to attend her funeral.

Inheritance

Customs have evolved under the direction of men with a view to ensuring that they get possession of the children.

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Once they have succeeded in getting heirs they want to ensure they can safely pass on their possessions. But brothers and maternal uncles have resisted moves that would deprive them of their rights of inheritance, and almost everywhere you find men still holding on to these rights. It seems that the success of Islam among the Black populations of Africa can be attributed at least in part to the way it defines how inheritance shall pass from fathers to sons. Having said that, some men are granting more to the eldest son than is allowed in the Koran. All in all though, it is true to say that in the

Moslem areas there is less of this tendency you see among elders and old people to hoard their wealth.

Women who did not keep possession of their goods can lose out in this process, and if they try to retrieve their goods the men attempt to stop them. Women have only recently begun to muster sufficient courage to defend themselves in such cases. In Kandy we have just witnessed for the first time two Peul women going to court to claim their inheritance.

Fetishists also want to leave their goods to their sons. In some cases they have adopted a form of inheritance that is quite similar to the one laid down in the Koran. Some have even sought the Administration's help in getting their inheritance laws reformed in this direction. It would be good if the Administration would accept advice in such cases and as far as it is able use its influence to share out inheritance between sons and daughters, even if it comes out unequally. It would help to stop wealth accumulating in the hands of a single individual.

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iii - The Prison System

It just remains to say a few words about the prison system. Prisons vary a great deal depending on where they are and how they are organised. Some are located in vast airy premises around a single or several courtyards. Others contain large common rooms and small cells along an external corridor, which requires that prisoners who are not out working have to be kept locked up, either because they are on remand or because they are too sick

to work. There is a prison like this in Tiassalé in the Ivory Coast. Another prison in the Ivory Coast, at Dedougou, is housed in imposing buildings which seem to have been designed to be gloomy, hardly any light gets into the common rooms and the cells are completely dark. At the prison in Sedhiou, Senegal, there are so many bats living in the rafters that the prisoners suspend their blankets like tents to protect themselves from the droppings. Another building has just been completed but it is far too small.

The prison in Goudam in the Sudan³¹ has narrow, dark, smelly rooms. This is a particular problem because the Tuaregs of the region find captivity difficult to endure. They quickly become listless and morose, in some cases they die after a few months of captivity.

There are too many small and badly ventilated prisons housing large numbers of inmates. Once the door is shut they are so airless it is almost impossible to breathe.

At least they are generally quite clean. I only saw one badly maintained .../...

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prison and that was in Gaoual. The men were sleeping on tattered mats on floors covered in cinders. Some had no more than a piece of flattened out corrugated iron to lie on.

In contrast, the prison at Kandy is remarkably clean. The upper half of the walls is lime-washed and the lower tarred, and there is shelving all around the room bearing neat piles of blankets and clothing. It seems to me that an honourable and demand to insist upon

³¹ She is referring to the French Sudan, now Mali.

cleanliness, order and discipline among prisoners, it benefits everyone.

Finally I would like to mention the prison in Ouagadougou, which unusual for being well ventilated, having very high vaulted ceilings and large windows. It has a specific area set aside as an infirmary, the prisoners have access to filtered water, and the recreational areas have been concreted over and are easy to keep perfectly clean. Storehouses have been set aside for the storage of food, and as I saw, they stock all the ingredients necessary for making local sauces. There is also a sewing workshop where those inmates who are tailors by profession make their own and other prisoners' clothing.

Women prisoners

Very rarely do you find separate women's quarters in these prisons. The women sleep either on the verandah, or in the kitchen, or in a storehouse which might already be pretty full or scarcely fit for human habitation. In Sedhiou there were two women sleeping to each mat. I should also point out that in the closed prisons women live .../...

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in very difficult conditions. They prepare meals for the men, this is sometimes very hard work, and they never go out. Sometimes they are subjected to the unwanted attentions of the male prisoners and guards.

At Allada there is a large and well-appointed prison for women only.

Fotobah, an island off the coast of Conakry, is serving as a detention centre for both men and women. The

women's prison has just been completed. It is quite comfortable and surrounded by a high wall which should protect it from the incursions of male prisoners. But as the women are not allowed to go out during the entire period of incarceration, this makes their predicament significantly worse than the men's. Male prisoners are allowed to move about freely on the island. Furthermore the men on Fotobah will doubtless work out how to get into the prison despite the high wall. It is most regrettable that no-one thought of accommodating the women elsewhere so they could also enjoy a certain amount of freedom. It is unfair that their punishment should be made worse just because there are men nearby, particularly given that society is often more to blame than the women themselves for the crimes they have committed.

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The women who have been found guilty of crimes fall into the following categories:

i - Some have participated in ritual murder. This generally means they were ordered by the men to cook the victim. This carries a prison sentence of at least ten to fifteen years. Cannibalism is now much more likely to be carried out in secret than it was in the past, it could be that is dying out.

ii - Others have killed a baby born from an illegitimate or adulterous affair to escape public disgrace. In other cases, women have succumbed to pressure from their husbands to end the life of a handicapped child.

iii - There are women who have killed or mutilated a co-wife out of jealousy.

This crime is more common in regions where monogamy was the norm but where men are getting wealthier and so polygamy is spreading.

The most pitiful group of women among these prisoners are those who are in prison for receiving stolen goods from their husbands. There is no doubt that these docile and resigned women are not morally responsible for their actions. They are quite different from the brash young city women who steal for themselves and then try to deny or lie about what they did.

Delinquent and Criminal Children

In Report 17 on Casamance³² I described the special school in Carabane which takes in delinquent and criminal children. They were under the charge of a policeman who was not qualified to ensure their rehabilitation and as a result they were becoming rebellious ../...

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or suicidal. Now they are under the supervision of a policeman called Choucroun. The atmosphere in the establishment has improved and we now have proof that it is possible to awaken the consciences of these young people so that they can go back into society and live honourable and useful lives. But the policeman is going to be replaced. Also it is not sure whether the children will be well received by the outside world when they leave the special school in Carabane although they have been taught to expect forgiveness and fairness on their release. So, their situation demands our close attention.

³² This is an account of her visit through southern Senegal in May 1938. Access to the report is available here and at savineau.hull.ac.uk/reports.

Firstly we should ask ourselves who these children are. Almost all of them were arrested in Dakar. They include children who went to Dakar on their own, and sons of notables, or educated Africans, or tradesmen, who are roaming around with nothing to do. They joined a gang, started thieving, and got a taste for money. It is often an overly strict rural family or an irresponsible urban family which is to blame for this more than the boys themselves. Or some of them are orphans. Then there's the matter of those boys who are sent out to beg by the Marabouts and end up killing a fellow pupil to defend a crust they have just been given. These unfortunate children are given sentences which are longer than those given to adults. While an adult might receive a 3 to 6 month sentence, a child can serve 5 or 10 years because he is kept incarcerated until he is no longer a minor.

It would appear that the first step we need to take in addressing this issue of how severely the law is dealing with these children, is to consider the matter of parental responsibility.

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The second issue we need to look at is the matter of incarcerating children. In principle, children are only interned in Carabane if they cannot be placed under the supervision of a chief. This system has attracted criticism from only one quarter, the chiefs in the Fouta-Djallon. This is a region where cattle rustlers start they training during childhood. The chiefs are afraid that delinquent children would steal their possessions and the large sums of money they accumulate during the

tax³³ collection. Chiefs here take the first opportunity to haul an offender back to court and then refuse to take him back.

Theoretically the system of placing a child back in a 'family environment' is supposed to have a beneficial effect on his behaviour, but in fact if we look a little closer at what really happens we will see that the impact can be deplorable. The child is invariably insulted and treated like a pariah, whereas at Carabane under the careful guidance of a good director he can relearn his responsibilities towards others and gain a sense of his own dignity, and he can learn some other salutary lessons through study and manual work. It seems clear that a 'special school' is useful not just for society, but for the child as well.

Then we need to ask the question of whether the school should be situated in Carabane. It is true that the children are often very far from home, but how can it be otherwise short of opening a school in every region. In any event, it is far from certain that the parents would come and visit their offspring. Many of these children write home but get no replies. Some of them receive news from a grandmother or an aunt, in secret. Furthermore if the school were on the mainland it would have to be a closed establishment, unlike the island school where they have the advantage of looking out .../...

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³³ This was a head tax introduced by the French administration to help finance public works. In his memoirs, the Malian historian Amadou Hampâté Bâ recounts the tale of the introduction of the poll tax in Niger which led to the Tuareg uprising of 1916. See: Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *Oui mon commandant!* (Paris, J'ai lu, 1994), pp. 215-227.

over fields, the sea, and the friendly village of Carabane.

The primary requirement is to find a well-disposed and enlightened director who has volunteered for the job. It is a job that would appeal to some teachers. Secondly, one must think about how the pupils are being prepared for their future. At the moment they are learning French from a teaching assistant, but the manual training they are receiving is quite inadequate. They can make pieces of furniture and wrought ironwork, but only very slowly because they do not have the proper tools. They would not earn enough to eat if they were craftsmen and furthermore many of them neither want to nor can return to their villages. In fact, they are useless workmen. A visit from the Inspector of Craftwork is required, as only he is the only one who could offer a workable solution. Lastly, we need to take into consideration the fact that once out of the penitentiary these children will be, in the main, without families or social support. The Carabane label must not follow them around, or if it does, it needs to be rehabilitated. Former pupils should stay in touch with their teachers and schoolmates through an old boys' association. It might be a good idea to settle them all in the same town in their own boarding house. Some people will argue that children who have never been in any trouble do not receive this degree of care and attention. But I would argue that they also should be receiving just as much care.

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This overview has given an indication of the kind of problems that indigenous societies present to the civil and criminal justice system.

As regards criminal law our position is clear; we are establishing a French system of justice in Africa. But as far as civil law is concerned the matter is extremely complicated. We acknowledge all sorts of different customs and try to influence how they are developing by respecting both the rights of the individual on the one hand, and the importance of the family, on the other. However, what often happens in indigenous societies is that the individual is crushed by the family. If he does break away, he will renounce all obligations and constraints. This results in a difficult situation which we should try to avoid. We need to be clear about how we see the authority of the family and the freedom of the individual, and clarify what we consider to be a happy medium between the two. As no decision has been reached on this, each judge is free to act as he chooses and does so according to his own character, convictions and convenience. It is a situation which prone to extreme sentencing. The judge wants to avoid upsetting the chiefs, and tends to act in a way that bolsters their power, they are the only ones consulted about customs, though they do not necessarily know much about these and can distort them to their own ends.

The judge can also impose his will where he should be arbitrating, and the many 'out of court settlements' are in fact just verbal judgements that have no written record. Only custom has any sway over sentences that are passed in accordance with convention. Though he might have received policy guidelines, a judge is not obliged to follow .../...

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them because they are not legally enforceable. Of course it is extremely difficult to legislate in the matter, given that every case demands a different solution and it is no easy task to find this solution. However, a precedent has been set in Cameroon and in Togo, where the rights of parents and children have been codified. In India a law has been introduced on the minimum age for marriage. It would be interesting to know what impact these measures have had, and what difficulties they have encountered.

Whatever they are, these difficulties should not put us off. How many people argued that the fight against slavery had to be abandoned because of the political problems it was causing? We learned how to pursue this goal prudently, and in the end we were very successful.

In the same vein, we need to think about how we help women and children, who, as we shall see, are suffering increasingly at the hands of husbands and fathers. Our task would be made easier if the interested parties themselves would rebel. If and when they complain we could ask the families to find a compromise. They are beginning to use the courts now, seeing them as an ally rather than the enemy.

If we want to succeed in this matter, then we need to be clear about our goal and persevere.

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PART 2

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND TRADE

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Well before we began to occupy French West Africa, trade was being conducted along caravan routes. With the arrival of Europeans ships, trade developed along the coastlines. However, the known continent was not transformed until the time of the conquest³⁴, which coincided with industrialisation in Europe.³⁵ The land had to be settled and roads built before trade could really take off and the large-scale export of local produce could begin.

At this point problems of yield, cost price, portorage, transport costs, profits, and wage labour emerged, and lifestyles suddenly started to change. I am going to be looking at all the repercussions of colonisation in this section, some of which have emerged, in a sense, automatically, and I shall also be looking at the steps the Administration has taken to promote or halt these changes.

i. Produce for local consumption

Staples

The staples have been millet in the north and yam in the south, but these are increasingly being replaced by .../...

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³⁴ The colonisation of Africa is often referred to as the 'conquest' of Africa in French history.

³⁵ She means industrialisation in France, which came later than in Great Britain.

rice. As rice does not have to be ground into flour, the housewife has less work to do, but the problem is that rice cannot be grown everywhere which means that it has to be transported from other areas. This is costly and raises the risk of profiteering, which we can already see happening not only in the trading posts, which provide foodstuffs for large numbers of people, but also in the villages where more profitable products such as cocoa, coffee, etc. are replacing subsistence crops.

In Guinea³⁶, farmer's profits vary from region to region despite there being a standardised taxation system. Indeed it may be too standardised given that it does not take account of transport costs. There are Kissi farmers from the Liberian border who have given up their rice fields to go and plant new ones in more lucrative areas.

If they are in the right area, farmers growing cereal crops are making a good living, particularly if they have large families. Baule farmers in Bouak for example are grateful to the Administration for helping them develop rice production. They see it as a profitable venture and they are also happy to eat the rice they have not sold. Marka people from Dedougou are increasingly giving up their traditional jobs as hawkers to grow rice and cotton. The Soussou of Guinea are also satisfied with it.

A local canton chief told us that a family of ten can produce 300 to 400 kilos³⁷ of rice. Along with the other foodstuffs they produce they can easily feed themselves,

³⁶ The English name of this country was 'French Guinea', now generally referred to as Guinea-Conakry to distinguish it from neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, formerly Portuguese Guinea.

³⁷ Approximately 660 to 880 lbs.

pay the head tax, and make a profit. But it is important not to have any delusions about people getting wealthier, all the profit goes to the chief. His relatives .../...

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have to provide free labour which in some cases has provoked an exodus. I will come back to this matter later in the report.

The temptation felt by the producer to convert his rice into cash has led him to make some mistakes. In Lower Guinea, local producers have been keeping back six months' worth of food and trading the rest against clothing. At the end of the six months they gather the palm produce, and when they have sold it they then buy back for 27 Fr.50 the rice which they sold earlier for 22 francs.

So far they have just been buying and selling rice stalks³⁸. On the markets the women are also selling dry or parboiled shelled rice.³⁹ Dry shelled rice produces one franc a kilo in profit, parboiled rice will bring in about 80 centimes⁴⁰ a kilo, but the work involved in producing the former is harder than for the latter.

Supplementary foodstuffs

Farmers who used to grow only millet and yams have not completely stopped growing them because they still like the taste. The traditional diet also included sweetcorn, beans, bananas, and flour-yielding crops they can gather, like fonio⁴¹

³⁸ Rice is initially harvested on the stalk. It is subsequently threshed to separate the grains from the plant stalks.

³⁹ Technically the grains are winnowed to remove the husk (or chaff). If the next coating on the grain, known as bran, is also removed, the result is white rice.

⁴⁰ As the name suggests, there were 100 centimes to the franc.

⁴¹ Fonio (*digitaria exilis*) is one of oldest cereal crops grown in West Africa.

and *néré*⁴². More recently, farmers have started growing groundnuts, sweet potatoes, manioc and wheat in the northern parts of the French Sudan. The people like this variety of foodstuffs, it is a novelty for them. They also like the security offered by having more than one crop should another fail.

Oil-producing crops

Produce from oil-producing plants, such as palm-oil, shea butter, and groundnut oil, count among French West Africa's great riches. The cultivation of oil-producing crops .../...

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is now operating on such a scale that the produce deserves to be classed alongside export crops, so I will discuss them in this context. I should mention in this regard that European demand for these products has made them very expensive for the local people who are not involved in the production of these crops.

Vegetables

There were some vegetables being eaten in the French Sudan before our arrival, including marrow, onions, tomatoes, and gumbo. They are beginning to become more widespread. The Habbé people of Sangha in the subdivision of Bandiagara⁴³ are growing onions alongside the water

⁴² *Néré* (*parkia biglobosa*) is a tree native to West Africa bearing seeds and fruits used in cooking and medicine. It was first observed and recorded by Westerners in 1757 by Michel Adanson. Its current Latinate name *parkia biglobosa* was attributed by Robert Brown in 1826 to commemorate the travels of Scottish surgeon, Mungo Park, into the interior of West Africa at the end of the 18th century. Park referred to *parkia biglobosa* as 'nitta' in his 'Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa' of 1799. Contemporary synonyms include locust bean, dua, netto, ulele, séou and ouli. Source: Margaret Shao, *Parkia Biglobosa - Changes in Resource Allocation in Kandiga, Ghana*, MSc dissertation, Michigan Technological University, 2002, p.45. See also the University of Melbourne's list of plant names at www.plantnames.unimelb.edu.au.

⁴³ Bandiagara in Mali served as the main town of one of the colonial subdivisions that made up a Circle, the French administrative equivalent of a British colonial district.

courses; these onions will be sold in Mopti and then transported south. Tomatoes are being sold in many markets now, along with some other recently introduced vegetables such as aubergine, cabbage and lettuces.

Condiments

Given the almost total absence of vegetables, Africans in the past were adding nothing but a strongly flavoured sauce to their staple foodstuffs, so condiments have been very important. They are either grown or gathered, and are prepared by the women who see them as their particular preserve. Any condiments left over after the family has been provided for are sold by the women, and in almost all cases they keep the profits for themselves.

The most important condiment ingredient is the hot pepper, which is grown and dried by women and then sold by the small handful. It is impossible to evaluate how much work goes into this crop as the work is carried out alongside all their other tasks. The Habbé people of Sangha, apart from the onions .../...

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I mentioned above, also grow large quantities of hot peppers for dealers in Mopti. They seem happy with the profits they are making.

Soumbara is a less used but no less appreciated luxury condiment. It comes from the same pod as *nééré* flour, which I mentioned earlier. The flour is produced from the pod surrounding the seed, and the *soumbara* is extracted from the seeds. The gathering, preparation and carrying to market require six days' work, and generates a profit of 7 Fr.50.

Soumbara that has been prepared in the French Sudan is appearing on all the markets of French West Africa, this is certainly far more widespread than in the past. It is shame that women are not making more profit from it but they do not appear to be in a position to demand more. Leaves, usually from the baobab tree, are added to the sauce. These are gathered in Senegal, ground to a powder, and sold as far away as Guinea.

In the past, very expensive bars of salt from Taoudéni on the banks of the Niger River were traded right down to the south coast. Now it has been replaced by salt imported from Europe.

Coastal people used to extract salt from the sea, and they still do this today. Once again, this is women's work, and very hard it is too. In Guinea, during the dry season, women leave their villages and set up along the mudflats of incoming and outgoing tides. At low tide they collect the white crust deposited on the mud, which they then filter and boil. In the Ivory Coast, they collect the sea water and process it in this manner. Presumably, they would need quantities of firewood to get the water to evaporate.

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Boiling continues day and night. As the liquid reduces, more is added until a sufficient deposit of salt is obtained. The women of Dabou earn between 10 and 12 francs for three or four days' work doing this which gives them an average of 3 Fr.25 at the end of twenty-four hours, or 1 Fr.30 for every ten hours of work. The women in Guinea earn approximately the same profits which go to their husbands. These women return exhausted and extremely emaciated from their stint on the salt flats.

Meat

Even in livestock-rearing areas, only the rich can afford meat. In practice, nearly all the beef cattle are sent to regions where there is no livestock which are also the regions where there is lucrative crop-farming and gold prospecting. Once the animals arrive at their destination, they command such high prices that the average local person cannot afford to buy this meat. Clearly there is something amiss here, and it is particularly noticeable in the gold fields⁴⁴ of Siguiri. Meat in Siguiri is imported from nearby Sudan but it sells at a higher price than meat in the Lower Ivory Coast despite the fact that the cattle there have had to travel from further away. The prices are taxed but housewives do not buy meat by weight. They are sold little piles of scraps only a quarter or a fifth of which is real meat. The price for scraps is 20% higher than for leg joints or steaks.

Chickens and ducks are sold for three times their normal price on markets where there is a wealthy clientele, even though they have been reared locally. Poultry is still rare though, and poultry farming should perhaps be encouraged as this would help bring down meat prices in these areas where meat products are scarce.

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The lack of meat is felt to be such a problem in the Ivory Coast that village chiefs everywhere are asking for rifles. There are lots of monkeys in the forests and the people are happy to eat this meat. The locals say they

⁴⁴ Strictly speaking the deposits are rocks containing alluvial plates of debris and gold. Siguiri is still the centre of the gold industry in Upper Guinea.

are working harder than they used to and they need to eat more meat. They also say that monkeys are destroying the plantations, an argument not without foundation. There have been complaints that rifles are being entrusted to village chiefs who are not distributing the guns around the villages. The chiefs are keeping them and get their own men to do the hunting and then the chief sells the meat at inflated prices.

Fish is the main substitute for meat. It is eaten fresh on the coasts and dried in the interior. It is considered to be a final resort when there is no meat. A lot of fish is being consumed, and the fishing villages appear to be prospering. The fishermen make their own nets. These are often very large and well made with fine netting. They are carefully stored in the owner's hut, where visitors are invited to admire them.

It is not possible to calculate the length of a working day in fishing. This is governed by fate. The fishing of certain species is very laborious and dangerous. Off the Ivory Coast, children start their training in shark fishing at the age of eight. When the fisherman reaches the age of thirty-four, he takes up crop farming.

Any fish not sold fresh is smoked in special hearths by women. In Dabou, women sell shark meat and the profits from this go to their husbands. In Porto-Novo, the women buy rotting fish from their husbands, then prepare it for resale and keep the profit.

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They make a 50% profit but this does not amount to much since they bought the fish so cheaply in the first place.

In Conakry you see both women and men walking fifteen kilometres a night to fish for sole by hand in the mud. They are very large sole, which sell for 6 to 10 francs, but they are often rotten by the time they reach market. Smoked sole sells for 2 Fr. to 2 Fr.50 a piece. Oysters were once greatly prized by the Europeans, but oyster fishing is very laborious and never provided much profit for the middlemen who complained that the oysters went bad too quickly. The Europeans gave up on oysters because of the fear of food poisoning. Women now dry oysters in the sun and sell them for 50 centimes a dozen, half of the price they command when fresh.

In the Ivory Coast, the lack of meat has led to women and children collecting large snails. They are sold fresh, or smoked on a string. It is not possible to calculate how profitable this trade is because the quantity of snails depends on whether it rains or not.

Water and fuel

Apart from food production we need to consider other necessities such as fuel and water.

The main fuel source is wood. Women and children, but also sometimes men, collect it after a day's work. They bring back either large bundles of sticks, or a long and heavy branch which they will have pruned before carrying it back.

Women from the lakeside villages near .../...

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Porto-Novo have to cover long distances to collect wood during the dry the season. They bring it back in their pirogues⁴⁵ and then spread it out in piles to dry. They

⁴⁵ Dug-out canoes.

sell it on in the rainy season. They also collect coconut fibre to sell as fuel.

The Soussou people from the Forécariah Circle collect wood; they pile it on to large boats and take it down to Conakry. Their average profit from this is around 25 francs a day. But it is hard work and the men just do it for eight days, long enough to make what they need to pay the tax.

Charcoal is not very widely used but we did come across a woman leper on the market in Timbuktu who was producing and selling it. She is earning 6 francs for a week's work.

Water is generally drawn by the housewife. They have to walk a long way sometimes to find water, and when it is less plentiful they have to wait a long time before the vessel is filled.

In exceptional circumstances, a water supply can be organised. In Dahomey, the same women who set out in pirogues to gather firewood also travel several kilometres in their pirogues to collect water. Each water carrier has to be carried up and down a hill. A day's work provides one franc of profit.

Since the native⁴⁶ village of Niamey moved up the hillside from its original position down by the riverside, women without husbands, who are usually elderly, have been finding some paid employment by carrying water up the hillside. They take two water carriers up at a time, each one suspended off the end of a yoke that they carry across their shoulders.

⁴⁶ In most cases I have avoided using the term 'native' to translate the original '*indigène*' because of the strongly disparaging resonance of the former in English compared with the French term. However in this case the implication of racial segregation is present and so the colonial/racist term seems more appropriate.

Each water carrier holds around 15 litres. The women are paid between 10 francs and 25 centimes for each water carrier, depending on how far they carry them.

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The return journey takes at least twenty minutes. The hourly profit is around 30 centimes. Water carrying is done only in the mornings and in the evenings.

ii - Goods produced by families for export

The main export goods produced by families are groundnuts, cocoa, palm products, cotton, kapok, shea butter, wax, coffee, rubber, indigo, orange essence and I will add gold to this list, as this is also a family business.

Groundnuts

Groundnuts are grown mainly in Senegal, a country we will come to later. The trials that have been carried out in other places do not seem to have been popular with local people. At Bouak, groundnuts are thought to bring in very small profits and to interfere with the already tiring work of growing yams.

At Banfora, the Administrator⁴⁷ has pointed out that traders have a tendency to exploit the farmers.

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The rate they are paying for groundnuts in Banfora is only 1 franc, whereas they pay 1 Fr.60 to farmers in the

⁴⁷ A senior civil servant with responsibility for a region. See glossary.

north of the region despite the fact that it costs them more to transport the nuts from there to the coast. Clearly, they could be paying at least the same price to the farmers in Banfora. This is an example of how trading stations are influencing developments. We can see that they do not encourage competition between buyers who come to an agreement among themselves on prices but rather they are generating competition between vendors.

We are increasingly seeing shelled groundnuts for sale on the markets. The women do the shelling by hand. It is such hard work that after a while their fingers start to bleed. It would have been interesting to work out how much profit the family makes from this additional work, but the information was not available. Where shelling has become the norm, traders are no longer buying unshelled groundnuts. It is highly likely that the husbands have not worked out exactly the value of this work as they are not the ones who do it.

The Provident Societies in the Upper Ivory Coast are going to invest in machines to shell groundnuts.

Cocoa

At one time cocoa was commanding a very high price, but this has plummeted which has been particularly hard on farmers who had become accustomed to spending a lot. Two hectares of cocoa trees in Dimbokro generated 4,800 francs in 1937. In 1938 this fell to only 100 francs. In Bouaflé, a family of nine men, 10 women and 6 children earned 7,000 francs (280 francs per person) in 1937 but only 1,350 francs (54 francs per person) in 1938.

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These are pitifully low returns in a country where the wealthy, thanks to their taste for the good life, have pushed up the cost of living. Small-scale planters are suffering manifest poverty. Their housing is poor and they have hardly any of the imported goods that Africans are so keen on. They have a hard life now because they want to make more money in the future from newly established plantations which they will have to cultivate for years before they get any return from them.

The question is whether the situation can improve. The downturn in prices is artificial, it has been brought about by an agreement between the buyers. They pushed prices down too far and provoked unrest on the Gold Coast and a refusal on the part of the farmers in our territories to sell them their produce. But the large plantation owner is still making a profit by exploiting his workers, as we shall see later. So it is unlikely that the buyers are going to be forced to concede much ground. If we do not intervene to protect the small producer then, under these conditions, family cocoa production is likely to disappear.

Oil palms

Harvesting of bunches of palm nuts is extremely hard work. I mentioned in an earlier report how in the past the man who climbed up to gather the nuts was obliged to remain chaste in a bid to conserve his energy. The husband harvests the nuts, and his wife extracts the oil, which is also a hard job. Their average income has been calculated in Dabou at 50 centimes a day during a bad year, but luckily it has increased to 6 francs a day at the moment.⁴⁸ There has been a detailed study of all this

⁴⁸ The typewritten archive contains hand-written corrections at this point which change the meaning. The original meaning, admittedly rather clumsily expressed, was: *In Dabou*

done in Boké where profits currently stand at 2 Fr.66 a day.

The downturn is becoming apparent everywhere. In Abidjan⁴⁹, a basket of kernels that was worth between 35 and 50 francs .../...

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last year⁵⁰ is worth only 10 or 15 francs now. Palm oil was 50 to 55 francs a canister but is now selling for only 25 francs. It seems the downturn is less pronounced in Dabou where the price of oil has fallen from 30 francs in 1937 to 25 francs in 1938.

Extracting oil by machine could bring in much more. Trials comparing the two methods have led the Provident Society in Dabou to the following conclusions:

Five people operating a machine can grind in half an hour the same quantity of nuts it takes 50 women or 25 men to grind in half a day. That means 2 ½ man hours instead of 100 to 200 man hours, in other words the machine takes about 1/60th of the time on average. In addition, the mechanical process produces half a litre more palm oil than you produce if you do this by hand.

If he wanted to increase his profits, a man would have to climb more frequently, but as we have seen, he is already quite exhausted by the activity. The elders in these regions are complaining that the men are weaker than they used to be.

As far as women's work is concerned, the relief offered by the mechanical process is more imagined than real. They are the ones who have to carry the nuts to the

their average income used to be 0.50 francs a day in a bad year, these days have passed and now the rate is 6 francs a day.

⁴⁹ The capital of Côte d'Ivoire.

⁵⁰ 1937.

press, which is sometimes a fair distance away, and the kernels they bring back are then even more difficult to detach from their sticky fibrous coating. Also they cannot procure their own little stash of oil on the side when production is communal. Also the women dislike having to mix their own produce with their neighbours' and then be given their share of the communal oil according to calculations which they find incomprehensible.

The mechanical press had to be abandoned. The family press, on the other hand, is very welcome and is becoming increasingly widespread. It produces as much oil as the .../...

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large press, that is to say 5% more than manual production. There is no handling or portorage involved, and the family group can see its own oil extracted from the nuts, and its own pile of kernels mounting up.

We can see from this how the economic problems African people face are complicated by psychological factors which cannot always be foreseen by Europeans. Both parties need to be more educated in this matter if we are to iron out these difficulties.

Cotton

We have been unable to calculate how much time the cotton farmer spends on his crop. In Bouak, the chief of the Baule quarter described plant as 'not too much of a nuisance', but somewhat tiresome in that it has to be sown every year, and it is not very profitable.

Farmers in the subdivision of Zuénoula were forced to start growing cotton. When prices fell this led to

unrest and local people refused to clean the cotton. They had to be forced to do it.

Kapok

The pods of the kapok tree are harvested by children, who extract the fibre *in situ*, clean it off and take it to the factory where they receive 1 franc per kilogramme.

A factory owner in Kandy claimed that a child can earn 4 francs for a morning's work. This is not true. Kapok is very light and 4 kilogrammes represents an enormous quantity of pods, and cleaning the fibre, even very roughly, takes a long time. We shall return to the subject of kapok factories later in this report in the section dealing with the paid workforce.

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Shea butter

The shea nut business is divided into two branches:

- Gathering nuts for sale.
- Gathering nuts for the production and sale

of shea butter.

5 kilos of shea nut kernels cost 1 Fr.50. This produces one 1 kilogramme of shea butter. It takes two days' work to extract the butter which is then worth only 1 franc. On the face of it, the work actually produces a loss. However, carrying the kernels to market takes five times longer than carrying shea butter. When this factor is taken into consideration, the profit margin on kernels is 3 Fr.75 a day and on shea butter it rises to 0 Fr.44 a day. The women do not take into account the time it takes to produce shea butter. The important consideration for her is that if she sells one load of shea butter on

the market she will take home 25 francs, whereas one load of nuts will generate 7 Fr.50. This is why she prefers to produce the butter.

If demand for shea butter goes up and exceeds current supply, and we have no information on this, it might be appropriate to envisage a form of mechanical extraction of the butter, while taking into account the individualistic concerns mentioned above. It would allow women to gather more nuts and increase their profits. We could also organise the transportation of this product.

I should just add a note here to say that profits from produce which has been gathered almost always stays with the women, as gathered produce was previously destined for the kitchen. As soon as this produce started making a profit, the men began to appropriate this profit for themselves. Our Administration has intervened with a profit-sharing scheme for the Minianka people .../...

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whereby the women are ending up with very little. They have made their opposition to the scheme very clear to the authorities.

Wax and honey

Wax and honey are profitable. Honey fetches 1,320 francs a ton in Boké. Ten 10-kilogramme hives produce 66 kilos of honey. The harvesting and preparation takes 13 days which produces a daily income of 6 Fr.70.

Wax fetches 9,700 francs a ton in Boké. It takes 6 days to prepare 34.5 kilos of wax. It generates 5 Fr.49 a day for the producer.

Coffee

The price of coffee has never been as high as for cocoa and the small-scale producer makes very little from it. A farmer working one hectare of coffee on his own will make 345 francs profit over seven years, the equivalent of 49 francs a year. Coffee growers, like the small cocoa planters, are not happy. They need their sons to work for them for free but these sons can find paid work elsewhere and are deserting the paternal home.

Rubber

Rubber is not popular with the local people. According to the Commandant in Boké, a rubber worker who collects and coagulates 500 grammes of sap at the going rate of 5,000 francs a kilogramme is only making 2 Fr.50 in profit. In the past local people sold rubber formed into balls to traders. But some of the balls had a stone in the middle so rubber is no longer bought in balls; it is now bought in strips.

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Indigo

The following information was given to me by a Syrian trader in Boké.

The leaves of the indigo plant are gathered out in the bush. Gathering thirty kilos and transporting them to the village takes three or four days. The leaves are then ground, rolled into a ball and dried. All this takes several days, our informant was not sure exactly how long. At 1,500 francs a ton, he says that a local person can expect 45 francs in profit. The gathering alone will take at least 100 working days. The preparation takes perhaps the same amount of time, and there is a loss in

terms of weight. All things considered, I wonder if the gatherer earned more than twenty centimes a day? ...

Orange essence

Orange trees are grown by the Fulah people of the Foutah-Djallon for orange essence extracted by grating the peel. One thousand oranges are needed to make one litre of orange essence, one tree can yield between two and five litres of essence. It takes two days of grating to produce one litre, add to this the picking and transport and altogether it requires about 30 hours of work. The official sale price is 35 francs, but sometimes the buyers cheat the producers and pay only 20 or 25 a litre. This sum has to cover not only the costs of grating, but also planting the trees and tending them for several years before the first harvest. We should also take into account the fruit that is spoiled. Before orange essence production begins, the fruit fetches two centimes a piece. The grated zest of an orange brings in 2.5 centimes. This means that in reality, the grater only gets 1 Fr.66 for ten hours' work. Actually, oranges from the Foutah-Djallon are very good to eat, .../...

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while foreign oranges are very expensive throughout the territories. But where economics are involved, only one factor comes into play, namely the trader's profit.

The grating of the oranges is done almost entirely by women and children, who spend every day for several months of the year doing this.

Few growers have more orange trees than the family can cope with but some big chiefs and notables have had up to a thousand trees planted. They engage their former

slaves to do the grating and allow them to keep one third of the produce, this earns the employees on average 2 Fr.77 for a 10-hour working day, during which they are not provided with food. Once the employee's third has been deducted the owner will barely get 1.5 centimes return for each orange, which is less than the price of the fruit.

In the main, orange essence is being used to pay the tax. The Administration is delighted and is planting more nurseries and offering seedlings to the local people, but they are only taking them under duress because they do not have the resources to grate more oranges.

Furthermore, the director of the *Compagnie Africaine des Plantes à Parfum* (African Perfume-plant Company) says the day is not far off when the price of orange essence, which is already falling, is not going to cover the costs of buying and transporting the fruit. He is also worried that Italy, which used to be the only producer of orange essence, is going to introduce orange trees into Ethiopia where the growing conditions are good. They would saturate the market and ruin the Foutah-Djallon industry.

Gold

Families engage in prospecting for gold and in producing gold for export. In Siguiriri,.../...

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where the biggest deposits are to be found, gold production is entirely in the hands of the local people. It is organised as follows: the chief of a mine has control over a certain sector where he organises the prospecting. He then takes on miners to extract the gold. The latter arrive during the dry season in family groups

or on their own and then organise themselves into teams. They dig a shaft on the site that has been designated for them. The spoil is removed by women; their payment for this work is one load out of every ten or twenty, depending on the agreement. A woman will pan everyone's earth and hand over the gold dust found in the piles of earth to the miners. This harvest is shared out between them.

Other miners, called *soughoumbalis*, go down into shafts after the miners have finished mining them. They extract gold from the remaining rock, running the risk of the tunnels collapsing on top of them.

The miners' profits vary enormously. Some of them leave empty-handed, while very occasionally others may find a valuable nugget. The average profit for a shaft digger is said to be 450 francs for the season; for a *soughoumbali* it is around 1000 francs. A woman earns, over the same period, around 50 francs.

The men begin by saving what they need to pay their family's tax. While they are doing this they eat very poorly but afterwards they double their food intake, start eating meat and buy themselves some clothes.

This is where the mine owner and his brothers, the traders known as Joola⁵¹, begin to make their fortune. The price of food, clothing, and all manner of manufactured objects .../...

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is twice as high on the gold fields as in the nearby towns, and these prices rise as more gold is discovered. The Joola traders make their biggest profits on livestock and rice. They sell animals not only to butchers, but

⁵¹ Alternative spelling: Dioula.

also to the miners themselves for the numerous sacrifices needed to appease the spirits.

The miners are increasingly exploited because they buy on credit and then become dependent on the goodwill of the Joola trader.

In the end the Joolas buy up the gold. They used to decide for themselves what they would pay for it but now the Administration is enforcing strict controls and has established a set price for gold. The miner knows his rights, and the abuses seem to have stopped. In spite of these measures, the Joolas are still making large profits.

The miner goes home reasonably happy if after all his efforts - which he rightly considers huge - he manages to bring home the wherewithal to pay his family's tax and some clothes to share among them.

iii - Industrial production

Europeans and wealthy locals have established large plantations for growing mostly coffee and cocoa in the Ivory Coast, bananas in Guinea and sisal in the territories of the French Sudan. Every sisal plantation has a factory for extracting and packing the sisal fibre.

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Cotton, groundnut, kapok, and wool are bought in their raw state directly from local producers. They are cleaned and packed, either by machine or by hand, by the traders. Some gold and diamond mining companies are operating in the Ivory Coast and Guinea and lastly, there are the large construction companies operating in the

ports of Conakry and Abidjan, and at the Markala Dam on the River Niger.

All these enterprises require a salaried workforce. There is a high demand for workers that is not being met by local people. The businesses mentioned are located near main transport arteries among people who are aware of the work involved and are not keen to take it on unless they are properly recompensed. So employers prefer to look further afield in distant regions for a more naïve and malleable workforce.

For a long time the Administration helped employers find workers and sometimes even recruited for them. But employers started taking advantage of the captive workforce and exploiting them, so the Administration decided to regulate the recruitment, transport and accommodation of workers. It fixed a minimum wage, maximum working hours, as well as a rate for overtime. Ill treatment was outlawed, health measures imposed, and conditions for repatriation were also introduced. The creation of 'Labour Offices'⁵² and an extension of the powers of the Inspector of Works were designed to help with enforcing these measures.

Now a labourer is treated better, fed better and paid better, and he also has more freedom. We will now look more closely at the life of this worker as he moves from his village to plantation life. We will discover whether the Administration's measures to protect him are adequate, and what obstacles remain in the way of their being implemented.

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Recruitment of the workforce

⁵² French: *Office du Travail*.

The Administration is no longer involved in recruiting workers. It authorises reliable bosses to find workers, monitors the conditions under which the workers are engaged, and checks their fitness and state of health.

Some employers have been quick to fall into line with these new regulations and work cooperatively with the Administration. Others have preferred to evade the regulations and go directly to canton chiefs whom they pay to provide them with men. These bribes amount to anything between one and two hundred francs. An official recruiter is lucky if he gets three or four workers for this price, but a generous boss can get many more with the help of a missionary, who acts like a chief and orders his Christians to go. We have seen two examples of this, in Man and in Conakry⁵³. Some bosses wait on the main roads for the return of would-be volunteers⁵⁴ who have been turned down on health grounds, and for workers from rival companies whom they tempt away with a bonus.

This is how bosses blacklisted by the Administration take on workers in unsupervised conditions, and engage men who are unfit or on the run from justice.

Recruitment, even regulated recruitment, is the scourge of some regions. The local head of the health service in Man put it this way: "Man could provide around 3000 men. They have taken 10,000. This is even worse than it seems because of the health problems here, a lot of people round are not very fit, there's a lot of sleeping sickness."

"There are too many Whites demanding workers", said a village chief from the same district, "we don't have enough men, but they don't take this into account."

⁵³ The capital of French Guinea.

⁵⁴ These are young men who have tried to enlist in the African regiments of the French army.

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It was the same story in Bouaflé: "Planters from the south are taking on too many labourers. The Administration puts in the request and the chiefs think they can't refuse. Some of these men are having to abandon their own crops to go and work for someone else." It is also said that the men are not happy when they return home. Some stay in the towns and are lost to their families.

In the Upper Ivory Coast, it is the Administration itself which is complaining, saying that the south is taking labour from the north and at the same time expecting the north to increase its output. This problem needs further consideration, as does the problem of enforcing the ban on abusive practices.

Transporting labourers

In the past labourers were marched on foot to their place of work, now they are taken there by lorry. There are regulations regarding the provision of seating and upper limits on the number of passengers but in most cases these are being ignored. Africans do not make a fuss if they have to travel standing up, even when they have paid for the journey. It goes without saying that they would prefer more comfortable conditions but an even more serious issue is ensuring that they are provided for during the journey.

I witnessed one case in Ouahigouya where the Niger Office was transporting two hundred people along with all their bulky luggage. They had not commissioned enough lorries so the petrol cans which were going to be used as seating had to be taken off to allow the passengers to

pile in. On top of this, the Niger Office had not laid on any food or sleeping accommodation for the journey. The Administration had to take charge of this by engaging a Niger Office employee, who was there on other business, to accompany the convoy. The situation was all the more serious in that entire families were being transported, including elderly people, pregnant women, and children, some of whom were far from robust.

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A few months earlier there had been another convoy heading for the Niger Office, this time containing only labourers. It had delivered its passengers in a very poor state. There were 116 cases of influenza, fever, dysentery and tuberculosis and one man had died during the journey.

Guinea does not seem to be experiencing these difficulties. Almost everywhere there are men arriving from considerable distances willing to offer their labour. Kissi men walk for several days to Kankan, and then take the train from there.

Piecework

Everywhere you go you are told about how the Black prefers piecework. Understandably they like to benefit from their hard work and want to be recompensed with leisure time. The bosses earn as much if not more from one half-day of piecework than from an entire week of hourly paid work. It also requires less overseeing of workers, in other words, the pieceworker is handled less roughly than the hourly paid worker.

But while some bosses respect the leisure periods earned by their workers, others indulge in all sorts of abuses, as the following examples demonstrate.

The sisal plantation at Kankan pays its pickers 6 centimes for each packet of leaves. If the picker works really hard he can cut, tie and transport a hundred packets in a working day. The following day, completely exhausted, he will rest. You can see him slumped on his mat looking dejected. What is more, he is given nothing to eat, as food is only distributed to men working on the plantation. This practice saves the bosses half the cost of the rations.

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The *CIRCONNIC*⁵⁵ Company's irrigated crop fields at Diré are worked by settlers but also by some labourers. They are assigned a task for the day. When the task is completed they receive a ticket to redeem against payment. If the task is not completed they will not get a ticket. The labourer has until the end of the following day to catch up. If he completes two tasks, he will receive two tickets. But the director says that a labourer never manages to do this so in effect he loses half of what he is owed.

On the sisal plantations at Sama in the Macina district a labourer is paid by the day. He will be assigned a task and if he fails to complete it, his wages will be docked.

All this leads one to conclude that if piecework is to be allowed to continue then we should either ban the double working day (the bosses will complain that they

⁵⁵ Savineau most probably means *CIRCONNIG*, the Niger Cotton Company, which was a private firm growing irrigated cotton in the Niger River Valley in the 1930s.

are already facing a labour shortage), or provide for double rations where this happens. In any event, there should be a system for paying partly completed tasks. It would also be a good idea to identify what an average task involves.

Hourly-paid work

The bosses generally pay the minimum wage. They have no hesitation in opening up their account books to show evidence of this. But we saw in Conakry that young Christian men supplied by the Catholic mission were being paid far less. In the villages where labourers are recruited, some people were complaining of being exploited. Some were earning only 25 francs when they had been promised 75, and others were being paid in cast-offs such as old uniforms and ridiculous old suits. Furthermore bosses were allegedly paying wages fifteen or twenty days late, and were laying men off before .../...

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the end of the month without settling what they owe. The Syrian plantation owners are reputed to pay their workers very poorly, and are also said to impose fines on workers at the slightest pretext as a way of not paying up and to settle their debts in clothing, which they claim are worth twice their real value. On the other hand the Syrians are not always 'on the workers' backs' and they do not insist that the work is of high quality. This is an advantage from the labourer's point of view.

I should mention here the distress caused to the workforce when a company is sold off or goes bankrupt. Until a new owner arrives, the workers are left without pay and are not able to return home.

Overtime

The working day lasts between nine and ten hours. However there are workers who labour by moonlight without being paid overtime (in the quarries of Akebefian, near Abidjan, for example), and workers on the sisal plantation at Sama operate their machines from four o'clock in the morning until midnight. These are exceptions, but workers everywhere are required to do overtime and are not always being paid for it. On the Markala Dam, some haulage jobs are done by two shifts of workers each doing consecutive twelve hours. This work lasts for three months, after which the men have two weeks' paid rest. In total, for every 939 hours worked, including overtime paid at a special rate, the worker receives 98 hours of relative leisure.

Docking pay for lateness

One of the ruses factory owners use to get their employees to work harder is to say they have arrived late for work in the mornings.

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On the other hand the workers say they arrive late because the working day is too long. In Markala, the working day lasts eleven and a half hours, with only a thirty-minute break for lunch. As a means of ensuring punctuality, the owner operates a system of docking pay for late workers. For each fifteen minutes lost, the worker is docked one hour of his wages. The fitters at *Consortium*, a company operating in Markala, went out on strike for five days to protest against these sanctions.

Weekly rest periods

Here is how a driver from Markala described his life:

"We are paid for a six-day working week and we work seven days. We are on call day and night, but we receive no overtime. We are not allowed to leave the car. We have to buy pieces of bread and nibble them as we sit behind the steering wheel. There is no fuel allowance for journeys, no cash advances, and no provisions supplied."

Poor working conditions

The men employed in the kapok factories spend their working lives either in a sort of cage full of large white flakes which looks like a snowstorm, or in rooms full of white dust. They are provided with regulation goggles and face masks but the goggles are so dark, and the breathing grill on the mask is so small that the man feel blinded and smothered when they wear them. Only one torture is endured at a time however, since each worker receives only one piece of protective gear at a time. In fact both are soon pulled off and hung around the neck like a collar with the result that there are many cases of conjunctivitis and pulmonary disorders.

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The bosses are quite unfazed by this as they are not breaking any rules.

Extractors should be installed in kapok factories to clean the air, like they are in cotton mills.

Alternatively we should provide items of protective headgear which are not instruments of torture. The men sometimes cover their faces with a metallic mesh because

they feel the need to protect themselves. A mask like the one fencers use might perhaps suit their needs.

Accidents

There have been a number of injuries, and cases of drowning and asphyxiations in Markala caused by rock falls. The company says the workers are clumsy but the charge hand explains that the men need to be trained for this work and selected according to their skill. The opposite is happening, tasks are being assigned willy-nilly and the men are shouted at and even beaten into producing results as quickly as possible. Because care is not taken to ensure that a safe distance is kept between workers, they injure each other.

A doctor told us that the life of a woodcutter is valued very cheaply because the bosses are insured. Every day seriously injured men are brought to the clinic with stomachs split open, broken legs, and sometimes cases of drowning. Our informant told us that "these men have to be incredibly nimble to avoid getting killed". Here is another example of the contempt in which the insured owners hold the potential accident victim. In the gold mines of Toumodi, several children were killed playing on the wagons. "It was their own fault", according to the boss, and the wagons continue to be left unchained.

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Rations

An Administrator explained that "planters who recruit most easily are those who provide the best rations, the pay is less important to the workers".

Almost everywhere, there is plenty of rice provided but usually too little meat. In the Ivory Coast, the

bosses insist that they cannot provide meat, that beef is in short supply, even to Europeans, chickens sell for between 10 and 15 francs, and a monkey carcass goes for between 25 and 30 francs. Some businesses are increasing the rice ration. Dried fish, when it is available, is distributed at most twice a week. Often no salt or oil is provided.

On the docks in Abidjan, we saw two kilos of gristle and hide - you could scarcely call it meat - being shared out among 110 workers. The smell coming from the cooking pot was disgusting.

In Lower Guinea, there is no meat either. The rice ration is generally served without any oil or salt. What often happens is that plots of land are assigned to workers where they can grow rice, manioc or groundnuts when they have finished the day's work. Some bosses let the workers harvest the produce from their palm trees. The womenfolk prepare the palm oil and sell on whatever their families do not consume. This is another example of where workers are forced to produce what should be provided for them. The worker likes it because he can build up reserves at home, which makes him feel rich, and it reminds him of being in the village, in the mornings he works for the community, and in the evenings for himself. They are healthy and satisfied, these men.

The *Grands Travaux de Marseille* construction company, which is building a jetty in Conakry, pays all salaries in cash.

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The business is based on one the islands of Loos. The families cannot go to town for provisions. The company gives them rice at cost price and they get by on this.

The company itself complains that the workers are not strong enough because they are not eating meat.

Housing

The employer has a choice between providing a large communal hut or individual huts. In both cases they must be big enough and reasonably watertight.

Out of all the communal huts we saw only one was spacious, solid and healthy. It belongs to the *SPROA* company⁵⁶ based near Gagnoa. Others were little more than dilapidated sheds or shelters covered with leaves, with beds packed in too close together. Whole families were sometimes housed in such buildings. Some had tried to create a bit of privacy by erecting screens of sacks or even paper but on the whole these efforts had not succeeded. "What does it matter", said one charge hand, "the women belong to everyone anyway". This is a despicable slur and a shameful excuse.

The employers prefer communal huts, it costs them less to build them than individual huts. But the workers prefer individual huts. Nevertheless they do not object being housed together, if other conditions are acceptable, as is the case at *SPROA*, but if the men already bear a grievance over another matter, the communal living demoralises them, and they leave.

"Build them for yourselves then", the bosses tell the men, who are then given a cramped little plot of land where the huts have to be built closely packed together. Bobo men are accustomed to vast and high living spaces, but because of the lack of space, .../...

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⁵⁶ At that time the *SPROA* company employed two hundred and fifty Mossi workers at Gagnoa in the Ivory Coast. *SPROA* still operates in modern-day Côte d'Ivoire, dealing primarily in agricultural export crops.

and also often limited time, they build little rooms that are so narrow and low that the air cannot circulate in them. But they seem satisfied, and the bosses even more so. The latter like to say that the Administration insists they have to provide pleasant living conditions for the Blacks, in fact all that is required is adequate accommodation. Then they want to show you how the rules set down by the Administration do not reflect African preferences. Some bosses say that Blacks have constructed the camps in such a way as to feel at home in them, and so they feel no obligation to insist on improving the living conditions. One boss was keen to point out the squalor in which these "animals" live.

We should understand that when Black people are moved away from home they are more vulnerable than would normally be the case. In a humid climate, the lack of air and light is more dangerous than in a dry climate. Also if one man is carrying an infection, his germs can contaminate a whole gang of workers. In some camps, the huts are going to rack and ruin. Rather than repair them, the bosses crowd the inhabitants into other huts, so you find two men sharing one bunk and whole families living in a cell three metres square. One boss complained that the leader of one of his gangs was demanding one hut for himself and another for *his* wives.

Generally speaking, the Administration's housing regulations are not being applied. Actually, only the most wealthy businesses can afford to comply with them. The regulations should perhaps be changed to reflect more closely the conditions on the ground. It would also be a good idea to make sure that the rights of all workers are being protected, even those who don't have a contract.

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Drinking water

The camps must be supplied with drinking water. Where water has been provided, the bosses have claimed that workers don't like it, they think it's "tasteless". In Africa there are some convenient myths circulating which are allowing some people to get rich quick. It is well-known that drinking fountains have been very successful in villages where they have been installed.

Toilets

Unfortunately it is probably true to say that very few labourers use toilets put at their disposal, though it is also true that very few planters have tried this experiment.

Health Services

Several big companies have an infirmary, but it usually stocks only a limited number of items for the treatment of minor injuries. The nurse does not have to have a diploma. The doctor who oversees the health service at the Macenta diamond mines has seen a former rifleman working as a nurse there and believes his ignorance to be a danger to patients. He is pleased that this 'nurse' has little access to medicines.

Some bosses run an infirmary just "for show", displaying a collection of drugs that have passed their use by date. Any business employing less than one hundred workers is not required to provide any medical service. Above this number, it is obligatory, but only for workers under contract. There are four hundred non-contracted labourers working at Guiglo under a boss who has not even

engaged a nurse. The A.M.I.⁵⁷ doctor was not allowed in to this business, and could only gain entry after the .../...

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Inspector of Health Services for the Ivory Coast intervened. This doctor could do little more than observe the miserable condition of the workers, but was powerless to improve the situation.

Abuse and mistreatment

In the Ivory Coast, the bosses admit quite casually that they slap their staff. They even do this in front of a representative from the Administration, and still believe themselves to be humane because they don't use the whip⁵⁸. This instrument has not disappeared completely, however. Some labourers recently returned to Bobo-Dioulasso after working for Mr Delannoy a planter from Grand-Bassam with their backs covered in scars. There has been talk of an English foreman in the diamond mines of Guékédou "who abuses the workers with a whip"⁵⁹. Former forced labourers from Man have recounted incidents of being beaten: "Even when we were ill, we were beaten and forced to work. The boss handed over anyone who complained to the Administrator, on the pretext that they had tried to escape. They were thrown in prison".

In Sama, the director of the sisal plantation allegedly imprisons men himself, and beats up "the old and the very young", and forces himself on women by

⁵⁷ The *assistance médicale indigène* (translation: the 'Native Health Service') known as the AMI or AM in French West Africa, was the health service run by the French administration for Africans living in the territories of the Federation. It was originally run by doctors and surgeons of the French navy. See glossary.

⁵⁸ French: *chicote*. This was an infamous weapon used notoriously in the colonisation of the Belgian Congo and then more widely in the African colonies.

⁵⁹ French: *cravache*. In this case Savineau uses the term 'cravache', signifying another kind of whip that was not outlawed unlike the larger *chicote*.

threatening to sack their husbands. In the Akébéfian quarry near Abidjan, the regime was so severe that the men left. They made it to the railway station where they were rounded up and forced to return. There have been unexplained deaths in their camp.

Certainly, not all the planters are torturers, but it does not seem an exaggeration to say that everywhere workers are at the very least slapped (especially in the Ivory Coast) and that thoroughly humane bosses are a rarity.

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Well-run companies

I will give two examples of how companies can be well run. Unfortunately this depends on them being large enough. The *SPROA* Company employs two hundred and fifty Mossi people at Gagnoa in the Ivory Coast. The housing was constructed by the company following plans drawn up by the doctor. It comprises very attractive large brick-built buildings with well-ventilated, well lit rooms and high ceilings. The sleeping mats are well spaced out on concrete flooring. Everything is washed with disinfectant each morning. Families are housed just as comfortably in round huts.

The Mossi people prefer round huts, and as soon as one becomes available, the single men group together to take up occupancy. But, they are also used to the communal dormitory now and are happy enough with that arrangement. They do piecework during the mornings and in the afternoons they make sun-blinds for their huts. They are magnificently healthy. The *A.M.I.* doctor says they usually put on three kilograms in weight during their stay in the camp. The workers' wives draw water from a

spring and wash their laundry in basins supplied for this purpose. They seem to be delighted with these facilities.

The *Kyriacopoulos* Plantation is situated in Lower Guinea, seventy-one kilometres from Conakry. It employs two hundred workmen. It is the regime they operate here which is most worthy of our attention. The salary for new workers is 3 francs, while the more experienced workers earn 3 Fr.25 or 3 Fr.50. The men receive rations for themselves and for their wives. The rations consist of rice and smoked fish, oil, salt and bananas. Three head of cattle used to be killed every month, until this became too expensive. An extra meal is provided at midday. A Sunday ration is also provided for anyone .../...

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who has worked five days during the preceding week. Extra rations are distributed after night shifts or particularly hard tasks (such as clearing muddy fields), and a rest scheduled for the following day.

The men can buy clothes and household goods from the company at thirty or forty percent below the price charged in Conakry. They have a tailor where the men can place orders, and there is soon to be a bakery. Every worker will be given a bread roll in the morning when he has finished his work.

Advances are given to conscientious men who need money to buy a bicycle or pay a dowry.

The prestige of the foremen is indicated by their two-room dwellings.

The company also makes an effort to teach specialised skills to each worker and he is paid 25 to 30% more for the less tiring skilled job. In most cases this has worked out well.

There is a male nurse who has a good supply of medicines. He treats Europeans for their numerous wounds as well as the local people who are injured in the water.

Despite the work being hard and dangerous, the *Kyriacopoulos* Company has no trouble recruiting workers. Toma people of Upper Guinea who are working for the company have returned home to fetch their wives to come back with them to the company camp.

Local planters

Local coffee and cocoa planters are often cited as having made fortunes. By dividing the total export revenue of a Circle by the number of families who live there you can come up with a respectable figure like 15,000 francs in somewhere like Abengourou. But in the Abengourou Circle, some planters .../...

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are cultivating up to two hundred hectares, while the average profit for the rest of the population is significantly less. What one tends to forget also is that each family is made up of twenty or more people. The head of a large family can amass several thousand francs (which amounts to a fortune for himself) because he has access to a large unpaid workforce. He hands out a few wrappers to his wives, some bicycles to his sons, and keeps the rest of the money to buy himself some more wives (who will be put to work) or gold dust which he will bury. Young people are starting to rise up against this hoarding of wealth. They are abandoning their fathers who are then forced to employ labourers. They pay the labourers 50 francs a month, feed them badly, house them in an even worse manner, but they make hardly

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anything or even no profit at all from this. In Dabou, some planters are no longer paying their workers. They give them girls instead hoping this will produce children who will then work for the profit of the planters. When someone leaves after working seven or eight years, the satisfied master may sometimes offer a departing gift to his good 'son-in-law'.

In this case at least this worker was treated like a son (which does not mean he was treated with kid gloves). Life is much worse for labourers on the big plantations. In exchange for 'tribute' his canton chief⁶⁰ hands him over to a plantation owner, the man can only comply or face reprisals. The planter then behaves as if he owns the man, and is quite oblivious to his well-being. There is no camp, just a few mats lying here and there among bales of straw in a shed. The only food on offer is bananas, as many as they like. These are cooking bananas but they are being eaten raw. They get no oil, no meat, no fish, only salt. The doctors say this diet is inadequate.

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The official wage is 50 or 60 francs a month, but the planters have complained; they used to pay much less than this. It is not easy to recruit under these conditions. In Abengourou, the Administrator advised the planters to offer a sort of sharecropping system, giving one third of the harvest to the worker, and getting him to grow his own bananas. These workers toil for a whole season without seeing a penny, and then they have to wait until the produce is sold. They are thin, miserable and

⁶⁰ The French administration appointed local African men to head the smallest administrative unit, the canton.

dressed in rags. Despite this some of them have been there for two or three years. I asked them what they had earned from the most recent harvests. I was told either 1000 or 1500 francs for a group comprising a husband and his wives or a man and his brothers. These unhappy people end up exploiting each other. I wondered why they received such a round sum. At the end of the season, when the bosses are faced with having to hand out a big share of their profits, they round down the wages to the level equivalent to a labourer's salary. Last year, many men abandoned the plantations once they understood what was going on. Recruitment is now even more difficult than before.

The life of a labourer

The labourer is there above all else to earn enough to pay his tax; and not just his but his entire family's as well.⁶¹ Some will have to send his father a sum to cover the dowry for a wife. Every labourer also has to bring home gifts for his extended family. If they are not able to do this they prefer not to go home to the village. Also there are some workers who had to borrow the cost of their train fare, and then have to repay it.

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With wages of 2 Fr. or 2 Fr.50 a day, even if he saves everything he earns he will still have to work for months on end before he can honour his obligations. Some men stick at it, but others give up. They get weary of the tasteless inadequate food, they want to eat more, they want to add some flavour to their rice and include some meat or fish, so they turn to a trader. The latter

⁶¹ The tax was imposed *per capita*, so dependants were taxed as well as workers.

opens a credit account for them, he sells them some clothes, a tin trunk, a torch, a bicycle. The labourer is tempted to borrow beyond his means. When he is paid, he must settle the account. It is about this time that women and professional gamblers turn up in the camps. The worker stays away from the plantation for several days during which he loses his money and all his worldly goods, right down to the clothes on his back.

On top of all this, the humid coastal climate is difficult for these mountain people. They are bothered by the mosquitoes and get infected with malaria. Bosses who understand what is going on say this is the reason why the workforce is so apathetic. One of them used to run a business in Central Guinea which employed people from the same tribes and he got higher returns there than he is now getting in Lower Guinea. Here the labourers are tired, impoverished and dissatisfied. They become demoralised and soon yearn to return to their homeland and stay there forever.

Child labour

It is common to see boys of thirteen or fourteen in the work gangs. In Kindia, some young Soussou boys were working on a banana plantation cutting straw and repairing roads. They were earning 1 Fr.75 plus a rice ration. They were housed by a woman who worked on the plantation. They gave her their rations and from time to time five francs to buy .../...

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condiments. They fetched the water and firewood for her. She of course was feeding herself at their expense.

On the Banankoro Farm in the Niger Office, boys aged between eight and twelve years are employed to scare off the birds. They get 15 francs a month and a ration of millet, with no meat or fish.

In Bouak, Mr. Michalos, a tobacco manufacturer, has twelve boys aged about fifteen in his employ, whom he calls his "apprentices". They tend the plantations, they harvest the crop, they are involved in the processing and wrapping of the tobacco, but they are paid no wages and given no food. At the end of the month, when they want to leave they cannot because Mr. Michalos has managed to requisition them for a year.

On the sisal plantation at Kankan, the leaves are pushed into the press by boys aged between ten and fifteen. They sometimes lose parts of their fingers doing this. The boss himself has a mutilated finger. He seems to think that it is just as fine for an African to run the risk of mutilation for 1.50 franc a day as it is for him while he is making his fortune. In any case, the air in the workshops is full of dust and it is dangerous for adults and children alike.

Young boys are also working in the Gonfreville⁶² spinning mills in Bouak, but the workshops there are reasonably salubrious.

In general, if the work does not require strength, employers prefer to engage children. They are more docile and industrious than adults, and accept very low wages. But as they hand these over to their parents, the level of pay is not really of much interest to them.

The female workforce

⁶² The Gonfreville spinning and textile mill, *Filatures Gonfreville*, was founded by Frenchman Robert Gonfreville in Bouak, Ivory Coast, in the 1920s. It modified its name to *Filature Tissage Gonfreville* in 1995 and was still operating in 2015, though in some financial difficulties as reported by Jeune Afrique that year.

The female workforce is said to be rebellious, unstable, quarrelsome and often lazy, that only women who work for themselves work hard, .../...

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but they all accept very low wages. In general in French West Africa, very few women are on a salary contract. On the plantations, they sift the coffee beans (for a wage of 1 Fr.50 a day) and make the packing material for bananas, earning 1 franc for every hundred pieces.

At Toumodi, the women pan for gold. Every month, the gold dust they have collected is weighed. A hard-working woman can earn 300 francs a month. Some women, although they are there all the time, only make a paltry ten francs or so. The boss suspects them of stealing most of their harvest. However, one of them, who used to work every day but earned only 12 or 15 francs a month, now earns 300 francs since the death of her uncle.

In Kabara, at the port in Timbuktu, women are engaged in sorting rubber and wool. The wool sorting is particularly hard work and gives them a permanent cough.

The wool sorters are widows, or young girls with an aged mother or younger brothers to support. Before the 1st January 1938, they earned 1 franc a day without rations. Rations have become obligatory since that date.

In Ziguinchor⁶³ and Mopti⁶⁴, trading companies employ women as dockers. These women, working in pairs, lift sacks of groundnuts weighing around thirty kilos each and carry a third sack on their heads. They go backwards and forwards at a brisk pace and without a break, between the quay and the warehouse for six hours in the morning and

⁶³ Ziguinchor is the major town of the most southerly coastal region of Senegal.

⁶⁴ The town of Mopti is situated in the eastern region of Mali (French Sudan).

four hours in the afternoon. They earn 6 francs, without rations. They are young and strong women, but there are some who are under fifteen years of age, and some barely twelve years old.

There are also female stevedores working at Diré in the French Sudan. They are employed alongside the men. These are small and frail Bellah⁶⁵ women who .../...

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work for Targuy⁶⁶ masters. They earn 1 Fr.50 and a food ration. I have mentioned these poor women already, their plight is not the fault of their employers. The employers say that where women are earning less than the men it is because they are not carrying as much. They take on these women more through pity than self-interest, because if they do not take them on, the women will face reprisals from their Targuy masters.

Labour laws

All across French West Africa now, women and children are quite well protected by law. This is not the case for men, as we have seen. But in all cases we have seen that their legal rights are not being fully observed, whether for political reasons (as in the case of the Bellahs and the Tuaregs) or because we do not have enough Inspectors of Work. So there are three issues here that need our attention.

⁶⁵ Bellahs have traditionally been enslaved by Tuareg masters. The practice is still in force in the 21st century though now under threat as the government in Niger passed legislation in 2003 banning slavery.

⁶⁶ Savineau uses 'Targuy' and 'Tuareg' interchangeably in her writing.

iv - Farming using "Settlement" and "Extension"⁶⁷ Methods

Here I am going to look at those companies that are specifically engaged in modernising crop farming and maximising the producer's profits. These are companies that are also producing, in bulk, certain products that we need in French West Africa and France.

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The Niger Office

The biggest company of this type is the Niger Office. This company has undertaken to irrigate the formerly uninhabited and infertile plains of the Niger Buckle and populate the area with farmers transferred from overpopulated regions, and to grow large quantities of rice and cotton.

The Niger Office is funded by the Federation of French West Africa, but is nevertheless autonomous. It resettles families, gives them oxen and ploughs, and oversees their work.

The settlement system

For the first year, the Niger Office provides the settlers with their food. In the second year it allows them to keep their harvest. From the third year onwards, the settler must pay by annuity the costs of his farm, the irrigation and for the instructors.

⁶⁷ The French term *vulgarisation*, translated here as 'extension farming', means non-irrigated farming methods conducted under French management. For an explanation of farming in the Niger Office, see: Van Beusekom, Monica, M. *Negotiating Development African farmers and colonial experts at the Office du Niger 1920-1960*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Oxford: James Currey; Cape Town: David Philip, 2002).

The experiment began in 1930⁶⁸ at Baguineda in the Bamako Circle. Five years later, it was extended to Kokry, and finally, in 1937, to Niono.

The settlers are expected to tend their fields from dawn till dusk. If the head of the family does not get a good enough return from his workers then either his rations will be cut or he will receive some other punishment.

Sons, wives and children have been worked very hard by the men. From the age of eight, boys are put to work on the hard land, they say the soil "sticks to the ploughshare" and slows them down. Sometimes this work is done at night to relieve the strain, not on the boys, but on the oxen. For nearly three weeks the work is done by moonlight until the sun rises. This coincides with the holiday period.

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The employees all have some agricultural training. They have an interest in maintaining levels of output if only for fear of being dismissed. Even in front of visitors they behave in a manner that would be too authoritarian even if the settlers were wage-earning labourers. No doubt they take no interest in passing on their education to the settlers.

Average profits

Given the conditions, it is reasonable to assume that the Office is getting maximum returns. When I asked what this was the settlers had no idea. The Niger Office takes the harvest, sells it, keeps whatever it is due -

⁶⁸ The first experiment was conducted near Bamako in 1925. The company itself was formed in 1932. See glossary.

this is not monitored at all - and hands the rest over to the heads of the families.

The Office calculates what it owes to a family on the basis of a family being ten people including two workers. It also calculates what it owes on the basis of age and sex of family members, and it appears, by counting women and children as half a worker - which is too low - that ten people equals at least four days' work.

A working day is said to be worth 2 francs in Baguineda, the only production centre. A labourer is paid 2 Fr.50, and gets a ration that includes meat or fish, oil and condiments. The only harvest a settler working for the Niger Office has brought in is his own grain. So I asked how he has been able to cover the rest of his requirements. The response I got was an ironic smile. One of his heaviest costs is for firewood in this deforested area.

The head of the family's profits

Those who work for a chief see even less of the profits because it all goes straight to the headman who according to local custom, is not obliged to give any account of it.

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However, it is also the custom that the chief has to provide clothing for all his dependants, and provide his son with a wife. Actually the more numerous the family group is, and sometimes it numbers up to 80 people, and the bigger the sums involved, the more the chief is tempted to keep all the profits to himself. He often

spends it on acquiring more wives for himself and condemns his adult sons to a life of celibacy.

Furthermore according to tradition a family must allow both men and women to take time out from family labour so they can grow crops for themselves. In the Niger Office, this custom is not being observed.

Finally, retired people have been given much more land than they can cultivate with their families so they employ labourers. During the economic crisis⁶⁹ these workers received almost no pay. One of them died of hunger. Now the employers are obliged to pay the standard wage which they cannot really afford.

The physical and moral state of the settlers

The Niger Office selected low-lying land for the settlers and it becomes waterlogged after the lightest shower of rain. It has built homes on this land which do not remotely correspond to the wishes of the inhabitants. Furthermore, these buildings are made of poor quality adobe⁷⁰ and are collapsing (in the new villages it has been decided that the Office will not build homes as the settlers are far more proficient at making adobe structures than the engineers). By the same token the machines which are supposed to clear the land are not able to operate efficiently in this area in fact they cause problems because they leave tree roots which are then more difficult to extract. The settlers are faced with hard graft when they arrive. If they have not finished building their huts or their walls by the time the rains come, they buildings will collapse.

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⁶⁹ The effects of the crash of 1929 were felt in the colonies throughout the early and mid 1930s.

⁷⁰ Adobe is a mud and straw building material that bakes hard in the sun.

The villages are in a really bad state and the people are sad and unhealthy. The huts are infested with mosquitoes so they sleep outside and catch cold. The new ration of rice - which was soon introduced in place of millet - is not good for them. When they first arrived there were many deaths from dysentery, malaria and pneumonia, mainly among women and children.

The livestock has not adapted well to the climate either. The animals have to be allowed to rest before the end of the working day and the remainder of the day's work has to be done by hand with hoes. Settlers who brought animals with them have lost nearly all of them. At Baguineda, the problem of trench latrines⁷¹ remains insoluble. The Niger Office claims to be winning the battle over sanitation and health, but its clinics are miserable little huts equipped at most with a few phials of medicine. Anyone who asks to attend the clinic is followed by the monitor who accompanies him back to the fields. An auxiliary doctor⁷² told us that some of the patients are not suffering from classified illnesses, they are just exhausted. Children particularly are overworked. There is a general air of sadness pervading the Niger Office. Bewildered old folk hide away in their shelters feeling lost and far from home, the younger adults are dressed in rags and children go around naked. Some chiefs say they are happy enough, but the young respond with bitter laughter.

The 'extension' programme in the Niger Office

⁷¹ The original meaning is ambiguous there having been no previous mention of 'trench latrines' or 'leaf fall' or 'tree cover' or any possible translation of the original French '*feuillées*'.

⁷² Auxiliary doctors, called 'African doctors' after 1946, were trained for two years at the medical school in Dakar before being posted to serve in clinics throughout the Federation of French West African colonies.

Along the borders of the areas used for the 'settlement' programme, that is to say the areas where settlers are installed on irrigated land, the Niger Office has undertaken an extension farming programme in long-established villages involving the use of ploughs in dry or partially irrigated land.

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The profits being made in these centres are as follows. At Niénébalé, where the land is partially irrigated, a family of ten is said to earn 4000 francs. At Barouéli (no irrigation) such a family is said to earn only 600 francs. Later, we shall compare these figures, not only with those from Baguineda, but also with those obtained by companies other than the Niger Office.

Areas neighbouring the Niger Office

In the villages surrounding the Niger Office, nobody wants to be incorporated into the scheme. On the contrary, many of them complain about living next to the Office. Several farmers have been ruined by the effects of land drainage. Some have experienced new hardships such as maintaining the road from Markala to Macina. It is used almost exclusively by the Niger Office but as responsibility for maintaining it lies with the Administration, it is the local population who live outside the jurisdiction of the Office who have to repair it. The road surface was never packed down so in the rainy season it gets full of potholes. The subdivision of Macina is required to supply five thousand days of forced labour a year from local men to repair this damage.

Also, opening up new canals has led to some roads being closed. We have seen Moors stranded at the 14 Km post⁷³ with two hundred sheep. The ferryman has refused to take them across, even for money, on the grounds that the ferry is for people and motor cars only.

While we are discussing canals, I should add that most of them are leaking. We witnessed two hundred settlers repairing an enormous breach at Baguineda, the dikes having been breaking at Kokry, and five villages were flooded at Siguiné, where about a hundred hectares of crops growing outside the Niger Office were lost.

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The Role of Agents in the Niger Office

The staff of the Niger Office, as I mentioned earlier, have an agricultural training and in principle play no part in administrative affairs. The settlers are under the jurisdiction of the Circle Commandant. In reality, however, the agricultural agents who know nothing about the law, and like it to stay that way so they can make it up as they go along, rule over the settlers in a crude and disrespectful manner and disregarding the rights of the individual. They stop the settlers filing complaints with the court as far as it is possible without running the risk of stirring up "trouble". This is a ploy designed not only to keep them

⁷³ This is a road reference indicting 14 kilometres from the beginning of the road.

at work, but also to prevent any gossip getting out and any spirit of rebellion developing.

The work regime in the Niger Office

As we have shown, the Niger Office has no hesitation in encouraging heads of families to exploit their sons, wives, children and the workers they employ on very low wages. This is a deliberate policy designed to reinforce familial authority. Under cover of this apparently laudable objective, heads of families are encouraged to abuse this authority. The Office staff ward off any criticism of this in advance by invoking 'traditional custom' whereas in fact custom demands that the actions of the head of a family are subjected to controls which ensure everyone's rights are protected. The Office acts as an accomplice to the chief who violates this custom. It is clear from the reports drawn up by the senior managers of the Niger Office that they want to destroy that admirable spirit of voluntary co-operation which prevails in indigenous societies and encourage fascism. Like other dictators operating on a far larger scale, the Director of the Niger Office .../...

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likes to dress this policy up in the colours of socialism. In reality, he is reinstating slavery. In spite of this he has not achieved the high levels of output he predicted. Rice and cotton are doing badly on land that has cost such a lot to irrigate. French West Africa has paid out one and a half thousand million francs on this enterprise so far but it cannot depend on the Niger Office to supply the food it needs nor can we

depend on it to supply the French cotton mills with what they need.

I can only repeat here what I said in my conclusion to the report I wrote on the Niger Office⁷⁴:

...It is a matter of great regret that in the face of such an important and delicate undertaking, the Administration has all but abrogated its responsibilities. We owe it to ourselves to re-examine this problem, to reconsider what we can expect from this enterprise, and to entrust the Niger Office to more expert, benevolent and neutral hands.

Cotton production in Diré

The settlement of Diré has recently been placed under the jurisdiction of the Colony of the French Sudan. When we visited it was still being run by the *Ciconnic* company.

It is engaged in rice, cotton and wheat production on irrigated land. The settlers have been moved here from only a few kilometres away so they are still in their normal environment. These people traditionally used irrigation and fertilisation methods, albeit on a smaller scale than they do now. Water is distributed by pumps and the land is initially prepared by machine. There are no ploughs and no oxen, so there is no fresh manure. They get their fertiliser from dung piles deposited over centuries by herds belonging to nomads. In exchange for the facilities it provides, the Company takes some of the grain from the settlers and half of their cotton. It is impossible to say whether this is .../...

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⁷⁴ This earlier report was sent to the Governor-General of French West Africa from Denise Savineau in December 1937 a few weeks after she had visited the Niger Office. An electronic copy of the report is accessible at the Savineau Archive website: hull.ac.uk/savineau/reports/report2

a fair deal but the settlers look like they are doing well.

Once again, there we encounter the chief pocketing all the family's profits. He is obviously wealthy, his bejewelled wives are well-dressed, his brothers are living a relatively good life and his children do not have to work much. They are look physically fit.

The doctor informed me that malaria is on the decrease, and the number of births is up. In 1936, out of all the French Sudan, Diré provided the highest number of new recruits fit for service in the African Rifles⁷⁵.

On the other hand, there are some farmers who are in a lamentable state. These people are the Tuaregs' slaves. The *Ciconnic* company made the mistake of giving Tuaregs some land. They have put their slaves to work on it who have to hand over all the produce apart from the miserable rations they are allowed to consume. These lands should be taken back from the current owners, and the slaves given the opportunity to set up on their own account.

In Diré, farming is supervised but voluntary so the agricultural agents are not authoritarian unlike their counterparts in the Niger Office. Also this is a much smaller undertaking so the Administration can easily monitor what is going on and be seen to be in control and collaborating with the settlers.

But the Company is losing money. It is operating on a small-scale and cannot provide enough irrigation in times of severe drought. Sometimes this means the harvest

⁷⁵ These are the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, who were initially recruited in Saint-Louis, Senegal where the corps was first formed by Governor-General Louis Faidherbe in the 1850s. Later the regiment recruited from all over French West Africa and most particularly from Mali.

is lost. It is also a long way from the coast and has to pay heavy transport costs. Transportation is slow and it is not easy to get the produce on the market .../...

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so there is a big delay between the harvest being gathered and profits coming in. The settlers suffer more than the Company from these problems.

Managed crop farming in Kolo (Niger)

In Kolo, near Niamey, an agricultural college is providing the base for a trial in managed crop farming. Under the guidance of the college director, the nearby villages are ploughing using locally-made implements, the plough costing 70 or 80 francs, and the harrow 30 or 40 francs.

Among the Djerma⁷⁶ people of Kolo, only men, and particularly young men, are involved in crop farming. Women and young children help only with the harvest.

A family of ten can save 250 francs a year while still eating well. The father keeps 100 francs, and gives 50 to each of his sons. He marries them off between the ages of twenty and twenty-five and pays the dowry himself. Women have their own small plots of land. They get to keep any profit they make from these and their husbands provide their clothing. All these people are dressed nicely and look well. We saw some young men showing off finely harnessed horses which belonged to their father, of course. The oxen had enormous humped backs, a sign of being well fed.

This is an experiment that has succeeded.

⁷⁶ Alternative spelling: Zarma

Mouride crop farmers

We cannot leave the subject of crop farming without noting, for the record, the Mouride farmers of Senegal, whom I shall .../...

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being studying on a future expedition. The Mourides are a Muslim brotherhood which is maintained by its followers. Those we saw in Diourbel did not seem to be suffering any privations. Through their own efforts they have built two very beautiful mosques costing several million francs. Whatever one might think about using community funds for such projects, it is clear that this community is prosperous and their farming is bearing fruit.

v - Provident Societies

As far as the modern sector is concerned it just remains for us to look at the excellent work being done by the Provident Societies.

When crop farming, food industries and other industrial concerns first started up they presented traders with the opportunity to make scandalously large profits.

Producers were incessantly being encouraged to expand their crops with the result that they ran out of seed and were obliged to buy more, not for cash but on credit, and against promises to pay back their debts twofold, threefold, or even fourfold.

Then, come harvest-time, producers were approached by buyers offering ridiculously low prices and the farmers got deeper and deeper in debt. This was the

distressing period when people were going into bonded labour.

Provident Societies were set up to stop these abuses. For a tiny sum, paid at the same time as the tax is due, the farmer becomes a member of a Provident Society.

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The Society lends selected seeds to the farmer at a reasonable price, and supports the development of crops by improving equipment, introducing a wider range of crop varieties, and encouraging the rearing of livestock. It also helps producers get a good price for their produce, offers loans, and helps farmers if disaster strikes. The Circle Commandant runs the Provident Society with the help of local notables. Those who appreciate how important this role is and manage in the interests of the local people (who should be his sole concern as the Society does belong to them), and know how to get the educational value out of this endeavour will achieve remarkable results.

I will not go into these in detail as they are so numerous and in general we are well aware of them already, I will just give some specific examples.

Growth in production levels

In Koutiala in the French Sudan, a typical family consists of thirteen people, which includes nine workers. This seems a much more accurate picture than the Niger Office's 'typical family' of ten people with only two workers.

In Koutiala a family farms six hectares of very fertile earth, producing some 2,600 kilos of millet

without using either a plough or irrigation. They make on average 389Fr.50 a year in profit. Their costs come to 361 francs and the budget is balanced.

Now under the guidance of the Provident Society but still working without a plough, the same family is in the following situation four years on: .../...

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Income	855 francs
Outgoings	525 francs

Profits	320 francs

So, with a plough they can double their output while the costs remain the same and their savings mount up to 1000 francs.

The Minianka people were once in serious debt and were handing over their daughters into bonded labour to pay their tax. It was the custom for sons to exchange their sisters for wives, but they were no longer able to do this and were having to leave. The father himself sometimes ended up in bonded labour. As the debt was not decreased by the work of bonded labourer, he became a slave for life, unless money from an inheritance became available to release him.

The Administration has been trying to get the principle accepted that a bondsman's debt can be worked off. Quite a number of individuals have now been released thanks to this, and now that production levels are higher under the Provident Society regime, there are no new cases of bonded labour.

There is an effort being made at present to build up livestock. The Provident Society has set up a sort of savings bank which does not pay out any interest - the African is not interested in this - but does release the sum immediately upon demand.

If a family wants a ploughs it has to put in a request and only two are allowed per family. This prevents heads of families expanding beyond their means and overworking or underpaying their workers. The Society is also providing low-cost farming implements .../...

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which the Africans can repair themselves.

This is a worthy project being run in the interests of local people rather than in the interests of Europeans, but Europeans nevertheless benefit from it, Koutiala produces a lot of very high quality cotton.

The results are slow in coming through. Only 850 of the 1,075 ploughs owned by the Provident Society have been distributed, and only 200 of those are in full working order. But the very fact that this is evolving slowly is a sign of it being accepted.

Higher prices and lower portorage⁷⁷ costs

It has been said repeatedly that building roads for motor vehicles has wiped out human portorage. It is certainly true that the great convoys that covered huge distances in their hundreds, carrying dismantled machines as well as foodstuffs, have disappeared. But with a view to controlling prices and encouraging competition between

⁷⁷ The term 'portorage' is used here to denote the process of transporting goods by hand as opposed to by any form of mechanical transportation.

traders, the Administration has established trading stations which bring together all the products from the region. Women and children carry their produce from their villages to the trading stations. The station is sometimes situated to the north of the village, whereas the outward routes lead southwards.

On the roads you see lorries driving along empty in the same direction as women carrying loads, and then lorries returning with loads passing women on their way home with empty baskets.

One even sees farmers who live right by one trading station, having to cover twenty-five kilometres to take their cotton to another station because the neighbouring one is not located in his administrative Circle. This can lose him 15 to 20 centimes on every kilo of cotton.

The quantities being transported and the working days devoted to portage are calculated as follows in Boudiali: .../...

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- the subdivision of Boudiali exports between 1,500 and 2,000 tonnes of groundnuts, cotton, shea, tobacco, pimento, onions and a small quantity of maize,. The groundnuts alone come to 40,000 loads and with all the waiting and returning with empty baskets, the portage of each load takes a minimum of a morning, and can often take as long as two or three days. One wonders how many working days are lost this way. It could be a hundred thousand days, the equivalent of 273 working years, and this is in just one subdivision.

In Zuénoula, where cotton alone represents 46,000 loads, this estimate would be even higher.

There are more disturbing figures. In Man, it is not uncommon to find villages situated twenty kilometres away from a trading station. In Bouak, they can be up to forty kilometres away, added to this, as one informant pointed out, the journey through the bush can be a third longer because the path is not straight. In Gagnoa, there are plantations situated five hours' walk away from the village, and the village fifteen hours away from the trading station. This means a total of thirty-five hours are required for portage to the trading station. A planter who does not have enough women employs female porters at a rate of 5 francs for a return trip.

This unregulated portage is more problematic than the old regulated system, because it involves people who used to be protected under the law, such as pregnant women, mothers of young children, and young boys.

There are those who claim that the women like going to market and would go anyway. We have seen that they prefer to process shea nuts into butter, even if this means incurring a loss, rather than have the bother of having to go to market more often.

Furthermore, the journey is costly. Gone are the times when a porter could find lodgings with someone from .../...

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his own ethnic group⁷⁸. This would be impossible on a market day. The village would be ruined. So rations and even accommodation must be paid for. In Man, the cost is estimated to be 5 francs per person per day.

⁷⁸ As in previous instances, the chosen English translation reflects current usage. The term used in the original is 'race' (race), which Savineau uses throughout her reports to signify ethnic or tribal grouping.

Porterage is such an exhausting job that in areas where the plantations are large, owners have been buying lorries rather than use their workforce. In Dimbokro, a region of small coffee producers, the traders have organised themselves in such a way as to relieve local people of these duties. They are developing some influence in this area thanks to this. They take their lorries as near as they can to where the planter is based, take him and his harvest to the trading station, and leave him to sell his produce. But the planter knows the ropes, as do his rivals. There's hardly a quibble over the cost of the merchandise and the trader finds himself doing so well out of it that he is happy to take his planter home again.

Some Administrators are saying that the trading stations are veritable "free-for-alls". They point out that farmers know the current prices in the villages and at the market and should know what to ask for. But what is true in busy areas is less so in more isolated parts, where defenceless people can end up at the mercy of unscrupulous traders. Rather than closing down trading stations, the best thing to do would be to open more. Just one station in Kasseré (in the Boundiali subdivision) would obviate the need for two hundred tons of produce to be carried to Siempurgo; the equivalent of 18,000 man-days when the return journey, with empty baskets, is taken into account. Also, regulations governing the running of trading stations must be made more flexible. It is of no significance whatsoever - except perhaps to the prestige of the Administrator - if the produce of one administrative circle or subdivision .../...

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were to be sold in the neighbouring Circle or subdivision. The producer must be allowed to go to the nearest station, and must be permitted also to travel south rather than north, if prices in the south are higher.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that 1) local people have worked very hard to lay roads suitable for motor vehicles, so they should be the ones who benefit from them first, 2) that the Provident Societies own lorries and motor cars which are used more often for the benefit of the district Administrator or local chiefs, than for the benefit of the Society members.

If these Provident Societies are really free, properly-run organisations, they should be able to provide transport for the benefit of their members, just as the traders of Dimbokro currently do for their own benefit.

They have managed to do this in Boundiali. I think it is useful to point out that after a slightly shaky start, their first solution below, they came up with a workable solution.

1. The first solution required that the lorry went as close as possible to the farmer's village to pick up the producers and their loads. They then drove to the trading station, deposited produce and producers, and the farmers returned to the village on foot. It was clear that the lorry was carrying more people than goods and the fuel costs, even when covered by individual contributions, were too high.

2. The second solution saw the lorry accompanied by an officer of the Provident Society, who took charge of the goods and gave the producer a receipt. He then left accompanied by two men from the village in question, to

sell each lot at the market. He would then return and distribute the money. The process was long and complicated.

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3. The third solution was the simplest, but had been avoided because the traders would say it was illegal. The Provident Society official pays for the goods at the going rate for that day. He then sells the whole lot in bulk to the highest bidder, and hands over the surplus to the Provident Society. There is nothing illegal here, since it is the Society, not the Administration, who is doing the selling.

It was feared that bulk selling would bring down the prices. On the contrary, the traders have considered it a boon to be able to buy in large quantities; it saves them time and effort. When a load arrives they jostle with each other to get the business and because they are now dealing with an official from the Provident Society and not with naïve village women, the price of shea products rose in a few days from 25 to 50 centimes a kilo.

This procedure has been introduced all over the Upper Ivory Coast and has been just as successful. In Tita, the price of shea nuts has risen from 30 to 42.5 centimes a kilo; in Safané it has reached 52.5 centimes, in Oulo it has reached 50.6, and in Oury 50.1 centimes. In the district of Bobo-Dioulasso, where the Administrator has openly allied himself with the traders and has opposed collective sales, the price of shea nuts has reached only 47 centimes a kilo while Bobo-Dioulasso is closer to the sea than any of the trading stations I mentioned above. It is 220 kilometres from Safané to

Bobo. If we calculate portorage at 1 Fr.25 for every
kilometric tonne, this means it costs 27.5 centimes to
transport each kilo of shea nuts, which brings its price
to 80 centimes a kilo once it is delivered in Bobo. If
they were to pay this price in Bobo the traders would
save themselves the time it takes them to the other
trading stations.

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Rising prices are the best possible publicity the
Provident Societies could get. In fact it is not enough
that the farmers are members of the Society, they should
also take an interest in its activities and feel they can
have confidence in it. On this point, we should note that
in Lower Guinea, economically independent Bandouma women
are members of the local Society but they take no
interest in its work. We can see from this how important
it is to educate women, a point I shall return to later.

The issue of portorage raises its head again when we
look at the provision of seeds. One of the Provident
Society's main activities, as I said earlier, is to lend
seed to its members. They give it back at the end of the
growing season.

This seed will be lent out again. If it were left in
the charge of village chiefs, there would be a risk of it
disappearing, or being arbitrarily distributed. It is for
this reason that the granaries have been located in the
main town of the subdivision.

In Boundiali 159 tonnes of seed in 12,720 loads are
brought in and taken away for this purpose.

Initially Boffa in Guinea only had three granaries
in the whole Circle. Farmers from some villages had to
transport their seed over ninety kilometres. Given that

they had to go there and back twice, it meant travelling 360 kilometres for each load. If the grain stores had been situated in the main town of the canton it would still have meant a journey of 30 kilometres. So a village granary was taken over for the purpose and secured with a padlock. But the Commandant has to come and open the granary himself to ensure everything is done fairly.

Given the number of villages, the whole process takes such a long time that sometimes the seed is still being returned when it is time to start distributing it again. .../...

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Some people are getting their seed late because of this.

The contribution of machinery

One of the conditions for good production levels is the use of machinery. Whenever possible machines should be used to replace human manual labour and boost profits. In Abengourou, coffee is shelled by machines. In the Upper Ivory Coast, they are going to introduce shelling machines for groundnuts. We have seen that in Dabou, efforts to produce palm oil mechanically failed despite some advantages of doing it this way. These successes and failures need to be communicated to the leaders of the Provident Societies to help them plan their trials. Everyone should be encouraged to remember that what constitutes an obstacle today will not necessarily be an obstacle tomorrow, and that obstacles need to be tackled in an effective way.

Monitoring the diet

2017

Another interesting initiative involves efforts to monitor and improve the diet.

In Dimbokro they have calculated what proportion of food produced is not exported and from this they have calculated each individual's share. The calculation has taken into account the proportion of wastage, this is so large as to merit attention:

Yam:	between 14 and 34%
Manioc, bananas:	between 14 and 15%
Maize:	around 10%

Once wastage is deducted, the individual's daily intake is: .../...

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Yam:	1,619 grammes
Manioc:	641 grammes
Bananas:	123 grammes
Maize:	301 grammes
Oil and butter:	0.5 grammes

We can see that there is a lot of starch in the diet but not enough fat. Very small quantities of meat and fish are being imported so, in general, the diet lacks nitrates, protein and fat. The Provident Society is going to try to rectify this by recommending that farmers grow haricot beans, soya beans and rice. It is also going to try rearing pigs.

Irrigated gardens

In 1933, the Bobo-Dioulasso Provident Society planted some big vegetable gardens. They are tended by the inhabitants of three villages. The gardens occupy a ten hectare plot, two hectares of which are irrigated and

serve as a plant nursery. An agricultural monitor has the beds prepared by six or eight 'volunteers' (mostly elderly people and children) provided in rotation by the villages. Ten workmen maintain the irrigation channels. Each family has their own plot and receives seedlings. The monitor oversees the planting out and the women do the watering. The produce from the two irrigated hectares is sold to pay for the seed. The produce from the individual gardens belongs to the families to do as they please with.

The output is massive and of a surprisingly high quality; any gardener the world over would agree that the vegetables from the Bobo gardens are 'monster size'. But is this being achieved by exploiting excessively docile workers? And what profits are the gardeners making? The Provident Society was not able to answer these questions. Everyone sells his own produce, and no accounts are kept. What seems to be happening in reality, .../...

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is that large quantities of fruit and vegetables are being left to rot and the rest sold off at ridiculously low prices; an enormous lettuce goes for 0.25 centimes. Of course this allows local people of modest means to have some variety in their diet, if the prices went up they would no longer be able to buy, but similar prices are charged to the co-operative of civil servants at Abidjan who are sent a box of produce every week. It seems that the co-operative could pay more but once again, the Provident Society of Bobo taking European interests into account rather than African interests.

Comparing different crop farming methods

2017

I will now compare some different methods of managed crop farming.

In the Niger Office accounts, profits are presented per individual worker in the following manner:

Farming method	profit per worker
Crop farming on irrigated land (Baguineda)	750 francs
Crop farming on semi-irrigated land (Niénébalé)	500 francs
Crop farming on non-irrigated land (Barouéli)	150 francs
Crop farming on irrigated land (Diré)	250 francs
Managed crop farming (Kolo)	65 francs
Managed crop farming with plough (Koutiala)	100 francs
Managed crop farming without a plough (Koutiala)	32 francs

We know that everyone working under the Niger Office regime has had to work very hard, has a very poor standard of living, and is getting no return for their effort.

On the other hand, everywhere else people are living well and are buying livestock and clothing. Of all the farmers we came across, those working under the Niger Office regime have, without a doubt, the lowest morale and the fewest material benefits.

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We have seen examples of how the well-being of African people can be improved with a few simple adjustments that

cost the colony nothing while we wait for education to take effect which will enable them to improve profit margins.

What we have also seen is that Africans accept and understand our methods of farming much more easily than might have been expected. Irrigated farming in the right locations and with good management works. It is not out of the question to believe that if it were relieved of the heavy costs of maintaining its numerous well-paid appointees, the Niger Office could ensure the well-being of the settlers under its jurisdiction.

vi - Commerce

As we know, Arab countries have been trading with Black Africa, which the Arabs called Sudan, since ancient times. Great caravans would arrive annually and set up at the edge of the desert to offer local potentates fine fabrics in exchange for gold, ivory, and slaves kidnapped in the forests.

In the capital cities, traders from Morocco, Algeria and Tripoli had set up to sell cheap goods from the Orient, or Taoudéni salt to nomadic traders, Hausa and Sarakollé people driving trains of camels or oxen, or Mandingo peddlers.

These were Mandingo folk, called the Joola⁷⁹, who lived in the forest and carried kola nuts to the north.

Lastly there were the Europeans on the coast looking for slaves, gold and spices, selling light cotton fabrics and sea salt for lower prices than in the north. As .../...

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⁷⁹ The original typewritten text included two other ethnic groups which have been crossed out by hand, these are 'Marka' and 'Yarsé'.

roads were extended, the peddlers saw their fortunes diminish while the colonial agents grew richer. The forest people took up new trades. The old currencies of cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean, leather batons, pieces of iron, oxen, slaves, silver coins from the time of the Empress Marie-Theresa, were replaced by our francs. But ancient trades have continued operating and some have even integrated into the new trade as I will explain.

From peddler to shopkeeper

Here is the account the Chief Marka from Safané in the Upper Ivory Coast gave to me about how the trade of peddler has been developing:

In the past, Marka people would travel by donkey to what is now the Gold Coast, carrying rolls of cotton woven by women into narrow bands. They would sell the cotton bands at 50 centimes for half a metre⁸⁰, then buy kola nuts and carry these back to the north. A lot of work goes into transporting kola nuts. The load is heavy and must be transported quickly so the merchandise arrives fresh. Anyone who does not own a donkey has to carry the load himself and move it at the pace of a donkey. It is not rare for a man carrying seventy-five kilogrammes to cover fifty kilometres in twenty-four hours, walking day and night. He eats little and lavishes care upon the precious nuts, sorting them, soaking them, and wrapping them in special leaves from the forest and from the savannah in an effort to stop them drying out.

In days gone by, all these efforts were well rewarded. The peddler would sell the nuts for four times

⁸⁰ The term used in the French original is *coudée*, meaning a length measured from fingertip to elbow, which is about 50 centimetres or 20 inches.

what he had paid for them, then buy salt and sell that in the south for three times the cost price.

The enormous profits made by individuals would be handed over to the head of the family who would feed and clothe the family, arrange the marriages of young men in exchange for dowries, and provide dowers .../...

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for the girls. One can still imagine what fortunes these Marka chiefs were making from the trading profits of five or six hundred people.

This golden age has passed. European competition has brought down prices. Now a Marka makes no more than two or three hundred francs in a whole season, so he prefers to stay at home and farm his land.

However, the young people are reluctant to give up going to the coast, which has become more attractive than ever. They leave for Bobo-Dioulasso where the plantations owners are looking for labourers, sign up and travel onwards by lorry for free. They return poor, but fabulously well dressed. The very night they return home, others run off to earn enough money to buy the same trousers or boubou⁸¹.

It is said that the smartest leave the plantation and go off to town to buy up some cheap trinkets to bring back and sell to their mates.

In Safané you can witness the curious spectacle of the tom-tom parade. The young men wear multicoloured costumes, half European and half oriental in style, and the young women are dressed in cotton fabrics decorated with designs of umbrellas, alarm clocks, or portraits of

⁸¹ A long garment similar to a kaftan.

the deposed King Edward VIII⁸² which is now being sold off cheaply in the Gold Coast. Some cheeky young girls wear little more than floral parasols.

The Marka people of Lobi are just as beautifully turned out and even more modern. They are said to dance in couples, like people do in the towns.

Though the Marka folk are turning their backs on jobs which no longer make them rich, the Joola are sticking with their trades. They travel around less and are opening shops in the villages where they lend out money against interest. They are still doing well.

There are Black people who have turned to trade but these are still quite rare. They buy goods from Syrian traders but they don't make much .../...

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and have great difficulty making ends meet. A few Senegalese have got rich this way but they are the only ones; they are generally former pupils from the Missions which arrange contacts for them in France. Some of them go to Bordeaux every year to get their supplies.

Lastly, there are the sons of crop farmers who in a bid to escape the family yoke, which is all the harsher now that production rates have gone up, go to market to sell trinkets bought in the shops. They take away a tiny profit on each item, do little business and live in poverty.

Women's trades

⁸² Savineau is referring to the British monarch Edward VIII who acceded as King and Emperor on the death of his father George V on 20 January 1936 and who abdicated (rather than was deposed) eleven months later. His brother, the Duke of York, succeeded to the British throne on 12 December 1936 as George VI, father of the present Queen.

European settlement is starting to have an impact on women's domestic work. It is becoming easier as millet is being replaced by rice which does not need grinding. Porto-Novo also has a mechanical grinding mill where women can take their maize.

This means they save time that they can now spend on trade.

All African women have been traders to a greater or lesser extent since time immemorial. Nearly all of them have grown and prepared the condiments they need for cooking and would sell off any surplus either on their doorsteps or at the market in tiny little piles. This is not a very profitable trade, the women make very little from it given all the work that goes into it. Having grown or picked the plants they then dry them, crush the seeds to extract the oil or spice, carry the load to market, and spend hours waiting for customers. After all this a woman will barely make 50 francs a season.

Even so, women traders are becoming increasingly numerous. In Dahomey, they arrive at the market early in the morning, they eat there, sometimes they embroider to pass the time, and then in the evening they light a small lantern made out of old tin cans in the hope of attracting .../...

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one last customer.

The more work that goes into a product, the less the vendor earns. We have seen this with shea butter, where production costs bring the price of the butter below that paid for raw nuts. There are women in Dahomey who grind maize into flour, or pay to have it milled, and prepare a pulp from the flour. It is then wrapped up in portions in

banana leaves. They have to buy the firewood, the wrapping, and they have to feed themselves from this meagre foodstuff. At the end of the day they make only about 25 or 30 centimes, and that is if their husbands gave them the maize.

Making tapioca out of manioc bought on credit is a good way of making money in Abidjan, it can bring in 100 or 125 francs a month. If the woman trader is fed by her husband she is fortunate because a normal ration of seasoned fish and yam costs 4 Fr.75. A young woman who was supporting her ill mother, was buying manioc for five francs, preparing the flour (which takes a week) keeping a bit back to eat, and selling the rest, bringing in 1 Fr.50 or 2 Frs.

In Kankan, during the morning, you can see women going to meet Joola traders bringing rice from the south. The traders sell them seven measures of rice for 5 francs. The women shell it, and resell it for 1 franc a measure. But the seven measures have gone down to six.

In Abidjan, the sale of fish transported in hired motorboats can bring in 10 or 15 francs' in profit. But the merchandise sometimes spoils during the journey in which case it has to be smoked, and is then sold off cheaply and this does not cover the costs.

Women with a little capital at their disposal do better business, dealing in glass jewellery, wrappers and headscarves exchanged on the coast for foodstuffs
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from the interior. They seem to derive an aesthetic pleasure from their work. These Dahomeyan women arrange the strings of brightly coloured beads and enamelled dishes on wooden racks in a very attractive manner. They

are also aware of how pretty they look under their hats as wide as parasols. They earn up to 5 francs a day, a handsome return. Their husbands are not happy at being deprived of their wives for a whole week at a time. It can happen that all the wives of a polygamous man are away at the same time, leaving the elderly women and very young girls to do the cooking.

Sometimes, these travelling women become rich. A canton chief's daughter from Allada travels with six tonnes of merchandise. She pays a lot for transporting it but earns a profit of between fifteen and thirty percent on export goods. For foodstuffs, she has to charge 100% or 150% above cost price given the high degree of wastage. This is the least lucrative part of her trade but Hounyo is still elegantly dressed in African style. Hounyo can neither read nor write and does not speak French, a fact she regrets. She does not keep accounts either, and is unable to say the extent of her profits. She has furnished her bedroom attractively in European style, keeps it very clean, and pays for her brothers who are studying in Dakar. She has not got married.

European and Syrian trade

Outside the large trading stations where there are European businesses selling building materials, lorries and alcoholic drinks to the local population, European traders seem to be primarily interested in buying export goods and are happy to leave the retail business to Syrians, selling them the merchandise .../...

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in bulk at a special rate. Only one agent is needed to deal with this. In general, local people in the know

prefer to buy from and sell to Europeans, because although the Europeans are ruthless they are straightforward, unlike Syrian traders who are less demanding but also less honest. On the other hand individual clients prefer buying from Syrians who are nicer to deal with, but they do not realise what a price they are paying for the privilege. This is where the Syrian trader's success lies, he speaks the local language, he gives credit, he lends when people are needy and he makes a profit on all of it. This is how he does it: the two bowls of his scales are not of equal weight, he has two sets of weights, one for buying and one for selling. The two end notches of the metre rule on his counter are less than one metre apart. Fabrics folded in metres are unfolded and refolded in yards. Before buying gold, he cleans it off a little too conscientiously, while kindly offering a free box of matches. He used to use a simple carafe to measure orange essence where he had marked the litre level himself, a little below the real level. Lesser quantities he guessed at, three quarters of a litre would become two thirds. The Administration has introduced measuring jars which mark the 1000 ml level three fingers below the rim. But the Syrian fills the jar to overflowing and if the producer decides he does not want to do business then the Syrian pours the orange essence back into the producer's bottle using a funnel with a hidden sponge in it. One last point, Syrians have goods bought for them in the bush at well below the official rate and the agent sets prices for the litre or the kilogramme.

Shrewd traders give African civil servants very flexible terms, letting them sign in lieu of payment. If he sees someone hesitating over a costly item, he lets

him know "You don't have to pay for it...". The buyer then signs a bond committing himself .../...

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beyond his means. He can even buy 20 francs' worth of cigarettes on credit from a European trader and sell them to the Syrian for 15 francs in cash. Or he can buy some fabric on credit from the Syrian, and then have to sell it back to the Syrian at the end of his term at 25% loss. And they claim they are not engaged in usury!

The unskilled worker is also an excellent client. He is sold a suitcase and enough boubous to fill it. The trader even offers to keep the suitcase out of reach of co-workers who might be tempted to steal it. He is even encouraged to leave his savings in it. It goes without saying that any old key can open the case. When the Syrian's business fails, which does happens in spite of everything, the case and boubou will be recovered but the money will have disappeared.

There are increasing numbers of Syrians in the trading stations, they are opening shops wherever local people are earning money. Clearly they contribute to stimulating production and making life more comfortable but they are making their fortunes too easily. They start off in a tiny room decorated with a few pieces of cotton fabric and six months later they are opening big shops and travelling around in motor cars. Sometimes they go too far and have to disappear and adopt another name, reappearing soon enough to exploit another locality. Their book-keeping consists of pieces of paper covered in Arabic script thrown in a drawer. We would be doing the local people a service and possibly even protect them

entirely if we insisted on legible accounts from all traders, and if we monitored weights and measures.

vii - Trades

Artisans

In Black Africa, artisans are often from castes that do not marry into other

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castes or into farming families. These artisan families have their own quarters in the village. The men practise one profession and the women another. They used to be paid in kind, the blacksmith or the jeweller kept would keep half the metal, the harness for a horse was worth one slave, the potter would be paid with as much grain as her pot could carry. The weaver had the right to one or one and half metres⁸³ of fabric from every five he was delivering. These modes of payment are still sometimes used (although the slave has been replaced by a heifer). But the artisan's work is changing. Blacksmiths now use small tools they have bought on the market, and are making new objects such as padlocks, hinges, keys, etc..., and have learnt how to convert stone-shooting guns to piston-operated ones. Cobblers are making European style shoes and bags. Alongside seats carved from solid bits of wood, we now see carpentry on the markets in the form of coat stands, little benches, shelves, chairs, chests and sideboards. Most weavers still use the traditional narrow looms except for those few who have been to our schools.

⁸³ Again the French refers to 2 ou 3 coudées, literally 2 or 3 'elbow-lengths'.

They have made the serious mistake of switching to commercial dyes as they are brighter than traditional local ones but they are not such good quality. The jewellers have developed a regrettable taste for the 'modern' and 'rococo' styles found in European catalogues. The tailor who makes boubous has adopted the sewing machine, and a new tailor has appeared who knows how to make European clothes.

These locally-made goods are suffering from competition from imported items. Printed cotton fabrics, enamel basins and metal objects are sold in the agencies of foreign companies and find their way on to the local markets. These items are becoming increasingly popular as money from the sale of agricultural produce reaches the villages. The artisan can no longer live from his craft so he practises it only during the dry season and has had to take up crop farming the rest of the time. In the towns, where artisans do not have this .../...

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option, they are living in poverty. In Conakry, we saw a forty year old tailor living alone because he has never been able to "earn" a wife. We saw a jeweller in a similar position. When he has three or five francs, he gives them to a female neighbour who prepares him a decent meal. When he has no money, he must wait until he makes some more.

Master Craftsmen

Though the small artisan is not doing well, there are more fortunate craftsmen who are prospering. Porto-Novo has its master tailors, clock-makers and printers. Abidjan has its restaurateurs. These artisans have a

fitting room or a shop on the street. They own the well-furnished houses they live in, they have several wives and their children attend school.

However, their prosperity is unfortunately due to the exploitation of their apprentices.

Apprenticeships

Traditionally artisans train apprentices entrusted to them by the families of other artisans. These children, who often come from far away, are housed, and sometimes fed and clothed, by their masters. The apprentice must obey and serve all the master's family. An apprenticeship used to last for ten to fifteen years with a blacksmith, two to three years with a cobbler, and six months with a weaver. It is evident that the apprentice becomes a fully-fledged worker long before the end of the apprenticeship, at which point he makes his own tools. The jewellers hold a celebration to inaugurate the new anvil. Every apprenticeship ends with a gift to the master in the form of two or three oxen, in exchange for which the apprentice receives the master's blessing.

Modern masters are loath to give up such a profitable custom. Tailors in particular train .../...

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many apprentices, who remain in their service for four years in exchange for rations and at the end, hand over 500 francs to the master or do a year's extra work.

The boy's family then buys him a sewing machine and the few tools he needs to set up in business. He installs himself in a ground floor room, sticks up some fashion plates on the wall and waits for custom. But he is lucky if he can find enough work even among his friends,

because the masters are training more tailors than the town can support. Our young artisan pays his rent and his work permit, wears decent clothes, but has not got enough to eat.

The tailors who make African clothes set up with their sewing machines on the veranda surrounding trading houses. They are not employed by the traders in the building but by the owner of the sewing machine. Some of these owners have several apprentice machinists, whom they feed and clothe. At Kindia, each machinist brings in around 12 francs a day once his thread and work permit is paid. He then has to do a period of work for the trader without being paid, in return for using the veranda.

The profession of boubou tailor is learnt in a few weeks, but the apprentice is kept for four years before being allowed to set up on his own. If his family cannot buy him his own machine, he will continue to operate the machine in return for being fed. There are elderly men who have spent their entire lives in these conditions of servitude.

European bosses, carpenters, masons and mechanics, also make the most of this free workforce, but stress that the apprentice might go on to become a qualified worker or a boss. They employ as many young people as they can and keep them as long as possible, in return for rudimentary rations. They are less concerned with training them than with exploiting them. You can see the results of this most clearly in the Ivory Coast, where local builders .../...

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put up houses which fall down almost as soon as they are finished.

One can see that if such workers are not in a position to establish themselves in business (which most of them are not) they are not in a position to find work. The bosses prefer to employ new apprentices. Because of this the towns are full of unemployed workers who believe themselves to be qualified and do not want to accept work as unskilled workers. Meanwhile, there is a shortage of skilled workers in the trading stations in the interior. It should also not go without a mention that the Missions are also exploiting their apprentices for long periods of time. In Conakry, they do not even give this free workforce a food ration. This whole business of apprenticeships is a serious problem which is resisting a solution and it needs looking into by the *Inspectorate for Artisan and Craftwork*.

Transport and drivers

Hauliers also form part of this category of European and local bosses.

Lorries operate in regions of high productivity carrying local people and their merchandise. It should be pointed out firstly that hauliers pay little attention to regulations governing loads; they take on travellers without completing the necessary formalities, and they appoint careless drivers to drive lorries with worn out parts. The result is the roads which are already too narrow in any case, get overused and there are many accidents, often with multiple casualties.

The European and African hauliers are in competition but not on equal terms. The European is often subsidised to carry loads by the Administration. His costs are usually more than .../...

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covered in this way. He can afford to be less particular about transporting an individual and his goods. It is alleged that the transport company commissioned to carry the post between Bouak and Man received 100,000 francs in subsidies. The annual costs were said to amount to 52,000 francs. The haulier is allegedly paid, in addition, 405 francs or 750 francs for each load of cement he carries (individuals pay 405 and the Administration pays 750), and 60 francs per traveller (or 85 francs if the traveller is a civil servant being carried on behalf of the Administration).

As we can see, prices charged to individuals are not high. If the local unsubsidised haulier were to charge these prices he could not cover his costs.

Notwithstanding this, clients come to him asking for a better price than that being charged by the European. On top of this there is heavy wear and tear on the lorry and repairs are expensive. The only chance that the African haulier has to make good his losses is to crowd as many Black passengers as he can get in standing room only into his empty lorry for the return journey. But he cannot always find enough passengers. And so it is that a mechanic who has worked for years to save the 26,000 francs he needs to buy a lorry, then scarcely makes a living out of it up to the day when the engine packs up, at which point he is ruined.

His driver is more fortunate, he can make a good profit making clandestine trips along particular routes. But the drivers give in to the temptation of becoming owners.

Women artisans

Blacksmiths' wives make pottery, dye and embroider leather, and are also hairdressers and tattoo artists. Farmers' wives decorate calabashes, weave baskets, spin and dye cotton. I asked what sort of profits these occupations bring in and was told the following:

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A female potter in the Niger travels two kilometres to collect earth to make one water carrier⁸⁴. She throws the pot, leaves it out to dry, and goes back to get more earth. She also has to gather quantities of firewood and grass for firing the pots. Finally, she arranges the six or eight pots on a special ladder-like support, places this on her head and goes off to market. She brings back 3 or 4 francs, her profits for the week.

A woman from the same region decorates calabash bowls using a wax relief method. She makes two bowls a day, each worth one franc. But first you have to grow the calabash and then they have to be hollowed out.

The cotton spinner in Dori spends two months preparing enough thread to make one blanket. She paid between 10 and 20 francs for the cotton, depending on the season. The weaver will ask 20 francs to weave it, which will take him five days. The woman then sells the blanket to the Joola trader for 50 or 60 francs, who resells it for 80 or a 100 francs. The woman has earned around 20 francs for two months' work.

Women from the lakeside villages of Porto-Novo spend three days making a sleeping mat, which brings in one franc in profit. Fulah women make attractive multi-coloured straw trays. The larger ones take eight days to make and are sold for two francs.

⁸⁴ This vessel is known locally as a *canari*.

To go back to the bead jewellery makers of Timbuktu, they use 25 centimes' worth of beads to make a necklace which sells for 50 centimes. A woman can make three a day, making seventy-five centimes in profit.

In Kindia, Soussou women are dyers. They make very attractive blue and white patterned cloth from pleating the material before immersing it in indigo. But they buy the material on credit from a Syrian trader. He sells them 25 francs' worth of fabric for 30 francs, and after much effort, expense and time, the women are left with only 7Fr or 7 Fr.50 worth of profit.

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Hairdressers, on the other hand, make 5 or 10 francs from a day's work, and live quite comfortably.

The techniques used in all these trades are entirely indigenous. Schools have been introducing new crafts and techniques but only one of these seems to have taken off, namely embroidery. In Abidjan, there are a few women embroidering on calico, making crude little table cloths which sell very cheaply. In Porto-Novo, there is an elderly woman of mixed race who for the last forty years has been teaching sewing, dressmaking, embroidery and crocheting to young girls. The work is very ugly and badly executed. The lessons are supposed to cost 10 francs a month, but the poor instructor only manages to get a few fried doughnuts or a chicken from the pupils' families.

Forced labour⁸⁵

⁸⁵ The French original is *main d'oeuvre prestataire*. *Le travail prestataire* was quite simply a euphemism for *travail forcé* or forced labour which in some cases closely resembles slave trade. In effect young men were forced to provide labour, it was not a voluntary scheme.

Before coming to my conclusions, I will just make some observations on the regime of forced labour we are operating.

If only those who designed this scheme had known something about local customs they could have devised a system of collective work that suited Black people. There already exists a system in almost every village whereby young men offer themselves for agricultural work. They arrive accompanied by tom-tom players and compete for a task. Whoever wins [gets the job]⁸⁶. In the evening, the plantation owner provides a big meal, and young women come along to dance.

If forced labour jobs were assigned in this way, and if the labourers were served a good meal including meat, not only would they agree to do the forced labour - on condition that they could see some direct benefit for themselves - but they would also not consider sending children and the elderly folk in their place.

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The forced labour system has turned into a form of endless undeserved punishment. Despite the many regulations and directives governing the system it is still being abused.

There are usually a lot of children and elderly people in the work gangs, sometimes they are made up entirely of children aged between ten and fourteen years of age, or a mixture of old people and children. Administrators claim to have no power to force the adults to do the work themselves; they turn up one day, and then

⁸⁶ The archive we are working from is written on ultra-fine carbon-copy paper. Occasionally parts of the original page have disintegrated. The words shown here between parentheses are not clearly legible in the original. In this case the meaning can be guessed from the context so we have added what we assume was there originally.

send a replacement the next. In Lobi, one head of a family brought along his wives and children to get the task over and done with more quickly. I have seen no women on the roads, but they could still be some working there. In any case, they are employed carrying building materials or foodstuffs requisitioned by Administrators.

The canton chiefs always call up the same individuals for forced labour. In Fada⁸⁷, one young man who had already done service several times that year climbed a tree and threatened to throw himself to the ground if he were not relieved of this duty. But the order was upheld and the boy jumped and fell to his death.

In Man, around one hundred men were set to work building a road through the mountain. It is a project of no apparent value which has been secretly undertaken by the Administrator with a view to developing tourism. The men hacked away at the rock for several months without receiving any rations. Anyone who rebelled was beaten.

These abuses will disappear. It is going to be possible to buy out of forced labour duties⁸⁸ and the roads will be maintained by paid workers. The new regime has been tried out and has thrown up a few difficulties. In some areas, the men were called up as usual and were astonished to receive money. But once they had received their pay they did not want to continue working. In areas of high productivity, crop farmers were very happy to be able to buy themselves out .../...

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⁸⁷ The Fada mentioned here is most likely to have been Fada N'Gourma in eastern Burkina Faso (ex Haute Volta).

⁸⁸ The legislation was introduced the following year, in January 1939, from which time African men could pay a tax to avoid the 9 days of forced labour he was considered to owe the French administration.

of forced labour, but they do not want to contribute any work days. Some have paid off their dues and now will not carry out maintenance work in the villages.

In Toumodi, it is not difficult to find men to work on the roads. But the plantation owners are complaining because the men, they claim, prefer to work on the roads for 4 Fr.50 a day, rather than earn 3 francs and a ration on the plantation. Or they prefer to cut wood for 5 francs. All this is because the men do not have to work at a specified pace on the roads.

It is interesting to see how this new regime is having an impact on the value of the working day. Meanwhile to improve output on the roads, we could specify targets and give a bonus when the navvies exceed the day's target. One way of encouraging qualified navvies to sign on for the jobs would be to make them employees of the Administration. In Porto-Novo, men who have graduated from the local schools are happy to take lowly jobs in the Postal Service just to get the title.

Many Administrators are opposed to the new regime. They say it is difficult to operate which just shows that they were abusing the system in the past. They are making no effort to bring the chiefs around to the new system, and taking no account of the time and experience that will be needed to get this well-founded reform up and running effectively.

Others have already discovered a singular advantage in the buy-out of forced labour. In Korhogo the Circle Commandant established the buy-out fee for each subdivision and then kept part of it back to cover 'administrative costs' at the centre, leaving the heads of the subdivisions without the wherewithal to pay the replacement workers. One final problem we need to look at is that in the past forced labour was required only from

men. The cost of replacing forced labour by paid labour is now being borne by men and women, irrespective of whether the father or husband pays the tax.

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However, in some regions the women are paying their own taxes from profits which are, as we have seen, sometimes very meagre. This extra financial burden is a real problem for them.

The Administration's contribution to progress

When we look at the commercial sector on its own, we can see that the way it is developing presents many serious dangers for society and these are often difficult to remedy. However, the Administration is managing, little by little, to attenuate the unequal balance of forces in the sector and introduce more justice into the system.

One important aspect of its work in this regard is the considerable effort it is making in the cultural sphere. The next section of this report addresses this issue.

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PART 3

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS:

EDUCATION & THE HEALTH SERVICE

I have already discussed the role the Administration is playing in education in relation to the legal system, animal husbandry and farming. In all these areas, the administrative services are guiding developments or steering them back on to the right path. I cannot cover here the whole range of activities we are engaged in so I will focus particularly on those that are having the most direct and widespread impact, which means the education system and the health service.

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EDUCATION

When we discovered West Africa, it was not, either intellectually or morally-speaking, 'uneducated'. Much is made of the fact that the Black people did not use writing, but for them spoken language is the conventional means of transmitting ideas. They could have grounds to cast a wry smile at us given how late it was in our history that we invented the telephone.

Even in the most backward regions children receive an education during the initiation period. Children are taught to exercise self-control, to be polite and respectful to the elderly, they are taught about the history of their people, their songs and dances. Nothing is missed out, and the teaching methods are based on demonstrations and games, which we Europeans are returning to after having been too dependent on books.

Their legends reflect this teaching; their culture is one of heroism where the Black man has none of the spinelessness we often attribute to him. Tales of great ironic subtlety have been collected among peoples

described by some as "moronic" (the Mossi people for example). Almost everywhere, theatrical arts are valued and developed through remarkable mimes and astonishing acrobatics. As regards so-called 'Negro statuary', I scarcely need say how highly Europeans now value this art.⁸⁹ The music is not richly melodic; its impact lies in the rhythms.

This culture has developed alongside another, namely Islam. This culture is based primarily on memory so it does little to develop the mind, but it does have some moral precepts encouraging gentleness and reflection. This culture was the preserve of the elite and the old cultural heritage has continued to flourish alongside it.

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The civilisation we are bringing to Africa is developing in a different, more scientific direction. It is enabling the educated African to transform his mind into a precise and disciplined instrument. We have every reason to look forward to a blossoming of traditional culture after an inevitable period when this culture will lie dormant. This is no cause for alarm. The natural gifts of these people are powerful enough to survive. What is important at this point is to give Black Africa a more sound, enlightened and mature outlook.

This is where the rural schools come in, they provide the African population with a widely available, simple and straightforward education system which is adapted to family life and does not require that children

⁸⁹ African art works started being imported in significant numbers and exhibited in Paris in the first decade of the 20th century. They had an influence over Pablo Picasso's aesthetic development. His famous *Les Femmes d'Alger* painted 1907-9 indicates the influence of Dogon masks from Mali exhibited at the Trocadero museum that year on his figure painting. African art had an impact on Cubist aesthetics, subject matter and on the *Avant-garde* in general in the Inter-war period in France.

are taken away from their family environment. The schooling only goes up to elementary level, and emphasis is given to training in craftwork and crop farming organised through school mutual societies.

These schools are run by African staff, overseen by a director for each sector who is generally a European, who will gradually hand over responsibility to the local teachers as more of them obtain the necessary qualifications.

To this end, it is important that we train teachers, as well as doctors, veterinary surgeons, technicians, and clerks to serve in the Administration.

Regional schools take the best pupils from the rural schools to prepare them for the end of primary schooling exam⁹⁰. They also continue with their agricultural training and some will be selected to sit the entrance exams for the upper primary schools, the rural teacher training colleges, the vocational training colleges, the guild of artisans and the Naval cadets' college.

The upper primary school prepares candidates to sit the entrance exam to the *William Ponty* teacher training college⁹¹ where they will be trained to become either teachers in the regional schools, .../...

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or despatch clerks, or they can prepare to exams for the School of Medicine or the School of Veterinary Surgery. The vocational training colleges prepare candidates for

⁹⁰ The *CE* (*certificat d'études*) was a school leaving certificate.

⁹¹ Founded in 1903 in Senegal as the *Ecole normale de Saint Louis*, it became *Ecole William Ponty* in 1915. It was moved to Gorée Island, then to Sebikotane, then to Thiès. It became known as *EFI William Ponty* located in Kolda in Senegal.

the technical college which trains future agents in the Department of Public Works.

The report below focuses principally on rural schools, which are still in the process of getting established and are encountering different problems in different regions.

i - Schooling for boys

Rural Schools

Some rural schools have been well-received by the local population, others less so. They are very popular in large towns and in regions where there are rich plantations, such as in the Ivory Coast and Guinea. Apart from a few exceptions, it is easy to enrol pupils in all regions served by a major road, such as Middle Dahomey, Middle Ivory Coast and Lower Guinea.

In other areas, it is easy to register the children of civil servants and traders in school but an effort has to be made to recruit children from the rural communities. The chiefs know that their sons need to be educated if they are to succeed them, but they are sometimes reluctant to send other children to school because they are worried they might be competition. In the Fouta-Djallon the population is heavily Islamicised, so the chiefs' sons are deterred from going to school on religious grounds. Their fathers are so powerful that the sons feel confident about their rights of succession. Children enrolled in this region are often from poor families, or orphans, and often not very gifted. If the teacher takes it upon himself to recruit a bright child, the family comes up with a made-up illness as a pretext .../...

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for taking the child home. The Tuareg people are even more resistant to our system of schooling.

In a general sense, in areas where the Muslim population predominates it is difficult to get the children enrolled in school, but in areas of high population density with strong European influences the schools are overflowing with pupils.

Some of the animists are also difficult to win over. They tend to stick with their old ways, and think we are up to no good.

I will take the Bobo people as an example of how opposition to our schooling works. Women are the strongest opponents but they are soon won over. A Bobo teacher told us that: "Back in 1923, leaving the village was a big undertaking. If a young man went off to a Marka village to buy a boubou, he would come home to find the women in tears saying, 'You've been gone for three days! We thought you were dead!' Then when the school opened, the canton chief told each family it had to send one child so they told him: 'Give up your own son first!'".

This is how our teacher came to leave the village. His mother threw herself into the well and broke her arm. She thought that her son was going to be sold, or even killed! The parents consulted the witch doctors who told them it would be all right.

The boy himself set off in tears, but by the end of the school year, he would have been happy to stay and not go home again. When his mother saw him, she was so surprised and happy that she threw a basket containing 15,000 cowry shells⁹² at his feet. But the boy's aunts

⁹² Cowrie shells were the predominant currency in West Africa up to the early 20th century. The exchange rate varied over time but at one point 1000 cowries were the equivalent of one French franc.

insulted him saying: "Stupid boy! You should have made yourself unbearable and got yourself expelled! Do you like school? Don't give him anything to eat!"

Then when children who had attended school started returning as nurses, mothers were keen to send their children.

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It is an example worth mentioning because it proves the pessimists wrong.

Lodgings for schoolchildren

One of the most serious problems we face when trying to recruit children from the rural communities is dealing with their food and lodging.

Given that adults who work in the fields earn only just enough to live on, why did we expect their children to have the wherewithal to feed themselves during the time they spend at school? Our methods of crop farming are certainly superior to African methods but they are complicated and involve skills that must be learned. The Mutual Societies attached to the schools can only manage to provide the pupils with one or two decent meals a week, or one very meagre meal a day, and only if the teacher focuses increasing output rather than on demonstrating methods.

It is worth mentioning that providing meals has a use beyond just feeding the pupils. They need to introduce pupils to new products they can grow. Otherwise, how can we expect these crops to be adopted in the villages? This is why it is necessary to ensure that

at least some of the produce is eaten at school, and not all sold to Europeans.

The children coming in from outside the neighbourhood must also be fed everyday. Some Provident Societies, like the one in Sedhiou, have taken on this expense. Some Circles have opened canteens, and others are subsidising the schools. Sometimes the level of subsidy is very low, in Gaoua it is only 8 francs per child per term whereas one needs at least 35 francs to feed a child for a term (at a rate of 0.39 fr. a meal).

In the majority of cases, the families have to provide the grain and the cooks. That is easy enough for the sons of notables, .../...

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but the poorer children, even those designated for school by their chief, have to be paid for by their families as well. This is very difficult for them. In all rural families, children as young as ten help with the farming. The child must produce as much as he eats. Feeding a child who does not work, who in a sense 'deserts his duties', strikes parents as not only unfair but immoral. It is like reversing roles, making the father the servant of the son. So in Djougou where a child from the bush is enrolled in school he receives no upkeep from his family and the teacher has no option but to send him home. Less strict parents would be happy to give up their children during the dry season, but during the rainy season they need the child to produce the grain that will be sent to him when he is away at school. But the rainy season is also when the school is raising crops.

Lastly, there are better educated families who are happy to give up their sons and to feed them in the hope

of reaping the financial rewards later. However there have been complaints that the canton chief, who is responsible for gathering together the provisions and sending them to the school, is keeping some back for himself.

Some schools have opened camps. In the one in Boundiali they are using enamel crockery, metal cutlery and they have made shelving out of old petrol cans.

But there is still the question of how the child can live in the camp, even when he is provided with food by his family, if there is nobody there to prepare his food. Some boys grind and cook their own grain, but many will not do this so their parents find them lodgings with another person. This can lead to one of two situations: either the child's family provides grain and the child performs small tasks for the host family, or the child becomes a servant of the host family in exchange for his keep. It goes without saying that there is little difference .../...

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between the two. Some landlords do not use the services of their lodger, they prefer taking half of the provisions instead which does not leave enough for the lodger. If the lodger is receiving a grant they take half of that too and leave him with just enough to buy a few doughnuts and some cigarettes.

The host is often a marabout⁹³ who has taken it upon himself to teach his lodger the Koran in which case the pupil's daily routine will include:

⁹³ Islamic teacher.

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6.00 - 7.00 am: Koran (except on Thursdays and
Fridays)
7.00 - 7.30: Two trips to the creek 300
metres away
7.30 - 11.00: French
11.00 - 2.00 pm: Meal followed by wood gathering
(1 bundle)
2.00 - 6.00: Work in the school's Mutual
Society plantations
6.00 -8.00: Three trips to the creek
followed by a meal
8.00 - 9.00: Koran

On Thursdays and Sundays, this child gathers wood, goes to the neighbouring village five kilometres away where he collects his rice before coming back to water the school garden.

Some will claim that our pupils in European schools are just as busy. Perhaps they are but they are also well fed whereas this African child eats nothing but rice, and only if he is lucky enough to have parents who send him provisions. To earn their rations, other pupils have to sweep the courtyards or wash dishes. They have no respite between lessons and if they are not learning the Koran they are helping with carrying, grinding, selling produce on the market and on Thursdays and Sundays they also work in the fields.

Apart from the fact that the child is always tired, this state of affairs reflects badly upon the school.

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All in all, this problem of lodging pupils is a serious obstacle to increasing enrolment in schools but

the need to educate some children from the most rural communities remains. In Kolda⁹⁴, the Administrator told me that: "There are barely ten people in the Circle⁹⁵ who can read and write, and nobody understands what a Provident Society is supposed to do". So not only are local people not developing in themselves but they are not improving production levels either. Staff at the clinic also complain about how difficult it is to communicate with some ethnic groups⁹⁶ as neither the male nurse nor the midwife speak their language.

Attitudes towards schooling

Another factor we need to consider is the how parents and children feel about school. The pupils are often reluctant to go initially, but generally they quickly get used to it and learn to enjoy studying then when it is time to return to their villages they burst into tears and don't want to go.

Those who are still the most resistant are Muslim children from "noble" nomadic or formerly nomadic tribes. These people still express hostility towards the Administration. At Dori in Niger, a tall Targuy boy wearing a head-dress that covered his face insisted loudly that he did not like school (despite being an excellent pupil). At Pita in the Fouta-Djallon children run away from their villages to escape enrolment, but those who are attending school are happy so long as they can live with their families. The situation is similar in Kindia and in Banfora. Among the Lobi people, children run away from school up to ten times because, it would appear that their fathers have no influence over them. In the Lobi households, the mother is dominant and she

⁹⁴ A region and major town in the southern part of Senegal, known as Casamance.

⁹⁵ See glossary.

⁹⁶ Here, as elsewhere in the report, Savineau refers to groups of people as 'races'.

allows her sons to grow up any way they please so long as she manages to keep them away from paternal authority. After two or three years, however, the sons get used to the discipline and do not want to run away from school anymore.

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There is generally a very keen interest in school among animists such as the Joolas of Oussouilles, the Gourmantchés in Fada, among various ethnic groups in Kandy, Allada and Pobé and among the Guérés of Guiglo. When the Circle Commandant passes through Guiglo they volunteer for school.

Intellectual aptitude

The Tuareg pupils are intellectually very strong, as are the Peul and Marka children, and some of the so-called 'primitive' people, notably the Sombas whose children are progressing well, they like drawing and singing and are good at performing plays. The Kissis are better than their Malinke neighbours, as the latter are broken by the discipline wielded within the family; the Gourounsi children do better than Mossi children for the same reason. Bassari and Cognagui boys are open-minded, but are as shy as girls. Bobo and Lobi boys are keen but not as bright.

Agricultural studies

Agricultural studies are taught in the school's Mutual Society. They are more or less well received depending on the social situation of the group. In general, most parents, even in rural communities, see school as a means by which their sons can acquire social

rank and a salary. They think all their boys will achieve this. There are many sons of chiefs in our schools, and sons from 'noble' races such as the Djerma who have become crop farmers since the abolition of slavery and are not happy with this 'loss'. Now they want to escape from farming rather than become accustomed to it.

In Mamou agricultural studies are popular because although it is a Muslim region, the parents use ploughs. They will say "we crop farmers are better off than a clerk earning 300 francs a month".

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Some who have been crop farmers for generations are opening up to new farming methods, and others will follow. At Boundiali, parents are visiting the fields belonging to the school's Mutual Society and comparing the returns from fertilised and non-fertilised earth (these 'demonstration' plots are nurtured with care) and while they acknowledge that the former is producing more they say that there is too much work involved. Meanwhile their children are asking for their own seed to sow.

In Kandy there have been ardent debates over the merits of our methods and some of them have been adopted. When the teacher noticed an excellent field of cotton and enquired of its owner, he was told that one of his pupils was cultivating it for his father. Similarly, at Dalaba, the children take plants home, hand them over to their mothers and report back to their schoolmaster on the results they are getting.

In Allada, parents are in favour of agricultural studies, but they only want to know about new methods.

Otherwise, they claim, "the children can learn just as well at home, and for our benefit".

In Agboville, the planters are more interested in what the school is growing than the pupils themselves. In Abomey-Calavi, on the other hand, the children are interested in coffee trees and maize, but not the parents, who would prefer they got an intellectual education.

In Kissidougou, one pupil has planted coffee trees that will start to produce coffee by the time he finishes his studies. He is already thinking of becoming a plantation owner, after retiring as a civil servant!

Some children from so-called 'backward' regions prefer farming to general studies. This is true of the Guerzé and Manon tribes of N'Zérékoré. The Somba people are "too attached to the land", according to one local African teacher.

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It is rare for children not to appreciate gardening at least, and especially growing flowers. They are an example of how beauty can play such an important role in education. School Mutual Society gardens are often devoid of any charm and not even enclosed. What the children like is a separate little area full of greenery, like the ones they have at Man and Sedhiou. Some would say that this is only possible in wet regions but even in the sandy regions the public gardens are full of leafy plants. May I just mention here that watering the garden does not have to be the kind of chore it is for the

prisoners who water our public gardens. Watering can be an interesting activity.

Training in manual work in the rural areas

Various kinds of manual work are being taught in schools including carpentry, lockmaking, weaving, bookbinding, shoemaking and tanning. The children show varying degrees of interest in these depending on where they live and also perhaps on the teaching methods.

Initially any manual work like crop farming is despised by the 'noble' races. Their children tolerate the lessons but they do not enjoy them. It seems also that some teachers only let the children do tedious repetitive tasks like making cigarettes. This is not a vocational activity nor does it help them develop any real dexterity. It would be much more worthwhile to encourage the pupils to make objects that could be used in their villages. This happened in Macenta and N'Zérékoré. When the adults saw the children making cushions out of raffia at school, they understood what they themselves could gain from this activity and these techniques. They went on to design a style of bag with a deep pouch and strap that goes around the shoulder, .../...

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which is both nice looking and useful. This example shows how a new idea can make headway even when badly presented, so the effort is really worth it.

In administrative Circles run by the armed forces, such as Macenta and Batié, non-commissioned officers are giving PT⁹⁷ classes. They are really popular. The children

⁹⁷ Physical training, known more recently as physical education or PE.

love using the crossbar and gym apparatus built for them in Macenta.

Also in Macenta a museum has been opened, separate from the school, with displays of indigenous artefacts and souvenirs. Schoolteachers could well copy this initiative.

Career prospects for schoolchildren

Most children graduating from the rural schools want to become civil servants, and they would carrying on believing that this was possible for all of them if the teacher did not warn them, as indeed he must, that not everyone can become a civil servant.

Amongst the most popular civil service careers are auxiliary doctor "because of the uniform", despatch clerk, "because you work sitting down, you know everything that's going on in the Circle, and you can help your relatives if they have to go to court". The children of livestock farmers want to become veterinary surgeons. The teaching profession is less sought after because it is not so well paid and teachers do not command the same level of respect. Rural teachers are even less well regarded, hardly anyone wants to go into this branch.

In some towns, parents prefer to find jobs for their children as shop clerks where they will get a wage straight away, or they set them up in a trade. Some excellent pupils, who could otherwise have hoped to make .../...

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a good career for themselves, have been taken out of school for these reasons. In the regions where crops grow

well, boys are quite willing to become planters. They do not imagine working on the land themselves; they will engage a workforce or their future wives and children to do it for them.

Lastly there are those who will follow in their parents footsteps and become crop farmers, or they will take it up because, as they say "we have no chiefs, we are free to choose". Nearly all the Somba pupils of Natintingou will return to the fields.

As far as manual trades are concerned, being a mechanic is popular in Forécariah, as is weaving in Dalaba.

Those pupils who do not make it into civil service⁹⁸ careers usually fall back on jobs in the commercial sector rather than go into crop farming. In Agboville, they can earn between 150 or 175 francs a month as clerks. Later, if their fathers can pay the security, they can become agents and earn 1,500 francs a month, not counting the undeclared earnings.

Those whose parents cannot help them often prefer not to return home because of hurtful and persistent sarcasm they will face there. Instead they become chauffeurs, houseboys or apprentices. Some will experience hardship and end up living on ill-gotten gains.

The failings of the rural school system

The rural schools were created precisely to avoid such failures. Clearly they are not all achieving this goal and there needs to be changes, they need to adapt to the different populations. What is the point, for example, in teaching ox-drawn ploughing to children who

⁹⁸ The French colonial service, or 'Administration' as it was called, covered more professions than the English colonial civil service. For example, teachers are civil servants in the French system.

will never own any oxen, or who are destined to be rice growers? What is the point of making children learn how to use a hoe if all they do with it is grow crops at school? Why train weavers in a region .../...

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where no cotton is produced (such as Allada)? What is the point of growing oranges when you only let the pupils do the tedious task of grating them, as in the Fouta-Djallon? Why do we get them to grow vegetables for Europeans that they will never taste themselves? Studies must be carried out everywhere so we can see not just what the Mutual Societies are making in terms of profits, but what they are contributing to local families in terms of alleviating the workload and increasing the family's income.

One last point, we should avoid turning children off farming by making them do it when they are too young or by making them focus on production when we should be focusing on education. In this regard, making farming the focus of class-based studies is an excellent approach, school becomes part of life. It is also a good idea to make it clear to pupils that the school Mutual Society belongs to them, and even if they cannot run the Society themselves, they should at least understand how it works. This would be an excellent way of introducing crop farmers to the idea of the Provident Society.

The European teachers in the rural schools have faith in the system but say they have to be adapted to the realities of each region. Here are some suggestions:

Mr. Brun, the head teacher of the school in Bobo-Dioulasso, would like to see village schools organised into two classes. Enrolment would take place every two

years and the youngest children would not be required to participate in the farming activities. These young children would settle in more easily and would have no problem going back later to fieldwork. The best pupils would be selected to go on to a school with three classes teaching the same syllabus as is currently being taught in the rural schools. An adult section could be created to do the heavy farm work and lead the work teams. Mr. Brun assures us that schoolboys could produce their own food if they had ox-drawn ploughs. The village would be happy to prepare of land .../...

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because that way they would be relieved of the need to feed the schoolchildren. The canton chiefs are in favour of this scheme, and would pay for the ploughs.

Mr. Brun's wish to enrol very young pupils is echoed by many educated parents, who are frustrated by the time wasted while their children wait to reach school age. These educated parents teach their children at home so the children can get ahead.

Mr. Diagne-Mapaté, the headmaster of the school in Sedhiou serving in the European administrative ranks, is particularly concerned about pupils returning to their villages. With the permission of the Inspector for Education, he has divided his elementary class into two sections, the 'rural section', comprising the oldest, longest-attending and least able pupils, and the 'urban section'. The rural section has its own camp which the pupils built and furnished themselves and the Provident Society provides them with their food. Pupils who have not managed yet to get their primary education certificate can enrol in this section. Fifteen or twenty

percent of these pupils prefer to find a job, but others are happy to pursue their agricultural training. Pupils from the rural school who either failed the exam, or who we not allowed to sit the entrance exam for the regional school, have also been enrolled in this section. An older boy who had never attended school asked if he could enrol and was admitted.

Mr. Diagne-Mapaté does not yet know how long he will be able to keep each year group, or how long he ought to keep them, but he has been thrilled with the attitude he has encountered among his students, who are old enough to understand and be interested in crop farming. They see it as their destiny and so we are seeing a new style of rural farmer being created. But thought must be given to how they will settle in again when they go back to their villages and how we will be able to follow their progress.

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The head of the education sector in Labé, Mr. Hervé, shares this concern. He suggests: "We should try to improve the status of farmers and artisans back in the villages. We should not send them home bearing the stigma of incompetents, but make it clear that they have gained something of value at school and we must give them the opportunity of putting it into practice". His proposal is to give a plough to each pupil who is returning home to become a crop farmer. This would be enough in Labé because every family already has oxen. However, ploughs are prohibitively expensive so why not get the pupils

themselves to make ploughs out of wood, like the ones they are using in Kolo near Niamey?

At Youkounkoun, they came up with the following solution. The Mutual Society bought a plough which it lent to four former pupils, one Cognagui boy, one Bassari lad and two Badiarankés, all aged between twelve and fifteen. They farmed together quite happily using the Mutual Society's oxen. The profits from their harvest are going towards buying oxen which the boys will keep while they continue to borrow the plough. These four boys want to stay working together with the Mutual Society, and they still attend school between harvest-time and the sowing season.

There has been another experiment which has been badly managed and demonstrates how not to conduct such matters. At Djenné, a teacher by the name of Vallery-Radot generously donated 20,000 francs to set up three good pupils on a farm with two oxen, a plough and some farmyard animals. The intention was to imitate a French farm, in this case built in adobe. It suits neither the people nor the animals. Land from neighbouring farms was annexed, which led to bad feeling among local villagers towards the new arrivals. Once the first harvest was in one of the boys was forced to marry the best pupil from the girls' school. The girl already had a rich fiancé, and the boy was not interested in her. The couple are not happy. The boy gave up his entire harvest .../...

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to pay for the dowry. As he had no resources, he had to find a job as a labourer; the crops failed and the animals all died (except the oxen kept in the school herd). The couple are expecting a baby, they live in

terrible poverty, and the teacher has lost interest in them.

It seems that we should be able to find the right formula by avoiding mistakes like this one and by putting into practice the suggestions mentioned above.

ii - Schooling for girls

With some exceptions, African women are in the main subjugated by men who jealously guard their position of superiority. Access to French schools has given men the opportunity for personal advancement and they have used this to create an even greater distance between themselves and their female companions. Education for girls has been slow in getting established. At first, we had to make do with enrolling a few girls in the boys' schools. Then we set up a few girls' schools in favourable areas. We are only just coming to end of this trial period. Now we can offer educated girls careers as midwives, nurses and teaching assistants, we are attracting increasing numbers of applicants for our schools. The recent introduction of domestic science into the school curriculum has gone down well with local people. The cause is now won, only a small number of people still oppose girls' schools and this is more an expression of hostility to the principle rather than the practice of schooling. I shall focus on these difficulties and try to identify some solutions.

In the large towns with a European way of life many young women already have careers, and the girls' schools are full, in fact so full that the quality of the teaching is .../...

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suffering as a result. The more educated Muslims are not opposed to schooling; they are particularly keen on domestic science. Local African traders are looking for wives who can run their households and care for their children; they are offering large dowries for such women.

Until just recently, parents have preferred to marry off their daughters rather than see them become civil servants. They worried that if their daughters went to Dakar they would become "emancipated and Catholic". The opening of a teacher training college in Rufisque⁹⁹ has dealt with this problem. Now families want their daughters to become primary teachers.

There are some animists who are particularly authoritarian and worry about female emancipation, such as the Mossi, the Gourmantche, the Senoufo, the Baga and the Kissi. However, the chiefs are having one of their daughters educated so she can serve as an interpreter or secretary.

On the whole mothers are against girls' schools, as they deprive them of their domestic helpers. Girl pupils often have to miss classes, and end up by abandoning school together. As for the girls themselves, those who have an opinion want to follow in their brothers' footsteps and they go on their own initiative to enrol in school. There are many Circles which still do not have a girls' school although there are enough candidates to fill them. The most lively girls are those who have been emancipated from an early age and come from the least

⁹⁹ The school, which also taught midwifery, opened in September 1938 taking in 44 girls in its first cohort; 28 of the girls were from Catholic families and 11 from progressive Muslim families. Source: Diane Barthel, "Women's educational experience under colonialism: towards a diachronic model", *Signs*, Volume 11, No.1, 1985, pp.146-7. Barthel drew her information on girls' education in French West Africa from the education archives at the Senegalese National Archives in Dakar.

developed races, such as Minianka, Somba and Gourounsi girls.

Girls' aptitude for education

In general, the schoolgirls are extremely shy as a result of how they are brought up in the family. All sense of free will has already been stifled in the girls who know .../...

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that in any event they will never get the opportunity to use it. Their fathers and then their husbands will make decisions for them. So they are left without ambition. Also, if they are never exposed to any examples of 'successful' female students, they do not understand where studying can lead. However, those who may appear the most apathetic are often at the top of a mixed class.

Many schoolgirls still have to fulfil their domestic duties. They arrive at school already tired and their thoughts are back at home with the younger brothers in their care. Their mothers are probably frequently saying negative things about school as well.

Lastly, there is the custom among some ethnic groups, such as the Agnis, that adolescent boys and girls spend the night together. The girls sleep through classes, and when they become pregnant they leave school.

For all these reasons, schoolgirls are generally not making as good progress as the boys. Also the boys have had the opportunity to pick up a few words of French down on the market before they start school, whereas the girls have to pick it up from scratch.

Some teachers are saying that the girls are paralysed by the presence of boys in the classroom. The

teacher at Dori feels that as they are so timid, girls have to be dealt with less strictly than boys, which is difficult in mixed classes. In any case, it seems that the girls prefer not to mix with the boys. In a few mixed schools, it has been pointed out that female-only classes would mean an increase in girl pupils.

It is said that some local teachers have a tendency to neglect their female pupils and find it difficult to overcome a certain contempt they feel to seeing them in their classrooms. It has also been pointed out that some teachers are forcing their attentions on these girls.

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So, would it be better to teach the girls separately? Some teachers argued that the presence of boys stimulates the girls, that they would not make progress on their own. They also claim that if we created one class for the girls in each school, it would have pupils of all ages and levels and so their progress would be even slower.

All this goes to explain why in many schools there is not a single girl sitting the Primary School Certificate exam. Given the present enrolment situation, the best solution appears to be that advocated by the head of one education sector who says we should put the strongest schoolgirls in the boys' class and keep another class for those girls destined to become housewives. But we should not commit the error of letting the girls who will be future civil servants give up domestic science

classes. They have even more need for this than the other girls.

Domestic science

The domestic science school teaches dressmaking, laundry and ironing, a little cooking, how to use crockery and table linen, and elementary hygiene. The fathers of the Muslim girls like these studies because they have a taste for clean and orderly interiors. At Dalaba, where there is no domestic science class, the school has been criticised for teaching "nothing of relevance to women". Girls with the ambition to find a professional post are not interested in domestic science studies. They are hoping that later on they will have servants to deal with all that. One girl from Abengourou listed, in the following order, the attractions of her future home: fine engravings, wallpaper, an iron bedstead and wooden furniture. She has not given a thought to the need for a sewing machine, crockery, or cutlery. In her school, the domestic studies class had to be cancelled.

Such aversion to the subject is not common .../...

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but it is not exceptional either. In general, girls enjoy the domestic studies, often more than general studies. Dressmaking and embroidery are their favourite domestic skills. I mentioned earlier this preference for the aesthetic over the utilitarian. We need to exploit this tendency carefully if we want to get people to adopt cleanliness and comfort, which are the basis of healthy moral development.

The schoolgirls enjoy making themselves dresses, then laundering, ironing and starching them. Their

efforts at dressmaking are sometimes crude, but this does not matter. They are enjoying themselves. There is no point in training them in delicate embroidery "for ladies"; they would earn a pittance doing this. Let us teach the young girls to sew for themselves, and above all for their future children. The Health Services in all the regions are complaining that children are falling ill, and even dying, because they have no clothes on. And we could exploit the mothers' interest in their appearance to achieve this goal.

Local civil servants have often complained that schools are not producing dressmakers, which is a convenient profession for the wife who "must follow her husband". But those men having married dressmakers can see that the income from this is meagre, and they regret the fact that their wives are not civil servants.

However, it would be wrong to consider women only in relation to what their husbands do. We need midwives and schoolmistresses, and we give them personal security. There is no need to change this formula.

Understandably the girls are not interested in learning French cuisine, but this is nothing to worry about. However they do like to prepare our more simple dishes, depending on the level of skill required to make them, for example omelette is popular. There is absolutely no reason to push the indigenous people towards changing their diet. However, what would be very useful would be to find what local ingredients can be used for preparing baby food.

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The girls also need to be taught how to prepare this food. Currently many babies die because there is no

transition period between mother's milk and an adult diet of heavy gruel and spicy sauces.

Finally, whatever foods the schoolgirls learn to prepare, they should be taught to eat them properly using their own knife, fork and plate. Unfortunately, they often do not have any of these items.

In Bobo-Dioulasso, the schoolmistress was escorting the girls to market and teaching them how to choose wisely and buy economically. She was also teaching her charges to cash a postal order and send a parcel. These are excellent ways of developing initiative, and girls often get little opportunity for this in African families.

Hygiene and childcare are being sorely neglected by schoolmistresses, and they are the least popular subjects with the girls. At the moment they are being taught almost entirely from books. In a few schools young girls are taken to the clinic to watch babies being weighed, or to see how dressings are applied. These visits are not enormously useful as they are not participating in any of this. Yet these young girls adore children. If one of their former classmates visits with a baby, they all want to hold it for a moment. It seems that there would be little risk involved in entrusting a few infants into the care of the older girls, they could learn to bathe and dress the babies. Each school should look into the possibilities it could offer.

Barriers to teaching domestic science

The main obstacle to domestic science classes is the fact that at the age when the girls are ready for these studies, .../...

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their mothers are insisting they stay at home to work in the house, help with the crops or contribute to the lucrative activity of gathering. Also, many girls marry at a very young age.

On top of this, the schools are under-funded. They need to buy equipment, fabrics and provisions. The most dedicated schoolmistresses are providing a lot of these necessities themselves and are justifiably irritated that they have to do this. Others have just given up on practical classes.

Lastly I should point out that not every European woman is capable of teaching domestic science. You need to understand how to teach. Some civil servants' wives are teaching domestic science to young girls and are quite incompetent at it. As for the local teaching assistants, hardly any of them really know what we mean by order, cleanliness and good taste.

Furthermore, it sometimes happens that when the girls are integrated into the boys' school, the girls are put to work for the benefit of the school Mutual Society; the proceeds from their work are used to feed the boys who are boarders at the school. In Parakou I saw girls making pieces of embroidery which the African headmaster sold to the wives of the civil servants he knew for ridiculously low prices.

At Djenné, the girls were grinding the grain, cooking, weaving baskets, just as they would have done at home for their mothers, but here they are doing it for the Mutual Society, that is to say for the boys. At Abomey-Calavi, the only female pupil in the school spent

the practical classes repairing the boys' clothing and processing harvested crops.

The domestic science curriculum

One schoolmistress showed me her schedule for teaching domestic skills. It included a cross-stitching exercise where girls who cannot even read .../...

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cross-stitch the alphabet, it also included window cleaning and preparing parquet floors for polishing, even though neither the pupils nor the schoolmistress have windows or parquet flooring at home.

This dedicated young woman felt she had to follow the syllabus to the letter, even the cross-stitching, but she expressed regret that it had not been drawn up by women, and women with knowledge of indigenous life. She also mentioned that there are matters of a delicate nature which she would far prefer to report to a female Schools Inspector, indeed this would improve the situation.

iii - Mixed-race Orphanages

In French West Africa there are two mixed-race orphanages for girls, one in Kankan and one in Bamako; two orphanages for boys in Mamou and Abomey; and one mixed orphanage in Ouagadougou. Since my visit, another mixed orphanage has been opened in Zinder¹⁰⁰.

In the Ivory Coast, girls of mixed race are entrusted to the Catholic orphanage at Moosou. In Porto-

¹⁰⁰ This sentence has been added to the text by hand in what appears to be Denise Savineau's handwriting.

Novo in Dahomey, another convent takes in young mixed-race orphan girls. These establishments are described below in the section on Mission schools.

Orphanages for boys

The orphanage at Abomey can accommodate only twelve boys. In the African quarters of Cotonou and Porto-Novo, you can see large numbers of poor mixed race children who need rescuing urgently from this environment. It is distressing to see how sickly they seem to be compared with the healthy black siblings being raised by the same mother.

We visited the premises of the orphanage at Abomey, which are cramped but clean, but the children were away on holiday at the time.

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We met one of these children in Cotonou. He was fit and health and reasonably well-dressed. He boasted about how comfortable his situation was and the other mixed race boys listened to him with envy. The mothers would be very happy if all these youngsters were taken off their hands.

The older mixed-race boys are even more miserable. Some are well-dressed but they still have an air of seediness about them and are completely illiterate.

At Mamou a newly-arrived woman director was taking over the orphanage from her predecessor who has fallen seriously ill. The school and the children showed signs of neglect.

There are no separate premises for mixed-race boys in Bamako. They board at the Upper Primary School. The masters think this situation is very unsatisfactory, since the discipline needed for older boys is far too

strict for the younger ones. An orphanage is going to be built.

Orphanages for girls

The girls' orphanage in Bamako is an imposing building while the Kankan orphanage is very unimpressive. Despite this, the atmosphere in these two establishments is quite the opposite of their external appearance. The main problem with the Bamako orphanage is that it is more like an army barracks than a hostel. It was designed on a large scale and accommodates a many female boarders, but their life is too disciplined and there is too great a distance between girls and teachers. The monitors are uneducated local women, only one of them speaks a little French, and none is capable of organising leisure activities. There is no garden either. The life of these young girls is centred on the village; they are free to go home every week, and on the church which they all attend. It is not centred on the orphanage itself. One can see the influence of nuns in the orphanage, every evening the girls can be heard spontaneously reciting litanies.

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The orphanage at Kankan is much smaller and the regime is more akin to family life. The premises are certainly rather minimal and not very comfortable, but most of the activities are focused on the well-shaded central courtyard, largely because the main entrance is kept closed and there are no views to the outside. The girl boarders are escorted to classes, on walks and to bathe, but in the premises they are free. They are not allowed to go to the village, so their families come here

to visit them. You need only observe the girls' faces to see which orphanage is better. In Bamako the girls' expressions are shifty and hostile, whereas at Kankan they are open and confident. The young girls in Kankan are far more influenced by European culture. They are becoming real housewives, much sought after by young civil servants, who are allowed, on the condition of having good references, to make an offer of marriage.

Mixed Orphanages

The mixed orphanage at Ouagadougou is a wretched, dilapidated place overcrowded with pupils. A mechanic's wife runs it as a good mother would. She even takes in babies, so you see in Ouagadougou something you will see nowhere else, well-fed mixed-race babies.

In this establishment, the younger pupils seem more content than the older ones, probably because the latter are not sure what their future holds. The girls are passive in class, and use their "mixed-race situation" as an excuse.

Some Reflections on Orphanages

In general, a good orphanage must resemble as much as possible a family home, and be as little like a school as possible. It seems that it would be better to send children of mixed race to .../...

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the regional school, rather than give them a private education. They should be discouraged from excluding themselves from Black society on the basis of a belief in their own superiority, as often happens. People of mixed race realise too late that White people do not see them

as Whites. They have no family to turn back to and end up in a very unhappy situation.

The Management of Orphanages

We have seen that the director of an orphanage, even if she is very devoted to the task, cannot do it properly if she is not a trained teacher. The wife of a headmaster entrusted with a small class is not automatically a teacher. But even the most well-qualified schoolmistress, full of enthusiasm for the task, cannot run an orphanage and her own household at the same time, as it involves washing and dressing the pupils, looking after them, preparing and teaching classes, supervising walks, monitoring them at night, and sometimes nursing a sick child. It is even more difficult if she lives a distance from the school buildings. Several female orphanage directors (two of whom were combining their duties while being pregnant) have been evacuated out in a critical condition. It is not necessary to appoint special directors to the orphanages, it simply needs one or two trusted assistants instead of uneducated monitors.

Pregnancy in Orphanages

Every orphanage has experienced girls who have had an "accident". When it is discovered that a boarder is pregnant, a scandal erupts. Some girls who were expelled from the orphanages were sent back to their villages where they became prostitutes and died in this state.

It would be difficult to avoid these 'accidents' ever occurring. In fact it is a miracle that they do not .../...

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occur more often given that neither mothers nor local monitors see any problem in early pregnancy. On the contrary, for African girls, virginity has only ever been a rule imposed by fathers, and orphan girls of mixed race have no fathers. It is astounding that the directors of an orphanage can remain ignorant of these facts, and then, sanctimoniously, throw the "shameless girl" out into the street.

There is certainly no question of encouraging the girls in the orphanages to be promiscuous, but they could perhaps be guided more effectively in a manner more in line with local morals. But pregnancy must be foreseen, and a solution sorted out. In Guinea, schools have been created to train schoolmasters' wives as monitors. It would be a good idea if a school were set up in each colony to take in girls expelled from the orphanages. This way they would remain supervised and continue with their studies. Later on, depending on their skills, they could be set up in a career.

iv - Upper Schools and Teacher Training Colleges

Upper Primary Schools

All the upper schools, from the most well endowed, such as Bamako, to the most modest all give the impression that they are being run not simply to teach lessons but rather to create a whole new way of life.

I will focus here mainly on the young girls attending these schools. They are quiet, they think before they speak, but they look interested and do have that shyness that paralyses schoolgirls generally. In

taking these young women away from an environment that was stifling them, boarding school is giving them the opportunity to make fast and well-disciplined progress.

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It is a pity that not all these schools have big enough premises to provide domestic science classes, unlike the lovely facilities at Bingerville where they have a very large kitchen; a room for sewing and ironing; and rather than a refectory they have a dining room with a sideboard; little tables with pots of flowers; decorated chinaware and tablecloths and napkins made from brightly coloured striped fabric. The young girls take enormous care looking after their environment, and they adore making pretty frocks and washing and ironing them.

Rural Teacher Training Colleges

These schools are facing real problems. As I mentioned earlier, boys who attend rural schools want to go on to become civil servants, in other words they want to become 'intellectuals' rather than manual workers. They dreamed of entering the *William Ponty* Teacher Training College, of wearing the *Ponty* uniform and a rural training college is a poor second best for them. They think it is dishonourable to learn about using a plough and training oxen. The teachers are finding it very difficult to raise the morale of these young men and to make them understand that the role being entrusted to them is a very important one and requires special qualities and knowledge. They have been promised the same salary as their urban colleagues in an effort to prove to them that they are not inferior. But despite this they feel inferior, because they did not make it to *William*

Ponty; and this presents a problem for their teachers, they are confronted with "second rate" students. In future those boys who will become rural schoolteachers should begin their career path much earlier, and they should not be allowed to lose the habit of agricultural work while attending regional school.

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v - Teaching staff

European teachers

European teachers who run the rural teacher training colleges are particularly worthy of praise. Although they have no background in teaching crop farming and animal husbandry, they have taken on this new challenge of training educated young men from rural areas with good grace and enthusiasm, and have done what they can to teach themselves how to do it. I should particularly mention the staff at the Dabou teacher training college who have made huge efforts not only to train themselves (there are no specialised staff in this school) but also to build and equip the premises.

I would also like to say how excellent the European primary school teachers are in general. Nearly all of them carry out their mission with such enthusiasm and competence. You only have to look at the elite they have created to appreciate how good our teaching methods are and how assiduously and patiently they are being put into practice. The young men they have educated are well

brought up, intelligent, and keen to think and act like civilised people.

I would like to point out that these teachers do not have enough contact with Dakar¹⁰¹, and are sometimes unaware of what resources are available to them there. For example in Bamako, the teachers created a mobile library, and when they needed advice on what new books to buy, they were unaware that the Government-General's archivist could have advised them. At the rural teacher training college at Katibougou students have been collecting plants. They were unaware that the Hann Gardens in Dakar have a herbarium now and that they can collaborate and exchange the names of plants being collected. I should add that the rural teachers show great interest in their .../...

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former pupils who have gone to *William Ponty* College. They learned in the press that a group of *Ponty* students¹⁰² had been sent to the Exhibition¹⁰³, but they had not heard that when the students got back they were invited to dine with the Governor General, and had made a big impression with their perfect manners. They would have been delighted to have been told about this. As the rural teacher faces a difficult life teaching beginners and is working under what are often indifferent or hostile Administrators, he needs to know that he is not

¹⁰¹ Here she means with the headquarters of the colonial Education Department of French West Africa based in Dakar.

¹⁰² Graduates from the *William Ponty* school became known as 'Pontins'.

¹⁰³ She is most probably referring to the great colonial exhibition of 1931. The organisation of the exhibition was entrusted in 1927 to the famous coloniser Marshal Hubert Lyautey.

toiling in vain and that his superiors appreciate and support him.

Women teaching staff

Having visited many schools, I believe that I can say that the teachers in the girls' classes are in the main too inexperienced.

When the schoolmistress is a professional, she knows how to give interesting lessons, how to make the best out of them, and how to prove that girl pupils, with their reputation of being 'unsuited to academic study' are as able as anyone else. The secret of bringing the girls round, say the schoolmistresses, is to get them to talk, sing and laugh.

Some assistant teachers are wives of primary school teachers who have been well prepared by their husbands and are also getting excellent results. But these women move on, and are replaced by incompetent ones or insensitive individuals like the assistant teacher at Labé, who dressed in a way designed to attract the wrong kind of attention. The local Muslim population did not like it and their daughters stopped attending the school.

Domestic science classes highlight more clearly than any other class the problem of assuming that any European woman can teach. In fact it takes a lot of teaching knowledge to know how to encourage interest in these new skills. I will just give one example of what one such a 'teacher' said about her pupils: "they don't even know what a laundry boiler is!", she told us with disdain.

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Lastly the African women we employ as teaching assistants are not always able to teach the household and

farmyard skills they have little experience of. One assistant showed me a hutch of rabbits that had big bald patches in their fur. She did not see any problem because she thought "they're normally like that".

Mr. You, the Inspector for Education in Conakry, has come up with a way of addressing the problem by opening a teaching assistants' school for the wives of his African schoolteachers. There are a good number of young wives who are following the certificate of education programme. They are attending regularly and are being encouraged to do so by their husbands. Some women are either pregnant or have had babies. The infants are being looked after by everybody so childcare facilities are on hand. It would be good if such schools could be set up in all our colonies.

African Staff in Rural Schools

While the European staff is devoting all its energies to making the rural schools work, the same cannot be said of the indigenous staff. Their studies set them apart as "intellectuals", so they often consider teaching manual skills demeaning. They also clearly find it difficult to work up any enthusiasm for teaching these unfamiliar forms of crop cultivation. This is particularly true of long-serving staff, who have never received any agricultural training. If we want our rural schools to operate efficiently they must be entrusted to teachers with a specialism in agricultural studies. The rural teacher training colleges could provide these teachers.

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vi - Private education

Christianity has made almost no inroads in the Muslim populations. In the Muslim-dominated regions, European Christian missions are not becoming established although one American mission based in Kankan has decided to open and do its proselytising in these thankless lands.

In the animist regions, there is some rivalry between Catholics and Protestants, and even sometimes with Muslims. Their success or otherwise depends primarily on the chiefs, who either convert or resist according to their domestic or political interests.

Educated people generally feel the need to break away from the religions of the "savages" and adopt a more "civilised" ones, but this does not mean that they will give up practising their ancient rituals. They weigh up each doctrine not so much in terms of its moral value or the degree to which it might reveal the "truth", than in terms of the advantages and disadvantages it holds for them. They choose between Islam and Christianity depending on the importance they attach either to polygamy or to the consumption of alcohol. The preponderance of Catholicism or Protestantism varies according to region; sometimes there is just a fashion for one or other, or it can depend on the personalities involved. A priest who is also a musician is popular. Also the Protestants are no longer forbidding polygamy, they tolerate it among catechists while not allowing them to be baptised. This dubious arrangement is proving quite successful.

The Catholic missions are as old as colonisation itself, while the Protestant missions started in the nineteenth century when both churches began opening schools. Knowing the importance of winning over the womenfolk, they established schools for both boys and girls. Now the Catholics .../...

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often say it is no longer necessary to open schools because the Administration is dealing with this, but they are still setting up girls' schools in regions where we are not providing them.

The missions continue to have an influence in secular schools through pupils who started in the mission schools or through local teachers. In some regions, the whole school attends Mass or Protestant services. It is marriage that can cause defections.

Schoolchildren certainly have the right to embrace whatever religion they choose but unfortunately they are all too often being encouraged by usually Catholic priests to disobey the Administrator and non-Catholic teachers. Furthermore both Muslim and animist families are complaining about the way missionaries are taking over their children by acting *in loco parentis* and depriving the family of its authority.

This is why we must not allow children who are taken on as boarders at the rural schools, the upper primary schools or the teacher training colleges to attend religious establishments without the prior consent of their parents.

Finally, while mixed-race orphans must be free to frequent either the church or the mosque as they wish, it is unacceptable that they should be escorted there by

orphanage staff. The display of 'holy' images in dormitories, or the daily collective practice of religious recitations should also not be allowed. Permitting such influences to pervade a secular establishment is tantamount to admitting that we do not care about the moral upbringing of the pupils¹⁰⁴. It is also proof that we are not providing enough recreation because religion .../...

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for many of these pupils is simply a remedy for boredom.

The missions actively campaigning for funds in Europe and America are receiving substantial sums, which are supplemented on the ground by donations from local colonial settlers. However, the African faithful generously support their pastors and hand over large sums of money. A girl from the teacher training college in Rufisque was surprised sending a 20 franc postal order to the Issoudum priests.¹⁰⁵ The amounts these people are sending come to three or four times what they are paying in tax. As we shall see, schoolchildren are not a burden on the missions' funds, quite the contrary.

Boys' Schooling in Catholic Missions

Boys are taught by priests who push the most able in the hope of sending them on to the seminary or to the

¹⁰⁴ The Catholic Church and the secular State were locked in a power struggle for most of the 19th century over the place of organised religion in education. In the first decade of the 20th century the French government passed legislation in French West Africa to ensure religious proselytising was excluded from schools in receipt of State funding.

¹⁰⁵ This sentence was an interlineal note in parenthesis added in what appears to be Denise Savineau's handwriting. From this addition we can assume that Savineau proof read this document after September 1938 when the Rufisque School opened. Those she calls the Issoudum priests are probably members of the congregation of the Sacred Heart. This Catholic brotherhood was established by the French priest Jules Chevalier in the town of Issoudum, France, in 1854. The Brothers started their African mission in Congo Kinshasa in 1924. There are now over 2000 Brothers of this congregation engaged in missionary work in 53 countries around the world.

Government-General's schools. The other boys become apprentices in the missions' workshops, most learn carpentry. These apprenticeships can last a very long time and the boy is neither paid nor housed nor fed. When the boys graduate from an apprenticeship, the priests, being absolute masters over their charges, will pay them whatever they want. The low level of wages is compensated by the promise of Paradise.

In the small seminary at Pobé, the pupils are in principle being taught up to baccalaureate level. But they are never entered for any examination, and the only outlet they are offered for their knowledge is the priesthood. Their knowledge is in any case extremely slight. In the "rhetoric" class, the academic level attained in this hotchpotch of Latin, is no higher than the School Certificate.

At the main seminary, the only subject studied is theology. There are only a few young men studying here. They have been carefully selected and are treated with consideration. They had an.../...

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open and thoughtful expression on their faces. Some of them have graduated from our upper primary schools.

Girls' Schooling in Catholic Missions

There is hardly any schooling for girls. Some girls are learning a bit of French but they are using books that were originally written for children who live in France and have long since been rejected on the basis of their abstract and complicated content. The younger girls often just learn the alphabet, which they can use for writing their own language.

The convent schools put great emphasis on domestic science. In reality, this involves using girls for cleaning the premises, washing clothes, and cooking local dishes which they serve up in communal calabashes.

As well as this, the female pupils do an enormous amount of dressmaking, embroidery, tapestry, laundry and ironing for the townspeople. This constitutes a veritable business and pays for the upkeep of the convent and its endless new building projects. The girls receive no salary. When they are "remunerated", the cost of their food and clothing is deducted from the sum, and the remainder is put aside as a nest egg for when they marry, so long as they marry someone the Missionaries approve of. These savings amount to between 75 and 100 francs after ten years' work (precise details and references are provided in my report on Ouagadougou)¹⁰⁶. The girls are sometimes forcibly taken from their parents, and then serve as bait to convert young men, who will only be allowed to marry the girls if they convert to Christianity.

At the Moosou orphanage for mixed-race children, fiancés have to provide large sums of money for the upkeep .../...

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of their brides-to-be (the establishment is already subsidised), or pay inflated prices for the wedding dress and wedding meal.

The nuns prepare their most intelligent pupils for civil service careers as midwives or district nurses.

¹⁰⁶ See Savineau's report number 8 from Ouagadougou.

Protestant Missions

The purpose of education in the Protestant missions is firstly to train catechists and secondly to train the wives of these catechists. The pupils come from wealthy families. As it is a boarding school system rural pupils are protected from bad influences in the large towns. The boarding fees are high and no underhand apprenticeships are used to subsidise the enterprise.

The syllabus and text books are the same as those used in the State schools. The schoolmasters and mistresses are nearly all European and seem to be competent. One could criticise them for being overly severe, the pupils are very quiet.

No domestic studies as such are taught in the Protestant girls' schools. The boarders do the housework and prepare their own local food. The aim is not to get these girls to develop, but to keep them at the same material level as the population in the region that have yet to be brought into the fold.

At Dabou, a hostel for young women has been set up from donations. It has been designed in a charming, indeed exemplary, manner. It is designed in the form of pavilions built around a leafy courtyard, each one occupied by a "family" of around a dozen girls. It would take very little effort to decorate these little dwellings: a table, a few chairs, a vase of flowers, but there is 'no desire for these'. When progress reaches the villages and people start wanting a different life, then we will see progress in the missions.

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American Missions

Outside the Ivory Coast, American Missions have no more than a handful of followers. The missionaries keep themselves busy translating the Bible into local languages and their wives teach the alphabet to children so they will be able to read the Scriptures translated by the pastors. These apostles seem happy enough to await eternal Paradise for themselves, but clearly some divine intervention will be needed for the rest.

According to the mission director's secretary the purpose of the mission is not to dole out soup, soap and healthcare; their only object is the saving of souls.

Koranic Schools

The Koranic school system is similar to an apprenticeship. In exchange for lessons, the pupil works in his master's fields. The child's parents provide his rations.

It is remarkable how local merchants and civil servants are hostile to our agricultural training but happy to see their sons farming for the marabou, but then the marabout is a holy man, and his pupils will attain Paradise.

Some marabouts take on children who are not provided for by their parents. These half-starved children have to go out and beg. At Carabane, we saw a young prisoner who had killed a classmate, a fellow pupil of the marabou, in an argument over food.

A teacher from the Fouta-Djallon gave us the following information about Koranic schools in his region. Islam is now the dominant religion in this region that used to boast many literate people. Nowadays all boys still receive some schooling but they rarely continue beyond the most basic level. Their parents do

not force them to study. Also it would appear that pupils from our schools, .../...

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who are used to doing reflective mental exercises find it increasingly difficult to learn texts by heart that they have not understood. Fortunately, their parents have not noticed.

More educated Muslim people everywhere are asking for Franco-Arab schools to be opened. They want their children to be educated, but are worried about them coming into contact with non-Muslims. Schools like this could teach artisan crafts and agricultural skills.

The following example shows how Franco-Arab schooling can work well in regions which resist our education. In Goundam the authorities set up a Franco-Arab school in a hostile Tuareg area and managed to recruit all the children of a marabou tribe. Of course these are not people who automatically reject schooling, unlike the warrior tribes, but they do tend to refuse to attend French schools. A solution of this sort might work for the Djerma people.

Muslim families also like the idea of sending their daughters to a Franco-Arab school, as this would "civilise" them in a way they would find useful, while keeping them within the faith. A Franco-Arab girls' school with a domestic science programme would be well received.

African private schools

In the Lower Ivory Coast, African planters are making a lot of money and they want to set up their own schools in the village. They are having schools built and

appointing the teacher, usually a chief's son who has done a bit of schooling. He teaches the pupils in the mornings and in the evenings they work in a field for him. The missionaries are keen to take these schools under their wing and provide them with books designed to inspire piety. It would be good if the Inspectorate for Education were to step in both to help set up and monitor the schools.

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THE HEALTH SERVICE

i. Clinics

Attendance at clinics

As a general rule wherever schools have been accepted this has followed the acceptance of a local clinic. It sometimes takes just a few quick cures for attendance at a new clinic to get off to a good start.

The opening of medical centres attended each week by a doctor, has been very well received. One doctor pointed out that ill people should not be given consultations in the afternoons because it means they have to travel to the centre and back in the heat of the day, some of them have to travel over 100 kilometres.

Africans have a tendency to see medicine as a magic potion that only needs to be applied once or at most a few times. Also, when their external symptoms have disappeared, they think they have been cured. Some only go to the doctor once they have exhausted all the solutions proposed by their local witch doctor, by which point it is usually too late to save them. The clinic is then accused of "killing" these patients.

In general, women are more prepared to attend the clinic than men, but only for their children, they are less likely to attend for themselves. Some of them refuse to be treated by the male nurse whereas they would accept a female nurse.

Young people consult the doctor more readily than the elderly. Sometimes most of the clients at a clinic are children; this proves that we are winning over young people.

Whether the chief is in favour or not has an effect on attendance at the clinics.

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When the chief in Kolda fell ill, the number of patients dropped from 180 to 6.

Facilities in the clinics

Doctors very often complain about the lack of medicines, bandages and surgical equipment. The equipment quota for six months can often be used up in eight weeks. Most commonly used medicines are in short supply while there are plenty of less commonly used ones.

The problem of having no microscope was frequently pointed out. As one doctor explained, when you cannot establish a diagnosis the patient has to be evacuated. It is very expensive to evacuate a European civil servant, and given that a patient takes longer to recover from an advanced illness, the financial burden on the Administration is higher in this respect also. All this costs far more than the price of one microscope.

There is also a lack of equipment to carry out the Wassermann test¹⁰⁷ on blood samples.

Hospitalisation and hospital food

Patients are being hospitalised in very different ways. While some are accommodated in reasonable comfort, others are suffering in overcrowded conditions. Some doctors are very pleased with themselves for having been able to provide an African style hut for each patient big enough to accommodate his family, because families always turn up and otherwise fill up the communal wards.

These families who come along with the patient also provide his food. If families are not allowed to stay on the premises, the *A.M.I.*¹⁰⁸ must take on this responsibility though often there is no budget to cover this. As one doctor at Banfora put it, with a budget of only 41 centimes¹⁰⁹ it is impossible to feed the patients adequately. In outposts run by the military, the sick are often fed riflemen's rations.

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Transport

Numerous complaints are made about the transport situation in the county towns and in the bush where vehicles get worn out very quickly and have to be sent in for repairs. They are then out of commission for several months so there is no service and everything that has

¹⁰⁷ She is referring to the German bacteriologist, Augustus Paul von Wassermann, who created a reaction test for the detection of syphilis in 1906.

¹⁰⁸ The *AMI* (*assistance médicale indigène*), known later as the *AMA* (*assistance médicale autochtone*) was a free health service run by the colonial administration for local people. See glossary.

¹⁰⁹ Presumably this refers to the budget for feeding one patient per day.

been gained is lost, and it takes a lot of effort to get it all going again.

It also happens that a doctor who has to drive some 5,500 kilometres to make his rounds only receives fuel for 2,000 kilometres. Lastly, the motorcycles issued to auxiliary doctors¹¹⁰ are causing complaints. They say they give a very bumpy ride on the bad roads, and the doctors arrive for work shaken and tired. Other complaints include the problem of not being able to carry much equipment, and difficulties riding over sand and waterlogged roads, where they are often falling off.

Staff

The doctors rarely have enough assistants. It is not unknown that to keep both the clinic and the health centres running at the same time, consultations have had to be entrusted to nurses while treatments are provided by unskilled assistants. One doctor pointed out that the red fez worn by the health service nurses frightens people away whereas the green fez worn by the veterinary nurses has the opposite effect.

ii. Maternity units

I do not need to point out how important maternity units are.

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We all know how much African¹¹¹ women want to become mothers and what obstacles stand in the way of

¹¹⁰ These African doctors were initially trained to 'assist' French doctors stationed in French West Africa. In practice their duties and competence usually far exceeded this auxiliary role.

¹¹¹ Here as elsewhere the term 'femmes noires' has been translated as African women.

childbirth, namely syphilis, genital organs ruined by early marriage, and the harm done by traditional birthing attendants. We know that infant mortality is very high because some babies are very weak at birth and other healthier ones are not being well cared for.

Unfortunately, it is much easier to get a sick person to attend the clinic than to get a pregnant woman to attend antenatal surgeries or deliver in the maternity ward. The arrival of a baby is surrounded by traditional customs which are sometimes completely resistant to any influence from us.

In the first place, it is generally true to say that among backward people everything to do with female reproduction has to be hidden from male eyes, it is a secret to be guarded by the women within the group. This is why they sometimes will not allow gynaecological examinations by the midwife, and even less so by the doctor. The traditional birthing assistant herself is often absent from the delivery, and steps in only after the event.

Where the woman gives birth is also very important. While one woman might have to go into the bush, another will be obliged to go to her mothers' home, and another will remain close to her husband's gods.

The custom of confession mentioned above can also result in opposition to a female patient being entrusted into foreign hands. Mothers and new-born babies are the object of rituals at this time. It is not easy to gather information on these rituals, but we do know that they are often dangerous. For example, they can involve applying cow dung, horse manure, or mashed leaves to the baby's navel or fontanel.

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The ban on women seeing the sun, leaving the house or receiving any visits during the days or even weeks after the delivery (up to three to five months in Allada), mean that we are unable to monitor mother and baby's progress.

Customs vary from one ethnic group to another which creates different problems for the medical centres. It has happened that doctors, and even midwives who are not from the area where they are working, cannot understand why new mothers are avoiding them and so they resort to inappropriate ways of winning the women over. What would be extremely useful would be to circulate a leaflet giving them information and above all encouraging them to gather information for themselves.

We should be aware, however, that in some cases there is currently no solution but we should not let this put us off. In the first place, these problems only involve the women. The men respect the women's rituals and are afraid of the powers of the occult these women claim to have, but they are not party to the rituals and would be happy to see them disappear. Some men are beginning to insist that their wives give birth in the maternity unit. However, a monogamous man needs his cook, and in polygamous households, the co-wives are not always willing to cover for absent new mothers. But men and women alike are anxious to see the babies survive, and when they understand that we can help them, they are gradually coming round to seeking the midwife or even the doctor's help. This is most noticeable in the towns, primarily because young women are more independent from older women. I should just add at this point that European district nurses are managing to communicate the

idea of *germs* to women in Dakar using the idea of a 'little beast' which infects babies with tetanus.

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Schooling will triumph over prejudice when this generation of uneducated mothers has gone. This is one reason why girls' education must become more widespread. Girls' education, and indeed boys' education, must include a campaign to eradicate ideas which are harmful to the welfare of babies and young children.

Premises for maternity units

Some maternity units have been well set up, and efforts are being made to make conditions in them pleasant for local women. But these efforts are not always well received in that a patient who has been provided with a bed might prefer sleeping on a mat, and another who has been allocated a cradle might prefer keeping the baby close to her. But there are mothers who like lying on a mattress and seeing their babies in their own little beds. Comfortable conditions should always be on offer even to the reluctant ones, some will be won over, and others will follow suit.

Unfortunately, maternity units are sometimes set up in such a way that they discourage even the most amenable patients. Where Health Service premises are inadequate, women are designated the oldest, smallest, most poorly-lit buildings. The delivery table is squeezed into a cubby-hole, or into the postnatal ward, or into the neonatal consultation room, or even put in the injection room which is used by both men and women. Quite often, the new mother is discharged immediately after giving

birth, or if she needs special care, is admitted to a ward containing men and women.

This overcrowding is not only disagreeable for the women, it also complicates the midwife's task.

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It goes without saying that the lack of equipment we have seen in the clinics is even more widespread in the maternity units. Some do not even have a water boiler.

Take-up in maternity units

Not all maternity units find it difficult to attract women. In some regions, even in the most remote areas, women are happy to arrive a month before the delivery to rest before the delivery. They then stay on for a while to recover after the birth. At N'Zérékoré, they spend their time weaving mats for sale. Their husbands are not happy about them being away like this.

In the towns, maternity units are expanding all the time but they can never keep up with demand. In Bamako, there are women lying on mats between the beds. Those who are turned away when the unit is full, stay in the courtyard waiting for the birth in the certain knowledge that when that happens they will not be refused medical attention.

In regions where the people have resisted our influence, the worst cases are brought to the doctor. It can happen that after three days of failing to deliver a baby villagers will then take the mother by road to the nearest clinic which can be 100 kilometres away. By the time they get there the baby has died and this has infected the mother. If she dies, the maternity unit is held responsible. But some do recover, sometimes beyond

the hopes of the doctors themselves, and this is the best possible publicity for the maternity units.

It is difficult to say which women have the most positive attitude towards the maternity unit. Sometimes, the maternity ward for African women is full of wives of traders and civil servants, but at other times these women are the most reluctant to attend either because they find the premises uncomfortable or because they do not wish to mix with women from the villages. Likewise Muslim women are either hostile or amenable, as are the animist women.

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Home births

Lack of space in the maternity unit or a woman's insistence on giving birth at home can often mean midwives have to go out to the villages and work in very difficult and unhygienic conditions. The midwife has to work on her knees, sometimes she will have to tolerate the heat and smoke of a fire in the hut, as is the custom in some groups. There is not enough water and no boiled water at all. On top of this, everything is dirty and custom sometimes requires that the mother lies either straight on the floor or on a bed of sand.

Where women are hospitalised in individual straw huts so that their families can accompany them, some of these problems are recreated at the maternity unit. The one advantage of them being there is that several women can be monitored simultaneously.

Prenatal and gynaecological surgeries

The success of having surgery hours reserved for women depends very much on the canton chiefs' attitude

and how much influence they wield, this is true for health service take-up in general.

These surgeries are very important, given the high number of deaths caused by syphilis¹¹². The treatment has a remarkable success rate but it has to be started early which is very difficult to achieve. Having said that, the local people are very impressed by the success rate.

Surgeries for new-born babies

Again it is necessary to get the chiefs to support surgeries for new-born babies.

Mothers do not understand the .../...

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need to bring a baby along when it is not ill. We are not perhaps taking enough trouble - though it would take very little trouble - to explain the importance of weighing babies.

The success of the BCG¹¹³ vaccine was frequently pointed out, it is getting a reputation for producing handsome babies.

The graph which goes with the baby weighing charts is clear enough to be understood by some mothers. But it is also the case that some of the nurses and midwives cannot use this graph and are even less capable of explaining what it means. It would be a good idea to devote part of their training to studying the use of these graphs. These graphs are so useful not only for individual babies, but also for the community as a whole,

¹¹² On several occasions in her writings Savineau draws attention to what was considered a syphilis epidemic in West Africa. This preoccupation with syphilis was also present in the British colonial medical services. Yaws, a common disease endemic in West Africa, presents some similar signs. Perhaps some confusion between the two might have been occurring, particularly in the number of cases of so-called syphilis that were being reported in infants and small children?

¹¹³ The *Bacille Calmette et Guérin* anti-tuberculosis vaccine.

as they indicate clearly what aspects of childcare need special attention. For instance, it can be seen that many babies are above average weight until they reach seven or eight months, at which point their weight rapidly drops below the average. It is clear that there is a local factor causing this and we need to find out what it is and deal with it, not just by giving advice to individuals but also through a publicity campaign that the chiefs could organise.

In some maternity units the graphs have hardly started to take shape. The midwives are sometimes embarrassed about this, knowing all too well that this is proof of their negligence. One asks oneself if they tried harder would they necessarily still fail? In any event, it is not enough to give charts to midwives with orders to fill them in. They must also be provided with scales, and not all of them have these.

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Toddlers

We have seen how after an auspicious start in life the health of babies declines rapidly. It happens at the moment when the baby needs more than just maternal milk. When the mother realises this, she starts introducing the baby to the heavy spicy food that adults eat and the baby's health deteriorates.

We have also noted that infants lose weight and there is a significant increase in infant mortality during the period when Muslim women are fasting. We need to make strong representations to the marabouts so that pregnant and breastfeeding women not required to fast. Children of animist parents face other dangers, such as when a mother dies, no other woman will take over feeding

the baby and so it starves. We need to provide a stock of condensed milk, but that would be expensive.

The doctors say that even after weaning toddlers are not out of danger. We should probably be paying more attention to these children. When the baby lived on its mother's back, it kept warm, but once it starts walking around naked it is vulnerable to pulmonary infections. If a child has a fever, the mother shuts him away at home rather than bringing him to the doctor.

Older boys and girls have to work hard and are poorly fed. The Inspector for Health in Guinea has noted that young boys are frequently replacing their fathers for forced labour duty around the age of puberty when they should be getting special care.

Finally, it has been noted that in a general sense, when old men marry young women it produces sickly children and causes the race to degenerate. The campaign against forced marriage will deal with this evil.

Encouraging women to attend clinics

As I stated earlier, the best way to persuade reluctant women to attend .../...

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the maternity unit is to get the chiefs to collaborate.

Distributing boubous to new-born babies has also had some success; it is an important to keep this up because while the mothers enjoy seeing them this way it provides protection for the baby. The success of this strategy depends on the quality of the boubous. Some have been produced quickly and cheaply and they are neither warm nor comfortable. A boubou must be long enough and have sleeves. Also, women are very well able to see if the

garment is well made or not, whether it represents a certain value in terms of the work that went into it and whether it is nice to look at. The material must be attractive, bright and preferably in a floral design. Mothers are very impressed when there is a little bonnet to go with the boubou. This fashion is starting to spread to the towns; even if it is of little use or even uncomfortable for the child at least it convinces the mother to dress the baby and that in itself is important. Once again, we come back to the point that a useful practice must be made enjoyable if we want people to adopt it.

There have been complaints that some mothers have taken a boubou for their baby only to put it away for celebration days. At least they are starting to get the habit, which is the first step to changing behaviour. Soap distributions have also gone down quite well.

In some regions, soap and boubous are already widespread so they are of no use at all in winning the mothers' favour. Doctors are searching for something cheap, useful and tempting to offer the mothers that would be sure to please them. Some doctors are offering "cosmetic surgery" to those women who are preoccupied with their appearance, this involves stitching up earlobes torn from wearing excessively heavy earrings, .../...

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or amputating the sixth finger from a new-born baby (a relatively frequent occurrence). Finally, some families turn to the doctor when a woman and baby have died before the birth, and ask him to extract the dead baby from the body as it needs to be buried separately. The gravedigger

at Abomey charges three hundred francs for this operation. Families will also rush the patient to the doctor in the course of a difficult birth.

One way of getting the message across is being used in Nikki¹¹⁴. It could be applied more widely although it does require the intervention of the Administrator. Each time a baby or new mother dies without having had any medical attention, he summons the father and gives him a 'good dressing down'. Of course, this dressing down must explain clearly where the problem lies.

One doctor suggested a baby beauty contest as a way of persuading mothers to attend the clinic. This might not be the wisest course of action. The most beautiful babies do not always belong to the most attentive mothers. Furthermore, some mothers may not understand why they are being inconvenienced and why they have not received a present. When these baby contests take place in France even the mother of the sickliest child is sure it is going to win. The outrage of the losers is unimaginable. It would provoke bad feelings and the maternity unit might lose clients. It is probably better to offer caring mothers a small celebratory gathering and distribute syrup to them. This would raise the prestige of the quiet, well-behaved mothers. A little piece of jewellery for the child might also be attractive. For example if a small coin or a bead were presented on a regular basis, over time there would be enough for a necklace. It goes without saying that each region would require its own specific solution, and that a small budget would be needed. But the expense would contribute to making the maternity unit work well rather than being a drain on resources; .../...

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¹¹⁴ A town in central Benin (ex-Dahomey) visited by Savineau on 8 January 1938.

which surely must be a good economy?

Traditional birthing attendants

Using traditional birthing attendants to establish a link between the Health Services and local people is a good development. These attendants act as indigenous midwives and they have a good deal of authority over women, sometimes this authority has a religious character.

The aim is to give these women some training, some equipment if they have to carry out operations themselves, and to get them to bring their clients in to the maternity unit. Various rewards have been devised to encourage them to do this, such as a bonus for each baby who lives beyond a certain number of months, or a bonus for every woman who gives birth in the maternity unit, or just a fixed payment.

The results vary greatly from region to region. Some traditional birthing attendants understand the objectives and try their hardest, whereas others revert to their old practices the minute we leave them to their own devices. They are often too old to learn new ways, but we should continue our efforts.

Beyond this, there is another possibility which might be more efficient. We could take on young women for training, preferably those who have attended rural school. Their intellectual training has already started and they often turn out to be very competent. Also, since they are local girls who know the people and the language, they have no difficulties of access and can quickly gain some authority.

But, whether we are dealing with old or young birthing attendants, the question of salary presents a huge problem. The budget is so small that .../...

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each attendant is only being given between five and ten francs a month. Even this allocation is sometimes reduced, or even stopped completely.

The traditional birthing attendants whose families cannot support them tend to leave. Others carry on in the hope of getting a recognised position but this never happens. This is a great shame; instead of providing promising results it is causing a lot of misery, especially for the younger women.

iii - Medical and Auxiliary Staff

European doctors

This is a thankless and gruelling task. Many doctors are generously putting their all into this work and they deserve our highest praise. The most dedicated doctors are also the ones who are least happy with the situation. What concerns them most is not what they are achieving but rather what they are failing to achieve either because of lack of equipment or lack of auxiliary staff, or because the Administration takes so little interest in what they are doing. When doctors and Administrators collaborate, the result is a source of inspiration to both of them. Perhaps we need to make it clear to some Administrators who have had a rather too legalistic training, that they also have a humanitarian role to play here.

As regards the doctors, they sometimes adopt an overly medical approach and neglect the educational side, or where they are more inclined to educate, they lack the patience for it. Doctors posted to remote regions need to be warned in advance of the difficulties of starting up a medical station and that the facilities are already overstretched. For a young doctor just starting out .../...

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it is a big responsibility and however enthusiastic he may be, if he is not well prepared there is a risk he will become permanently discouraged.

Auxiliary doctors

I am not able to judge their medical competence, but in other regards auxiliary doctors also appear very capable of understanding their role and how to run the services they provide. Many have been accused of being alcoholics, but they accuse us of throwing them back into an African lifestyle that they had left behind. I will come back to this point later.

Midwives

We have seen how girls generally fall behind in school compared with boys, right from the beginning of their education. Understandably this discrepancy persists and becomes even more marked between auxiliary doctors and midwives. When they leave upper primary school, the auxiliary doctors go to the William Ponty college¹¹⁵, this gives them a strong academic training before they go on

¹¹⁵ It was considered the elite French-speaking school throughout West Africa, moving from its base on Gorée Island near Dakar to Sébikotane 40 kilometres from Dakar at the time Savineau was writing this report.

to the Dakar School of Medicine¹¹⁶ to learn about medical science. Throughout this period they have been living alongside well-educated Europeans.

Up till now girls have not been given such care and attention. The School of Midwifery¹¹⁷ provides girls with a professional rather than a scientific education, albeit of an excellent standard. All the doctors assured us that the midwives are very well trained in practical skills. However, there appears to be no intellectual training. They are housed as boarders, under the charge of what seems to be a very dedicated and admirable female director. She has the responsibility of providing general studies for them. She tries her best, but she is not a trained teacher. I should add that these young girls, .../...

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have had little chance to develop domestic science skills before they arrive in Dakar and while they are in the charge of the Health Service they receive no training in domestic science at all.

The Teacher Training College for Girls at Rufisque will provide three further years of study during which future schoolmistresses, midwives and district nurses will receive both domestic and cultural education from experienced teachers. But on leaving this school and entering the School of Midwifery and Nursing, are these young women going to end up in this boarding house they are in at present?

If it is decided that this boarding house is adequate then we should take into account the fact that up till now many Muslims have not wanted to send their

¹¹⁶ As was the case with most of the elite educational infrastructure, this school was also located in Dakar.

¹¹⁷ This women's college operated as part of the African School of Medicine in Dakar.

girls to the elite schools in Dakar because "they soon get on a slippery slope and come home Catholics". Young women should not be allowed to attend church without the permission of their parents. As for forbidding them from mixing with young men, the director of the Medical School regrets that such a rule would be impossible to enforce; liaisons form while they are in the service, it happens in Dakar just as it happens in hospitals in France. Healthy entertainment should be devised for these young people such as theatrical productions. The young student doctors really enjoy these and the student midwives and nurses probably would too, it would also help them get over their shyness. But it would be necessary to entrust the boarding house to carefully selected *schoolmistresses*.

District nurses¹¹⁸

What I have just said about the midwives is also true of district nurses, who receive a parallel training. While the midwives are chosen from among the most intelligent pupils, district nurses.../...

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are selected from the second rank of applicants. Though they do not have to have much technical knowledge, they do need have at least a certain level of maturity. While it may be enough for a midwife to attend and take good care of the patient, the district nurse has to go out and find her patients. This task not only requires skill but also a certain degree of prestige and influence. Very few of them seem qualified in this regard. In the first place

¹¹⁸ The nurses who worked in the villages and rural clinics were called *infirmières visiteuses* ('visiting' nurses).

they are too young, and secondly they are trained to be passive rather than to take the initiative.

Some doctors practising in the bush want a European woman to be in charge of the district nurses, whereas other doctors think European women are physically incapable of withstanding the rigours of such a post. I think I should point out here that there are European women and European women, it is a question of choosing wisely. Those posted to Medina are managing a difficult job in excellent spirits and with considerable success, though their health is clearly suffering.¹¹⁹

The importance of primary education

I noticed a very marked difference in the intellectual maturity of women auxiliary staff in the Health Services who had all graduated from the same school, so I made some enquiries among them about their earlier education. Almost without exception, those capable of formulating an open and frank opinion about what they were doing, and able to reply in a thoughtful manner rather than repeating stock responses, were former pupils either of the regional schools or Protestant schools. Catholic women remain passive, feeble, and incapable of thinking for themselves until they reach their forties. All these women have passed the exams but the former are much more capable of doing the job than the latter. The examinations are not well designed being based on .../...

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testing knowledge rather than a natural aptitude for the job, and the director of the Medical School finds this

¹¹⁹ This last sentence was added in what appears to be Denise Savineau's hand.

deplorable. Either the examinations should be modified, or they should include another component which gives sufficient weight to personal qualities. The collaboration of the Education Service is probably needed here.

Local or European dress

A not insignificant point in relation to the female staff is what they choose to wear. We need to consider whether we are going to encourage future civil servants to dress in European or local African style. There is no question of imposing a style, as each woman's taste must come before all other considerations, but we could exert some influence, this is not an unimportant matter.

European schoolmistresses quite often advocate local dress, and particularly the long loose dresses favoured in Muslim areas. They claim these dresses look attractive and should be respected as a local art form. I am not totally convinced of this and suspect that perhaps they do not like seeing Black girls dressed like Europeans.

As for being a local art form, this claim does not stand up at all; it is not an indigenous art form, it is not even Muslim, it is a combination of European styles from the last century mixed with some Arab influence.

From a practical point of view, the African dress suits inactive women, not ones who work. It is unsuitable right down to the babouches¹²⁰ worn with it, which are usually dragged along the ground giving the wearer a slothful air. A little well-fitting dress worn with a cap and pair of neat clicking heels transforms her into a smart, professional-looking woman. All the midwives I have seen who were dressed in African style .../...

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¹²⁰ A type of slipper common in North Africa and Muslim regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

gave the impression of being lazy.

It seems also that when the midwife or district nurse dresses in European style, she has more prestige in the villages, as she is more closely associated with Whites, whereas Blacks are less accepted in this role.

Furthermore, the husbands are in favour of dresses because they require less fabric, the fabric is of cheaper quality, and they are not worn with jewellery. But the women must be shown how to cut out the dresses themselves.

What we are looking at here are social factors rather than professional factors. Indeed the whole process of producing a local elite has to be seen from a sociological point of view. The factors we need to observe are in the villages, the towns and in the home.

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PART 4

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND PROGRESS

As I have shown, African societies are changing as a result of our presence here. The two main causes of this change are commerce and culture. While we have some control over the latter, the impact of the former is largely out of our hands. But these two factors have become interwoven so I will study their combined impact on African society. This final section takes us into the villages, the towns, and the major cities of the region.

I have visited the poor, listened to the chiefs, spoken with educated Africans, and from all of this I have sought to identify what new problems our presence has generated.

i Villages

As a general rule villages become modernised if they are located near a main road or a city.

Villages in remote areas

As I mentioned earlier, even the smallest and most remote village cannot escape our influence due to the fact that everyone is taxed. Villagers have had to grow more crops and sell produce to raise revenue. The very fact of carrying the produce to market has brought people into contact with a new life and products from other lands. I asked whether this had given them more home comforts. In some cases they said it has made no difference at all, because they have nothing left after paying their tax and even if they make a surplus the chief takes it all.

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This is not robbery as such, it is simply customary in some groups to distribute goods in this way and as a rule the chief will hand out presents to the men and women who undertook the extra work. The presents are always clothes and finery, boubous for the men and printed cotton wrappers and jewellery for the women. Cotton growers are still sometimes satisfied with a length of the fabric they produced, but more and more want the latest fashion in little scarves, women have started wearing these as a

head dress. Actually they have been available from peddlers for quite a while but the peddlers do not visit all the villages and clients have certainly never acquired the habit of visiting them as they might visit a shop nowadays.

Apart from clothing, women are given household utensils, large containers made of tin, and enamel bowls. Housewives like the containers best, they know how make good use of them and they find ours more attractive, durable and easier to maintain.

Very occasionally you see a lamp, a recliner chair, a bed, or a mosquito net in a house. Only the men have these as they are the only ones rich enough to afford them. More often than not these luxuries are only enjoyed by the chief. His mosquito net is sometimes filthy and full of holes but he still sleeps under it.

Progressive Villages

In villages situated near main roads you find that it is not only the chiefs who are surrounding themselves with new possessions, the richer farmers are doing this too. First they install .../...

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a corrugated iron door in their mud brick hut and then a roof. Then the planter has a brick house built. It is often just a facade with no comfort inside, unless we include the row of aperitif or even champagne bottles. He will be living there on his own; the women do not come and clean it.

There are also smaller versions which are nicer and better kept. They are reminiscent of those modest little houses you find in a working-class suburb in France.

Inside the walls are painted bright colours and sometimes decorated with pictures of animals or 'civilised people', like the ones in our picture books. The rooms are full of roughly made furniture.

There is not the slightest sign of progress among Christians. They live in traditional native style, and where it is the custom of the group to live in this way, their homes are messy. There has been only one change; the master's bedroom now contains religious images. This man will have just one wife but she sleeps on a mat and is not even allowed her own Saint Teresa¹²¹. He keeps an extraordinary number of female 'relatives' who all sleep together as they are not married. It is clear that they are just second rank wives living in far worse conditions than they would be in an animist household.

Christians are arrogant and have no fear of showing their disdain for civil authority. They are often wealthy because the pastors are helping them set up businesses.

The luxuries enjoyed by Muslims, no matter where they are from, are quite different from those of animists. They value order, cleanliness and sobriety. There are none of those bright shiny objects bought just for their looks which quickly get broken and are then abandoned in a corner. There are a few armchairs, a cupboard, a bed with a heavy mattress, and spotless sheets.

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In place of a mosquito net you often see calico curtains decorated with flounces and pockets. The women do not participate in crop farming but they are obliged

¹²¹ Saint Theresa was a particularly popular Catholic image being the patron saint of the missionaries working in the region.

to do their husband's washing. Their homes are often decorated with Arabic motifs. Muslims do not copy us, they adapt our style to their own taste.

Some of the great chiefs of the Fouta-Djallon live in the traditional style in huge round huts decorated in subdued colours and plain furnishings. However, the audience chamber is decorated in French style and equipped with a vast writing desk and armchairs. The great chief Tierno Oumarou from Dalaba has a villa with furniture from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine¹²². He does not live there himself, it is lent to high ranking Europeans.

Women's quarters

In a traditional village there is little difference between the chief's accommodation and his wives'. But as the chief becomes wealthier so the difference becomes more marked. It even seems that as he accumulates more wives some of them live increasingly miserable lives. All of them are housed in an old adobe¹²³ hut. The first wife has her own room and sometimes has a bed, the second wife only has a tara¹²⁴, the others share cubby-holes where they sleep on a mat. These narrow, windowless cubby-holes would not be considered fit accommodation for prisoners.

Women's lifestyles

These wives have very different lifestyles according to their rank. The first wife manages the household, her job is to give orders rather than carry them out.

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¹²² From the 15th century the street 'Faubourg Saint-Antoine' in the Bastille district of Paris has been famous for carpentry and cabinet-making.

¹²³ See glossary

¹²⁴ See glossary

They call her the 'great woman' though a more accurate translation of her title would be 'woman-in-chief'. She is richly dressed and it is she that Europeans are referring to when they pronounce Black women happy. The second wife does the cooking. She is also fairly well-dressed. The others work in the fields; they hardly have any clothing at all and are worn to the bone.

Chiefs' wives

In some regions the chief's wives have a political role in society, particularly among the Fulani.¹²⁵ They advise their husbands and take care of the affairs of the womenfolk. The husband for his part lives alone and cuts a solitary figure among the men folk. These are the old ways.

In more progressive regimes where the chief's wife has lived in town and speaks some French (though she will still be illiterate), the wife will not only advise her husband but also appear next to him in public. She is able to understand the domestic problems her people face and can point them out to her husband in an effort to ensure everyone's interests are respected. There will be many such wives when the present generation of chief's daughters have gone through their schooling.

Exodus from the countryside

I mentioned earlier the dangers of taking too many labourers out of the villages to work for European and African¹²⁶ planters. These young people do not always

¹²⁵ Alternative spellings: Foulah or Fula.

¹²⁶ The term used in the original is 'assimilés', referring to those colonial subjects who had adopted the French language and culture to such a degree that they had become assimilated into the French way of life, as opposed to 'évolués' who were seen as having 'progressed' and were perhaps on their way to assimilating. In the main only men were 'assimilated' as it was usually only they who could gain access to the means of assimilation, i.e. education, and in any event, women were excluded from almost all

return home. If they do come back they bring a taste for luxury and insubordinate behaviour.

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Also, the heads of the family are making women and children work harder than ever while giving them as little as possible in return. The more profit they make, the more avaricious they become. They want to buy cattle, fine clothes, and above all more and more wives. These are either working in the fields or giving birth to future workers. In olden times, as soon as a boy reached adolescence he would be married off. But now they are getting married much later, and where before the father would cover the costs of the wedding, now the groom often has to cover this himself but the father still retains the right to choose his daughters-in-law.

The result is that the young men and women are all very dissatisfied. The boys have no wives while the girls are not happy about being married off to old men who already have a harem and where they end up with the status of servants. Furthermore they have started thinking about how to acquire all these 'riches' they are seeing on the markets. They are leaving either on their own or in groups for the towns. We will encounter them again later when I talk about the towns. As for the men left behind, they are getting really worried because this exodus is gaining significant proportions. The villages are losing their young people and the elderly are being left behind without any support.

ii Large towns and cities

the points of access to assimilating into a European style of life, including education, professional employment and the right to vote.

Markets

For anyone who wants to see how customs are evolving in the urban environment need only go down to the market and see what is on sale there and what people want to buy.

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There are lots of different foods. Townspeople do not grow their own food and all the former farmland has been taken over by European buildings and the ever expanding indigenous neighbourhoods in the city. The produce has come long distances; there is a lot of variety, a lot of semi-prepared foodstuffs such as grains and flours and everything you need for making sauces including oil and seasonings. These would previously have been prepared by the woman of the house. There are a lot of cooked dishes for sale such as doughnuts, corn porridge, and fried potatoes. This is often what the unmarried men live on; it is expensive and not very nutritious. There is bread everywhere; it is expensive, full of air and poor quality. Unfortunately there are young boys who are living on this.

You will also see large stands displaying local pottery, enamelware and even china. There are plenty of clothes stalls selling local styles made up in calico and poor quality trousers, shirts and dresses. The jewellery is mostly glass beads but there are also plastic bangles and heavy silver items.

There is a lot of ironmongery, such as padlocks, hammers, and nails. This shows how the type of housing is changing. There are also knives, forks and spoons, so clearly people are eating more properly. The notebooks,

pencils, writing paper are evidence that people can read and write, and are putting this knowledge into practice. The bars of French household soap¹²⁷ and toilet soap are clear indications that people are washing. I should add that you can see the cast-offs of European society here too in the pots of rancid pomade and cheap perfume. There are stalls selling medicinal remedies, some local, such as roots and fruits, but also a variety of cleansing salts, topical ointments and syrups. One doctor .../...

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has pointed out the dangers of selling medicines on the open market because frequently these toxic drugs are bring used in too high doses and some drugs designed for external use only are being ingested.

There are many elegant women walking around the market place buying very little while the tradeswomen sit quietly by waiting for the day to pass.

Shops

Shops are opening up around the market square. You can buy thin cotton fabrics in large quantities, preserves, alcoholic drinks, sewing machines (for tailors), bicycles, and lorries. In the wealthy areas of the Ivory Coast and Guinea you come across groups of men eagerly jostling around these shop counters. I visited some different neighbourhoods to see whether this wealth was a general phenomenon.

Poor neighbourhoods

¹²⁷ The original text referred to '*savon de Marseille*', a type of soap still very well-known and widely available in France, generally sold in olive green or ivory-coloured square blocks.

Life for poor people is harder in the towns than in the villages. In the first place they do not have access to farming land and secondly they often do not own their own homes. There are those who arrived at the right time and had a series of rooms built around a central courtyard which they rent out. Others had big houses built for themselves and rent out parts of them. All townsfolk want to become landlords. Those who live in these rented little rooms are poor households engaged in small-scale farming. Their products sell well enough but the tax costs a lot and here, they have to pay for house repairs (in the village the young men take care of this), and

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they have to clothe themselves, no-one here goes around bare-chested. They feed themselves from their produce but can never afford meat and only rarely fish.

The labourer's household is scarcely any better off. From the outset the husband has to save to pay off the dowry of one wife, then a second, and then there are all the children. The family does not produce as much as it does in the village, here the women might sell groundnuts, or doughnuts, and only earn half a franc a day. Even the children have to be clothed. They all look poor, underweight and lethargic.

The atmosphere was quite different at the house of a young clerk. The house is smaller and they are making bigger savings on rent, the husband has a bed, while the wife sleeps with the child on a mat at the end of the bed. Sometimes there is no room for anything else. But the young man who comes out of this home is dressed in a white suit and wears smart shoes and a neat haircut. He

pays for his laundry, eats his fill for half of the month and goes hungry for the rest. But he is not making ends meet and has got into debt.

On the other hand, the joiners and mechanics, even the poorer ones, are running their lives more successfully, equipping their homes and buying in provisions a month in advance. They make little bits of furniture out of storage boxes. They have a sideboard, so there is no crockery on view, and a wardrobe, to avoid having piles of clothes lying around. The joiner gives the impression of being the most Westernised in the way he arranges his objects symmetrically and keeps everything tidy. Some mechanics have been more inspired to create artistic objects rather than practical ones and have used old oil cans to make cut-out decorations or metal covers. They all like their homes and look after them.

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'Foreigners'

One might wonder what becomes of all those boys who are running away from their villages to be free to make and spend their own money. In the rich farming regions some will buy a bit of land and ask their brothers to come and help with the clearing. These families farm and live well. There are Baule people like this living in Abengourou, you can see hovels being built around vast courtyards, but the women are well dressed, well built, seem happy and have the means to cook large quantities of food.

Not all these runaways want to replicate village life, some want to adopt 'civilisation'. Can we really blame them? Although their chosen path is hardly

commendable at least they are trying to give up old ways and adapt to change. Some of them succeed, proving that people with the right talents can sometimes pull themselves up out of their own background.

They start off as domestic servants, or in a workshop, or they buy a packet of washing powder or sugar in a shop and resell the contents in smaller quantities on the market. These are the inhabitants of the shacks and veranda corners that I mentioned earlier.

Some of them eventually save up a nest-egg and set up in business. Some were wealthy for a while before being reduced to piecework or sometimes even theft. There are lots of young thieves in the towns, almost all of whom are 'foreigners'.

The African Middle-classes

Everything I have said so far is true of all the major towns.

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The type of accommodation changes from region to region but the working people suffer the same ills and face the same opportunities.

The way of earning and spending money also varies across regions. In the French Sudan and Guinea wealthy tradesmen often wear traditional Moslem dress and retain a Moslem attitude to wealth and luxury. What is remarkable are the signs of change in that remote and distant town of Timbuktu. This influence is not coming from Dakar or Bamako, but from Morocco. Timbuktu has had contacts with North Africa for centuries with Moroccan merchants travelling south to set up businesses along the Niger River. But they maintain contact with their

families and often go home to visit. They have brought back with them the idea that it is all right to become more Westernised and to allow your entourage to become more Westernised also, and all this has brought some benefits. Some young households have invested in furniture, curtains, carpets and copper trays. The women are particularly happy about this because they are locked in at home with the servants. Songhay women used to enjoy a lot of freedom but the Songhay men have adopted this custom too. They say it is because of the slave raids which used to happen a lot. The slave raids have stopped but the doors remain locked.

All the Moroccan and Songhay households I visited were monogamous. Some of the women were sorry that they had to stay in while others were terrified at the idea of going out. The couples seemed to have affectionate relations with one another and the husbands were considerate towards those spouses who were of noble birth and had an endowment (in the European sense of the term).

In the southern towns where Christianity has taken hold, the wealthy definitely take their lead from Europe.

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Their houses resemble the Administrator's. In Dahomey you can see this tendency most clearly in the sitting room which will be furnished with vast armchairs and velvet curtains, in Abidjan you will find wash basins and bath tubs.

In Dahomey this modernisation does not exclude ancestor worship. There is a rich businessman in Ouidah who has a vast dining room designed to receive his whole family containing. At one end there is a kind of chapel containing his father's family mausoleum. He merrily

shows it to his visitors. In the same town, the descendants of the famous Portuguese coloniser, Da Souza, have assembled his possessions in his house including family portraits and tombs. They live communally in native style. In the Ivory Coast the 'middle-classes' are building empty mausoleums along the road side. If this trend continues the outskirts of the cities are going to be nothing but gruesome cemeteries.

Women living in the cities

Local ethnic customs disappear in the city. As far as hairstyles and clothes are concerned, the women in Bamako have their own style and the women in Abidjan likewise. The same goes for their way of life and the food they eat. This is important in that it appears that Western ways have got the upper hand and are liberating local people from traditional ethnic customs.

The husbands and fathers are not happy about this liberation when it comes to women. They say the women want to wear expensive wrappers and jewellery and do not want to work. They say women are not 'obedient' anymore because men are no longer allowed to beat them, they complain that women threaten to leave at the slightest provocation and despite all his efforts to adapt the husband finds himself abandoned in favour of a richer man.

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Parents help the women leave and sometimes even encourage it. So much for married women. As for single women what you do see here which you will not see in the villages are women living on their own. Some of them are old and have been abandoned by their husbands, they get by on a

bit trading. Some are divorced, and some are 'old maids', these are Christian women who were forbidden by the priests from embarking on a 'pagan' marriage and who never found a Christian husband. It seems that quite a few stayed celibate as there was an intention that they would eventually become nuns. If they refuse they will be left without any means of support or survival at an age when marriage would no longer be allowed.

Lastly, there is a high number of prostitutes in the towns, just as there are elsewhere. I have devoted the following chapter to this issue.

iii - Prostitution

Prostitution begins where there are roads leading to the main trading centres. Large numbers of 'foreigners' pass along these roads and stop in the larger villages for food, temporary shelter and the extras. Local women provide these; sometimes their husbands play a part in this business. There are no working women from outside areas coming in to do this.

The local women in the major towns have also shown themselves to be very welcoming. I should say that in Niamey some girls accept a loan, to be paid back when they marry, as payment. Almost everywhere the authorities have given up monitoring prostitution. 'You would have to put every woman in town on the list', I was told.

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But a more professional type of woman has joined the ranks of the former. These include:

1. Women who have run away from their husbands back in the village to go off and earn enough to buy new clothes.

2. A large number of women married to African riflemen.

I shall look at each of these categories in turn.

Runaways

Of course not all runaways become prostitutes. Many run off with their lovers and get married. But those who run away on their own very rarely end up working on plantations; as a rule these do not take on women other than the wives of labourers. Single women have barely any other source of employment than prostitution and do not seem at all averse to it. A black woman's virtue is maintained through fear of their husbands and fathers, but they do not consider themselves under any moral obligation to desist from disposing of their bodies as they like. It goes without saying that as soon as they find themselves liberated they expect to benefit from this in every possible way. Furthermore they want to have children and to bring them up. There is nothing here to cause us alarm apart from the danger of venereal diseases, which I will come back to.

All this results in there being many 'foreign' prostitutes in the cities. The Christian ones pretend to have another profession, such as embroidery, but their roughly executed products would not earn them enough to buy all the gold jewellery they wear.

What is striking about these women is that they do not feel demeaned by what they do. They have nice homes and dream about the future. They often send money .../...

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home to their parents, which is well received, and they always go home to the village for traditional celebrations. When they become wealthy established women they marry a younger man and they continue to rule the roost. Here you see the inverse of what happens elsewhere, now Madam has the bed and Sir just has a bunk.

African Riflemen's Wives

When a rifleman leaves for France his wife is issued with a train ticket and must return to her village where she will receive an allowance. This allowance is not sufficient for her to live on, but even if it were, it would never equal the profits from prostitution.

At the first station stop the woman gets off the train and goes back on foot. Here we come to the issue of pimps.

Pimps

A man who has left his village but failed to find a job in town sometimes observes that women in a similar situation are acquitting themselves much better than he is. From that point it is a small step to getting a woman to go into business with him. These couples return to the village, decide which girls to take back with them, and procure men to be their 'temporary' husbands.

The 'husband' offers a gift to the girl's protector, as he would to her parents, indeed the 'protector' may well be the parent. The girl, for her part, must relinquish her takings in return for food and clothing, this is the expected procedure. The poor young girls are so naively

taken in that we then see them appealing to the courts when the marriage contract is not carried through fairly.

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Some pimps are former prostitutes who have bought some property. They draw into their homes the young wives of those unfortunate clerks who want to be seen in society but earn almost nothing.

Finally, there are the retired sergeants and widows of sergeants, these are powerful well-respected people. They take it upon themselves to take in the rifleman's wife whom we saw alighting from the train on her way back to town.

This is how that seedy population that we see swarming around military camps and the workers' camps sets about relieving the soldier of his pay, and the worker of his loan. Men and women get into the workers' camps on pay-days. The workers are caught in games of chance or love and are quickly stripped of their earnings.

The difficulties of eradicating prostitution

There is a danger stalking both prostitutes and their clients: venereal disease. Once they have contracted it, they then spread it to others. Doctors are very alarmed by the spread of the disease and by the number of miscarriages and infant deaths it is causing. The police authorities and the Health Service would like to set up a monitoring system but all attempts have come up against the following obstacle: a married woman cannot be registered as a prostitute.

At the first sign of trouble, all the unmarried prostitutes get married. In Niamey they have paid men to

marry them. Suddenly, from one day to the next there are no more prostitutes. As for the pimps, they use polygamy as a cover saying all the women in their charge are their wives.

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An attempt at monitoring prostitution

A system of medically monitoring prostitutes has been set up in Timbuktu. It involves only unmarried prostitutes. The aim is simply to protect Riflemen. They are told that it is safe to use monitored prostitutes and they should be wary of the others. The percentage of infections has dropped considerably.

The causes of prostitution

I asked the 'monitored' women in Timbuktu how they came to take up this trade. Nearly all of them were once the wives of non-commissioned officers. Several of them are bringing up a mixed race child. Others had left an official husband, who had been imposed on them, or had escaped a brutal father. A Targuy¹²⁸ woman fled to avoid being fattened up on the milk diet.

It is the harsh treatment received from fathers and husbands, as much as love of self ornamentation, which leads them into prostitution.

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iv - Educated Africans

¹²⁸ Here, as elsewhere in the report, Savineau uses 'Targuy' as synonymous with 'Tuareg'.

The rural schools right through to the teacher training colleges are turning out a new kind of African who has been exposed, to a greater or lesser extent, to our culture. We are trying to get these people to adopt our ways, or something near our way of life. Here I will explore to what extent we have succeeded.

Former pupils of the rural and urban schools

The children whose schooling ends when they have completed their studies at the rural or regional schools either become crop farmers and apply our methods to farming, or refuse to go back to the land. The latter head for the towns and become houseboys or clerks. We came across older lads who know how to read and write and are now learning tailoring or carpentry. We saw others who have finished these apprenticeships but still cannot make a living. At the same time we hear of trading stations in the interior where they complain there are not enough labourers.

Many of the boys we have educated and who could be usefully employed are out of work or working as labourers. At Porto-Novo, one hospital that needed to recruit male nurses held an entry examination. There were many eligible boys who came forward. Meanwhile the doctors working for the *A.M.I*¹²⁹ say they are being badly assisted by incompetent male nurses, and the postmasters are complaining about working with illiterate postmen. It seems that more efficient links could be established between the different services and between towns and villages to recruit former pupils.

¹²⁹ *Assistance médicale indigène*, the medical service provided for Africans.

Former pupils of the upper primary and vocational schools

There is a big demand for pupils from the upper primary schools and the professional schools, and they can find jobs easily. I investigated how they are getting on.

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Firstly, I saw a group of former pupils from the Bamako Upper School. Some have become clerks and others mechanics. They have formed a closed little group in Markalla¹³⁰, a large village near where the Niger dam is being built. Some of them have got married, others are single. The single men's homes are not the worst maintained. They contain a few cheap items of furniture and some decorative wall plaques of Arabic design. It is all quite spick and span. A neighbour provides their food and his wife cooks it for them. They wear European clothes for work and African clothes for the holidays. They spend their leisure time playing tennis. Their biggest expense is laundry and particularly ironing. They need a capable wife, but the former schoolgirls have already been taken by merchants who can offer big dowries. Our boys earn too little to save up the required sums. They have either married or will get married to uneducated women, which is not what they were hoping for.

Next we have three young men who graduated not from an upper school, but from the rural teaching training college at Katibougou. They were the best students in their year but they have been directed away from teaching careers to jobs in the Niger Office, where they are learning about farm management. They are housed in a

¹³⁰ The standard spelling for this village located 250kms north-east of Bamako, is Markala as shown on the government's official route map of the French Sudan of 1935. Savineau was rather inconsistent in her spelling of names and places.

straw hut, where the engineer is also housed, but whereas the engineer has his camping equipment, the young agents have nothing. They are sleeping on mats on the ground and they eat from a calabash. They are also being treated without respect. The agents address them in the familiar 'tu' form and are rude to them, and yet they are supposed to become their equals. If they are asked to accompany the conductor¹³¹ in his motorcar, it is only to get down twenty times an hour to inspect irrigation ditches or fetch water for the wheezy radiator.

The less said about all this the better.

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Former schoolgirls from rural and urban schools

We already know that these former schoolgirls are in demand among the merchant class. I was interested to know what they have retained from the education they got from us.

I visited a few Muslim women in Mopti. They were lavishly dressed in African style. They had starched their white boubous themselves. Their spotlessly clean bedrooms were decorated with embroidered linen. The baby was wearing a little dress, and its mother understood French very well, though she did not wish to speak it. Nearly all these women had insisted on being the sole wife, and consequently they have managed to break with the tradition of passive obedience.

In Conakry I met a far more advanced young woman who had been hoping to become a midwife but had been forced

¹³¹ One of the many levels of managers employed to run the Niger Office. See Van Beusekom, Monica. M. *Negotiating Development - African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger 1920-1960* (Heinemann, Portsmouth NH; James Currey, Oxford; David Philip, Cape Town; 2002) for a detailed discussion of the management of the Niger Office.

into marrying a polygamous civil servant by her guardian, also a civil servant.

In Grand-Bassam, engagements begin in school, and fathers are not opposed to this but the resulting marriages are not happy. The husband is sent to complete his studies in Dakar where he meets another woman, or else he returns, marries the first one and then keeps all his money and wants to be fed, waited on, and to spend all his time with his mates. The wife is not inclined to accept such a fate. All the former girl pupils of the Grand-Bassam school whom I was taken to meet were divorcées with children to support, or unmarried mothers. They expressed themselves very intelligently. One of them was running a business with her mother. She is eating well, dressing in the European style, and seemed quite independent from men. The others were still being supported by their families. They were unhappy about this .../...

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and were trying in vain to find a job, they seemed very hard up.

Finally, at Cotonou, I observed a real household consisting of a former schoolgirl married to a lowly employee of the Public Works Department. Their African style home was well kept, and their baby well cared for. The mother was making baby dresses for sale. Her husband was handing all his pay over to her and they were saving to build a house. This young Protestant couple were both pupils at the regional school.

Civil servants' households

Civil servants' households fall into three categories depending on whether the wife is uneducated, educated but not working, or a civil servant herself.

Households with an uneducated wife can be monogamous or polygamous. In the polygamous ones, the husband lives in European style in his own home where he is waited upon by a houseboy, while each wife lives African style in her own quarters. These wives may be treated with respect, enjoy a certain level of comfort, have their own serving woman, and have a husband who, when he is out and about, is mindful of the fact that he is a married man and behaves accordingly. He may be also be the kind who treats his wife like a servant, and spends time enjoying himself in insalubrious places with Westernised women, usually the ex-wives of White men. This behaviour is particularly regrettable when it involves a teacher, as happens. Indeed there is a teacher, a Kado man, who is marrying as many wives as possible with a view to having lots of children and claiming child benefits. His wives and children are virtually naked, and all sleep together on mats in a single room. A certain level of decency in marital relations should be required of civil servants, and we should be wary of people trying to exploit the family benefit system. .../...

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Anyone receiving allowances should be expected to provide a minimum level of comfort for his wives and educate his children. I should add that uneducated women do not allow themselves to be humiliated in this manner when they live in the towns. They want to go out in society and to be waited upon and many young civil servants are discovering

that it costs them too dearly to marry several wives. Civil servants are also staying monogamous if they want to become French citizens. They can still have "friends" in town, but they are wary because people could find out. In any case, why take on other women of this sort when they keep the children.

Where you have a husband who has just one uneducated wife, it is touching to see how very nice the situation can be. He tries hard to create a household in spite of everything, and to train his wife to be mistress of the house and his companion. Not only does he want her to be able to roast a chicken and cook macaroni, he also wants her to speak French and perhaps even learn to read and write. Alas, the poor young woman does not understand very much. She is docile and can learn cooking well enough but can hardly manage any housework, and her husband is incapable of teaching her how to sew or iron. As for French, she can understand it quite well but says nothing. The husband has to take care of everything. He considers himself very lucky if his wife is not taking her orders from a cantankerous mother 'queening' it over the children. As far as possible, he educates them and pushes them to achieve what he can only glimpse at as he casts an envious eye in the direction of households run by educated women.

However, our midwives and district nurses are not all good housekeepers. Some homes are very nice inside and others .../...

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are hovels. Some of them think that "intellectual" women should not have to do menial tasks and leave all this to

an inexperienced 'boyesse'¹³². Consequently these "intellectual" women live in sordid environments and impose the same on their husbands. They are also the kind of women whose language and behaviour is not, it seems, always respectable.

Finally, civil servants and their wives are complaining that they are often being separated and posted to different places for long spells. There have been many cases of divorce and for all these reasons some astute young men have decided to marry a competent housewife and keep her at home. They have no hesitation in making her give up her job and depriving her of her independence. By this they are also leaving her with the risk, in case of their own death, of becoming a widow with little or no pension and children to support. The Administration may also like to consider what a waste it is to take so much trouble to train these women and then have them give it all up in the interests of one individual.

In general, educated young men want to marry educated young women and they complain about the shortage of such women. They are prepared to accept monogamy, and even Moslem men are beginning to understand what a *conjugal household* means. One distinguished Moslem gentleman, Mr. Diagne-Mapaté, the head of the schools division in Sédhiou, had something to say on this matter:

"By authorising four wives, Mohammed intended to restrict polygamy. The modern Muslim man must continue this trend. It is not possible to have a real family in a polygamous regime, even during the lifetime of the father. After his death, his worldly goods are sold, and the family lines breaks up. We should accept

¹³² The French used the English term 'boy' (short for 'houseboy') to denote an African man working as a house servant in West Africa. The term 'boyesse' was invented by the French to denote the female house servant.

monogamy, but there must be 'companions' for us, otherwise conjugal life for the educated person, despite any amount of reciprocal goodwill, would be .../...

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a terrible burden. Girls must attend school; we must put pressure on people to make this happen and get the notables to set a good example. To start with, we must not allow the daughters of chiefs and civil servants to grow up uneducated. The aim is not simply to provide wives for educated men, but also to ensure that everywhere family life is transformed."

Educated Africans and marriage

We should listen to the opinions of the older schoolboys on marriage because they show us the direction these boys are taking, and why. At the risk of repeating what has been said above, these opinions clearly reinforce earlier observations.

Nearly all the boys intend marrying educated women and remaining monogamous, although some hold the opposite opinion. The former justify their choice on the following basis: an educated woman knows how to look after the children, as well as cook, iron and repair clothes. You can talk to her in French if you do not want other people to understand what you are saying. They think she should still serve her husband, this caused much hilarity among the boys.

Those who dread educated women are afraid of "not being obeyed", and even of being made to follow orders, or of being "duped" into attending church. Merchants and crop farmers want a wife who will help them at work and

schoolgirls do not want to work. Some boys wish to speak French to their mates without their wives understanding and to know that their letters cannot be read by their wives.

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Monogamy is accepted primarily because educated young women have demanded it. Some young men like it though, saying "it is less expensive", or "it's more peaceful that way" in that co-wives are always causing trouble.

For those who reject monogamy they argue that, "It is our tradition. I'll inherit wives from my relatives and I cannot refuse to take them and I want to have as many children as possible; they will provide for me later in life".

As for the girls, those who have a choice prefer monogamy but many know that they will never be in such a situation and are resigned to that fact.

Economic pressures on African civil servants

The African civil servant sees himself as being on quite a different level from people in the village, and even from the chief whom he also thinks of as his inferior. Where there are two brothers, and one is a mere assistant clerk and the other older brother is a chief, it is the former who outranks the latter, who has 'more weight'.

But the clerk suffers from being much poorer than the chief and it can happen that as a notable, or the son-in-law of a notable, he has obligations towards his followers who think he is a man of considerable means. He tends to refrain from pointing out the mistake. Then

there are his wives who want to outshine the others. It would be shameful to say "we cannot afford it", so he ruins himself trying to provide all this.

The civil servant from a more modest background has fewer obligations to his traditional social milieu. He feels more westernised and wants to live in the European style. We can hardly blame him for this. At school we taught him our ideas about how to behave in society and he had no trouble adapting to them. We can see this particularly among the students from the *William Ponty* Teacher Training College .../...

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who are so well turned out and courteous. All this is new to them at least in form though not in principle for Africans are naturally very polite though their courtesy is more nuanced and obligatory than ours. All schoolchildren should be taught these social norms, if they are not their academic and technical education will be undermined.

So the civil servant becomes westernised. He is proud of this and wants to maintain the level he has reached but this is where it goes wrong. He observes White people, some of whom hold jobs inferior to his own, and he thinks he is the equal of all of them. He does not realise that even highly qualified young Whites do not start off living the high life. The African civil servant wants everything money can buy in terms of comforts and luxuries. In this regard, it should be pointed out that Christians are probably better prepared and have more modest tastes than the animists.

The standard of living to which civil servants can aspire varies from place to place, reaching a pinnacle in

Dahomey where it would appear that the situation is influenced by the example of traders amassing vast fortunes and living in the grandest style.

The social club represents another drain on resources. African men want to have their own club, like the Europeans, particularly if their own homes are not very nice. Above all they want one because their wives are from such different social backgrounds that they cannot mix together or with the men. This explains why many of the husbands meet up in bars and become alcoholics.

I should also add that they have numerous children whom they want to clothe like middle class boys. One of most costly and least useful items of expenditure .../...
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is the boy's cap. The merchants do not fail to charge the most exorbitant prices for these especially when the client is buying on credit, as is so often the case.

One might assume that at least the civil servant can afford to eat if he buys local produce, but he wants to eat meat and tinned food and drink wine. Here he is in competition with the merchants and the planters who do not have to watch what they spend. Food is very expensive in the large towns and civil servants are economising on food as we hear from their complaints.

Civil servants who say they have no trouble 'making ends meet' are rare indeed. Many get into debt and others end up in embarrassing circumstances. There is no financial remedy to this problem; if they were paid two or three times what they are paid now, their difficulties would only get worse.

We must look for a solution elsewhere. Bearing in mind that Christian households are doing better, we should conclude from this that the preparation they received is better than what we offered in our State schools, even if our schools are superior in other respects. We need to think more about this in relation to African society as a whole and I will come back to this issue before the end of this report.

Before leaving the question of civil servants, I would like to examine the issue of what we can do to maintain the sense of pride they feel in being civilised and how we can help them live a dignified life.

First of all, they must be well housed. They get demoralised in a dilapidated hut. Next, we must take into account that they .../...

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have furnishings, that it is good that they have these and we arrange to move these effects. They all complain of having the right to transport only a very small amount of baggage when they receive a new posting, namely personal effects and books, "we are obliged to have books for our jobs" they say. If they have bought a bed, armchairs, or a wardrobe, they have to sell them off before leaving, and buy new ones elsewhere. This results in a considerable financial loss and the threat of this can put them off buying what they need for their homes. They have told me that they do not want any old furniture, they want to live with their own furniture. They have paid a high price for it, they like it and it pains them to have to part with it. We cannot ask them to feel differently about this because this is what they are born to and they are very attached to their home

life, indeed many Europeans have not got beyond this stage.

Secondly, I must come back to the perennial question of respect. The Black man is very conscious of it, too conscious perhaps, but then he is affected by an inevitable inferiority complex. We should take this into account. There are too many civil servants in the interior who speak to their African staff using the familiar form of address¹³³. As an excuse they say that the local African language uses the familiar form. That is fine if they are speaking these languages, but if they are using French, and the person they are speaking to knows the difference between *tu* and *vous* and is using *vous* himself, it is very impolite not to reciprocate. It would be ridiculous to make this a requirement, but then insulting African staff and provoking ill will would also be tactless when we are trying to engage their loyalty.

Finally, it is rare to find a European civil servant who takes the trouble to make the African staff feel integrated and who strives not to create a barrier .../...

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between the races. It is certainly normal for White people and Black people to socialise separately and everyone prefers it this way. But there are some semi-official situations, celebrations for example, when it would be very advantageous if the Administrator were to invite all his colleagues along. There is a way of treating people with respect which does not undermine authority, in fact it reinforces it because it allows the

¹³³ In France at this time usually only children and close friends and family would have been addressed using the informal form, namely the pronoun 'tu' instead of the more formal 'vous'. To address a colleague or particularly an employee using the 'tu' form indicates a lack of respect and/or education on the part of the speaker.

subaltern the opportunity to get the measure of his employer and to see that his superiority does not just reside in his badges of office. Arrivals and departures could also provide the opportunity for bringing the ranks closer together. If the new arrival in particular were to receive an invitation from his new boss, albeit for a simple aperitif (the host having taken care to provide cordials and lemonade for any Moslems), he would be won over right from the start. I had the opportunity - just once - to meet a new auxiliary doctor with his wife and children at the home of the station chief. They all seemed well brought up, respectful and touched by the invitation.

Educated Africans ask only to do a job well and to follow the path we have set them on. Let us help them in this task.

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CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on four aspects of life in the colonies:

1. Customs
2. Work
3. Education & Culture
4. The New Society

We have seen that customs vary enormously from one ethnic group to another. In some cases custom dictates that men exercise a great deal of power, in other cases women and young men are not dominated.

When allowed to evolve freely, all indigenous societies develop a tendency to reinforce men's power over women and the father's power over his children. These dominant parties want us to help them to maintain or reinforce their supremacy. However, we have chosen not to follow blindly; in fact we want to protect and sometimes even increase the freedom of the individual. Those who are being downtrodden understand this and are asking for our help. As they know we will support them, they are beginning to rise up. This could get out of hand and descend into anarchy. As I have said, we need to set out our ideas very clearly if we want to succeed.

As far as the impact of work is concerned, it has given everyone the means to earn and spend money. However, those in authority tend to hoard the profits while their 'inferiors', the women and children, do the work. Adult sons are more able to protect themselves than women; in fact they are now trying to off-load their duties on to women and children.

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As for the women, some of them use all their guile and position to get themselves into a situation of idle luxury and privilege, which sometimes affords them independence, all at the expense of hard-pressed women and children. Very few women actually manage this. In fact, women and children supply a large part of the additional labour we have demanded from the regions.

But when it comes to¹³⁴ making the worker's task easier by teaching him new techniques, or increasing his

¹³⁴ In the original several words have been crossed out of this sentence. Firstly, *d'évoluer et* [making progress and] at the beginning of the sentence and *qui vient surtout des femmes* [particularly from women] crossed out at the very end of the sentence.

profits, or above all ensuring that these profits stay with him rather than ending up in the hands of intermediaries, we encounter some hostility.

In the same way, our efforts to improve health conditions are blocked by traditional practices.

Progress is certainly being made but sometimes it is disorderly and dangerous. The question becomes how to make these people more open-minded. School is not the only factor here. There are the Provident Societies and the agricultural, veterinary and health services which have a large role to play in this, but school remains the dominant factor. This is not the place to propose the opening of many more schools; this is an ideal that can only be achieved in the long term. What we will need to do is to focus more on schoolgirls. Women presently represent a considerable obstacle to development. Women as a whole can only change through the influence of other women because they live in a closed world, their rituals hidden from the eyes of men, and the more the authority of men weighs upon them the more they retreat into this world.

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The fight against infant mortality will be endless if we do not educate the chiefs' wives in the same way as we have educated the chiefs. It is unfair to look at women solely in relation to their role in the family, we should look at them as individuals who struggle and who deserve recognition and reward. The establishment of a teacher training college for girls at Rufisque is a very important step in relation to both these concerns as it will soon mean an increase in the number of primary schoolmistresses.

However, when we are creating these new households, be they schoolmasters' homes or the households of all those who have attended school, we must prepare them for a new way of life both in the home and in society. It is not enough to emancipate young people; they must also develop the responsibility that goes with this. We have seen how the Protestant missionaries have succeeded in teaching what we mean by conjugality to young educated couples. It is possible that we are not making enough of effort in this regard. We are raising people as individuals, we are training them for a profession, but we are not preparing them to become good husbands and wives.

Boys must be taught that a wife is not a servant but a companion, that it is important to choose well and that he should hold on to her, for the sake of the children. They should also be taught that it is not good enough to bring lots of little black babies¹³⁵ into the world just so they can draw child benefits; they have to bring them up properly as they do in the village. We should emphasise here that among the many qualities that characterise the indigenous family is the very deep sense of responsibility it feels towards its children. We should make it clear to them that they demean themselves if they give up qualities.

We should teach girls that it is shameful to run around with boys, or change husbands too often. A woman should only enter marriage having thought about it carefully, .../...

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¹³⁵ Savineau uses *négrillons* in the original which some may argue requires a translation akin to 'little black Sambos' or 'piccaninnies'. However, these terms are so shocking for a 21st century reader that they over-interpret the sense of the French term as she was originally using it in this context.

not only out of respect for herself, but above all because of the risk of bringing an unhappy child into the world. This argument would be worthless in indigenous circles where all children, without exception, are welcome arrivals, but it is a valuable one for educated women who must make a lot of sacrifices to raise a civilised child.

We should work on strengthening the bond between mother and child, showing her the hundreds of ways of looking after it better. Unlike female bears, African mothers find all their children beautiful - which indeed they are - and they adore them, but they abandon them as soon as they are weaned! They do this because they think there is nothing more to be done for them. We should teach schoolgirls that a mother's job is never finished.

Since attachment to the child is dependent on a good relationship with the husband, we will get our message across much better if we stress to women how important it is to make a good choice.

As a final point, we need to provide excellent training for housewives. Training in manual skills can work hand in hand with intellectual and moral education. It has been noted in the dressmaking unions in Paris that seamstresses responsible for the whole process of cutting, making up and fitting, have a better grasp of social problems than fashion designers who work solely in the realms of the imagination. More extensive analysis of this question of intelligent manual training would probably produce some very interesting results.

When our young women have become fully trained we can teach them that pride in a nice-looking home is an extension of a woman's pride in herself. Also I see no

reason why we should not teach them that if you look after your husband well, you are more likely to keep him.

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We should be careful however that these women do not turn themselves into servants. They must feel able to appear in their parlour¹³⁶. If I draw attention to this room it is because all civil servants want to have a room where they can receive guests, it is more important than having a dining room or a comfortable bedroom. The civil servant's wife must feel able to come into the parlour and play an active role. It is up to us to teach her what that role is.

It would also be useful to tell these women that servants have to be trained and then supervised but that the mistress of the house must never lose control over her domain; she must choose the menu, keep accounts, and count the linen.

The teacher training college needs to resemble a household as far as possible, so the students can learn how to run this household. It is very important to attach a crèche to the school.

All the points I make here do not constitute a programme of action. These are just some suggestions that can be added to the remarkable series of studies that has already been carried out.

Old Boys' and Old Girls' Associations

The second advantage that Christian education has over our system is that its followers remain within the sphere of influence of the teachers. I am not advocating

¹³⁶ The 'parlour' was a term in use in English in the early decades of the 20th century to denote the front room of a fairly modest home where the family would receive visitors.

setting up a system of tutelage but we can make use of an African liking for associations. Groups based on gender and age probably predate the family in their societies. It is particularly noticeable among young people. They band together to take on farm work for relatives of future brides (as I mentioned earlier in relation to agricultural training), and they come together as a group for a big celebration.

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Families provide the refreshments or alternatively the young men will pay a contribution. The young girls will do the cooking. African people can form groups like this without all coming from the same ethnic group. They have begun to set up colony-wide networks. To take an extreme example, Mossi and Krou people can find themselves in the same association with people from the Ivory Coast. Children from the bush who attend school quickly form a 'schoolchildren's club' and nominate a leader to chair their debates. Girls at the school in Mopti have set up a "schoolgirls' society". They get together for parties but not in the traditional way, they do it in the way they have been taught in their domestic science classes. I mentioned earlier some former pupils of an upper school who continue to live as a group. Civil servants often set up clubs for solidarity, but also, alas, for drinking sessions.

What we must avoid is undesirable groups forming outside our influence, and we must prevent others - i.e. missionaries - from taking them over. We can guide them discreetly and use them to maintain and improve the level of former pupils.

Old school associations can be organised for every level of education. They could be very useful in the upper schools and in the rural schools they could be used as a way of improving agriculture. It would not work in the teacher training colleges because graduates are sent out to so many different places.

Women must not be neglected in this matter, in fact they should be the focus of a particular effort to enrol them in an association at the school nearest to where .../...

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they got married.

An excellent model of the activities an association could host has been devised by Mr. You, who used to be the Inspector for Education in Guinea. His proposal includes a reading room, a games room, festivities, conferences, a mobile library, a careers service, and a magazine. This would make sure that civil servants stationed out in the bush who find themselves at a loss in an uneducated population would be able to keep in contact with their former academic milieu.

Primary teachers are prepared to take this on and the funding would come principally from the members themselves. It would enhance the value of the school beyond measure, as well as extending its influence and generally promoting progress in every field.

This task of modernising West Africa wisely for the greater good of Blacks¹³⁷ and Whites is a complicated, long-term endeavour which requires perseverance and good

¹³⁷ Although the terms 'race noire' and 'noirs' are translated as 'Africans' elsewhere to reflect the sense in which Savineau was most probably using the term, the clear binary being flagged up here by the colonial administrator is clear and so likewise the distinction is made clearly in this translation.

organisation. It is also a delicate task that requires we make a careful study of the many different environments we are influencing. Local people are acutely aware of the changes and told me on many occasions how grateful they were to the Government-General for being the first to ask about how their experiences. We should remember that indigenous people are not just numbers, they are people. We should not settle for simply increasing the percentage of educated people. We should make sure that they have a presence throughout West Africa and avoid creating two opposing worlds, an idle bourgeoisie facing an oppressed proletariat.

It is along this path we must proceed, if we wish to be worthy representatives of our Republic and our democratic ideals.