

DEPENDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE:  
FEMALE HOUSEHOLD HEADS IN MATHARE VALLEY,  
A SQUATTER COMMUNITY IN NAIROBI, KENYA.

BY

NICI NELSON

School of Oriental and African Studies

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the lives of Kikuyu women heads of households living in the squatter community, Mathare Valley, in Nairobi Kenya. These women support themselves and their children by a combination of petty commodity production (basically beer brewing) and commercial sex. These migrants to the urban area have broken 'dependency relationships' with male relatives and affines in the rural area and have come to the city to support themselves. This can be seen as a process of women establishing themselves in the public domain in the urban area. A developmental model of a low income Mathare independent woman's urban career is constructed. First, women's socio-economic roles in traditional rural Kikuyu society, and the dependency relationships they were part of, are described. The factors which have led to the migration of single females to the city are outlined. Finally, unmarried women's adaptation to life in Mathare is described in detail. They participate in certain types of urban economic activities. They are reorganizing their relationships with female relatives: mothers, daughters, and sisters. They foster their children with their rural-based mothers. They enter into new kinds of dependency relationships with men, which give women access to resources just as the old rural ones did, but allow the women greater choice and control over the relationships. Within Mathare women form friendship networks that are instrumental in the production of the illegal local beer, and protection from police activity directed towards controlling this industry.

As each woman works out her urban strategy for survival in Mathare, there is discernable the emergence of new group values and ideas, particularly those that have to do with the roles of men and women, relationships between the sexes, and the institution of marriage. The role of ideology in explaining, and rationalizing social action is explored and the shifts in traditional Kikuyu ideology occurring among Mathare Kikuyu women are charted. New women's models and models for men are emerging which may operate to lessen cognitive dissonance resulting from the negative social image given Mathare women by the larger society. These ideological shifts may also play a role in the socialization of Mathare's children, and in the future formation of a general model of new possibilities for Kenyan women.



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CHAPTER I  
AN INTRODUCTION

THE SITUATION

In 1972 I began fieldwork in Mathare (pronounced Ma-tha-rey, no syllable emphasised) Valley, a large, sprawling squatter<sup>1</sup> community in the northeast part of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. 70,000 people, mostly Kikuyu, live crowded onto the steep sides of this valley close to the centre of the city, some of them working at wage jobs in the surrounding city, others engaged in petty commodity production and trade within the confines of the Valley itself. 50 to 60% of the adult inhabitants living in Mathare are women, and of these more than half are independent heads of households. This is an interesting reversal of the demographic pattern of most urban populations in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Since I was interested in the migration of women, it was this demographic pattern of women outnumbering men and a large number of single women, that first attracted my attention to the neighbourhood. I felt that Mathare was, and is, an expression of a changing trend in urban populations in Africa. Where before men frequently migrated to town alone, and those women that migrated to town accompanied their husbands, now women are making use of a migration strategy to come alone to the urban area in response to new pressures and new opportunities. A

population explosion in the rural area, land scarcity, and changes in family and marriage patterns have created new strains and pressures in the rural social field. At the same time, as colonial regimes have given way to independent governments, pass laws and other restrictions to travel between urban and rural areas have been lifted. Education for girls has become more and more common in the fifties, causing girls as well as boys to become eager to try their luck in the job market sweepstakes being held in the urban area.

Who are these women living independently in Mathare? Why have they left the rural area? Why have they come to Mathare, and what do they hope to accomplish by leaving the rural area and living and working alone in town? What have they accomplished in this migratory strategy? Little summarizes recent work on female urban migrants pointing out that

underlying or directly associated with these various motives is the fact that the women perceive an opportunity of improving their status. Like the young men before them, the women are increasingly impatient with their traditionally ascribed position... They speak of their desire for 'freedom' and 'emancipation' and many see town as a place where this can be achieved. (1973, p.20)

Baker feels that women protest against conditions they find in the rural areas by migrating to urban centres. "Women vote with their feet and flee to the city." (Baker, 1959, p.106) Women interviewed in many towns in Africa, including women in Mathare, speak of town as a place where women can find independence and freedom. A Xhosa woman told Mayer that in

town "a woman is independent. You are free to do as you please. There are no homestead people watching you."

(Mayer, 1961, pp. 249-50) Hellman observes that in Rooiyard

women are making use of opportunities of the urban area to become economically independent by supporting themselves in the urban area, and not returning to their homes as deserted wives. (1948, p. 87)

The urban freedom from parental restraint, freedom from the controls of men and marriage, the ability to act independently economically and sexually, the ability to choose and change partners were themes that appeared continually in the conversations and gossip sessions in which I participated while visiting friends in Mathare. The following are merely a selection of some of the sentiments I recorded about the desirability of freedom from parents, husbands and marital institutions expressed by these Mathare 'women alone' when discussing life in town.

I don't wish to marry ever. That is why I stay in town. I have stayed a long time now without marrying and it would be impossible for me to make myself obey a man, who will always want to rule his wife. 2.

It is hard to marry once you start 'buzaa business' (brewing of local beer) because one gets a lot of money. It is so hard to become a dependent on a man, who will probably be 'money tight'. (want to control the money).

I hate staying with men because they beat you.

I love men, but never to marry. Besides why do I need to marry. I have my children. If I was married I'd have to wash, cook and stay home to clean it. This way I'm free to roam, to know many friends, and when I come home I sleep in peace all night.

I do not miss marriage. I get all I need from my 'one-night husbands'. In town there are many men available.

I would not go home (to my father) to farm. I could not be under my father's control. I ran away from home to escape from him. I will only go back if I have my own piece of my land to farm independently.

It is not advisable to keep a man in the house. He acts as a barrier to one's freedom. If you don't keep a man in the house (a regular lover) one can never lack for money, since you can always get a man to sleep for money.

If I can get rich, I will never marry, but will buy a plot of land and will live on it alone.

I want men only who come for the night and pay up, then go. I want no man permanently. If they stay they begin to make trouble..demand you wash their clothes, and have the food ready on time. They beat you cruelly. You see it all the time.

I don't have one man. I have many. It is better that way. If you have only one Bwana, he begins beating you. There are quarrels, questions and 'bados' (not yets), Food bado, clothes bado?

I have been a widow for 15 years, and I have been very happy to be alone. I wouldn't marry again. I work here in town instead.

In the words of a song very popular in Mathare in 1973, a woman can use the social parameters peculiar to the urban area to remain "a bachelor girl until her dying day".

As independent heads of households, Mathare women perceive themselves as being independent, depending on no one (meaning relatives or husbands) to raise their children and survive, pursuing career strategies as competent urban women.

## METHODOLOGY

I spent two and a half years doing research in Mathare Valley. I did not live in the area, but spent every day there, and in time, many nights as well staying with women friends. My methodology included participant observation, structured interviews, and surveys.

My participant observation consisted of visiting, working with women, attending meetings and village events or taking bail to friends at the police station. I was always accompanied by my friendly, competent assistant, Veronic Nyambura Njoroge. This was partially because I never learned enough Kikuyu to follow a conversation without help, and partially because she was an excellent observer and we made a good team together. Unstructured questioning and interviewing naturally took place in informal visits, as well as just listening to gossip and conversations. Police raids were a part of our daily life, and this often interrupted fascinating exchanges or confidences.

I did not start intensive, formal interviewing until I had built up trust relationships in the two Villages where I concentrated most of my visiting, Village I and Village II. This size of the Valley was such that I had to limit my field of operations, and chose these two villages because they were the oldest and the best established. I administered Life History Interviews to 89 women. Some of these women were willing to submit to further interviews, on such subjects as attitude, friendship networks, and perceptions of other ethnic groups. Mathare

women were busy and suspicious of strangers. There were many rumours that I was a spy for the government. The refusal rate was quite high, which accounts for why the size of the sample is limited.

In the last month of my stay in Mathare, I conducted a random sample survey of 10% of the adult female population of Village II. The data that I collected on this survey was purely statistical social and demographic data. I wanted this data in order to compare the universe of my Life History Respondents with the total universe of women in Mathare. Since my Life History sample was not a random sample, I knew there would be certain biases reflected in its composition. For example I found that they had a higher level of education than average. I also conducted a survey of the make-up and organization of 200 small businesses in Villages I and II.

Finally I spent many happy hours visiting with my Mathare friends in the rural area. I visited the farms of relatives of more than 30 Mathare women. Though a small sample, this gave me some insight into the relationships existing between Mathare women and their rural networks.

#### THE PROBLEM

Upon first consideration, these women do seem independent: free wheeling, making money and supporting themselves. Upon closer examination, many questions arise concerning the nature of this 'independence.'

Though they perceive their independence as independence from male domination, isn't it possible that these women have merely exchanged one type of dependence on males for another? This is one of the questions to which this thesis will address itself. When women migrate alone to the urban area and thus redefine their relationships with their rural extended families, <sup>and</sup> leave the predominately <sup>n</sup> subsistence agricultural economy for the urban economy of wage labour or petty commodity production, what are their career options and choices? When they cease to activate their dependency relationships with fathers, brothers, husbands or sons to gain access to resources such as land or money, what new dependency relationships do they form with men in town? Is it possible to construct a model career strategy for these relatively uneducated Kikuyu women who have migrated to town? Are there discernible patterns of decision-making at certain predictable points in their life cycles in town, and do certain women achieve a life style which allows them to have direct access to resources without the mediation of men? At this point do their relationships with men become purely those of peers? Can one view this as the direct result of a process whereby women are leaving the domestic sphere to which they are mainly confined in the rural area and attempting to enter the public domain, normally monopolized by men, in the urban social field? In the course of this penetration of the public domain, do some women achieve greater control over their lives, economically, socially and politically?

In what ways, both structurally and ideologically, does this new 'independence' (as perceived by the women themselves) differ from the old 'dependence'? Does the examination of the life styles, the perceptions, and career strategies of political leaders and successful entrepreneurs of this relatively small group of Kikuyu women living in one Nairobi neighbourhood allow us to make predictive statements or generalizations about the future role of women in industrializing, urbanizing Kenya? Are these women aberrations or are they role models for women of the future? Does the study of the careers of these women allow us to generalize about the nature of sexual relationships in the urban economic strategy of women migrants (or the economic implications of all sexual relationships), the nature of women's relationship to a society's resources, and the ideological redefinitions that accompany new strategies for survival? These are the major questions that will be addressed in this thesis.

In exploring and analysing the related questions concerning women's status in Mathare and women's relative subordination to men, I was inspired and guided by a variety of theoretical sources. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) call for more systematic exploration of the socio-economic factors which have led to the relative subordination of women and the cross cultural variations to be found in their power and status. Boserup's thesis in her seminal work published in 1970, is that women's role in production is an important determining factor in their power and status



in the larger society. In Sanday's reworking of this hypothesis (1974), not only is women's role in production a crucial variable in determining their status, but also their control over the product of their labour. This has contributed a great deal to my understanding of Mathare women's position and power.

Feeling that men and women are social actors who work in structured ways with more or less conscious strategies toward desired ends, has given me an interest in decision making and actor's cognitive maps. Among others I found Barth (1966 and 1967), Epstein (1969 a,b), Boissevain (1974) and Uzzell (1976) helpful in formulating my views and my analytical approach. Mathare women are an interest group grappling with the economic and social realities of a rapidly changing urban-rural social field in modern Kenya. The sum total of their strategies is the generation of new social forms. Using Barth's definition of social interaction as exchanges of goods, services and time, I developed a concept of dependency as a way to examine the shifts in the economic asymmetry of male-female relationships in the urban areas. My Life History data revealed patterns of strategizing which I have summarized as a developmental model of a Mathare women's urban career.

Cohen (1974) has called for the identification and description of informally organized interest groups in industrialized societies. Reading Ardener (1975), Maher (1974) and Muller (1975) as well as communicating with Scarlett Epstein, convinced me that there is a need to

explore possible women's structures and ideologies which may parallel those of the larger male-dominated structures and ideologies. These women's structures and ideologies may not be articulated or recognised by the larger society, and may have been ignored by the anthropologists, but women social actors may manipulate them in order to gain resources in support of interests that may be hidden from men, or even opposed to those of men.

I feel with Cohen (1974) that ideology is a significant variable with important integrative and activating functions. As Mathare women explore new strategies in the urban areas, and form, or institutionalize, new structures, reinterpretations of the universe and women's place in it must necessarily arise. At the same time, this new ideology will have important repercussions on the integration and institutionalization of these new social forms, to say nothing of its role in the socialization of new arrivals to and children growing up in Mathare. It is necessary to have an understanding of these ideological shifts, especially Mathare women's model of women (Ardener, 1975) in order to gain a deeper insight into the concepts with which they view the world and their perceptions of strategies available for the achievement of their particular ends.

#### CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SUMMARY

In order to examine the above problems there are five data chapters and two theoretical chapters, followed by a conclusion which includes the theoretical and research

implications of the thesis.

## Chapter Two

In order to deal with change, it is necessary to examine the traditional base from which change begins. In this chapter I will examine the roles of women in rural Highland Kenya (Kikuyu or Kikuyu-related people) from traditional precolonial times to post independence. In the process, the socio-economic changes of these periods which have had far reaching effects on the lives of women will be examined. Land tenure rules, western style education, labour migration, the money economy, changes in demography, introduction of cash crops, changes in sexual mores and family and marriage patterns have all had important implications on the role and status of rural Kikuyu women.

## Chapter Three

Mathare is where I observed the process of female career strategizing that will be described, though the process has happened and is happening in many other neighbourhoods of Nairobi and other townships in Kenya. It is a young community, only 12 years old. In this brief chapter the history will be given of its formation and its confrontation with city and national government as it established itself as a community. This history will be presented from two points of view. First I will present

the more official point of view in order to understand the policies adopted by City Council towards Mathare. After that I will describe the history as given to me by the residents of Mathare, both male and female. The women's view of Mathare history gives important insights into the way that women perceive their role in shaping the urban area of Nairobi.

I feel that it is also necessary to present a description of the physical arena of the social interactions I describe later, in order that the reader can experience some of the feeling-tone of the research area. It is also necessary to describe the inhabitants, both male and female. Here the demographic data from other surveys in Mathare, as well as my own, will be summarized.

#### Chapter Four

In this chapter, the economic activities open to women in Mathare will be described. These include house building for rental, brewing, petty commodity production and trade (such as sewing, hawking vegetables, and selling charcoal), commercial sex, taking of lovers, Town Marriage, wage employment and education of children. The relative importance of these economic activities will be examined. The interrelationships between various categories of economic activity are interesting because here the element of strategising can best be seen.

## Chapter Five

In this chapter I will develop the concept of a 'dependency relationship' as a way of pointing out the basic economic asymmetry in most dyadic relationships between men and women. In a dependency relationship one party has greater access to resources than the other. The second party depends on the first for these resources, usually giving more services to the relationship. Using this concept I will examine the traditional rural dependency relationships in which women are involved in the rural area, both in traditional times and today: father-daughter, sister-brother, wife-husband, and mother-son. When women migrate to Mathare, these dependency relationships have already been, or subsequently are either broken or deemphasized. However, due to the inequitable access to wage jobs or other means to earn money, in town most women form and manipulate three other types of dependency relationships with men: prostitute-customer, lover-lover, and Wife-Town Husband. These new relationships and the ways in which they are at the same time similar to and different from the legal sexual unions these women have often abandoned are described in detail. The way in which women gain access to money (and sometimes influence) through these dependency relationships and the ways in which they manipulate their sexual partners to this end will be described. Again, the strategizing element is most clearly seen in the way in which women choose and change their sexual partners, and alternate at the same or at different times the three kinds

of sexual union. Finally, one type of non-sexual dependency relationship is examined, that is the relationship of patron-client. Mathare women form patron-client relationships with male patrons on a local as well as a national level and utilize these as part of their survival strategies, both as individuals and as a group.

### Chapter Six

At the same time that women are forming new types of dependency relationships with men in order to gain access to resources, they are reorganizing old style relationships or forming new style relationships with other women in order to help solve various problems such as child care, social security, control of uncertainty and male violence, and companionship. In this section I will describe the ways in which Mathare women are re-defining the mother daughter relationship. Fostering of children with the rural mother, never a traditional Kikuyu custom, is one of these ways. In Mathare itself, daughters continue to live with their mothers after adulthood, forming matrifocal extended families which are units of economic, and social cooperation providing security, companionship and assistance to their members. Sister clusters have also formed in Mathare; here I feel women redefine the traditional sister-sister relationship which normally is not a socially significant one due to the residence patterns after marriage. At the same time, women residents of Mathare form friendship networks, both extended and effective networks, in order to

cope with various short term and long term problems related to the difficulties of beer brewing, the need for protection from police harassment (police raids, bribery, arrest, bail and fines), day to day problems of budgeting, cooking, child care, and illness, obtaining of credit and customer control. These networks function to diminish uncertainty in the difficult social, economic, and legal positions Mathare women find themselves in. Of more limited value, but important nonetheless in the economic strategies of many Mathare women, are the formal women's organizations: the dancing societies, the savings societies, the land and house buying cooperatives. How these societies contribute to the economic strategies of their members will be discussed.

### Chapter Seven

The sum total of the strategizing discussed in the previous five chapters is of course a model career strategy for a Kikuyu woman migrant of relatively low educational standards. Using Sanday's developmental model of female status (Sanday, 1974) and applying it to an urban migration situation, I will present a developmental model of a woman's urban career strategy. I will show how the urban environment offers the possibilities for a woman to improve her status because not only is the product of her labour valued but also because she can achieve control over that product. Current views in the literature regarding the effect of the urban area on the status of urban women will be reviewed in order to set the argument in its proper context. Then

I will show that some women do in fact attain a secure enough grasp of resources in their own right to be called 'independent' of men. The philosophical limitations of the term 'independent' must of course always be kept in mind. Obviously no single individual can be said to be independent of the system in which he or she lives; there are always socio-economic forces beyond his or her control. But individuals, or aggregates of individuals, can perceive themselves as achieving relative independence vis a vis other individuals, or aggregates of individuals. That is, they can perceive that they are no longer having to depend on other people for support, or for decisions concerning their day to day life. I believe that certain women in Mathare have achieved 'independence' in this sense of the word. By manipulating their urban and rural networks and their sexual unions and by strategizing in their economic activities, they have managed to free themselves from the direct control of relatives and affines. In this chapter I will present a model of an urban career strategy, illustrating it with case histories of both Old Timers and New Comers to Mathare.<sup>3</sup> How have they set about achieving their goals of self-sufficiency and control over the decision making processes affecting their lives? How have they manipulated in mutually reinforcing ways the various economic activities open to them in order to put themselves in better bargaining positions vis a vis individual men and even the larger society, as represented by City Council, the Police, the District Officer, and the



Social Workers? I feel that an examination of these Life Histories will illustrate amply the principles that I have set forth in the model.

### Chapter Eight

I feel that ideology is both a blueprint for action as well as an explanation and a rationalization for an individual's actions and reactions to the society in which he finds himself. Looked at in this way, ideology is more than the end result of a certain set of socio-economic relations, but is also in part a force shaping future relations. In addition, Ardener's concept (Ardener, S. 1975) of a separately held and articulated ideology for women, opens up as yet unexplored possibilities of a world view held by women which differs from that held by the larger, male dominated society. In this chapter I will examine what I feel is an emerging ideology for women being shaped by the life experiences of Mathare women. I will explore the possibility that an ideology of female self-sufficiency and independence is gradually emerging in Mathare, and other similar women's sub-cultures throughout Kenya (and perhaps Africa) which will have important repercussions on women's perceptions of themselves as women, on the definition of women by the larger society, and on the way women socialize their children.

Though the field of my research was bounded by Mathare, and thus excluded most wage earning or elite women, I feel that this new ideology for women is emerging in many sectors

of Kenyan society. (See Schuster, 1976). It is a slow process, but there are promises a<sup>nd</sup>/hints that in the future these ideological changes could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If women begin to perceive themselves as self-sufficient and competent, this may lead to a felt-need for greater and greater voice in the way that the socio-economic and political life of Kenya is run.

### Chapter Nine

My last chapter will summarize the results and conclusions of the preceding chapters. I will end with a number of theoretical and research implications brought to the fore by these conclusions. In the theoretical implications of the research I will discuss the concept of actor oriented analysis, the relationship between ideology and social change, the concept of the model for women, the distinctions between the public and the private domains, the theoretical implications of commercial sex, the economic component in all sexual unions, the social differentiation in squatter communities, and the role of female researchers. In conclusion I will list what I feel are the avenues of future research revealed by the development of the thesis. There is a need to examine the modern Kikuyu family system, with a view to establishing why so many of the migrants to Kenya's cities are Kikuyu. There needs to be systematic research and theoretical exploration of the city and the changing role of women in Africa. More research is called for on decision making process of migrants. Finally there

also must be systematic exploration of the possible women's networks, women's structures, and women's ideologies which parallel those of the larger society. That these exist is as yet by no means clear, but there are some hints in recent literature that they do. The male bias in research may have led to their being ignored. At the very least more work is necessary to round off the anthropologist's understanding of society and culture by exploring and describing the way the other half lives and views the world.

## CHAPTER I - FOOTNOTES

1. There is some difference of opinion to be found on the use of this term by development experts. Other terms, such as irregular, spontaneous, or illegal, have been proposed to describe these types of communities. None of these terms is, in and of itself, adequate. For the purposes of this thesis I will use the term to mean housing that is self-built, which does not adhere to the municipal housing code of the city involved. This type of housing is usually placed on land that the house builders do not own, hence the term squatter. However, as Turner has shown, there are varying degrees of land ownership irregularities. (Turner, 1969) There are also great variations in quality of housing, ranging from the two storied villas of some Brazilian favelas, with sewerage and electricity laid on to the cardboard and plastic tents of some of the smaller Nairobi settlements. Housing in Mathare is generally of the standard found in the rural areas; mud walls and cardboard substituted for thatch in roof construction. The land ownership problem is also very complex in Mathare. It is sufficient for the purpose of this thesis to know that all the early squatters squatted on land owned by Asians, and some successful entrepreneurs eventually bought land to build cooperative 'Company' housing which was illegal by municipal housing code standards.
2. For the purposes of this thesis all quotes from informants will be rendered in English. Approximately one third of my informants spoke English at least minimally. The language that I had learned before going into the field was Swahili, and much of my day to day conversation was in that language. The rest of my verbal exchanges were in Kikuyu carried out with the expert help of my efficient, sensitive field work assistant. Having little or no interest in ethnolinguistics, I generally kept my field notes in English, only occasionally writing terms or words in the vernacular. Throughout the thesis when I use Swahili or Kikuyu in the body of the paper, I will include the English translation in parentheses.  
 I must also add that my Swahili usage may not adhere to the rules of Standard Swahili as found on the East African coast. I have used Swahili as my up-country informants use it; and it will be noted by those conversant with Standard Swahili, it differs in certain respects. For example, in Standard Swahili the correct plural form for Bwana (man) is Wabwana. In Nairobi, many people use the word Bwana in both singular and plural.

CHAPTER I - FOOTNOTES (Cont.)

3. Old Timers are women who arrived in Mathare before 1969. Newcomers arrived after 1969.

## CHAPTER II

### POSITION OF WOMEN IN HIGHLAND KENYA KIKUYU FROM PRE-COLONIAL TO POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD.

#### TRADITIONAL KIKUYU

Before the arrival of the Europeans in the rich volcanic highlands of Kenya, the Kikuyu cultivated their millet, beans and sweet potatoes and carried on sporadic warfare with the pastoral Masai. They were a small scale and politically acephalous society, in which political and social relationships were organized by patrilineal clans and lineages and an age and generation-set system that cut across these descent groups based on ties of land and marriage. (Middleton, 1965. p.23) Much has been written on this latter system, but it is not necessary to go into detail here. The age set was made up of individuals circumcised in the same year, and the members of it stood in a close relationship to each other. Women were organized into age sets like those of the men, the only difference being that the female age sets were not incorporated into the generation set system that regulated men's access to political power throughout Kikuyu society. While the men's generation sets were concerned with warfare, religious and political affairs, women's age sets were concerned with domestic affairs, agricultural matters, and standards of behaviour. (Lambert, 1956, p. 95-100)

It would be misleading to say however that women occupied a position of no power and importance in traditional Kikuyu society. Very little is written directly about Kikuyu women; in Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya (the most complete ethnography in print) and in the other early sources available to us (often written by colonial administrators) one must read between the lines, and much data is just not there. What is clear is that women had considerable power in the domestic realm and were the mainstay of the subsistence agricultural system. Fisher, who researched Kikuyu agriculture in the early 1950's, collected a certain amount of oral history from older informants. He reached the conclusion that women were responsible for much of the agricultural work and that this had always been so. (Fisher, J. 1956, p.5) The Kikuyus had always been ardent traders, even before the arrival of the British and the money economy. "Large markets have been, and are, an important feature of Kikuyu life." (Middleton, 1965, p. 19) Marris describes early Kikuyu trade expeditions into Masai land. Caravans of 10 to 100 men would gather together gourds, millet, honey, tobacco and spears to go into Masailand to obtain livestock, which was the chief form of wealth for the Kikuyu. (Marris, 1971, p. 34) Obviously women did not participate in this lucrative but dangerous long distance trading. It is possible that women were responsible for trading food stuffs in the local markets held frequently in Kikuyuland. Middleton does state that women traded, but does not explain

in what items. Hay, writing for another part of Kenya, describes a pattern of trading for Central Nyanza related to her by old informants, in which women traded mainly in food stuffs in pre-colonial markets, while men traded the more lucrative cattle, iron and weapons. (Hay, 1976, p.92) Fisher claims that in the 1950's women were allowed to take the surplus from their produce to trade in local markets and keep the money to buy luxuries for themselves or their children. She seemed to feel that this was a very old pattern amongst the Kikuyu. (Fisher, 1956, p. 107 & pp. 273-4)

Women's position vis a vis land in pre-colonial Kikuyuland was ambiguous. Each 'mbari' (lineage) had its own land, and the head of the mbari allocated land to the households on the basis of need and matri-segmentation. (Middleton, 1965, p. 49) The founders of the component families of the mbari inherited their plots from their mother's houses, and any maldistribution was corrected if a family was short of land. (Sorrenson, 1967, p.4) Property was divided among the sons so that each inherited a share of that property associated with his mother, which included cultivated land, livestock and moveable property. This was clearly a house-property complex, and as Goody has commented on this complex, it "is a social recognition of women's major role in the process of production though she herself is excluded from ownership of the means of production" (Goody, 1873, p. 118). A girl was allocated land from her mother's land to cultivate until her marriage. There



is some indication that this land may have continued to be hers; as long as there was no shortage of land, she might continue to cultivate it or claim the produce from it after marriage. Fisher found this to be the case in the 1950's, but Middleton and Kenyatta do not mention this. (Fisher, 1956, p. 216). When a woman was married she had land allocated to her by her husband's mbari, and as she bore children this land was increased. As her sons married part of her land was allocated to daughters-in-law. After her husband's death she continued to stay in her hut, and as she became older the land would be cultivated by a son's wife or a grand daughter. If she had no male issue, she would be cared for by the son of a co-wife or by a younger brother of her husband. "In the case of divorce a woman forfeits all rights to land received from her husband, and even the standing crops." The divorcee returned to her parental home and there received gardens from her father or brother. Presumably, at this time she could reactivate her claim to her earlier rights in a field. (ibid, p.214)

The life cycle of a woman followed a pattern broadly similar to that found in many other pre-industrial, sedentary peoples: a childhood spent in caring for younger children, and learning domestic chores and agricultural tasks; initiation, which for the Kikuyu involved female circumcision that legitimized sexual activity and child bearing; marriage; motherhood; and old age spent doing light household chores in the compound of a son. The daily round of housework, cooking, childcare, and farming was

broken by going to market, attending dances with her age set, participating in informal work-sharing groups (to cultivate a field or repair a house), or visiting relatives.

Marriage, the most important event in a girl's life, was most probably largely negotiated between the interested families. There is some disagreement in the literature on how much choice girls had in marriage. Kenyatta states that the choice was up to the persons themselves (1962,p.159) but Middleton quotes other sources that say that infant betrothal was common. (Middleton, 1965, p. 59). Alliance theory recognises the importance of the exchange of women in internal politics of many African societies. It is highly unlikely that marriage was as much an affair of the heart as Kenyatta would have us believe. My older respondents substantiated the view that marriages were arranged by fathers, though girls usually had a right of refusal. Bujra, interviewing old Kikuyu women in Pumwani quotes one old woman as saying that her father sold her like a goat to her husband (1975, p.219).

Polygamy and remarriage of young widows ensured that women remained married for most of their fertile life. It is interesting that, as in many African languages, there is no word in Kikuyu for "unmarried" or "old maids". (Kenyatta, 1962, p. 168). When divorce occurred, and the sources and my older informants were all in agreement that this was rare, the women did not have rights in her children, since the bridewealth paid at the time of the marriage vested the rights of children of the union in the husband's clan.

It is not clear whether or not the bridewealth was always reclaimable. It seems that if a child had been born, there was no repayment of the bridewealth unless the woman remarried, and then the first husband could claim back half. Motherhood, especially motherhood of sons, conferred distinction and honour on a woman. In a polygamous society, it is usual that the strongest parental ties will be between mother and child. A mother was responsible for the feeding of her children. Sons were a woman's security for old age once her husband had died.

This picture of traditional Kikuyu women is one of a life devoted to agriculture and childbearing. Women had little control over their own lives, in the sense of controlling their sexual behaviour and choice of marriage partner. They participated rarely in religious activity and had no power at all in the political system, warfare, and long distance trade. Marriage and motherhood defined a woman's status, and a woman's security and honour in old age depended on her producing sons.

## COLONIAL PERIOD

### The Coming of the British.

The coming of the British and the formation of the British Colony of Kenya in the early part of this century had profound effects on the traditional societies within it's borders. When the British first obtained a foothold in Kenya between 1895 and 1901, it was with the aim of building a railroad through Kenya to open up Uganda to

world markets, Nairobi began as a watering stop for the railway. (Ogot, 1968, p. 257). When it was realized that the Kenya Highlands were "admirably suited for a white man's country", various programs to recruit settlers were started. The changes introduced by the colonial administration and the settlers had important repercussions on the lives of Kenyan Africans. The most important of these changes were land alienation, the introduction of the money economy, wage labour and labour migration, the development of urban centres, and the setting up of a western education system by the missionaries.

#### Alienation of land.

Though the number of settlers was never very large, they alienated a great deal of the central highlands. For example in 1934 there were only 2,027 European occupiers owning 5 million acres, of which only 550 thousand acres were under cultivation, a fact that was a constant source of frustration to land-hungry Africans (Tignor, 1976, p. 25). The alienation of this land created land pressure and overcrowding among the Highland Bantu as early as 1919. In the Reserves, where African residents of the surveyed and alienated land were moved, the densities were usually 200 to 400 persons per square mile; in one Reserve it was as high as 1,000 per square mile. In the White Highlands the densities were approximately 1 European per square mile. (Ogot, 1968, p. 272). In other cases, alienation created an instantaneous population of Africans squatting on the land

they once owned. As a result there was created a class of landless African whose only hope was to squat on European farms or to migrate to the urban area. (Tignor, 1976, p. 184).

#### Wage Employment

The introduction of taxation compelled Kikuyu (and other Kenyans) to look outside their traditional barter economy for money. (Op. Cit, p. 8). In the 1920's the local, informal African markets were replaced by Trading Centres where Asian traders began introducing consumer goods of various kinds (Hay, 1976, p. 102) which also stimulated a need for money. A boom in agriculture created a labour shortage which meant there was much recruiting of labour (some of it forced) for government projects, the railway, and settler's coffee and sisal plantations. (Op Cit. Chapt. V), Kikuyu men of all the people in the Highlands, responded most eagerly to wage labour opportunities. In 1927 40% of Kikuyu males were estimated to be working outside of the Reserve, as opposed to 20% of the Kamba (Op. Cit. p. 178). In the census of 1948, 30 to 50% of Kikuyu males (depending on the district) were living outside of their districts. Many Kikuyus sought wage employment either on coffee estates or by contracting as squatters on European farms, where their low wages were supplemented by garden plots. Kikuyu women and children also had access to money through coffee picking and sisal fibre sorting on a day labour basis.

### Changes in Traditional Agriculture: Cash crops and Trading.

Kikuyus also had access to money through cash crops and trading. They continued to be eager traders. New crops were introduced which Kikuyus grew for sale: notably wattle, maize and beans.<sup>1</sup> Kikuyu men entered into long distance maize trade with Europeans, buying maize from Kikuyu women farmers and transporting it some distance to European farms. (Marris, 1971, p.48) Kamba and Masai Reserves were infiltrated by Kikuyu traders. (Tignor, 1976, p. 196).

The monetization of agriculture led to a great expansion in agriculture in Kikuyuland. This combined with population expansion resulted in great pressures on land in Kikuyu Reserves. Agricultural methods remained unchanged, but new crops were grown, and women did more and more of the agricultural work. Men had traditionally done the heavier tasks, but from the late 20's onwards women were increasingly seen clearing bush, and carrying on hoeing and harvesting alone. Pressure on land, and the deleterious effects of new crops (e.g. maize exhausted the soil very quickly) led to extensive soil erosion and exhaustion. In addition, the increasingly lucrative returns of agriculture resulted in a marked trend towards individual land ownership. Successful farmers and Kikuyu chiefs attempted to accumulate large estates to practice cash cropping. (Op Cit. p. 307).

### Urban Growth

From the 1920's onward Kikuyus contributed the greatest

number of migrants to urban areas of Kenya. (Op cit. p. 184). Until Independence, most migration to urban areas was done by men who left their wives and families at home. Few provisions were made by European employers for African men to have their wives with them. Not only was accomodation crowded and scarce, but rents were high and food expensive (Zwanenberg, 1972, p.4). It was much more economic to leave the wife at home in a rent-free house in the rural area, raising enough food on their plot to feed the family. (Bujra, 1975, p. 222).

The presence of the urban areas, and the demographic imbalance in them created by conditions discussed above, was from the earliest days an attraction for a certain number of Kikuyu and Nandi women. McVicar mentions that in the mid 90's the small settlements created by railway construction activity attracted a number of "Kikuyu women who were widowed or who had run away from their husbands." (1968, p.8). The social dislocations of the 1920's and 30's created social situations where some women found themselves in personal difficulties which could only be solved by seeking economic support in urban areas with or without husbands. For example land pressure, and the head tax which had to be paid for each adult by the head of a household, made men much less able to support their divorced sisters or the childless widows of their brothers. Bujra found this while interviewing old women in Pumwani. It is interesting that all of the women in my sample that had come to Nairobi before WWII were either barren (and thus divorced) or were

married to a man without land.

### Missionary Education

Early in the 20th century, missionaries began to establish schools for Africans in Kenya. There was of course, a traditional form of education given to Kikuyu children before the advent of the missionaries. This education, so vividly described by Kenyatta, (1962, Chapt.5) transmitted the world view, the ideology, the knowledge and skills necessary for each Kikuyu man and woman. Early on in the history of missionary education in Kenya, there was some confusion over the proper curriculum to be offered to boys. Some missionaries merely wanted to transmit Christian values and behaviour with a modicum of reading for the purposes of understanding the bible. Others maintained that mission education should prepare African boys for the job market, both for clerk jobs and for technical jobs. There was less confusion over the curriculum to be offered to the girls. In the words of an early Director of the Government of Education, "girls didn't need the 3 R's but the 3 B's: babies, baths and brooms". (Tignor, 1976, p.206).

It is clear from the small number of educated women in Kenya relative to educated men, that education for girls proceeded at a much slower pace than that of boys. As late as 1949 the Annual Report on Education pointed out that only 25% of the school-age population was in school. Only 30% of the first year enrolment was female and only 7% of the last year. (Sheffield, 1973, p. 32). One reason for



this was that jobs available with the civil service and the railways, the two largest early employers of Africans, were for men, not for women. Obviously there was much less of a perceived advantage in educating daughters than there was for educating sons. Secondly, "The need for fees and the status of women operated selectively in favour of education for boys." (Tylor, 1969, p. 163). Thus where there was limited resources of cash available for school fees, it was the sons who were sent to school. This pattern has continued till the present times; a number of women in my sample had had their educations interrupted because a brother was given priority of schooling. As late as the 1950's, Fisher found that the Kikuyu considered educating girls was a waste of time and money since they would not get wage employment. "Daughters do not work because they marry." (Fisher, 1956, p. 107). It was not until the increased monetization of the Kenyan economy and the Africanization of jobs after Independence that there were sufficient jobs available in the wage sector for women to make education of daughters important to parents.

There was one additional, and undoubtedly relatively minor, impediment to girls' education in the 1920's and 30's. The female circumcision custom of the Kikuyu was hotly opposed by the missionaries as a cruel and barbarous custom. On the other hand, Kikuyu's defended the custom as important to the initiation of women. The issue reached a head in the late 20's, and frequently girls were withdrawn from school in their early adolescence because their teachers opposed

Kenya. Nearly a million people were consolidated in stockaded villages; 11,500 Kikuyu were killed and 31,700 Kikuyu captured and arrested. (Ibid, pp 303-4). These are the official statistics and the actual death toll may well have been greater. Many relatively young women were left as widows with children, or as schoolgirls unable to continue their education.

During the Emergency the government began a policy of Land Consolidation. This was carried out ostensibly to rationalize the traditional land holding system of the Kikuyu which often meant that one owner had many, small, scattered bits of land. <sup>2</sup>. "The immediate aims of policies associated with it (land consolidation) were political as well." (Op cit) "Consolidation was seen originally by some officials as just one more reward for loyalists." (Sorrenson, M. 1967, p. 112). The reason for this was that Loyalist Kikuyu were able to rush and register claims to all the best land in the area. The great irony of the fight for independence is that the very people who were risking their lives for independence often found themselves landless when they returned to the village after Independence. Itote feels that not enough was done to alleviate the sufferings of the many men and women who occupied lowly positions in the ranks of the Forest Fighters and to compensate them for the loss of ancestral lands in their villages. "Some of those who now enjoy the fruits of Independence, who sit in places made available to them through the blood and sweat of those who fought, look down upon the fighters as

their being circumcised. (Tignor, 1976, p. 250). This issue was instrumental in the formation of independent schools by Kikuyu missionary-trained teachers. What was the comparative enrolment of girls to boys in these schools is impossible to determine from available sources. Amazing as it may seem, many of the standard books on the history of education in Kenya do not break school enrolments down by sex. (see Tignor, 1976; Stabler, 1969; Ray, R.1966).

#### THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE.

In the late 1940's, African politicians, led mainly by Kikuyu, grew increasingly militant in their demands for self rule. In 1952 a State of Emergency was declared. At this time many guerillas, members of the Mau Mau fled to the forest to fight. Though there were few actual women fighting in the forests, women played an extremely important role as "scouts" who ran messages and spied on the enemy for the forest fighters. "Girls found it simpler to disguise themselves, or at least to be inconspicuous." (Itote, 1967, p. 78). Women were also the lifeline for the forest fighters, providing them with food; a fact that the authorities recognised and tried to curb with enforced, stockaded villagization and curfews. (Ibid, Cahp. 11 "Life in the Forest"). The importance of the support of the women to their fighting men folk was recognised by those Europeans in charge of stamping out the Mau Mau. (Rosberg, 1966, pp. 51, 52 and p. 338).

The Mau Mau period was one of great upheaval in modern

fools." (Itote, 1967, p. 270).

It must be realized that 24% of the women over 40 in my samples claimed that the reason they came to Nairobi was a loss sustained in the Mau Mau (loss of a husband or father, or loss of land of husband). In addition, many of the older Kikuyu women in Mathare had been involved in the fight for freedom. This was my impression gleaned from informants' comments; it was not a question that concerned me deeply. Ross, who did work on political behaviour in Mathare, found in his survey that 27% of residents were detained during the Emergency, though the percentage was as high as 73% for village leaders. I think these percentages would be much the same for Mau Mau involvement of women, leaders and non-leaders. Possibly working in the forests or being detained for Mau Mau activities as peers of the men freedom fighters, gave women a taste for personal independence. Admittedly the latter is purely speculation. However, the Mau Mau period was a very important force for change in the lives of many low income rural women.

#### POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD.

To attempt to describe the transformation of Kenya in the period since independence would be the subject for a thesis in itself. It has been a period of rapid economic growth and expansion, and the political consolidation of Kanu as the one political party. There has been an increasing economic disparity in the African population as certain

Africans moved into the business and civil service positions vacated by the departing Europeans and bought up many of the large farms of departing settlers. It has been a period of great expansion of foreign investment in Kenya, in many ways to Kenya's cost. (see Colin Leys The Under-development of Kenya, 1975). Among the many interrelated factors which have all wrought significant changes in the lives of Kikuyu men and women (and those of other tribes as well) are rapid urbanization, labour migration, population growth, land pressures, education expansion, a trend away from the extended family and polygamy, increased divorce, and changing sexual mores.

#### Urbanization

Urbanization has been proceeding at an extremely rapid rate in Kenya during the last decade. Though a relatively small proportion of the population of 12 million lives in urban areas (approximately 10% of the population by the 1969 Census) the rate of urbanization is high. It is calculated by urban planners that the present growth rate for Nairobi is 6 to 7% per annum, and as high as 10% in some smaller towns. Nairobi's present population of 500,000 will, it is estimated by planners, reach  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million by the year 2,000. The increased disparity in returns from agricultural and wage employment, the higher standard of living to be found in the city, and the concentration of jobs in the urban areas continue despite sporadic government attempts to disperse industrial development throughout the

country or to stimulate rural development. There seems to be no way to stem the tide of migration from rural areas.

One of the aspects of urbanization relevant to this thesis is the drop in the disparity between male and female urbanites. In the 1959 Census there were 1.7 males to 1 female; by 1969 there were 1.4 to 1. Thus it is safe to assume that in the years since Independence female migration has been slightly greater than male migration.

#### LABOUR MIGRATION AND WAGE EMPLOYMENT.

Closely related to the growth in urban areas is the increased rate of labour migration, which is a phenomenon to be found all over modern Africa. Not all of this migration is rural-urban; some of it is rural-rural. But it is a response to landlessness, unemployment, under-employment, or an inability to satisfy cash needs in the migrant's place of origin. The pattern of male migration where the migrant leaves his family on his farm or on someone else's farm if he is landless, described in an earlier section for pre-colonial Kenyan towns, has continued to the present day. For many low-paid workers the economics of supporting wife and family in the urban area are nearly impossible. In many cases only the landless, or those who obtain Council Housing, or the highly paid elite will bring their families to Nairobi. The ILO Report estimated that perhaps a third of rural households could be households with the male away in town. (1972, p. 47). This split family living means that the man visits his wife anywhere

from once a week to once every 3 months. In some cases I met men from Nyeri who only saw their wives once a year, though during the slack season their wives might come for a couple of weeks 'holiday' with their husbands in Nairobi. The strains and social cost of this type of marriage are difficult to calculate, and as far as I can ascertain no one has yet published any research on rural femal heads of households. A number of my own informants, who had experienced such a marriage before their coming to town, spoke of the loneliness, the strained relations with in-laws and the tendency for some men to 'get lost in town' and forget to send money home regularly. The ILO Report chronicles the worry, the pressure of work, and strain of new roles for the women left behind. (Ibid, p. 358).

If a man is unable to keep his wife in the rural area, for whatever reason, he must find accommodation for her in town. When wives join their husbands, they are introduced to what my informants called the 'raha' (luxuries) of town running water (even if it is several hundred yards away from the house); buying charcoal instead of collecting firewood; buying food instead of cultivating it; light housework instead of back-breaking hoeing in the hot sun; close neighbours to gossip with (and quarrel with); clothes that stay clean and brightly coloured instead of being stained to a uniform dull grey-red by the country soil; traders with trinkets to tantalize; naps in the afternoon when the sun is hot; mutual braiding of hair with neighbours in the cool shadows of courtyards; cooking a greater variety of

food with town sophistications of onions, chilli peppers, and curry powder; and the possibility of visiting a bar or a cinema (though many did this but rarely). Many women I met living permanently or temporarily in Nairobi admittedly professed to prefer the rural area with its quiet, simple, and relatively cheap life of cultivating. But others learn to value these luxuries.

Women who come to town to live are liable to be seduced by more than the 'raha ya town'. The sexual pressures put on women in the urban areas of East Africa with its unequal sex ratio were spoken of early on by Southall. (1961, p. 50). Many a woman in Mathare, who had come to Nairobi in the first instance to join her husband, succumbed to the blandishments of a lover (a man living singly in town) to leave her husband. Conversely, many other women I knew in Mathare claimed to have been virtually abandoned by their husbands who had succumbed to the charms of an urban woman and had 'forgotten their homes' in the rural areas.

The high rate of migration has also had the effect of increasing the knowledge of the possibilities of city life amongst rural dwellers. There are few if any Kikuyu who have not at least heard first hand accounts of city life from a returning or visiting migrant; many have visited a friend or relative living in a Kenyan urban area. Everybody knows that the city is where the money is, either in wage employment or in various types of petty commodity production. Most appreciate the difficulties of finding a job and the expense of living in town; but one has little chance of



making money in the rural area. Even those who make money in the rural area on cash crops (coffee, tea, pyrethrum) are usually those that initially capitalize their cash cropping with income from employment.

Women have not been as fortunate as men as labour migrants. In the formal wage sector, women form only 15.5% of the working forces 81,000 out of a total work force of 603,000. (Ray, 1966, p. 213). Women supporting themselves in cities are generally on the fringes of the formal economy, in the uncounted, often illegal petty commodity production sector. For example, though women only held 20% of the hawkers licenses issued in 1963, they accounted for most of illegal hawking prosecutions. (Carlebach, 1963, p.6) Probably the only wage employment dominated by women is tea and coffee picking, very low paid, arduous work.

#### Population Growth and Land Pressure

Kenya now has an annual population growth rate of 3.4% per annum, which makes it one of the fastest growing nations in the world, even outstripping India. This has resulted in increasing land pressure, especially in the western provinces and in the fertile volcanic highlands around Nairobi. Though much of the land alienated by Settlers in the Highlands has been 'Africanized' since Independence, much of it has remained in large units and has not been returned to the 'wananchi' (the ordinary man). The ILO report estimates that there are nearly 300,000 families landless in Kenya today (1972, p.33). Colin Leys points out how

greater disparities in African land holdings have developed since Independence. In 1963, 60% of the land registered was owned by 71% of African land holders; but by 1973, 60% of total land area was owned by merely 18.3% of registered African landholders. A small number of African elite families are accumulating larger and larger land holdings. (1975, pp. 186-8).

Land pressure has meant that families are increasingly unable to support themselves on available land. Some members have to find wage labour. Quarrels over land inheritance grow very bitter. A widow can find her dead husband's brother taking over her husband's land. Unless she is strong-willed or has an influential family, she may be unable to prevent it. With limited land, families are less and less able to absorb unlimited numbers of peripheral dependents. Divorcees, returning widows, and daughters with illegitimate children are less easily absorbed into their fathers' or brothers' households. None but the most cruel male relative would refuse outright to take in such a female dependent in need; but she would soon be made to feel a burden. Eventual subtle (or not so subtle) pressure will be brought to bear and the unwanted one will leave when the level of tension gets too high. Let the words of Mathare women tell the tale.

I felt I was a burden to my father and taking food from my younger brothers' mouths.

My father was always quarrelling with me and telling my mother she had raised a whore, (because I had a baby and no husband).

My brother had too many of his own children to feed, and his wife begrudged me anything for my babies.

You would pity Mathare women if you knew their life histories. I came to Nairobi because my brother wanted me to marry a rich old man. My mother has 12 children, and my father died during the Emergency by the British. Life was hard for us because my mother did not have a family to assist us. When my brother continued to hate me for not marrying the rich, old man and thus reducing the numbers of mouths to feed, I left home.

Sometimes the families might even tell the dependent to go to town and earn money. One woman, a self-confessed prostitute, told me that her mother (to whom she had returned with 2 babies after her husband abandoned her) gave her bus money and told her to go to town "where any woman can make money."

My mother knew she was telling me to go to town and be a 'malaya' (prostitute) but even though she is 'saved' (has been converted to an evangelical sect of Christianity) she couldn't do anything else. Food was scarce at home because of my many brothers and sisters behind me. There was nothing for my two fatherless children. Now my mother cares for my children and I send her money every month.

For women in these circumstances migration to the urban areas has been the only answer.

### Education

Education increased greatly in scope in the post independence period. In Kenya from 1961-1966 there was a three fold increase in secondary school enrolments and a 65% increase in University enrolments. (D.P. Ghai "Contemporary Economic and Social Developments" p.387,

Zamani ed. B.A. Ogot.) Though many improvements have been made, girls still form a lower proportion of the student population, especially in the higher forms. For example, Carlebach noted a continuing prejudice against educating girls. (1963, p.4.) In a breakdown of enrolments by sex for the year 1969, it was shown that girls made up 41% of the total primary-school enrolment, 31% of the Form I enrolment, and 24% of the Form 4 enrolment. This figure represents a poor "survival rate" in the system. Only 66% of the girls who enter Form I in 1965 reached Form 4 in 1968, as opposed to 80% of their male counterparts. (I.L.O 1972, Chapt. 18 "Access and Equity"). The drop out rate is high and few women finish. At the time of the 1969 census only 20,000 women in Kenya had completed their secondary school education.

Thus a greater number of girls are starting school and getting a smattering of education but not obtaining qualifications sufficient to allow them to compete in the job market. It has been generally recognised that increase in education raises aspiration levels and creates new ambitions and a wider world view among the male populations in Africa. The same can be said for women. Educated women, like their male peers, migrate to the urban areas to seek jobs and/or husbands commensurate with their education level. It is not the fault of the many girls with only Standard 6 level of education that few wage jobs exist for people of that standard of education.

Education is one of the contributing factors in the changes now occurring throughout Africa in female attitudes

towards marriages and towards women's status in general. Women are increasingly attracted to western-styled monogamy and marriage based on the love ethic and companionship. (Little, 1973, African Women in Towns, Chapt. 8,9).

In addition to introducing girls to a new ideal of marriage based on love, companionship and personal choice, modern education has opened to Kenyan girls the knowledge of the wider world and of women in other countries who have achieved success in the public realm. They compete with boys in examinations, often successfully. They learn about Mrs. Ghandi and Madame Curie. I don't want to overemphasize this aspect of modern education, but, as I shall show in Chapter VIII, one of the trends that I observed in Mathare was a move in what Ardener calls the 'model of women' towards a new view of female competence and independence.

#### Trend Away From Extended Family and Polygamy.

There has been little systematic research on changing kinship and family patterns among the Kikuyu of modern Kenya, (Mair 1969, p.152) but it is the view of many observers, myself included, that there is currently among Kikuyu a trend away from the extended family and corporate kin group towards a more individualistic nuclear family.

Brothers still help each other with school fees, and working sons and daughters assist their parents, but strong obligations to a broadly based extended family are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. For this reason it is possible for a city dweller to build a fine house for himself and develop his land at home and still say "no" to the requests for assistance from relatives that may have been

attracted by the display of wealth. (Mc. Vicar, 1968, p. 90).

This trend towards the nuclear family is consistent with what some have seen as the strong entrepreneurial values in Kikuyu society as a whole. From the earliest period, status in Kikuyu society was not just a function of age, but also a function of prosperity, and prosperity was "an individual achievement won by hard work and good husbandry". (Marris, 1971, p.41). No one became a leader in society without achieving prosperity through his own efforts; such a man would be recognised as a man of wisdom "as much in recognition of his ability as his wealth". (Op cit.)

David Parkin, in a personal communication, has confirmed these observations, something he is in an excellent position to do having conducted research with both Kikuyu and Luo in Kenya. Compared to Luo, Kikuyu feel a minimal obligation to clan lineage or other extended family.<sup>3</sup> There are since land consolidation no more corporate land holdings in Kikuyu land. The elder brother is no longer considered to be the head of the family with great responsibility towards his younger brothers.

It is also felt by observers in Kenya, that polygamy is increasingly uncommon amongst Kikuyu today, found only amongst the very old. There is great pressure on land, as I described earlier. Moreover, wealth today is to be obtained through wage employment and capital-intensive cash cropping, not by having many wives hoeing away at many small plots of land.<sup>4</sup> There is no 'faida' (profit) in having

more than one wife in Kenya today in the eyes of Kikuyu. By contrast the Luo still practice polygamy; and urban based Luo men even have a system of rotating wives, one wife cultivating for 6 months while the other stays in town with the husband. Thus the husband keeps wives separate without having to have a large farm, and always has a wife to care for him in town (David Parkin, personal communication).

Polygamy is also felt to be non functional in modern Kenya by Kikuyu because of the increasing costs of raising children. Men often explained to me that double number of wives meant double the number of children, and the cost of school fees alone was enough to give a man pause. When you then add the cost of clothes, food and medicines, the raising of a child "properly" can add up to an enormous strain on a man's cash resources.

As a result of the move away from the extended family and polygamy, there are increasing numbers of women who do not have anyone to turn to for support in the rural areas. As described earlier, women who are divorced or widowed cannot expect their brothers to support them any more. Widows may not necessarily be supported by husband's brothers, especially if the widow is barren or only has girls. Part of the problem is of course land pressure; but I am convinced that there is also less and less feeling that one's basic and irrevocable responsibilities do not extend past one's parents and one's children. Increasingly, barren women will now be divorced rather than kept with a

second and third wife. If a man can only afford one wife, he will not keep a barren one as a rule. If there is a serious conflict between husband and wife, there is no longer the possibility of giving the wife a distant patch of land and building her an isolated hut, as was the early Kikuyu practice mentioned by some of my respondents. Widow inheritance marriage is not practiced now, so a young widow with young children may find herself with no recourse but to return to her parents or brothers, with the eventual results (barring her remarriage) described above.

### Divorce

The above leads logically into a discussion of divorce and its probable increase in Kenya today. There is no statistical proof for this assertion, as there is no information on Kikuyu divorce rates traditionally. Even today most marriages are not registered, and so there is no way to measure current divorce rates.

All I have to go on are qualitative judgments by observers that divorce was rare traditionally and easier and more frequent now.

Among the Kikuyu divorce is extremely rare, because of the fact that a wife is regarded as the foundation-rock on which the homestead is built. It is only when all efforts to keep the husband and wife together have failed, that an action for divorce can be taken. (Kenyatta, 1962, p. 176).

Zamani, (long ago) the two families tried to keep the couple from separating. Nowadays, the husband might send a couple messages to his wife (after she has run away to her family); and if she doesn't answer or return then, it is considered that they are divorced. It is as easy as that. As to 'rurracio' (bridewealth)



the husband usually knows that the goats have been eaten and the beer drunk (referring to the two traditional components of the bridewealth) and he doesn't bother trying to get any back. (Old woman).

Most of my respondents felt that divorces were much more frequent than they used to be. Again this is just a qualitative perception; but like so many qualitative perceptions, the chances are that research would reveal its statistical accuracy. More divorces means more divorcees, who, unless they can be remarried quickly, will find themselves in the position described above of finding some means of supporting themselves and their young children. One of these means is to drift to town and seek work there.

### Changing Sexual Mores

One of the cultural changes that have taken place in Kenya in recent years that has profound implications on women's lives is the change in sexual mores. Northeastern Bantu and Masai never had particularly puritanical ideas on premarital sex. Strong sanctions prevented boys and girls having sexual activity prior to initiation. After initiation girls and boys were allowed sexual play short of actual penetration. Since sexual activity took place in a special hut for the boy's age grade, there was obviously a certain amount of public supervision to ensure that this prohibition was scrupulously observed. If a boy was discovered trying to loosen the leather apron the girl tucked between her thighs, the matter would be taken up before

the age group and the boy would be punished severely. (Kenyatta, 1962, p. 144). In recent years, the age of marriage has risen, partially due to formal schooling, and boys and girls now indulge in sexual exploration in unsupervised circumstances, usually the bushes, if my informants tales are typical. Sadly this increased sexual freedom has not been accompanied by better sex education or improved access to Family Planning methods. An appalling number of secondary school girls have to leave school every year because of pregnancy, and most of these never return to complete their interrupted education. Castle calls this

one of the more startling phenomenon in African education...School supervisors may spend hours weekly disentangling paternity problems with outraged parents and furtive male offenders. (1966,p.137)

The actual numbers of such dropouts have never been published, but estimates in the press have reached as high as 60% of the female student body. The situation is so tragic that one female official in the National Council of Churches was moved to describe it to me as a conspiracy by male students to rid themselves of female competition for limited higher school scholarships and places and jobs. The pressures on young girls to indulge in premarital sex are enormous, and their ignorance of simple biological facts pathetic. Most of the genitors are either fellow students or older business men who lure girls into bars after school; both categories are unlikely to marry the girl once she conceives. A double sexual standard is alive and well in Kenya. Men can boast about their illegitimate children and affairs with women;

women with illegitimate children are branded as sexually loose, in Kenyan English 'whores' or in Swahili 'malaya'. They will be lucky if they meet a man broadminded enough to overlook her child out of wedlock. <sup>4</sup>. Kenyan men generally believe that once a woman has had sexual experience with many men, she will always hunger for variety and will be unable to settle down to faithful marriage with one man. It is interesting to compare this view with the beliefs of Hausa men in Ibadan about prostitutes and marriage. Prostitutes are highly desirable as wives, for it is felt that they excel in the art of love and "when they are in love with a man, they are most devoted and sincere to him." (Cohen, 1969, p.56).

Most Kenyan girls with children out of wedlock refuse to go back to school after they have borne a child. It may be difficult to get someone to care for the child while they are in school. Fathers may refuse to pay school fees for a daughter who has so disgraced herself. There are sanctions of shame applied to the young, unmarried mother by her school mates. "I would be ashamed to go back and face my friends" was a frequent answer to my question about why studies were not resumed by the young mother. There may also be psychological barriers to returning to school due to a perception of womanhood. Pregnancy is a watershed which divides girl from woman. For a mother (a woman) to return to school would be returning to a girl-state.

Undereducated, with a child or two to support, these unmarried mothers find it increasingly difficult to stay at

home with parents. They are a strain on the household finances, and father and/or mother may be censorious and prone to pick quarrels. The girl having experienced a complete sexual relationship and borne a child, sees herself as a woman and chafes at her lack of independence in the parental home. Migration to an urban area is both an escape from tension and a chance for some kind of economic and sexual freedom.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have given a brief outline of Kenyan Highland history, with a special emphasis on those aspects of traditional life and of socio-economic changes brought about by colonial rule and independence which relate to women and women's lives.

Such interrelated factors as population growth, land pressure, trends to nuclear family, increased divorce and pre-marital pregnancy, and landlessness due to Mau Mau activity have all combined to create a category of unmarried female dependents who are burdens to their male relatives. Differential access to education and difficulty in obtaining formal wage employment have hampered the efforts of women to support themselves while unmarried. Yet at the same time, Kikuyu women had early access to a little money through trading and coffee picking. Kikuyu women took an active part in the fight for independence. They also, through the educational system, have absorbed new ideas about women's role in the world. This exposure to entrepreneurial

activity and independent political participation may have created an atmosphere of female impatience with absent husbands, lack of access to cash, unhappy marriages, and dominating fathers. Just as women in early days of the building of the railways left home when their fathers tried to "sell them like goats", perhaps the same thing is happening in Kenya today. In the words of Soeur Marie Andree "women vote with their feet and flee to the city". (Baker and Bird, 1959, p. 106).

## CHAPTER II     ~     FOOTNOTES

1. Africans were prevented from growing coffee until the 1950's in Kenya. Settlers claimed that allowing Africans to grow coffee would lead to the spread of coffee plant diseases and a lowering of production quality. The administration accepted settler pressure to keep coffee a white man's monopoly, in spite of the fact that Africans were raising market-quality coffee in Uganda and Tanzania. It was realized that African peasant producers would be serious competition for European growers.  
(Tignor, 1976, p.291).
2. This method of land tenure was in actual fact a very sensible one for hilly Kikuyu land, where quality of the soil and drainage varies so greatly. By giving each wife a number of small fragments of land, it ensured that each woman would receive a fair share of both good and poor land. (Fisher, 1956, p. 219). Excessive fragmentation was not a drawback with traditional Kikuyu hoeing methods of agriculture. It however, is a drawback if any sort of mechanized agriculture is contemplated.
3. Very few of my Kikuyu informants under 50 even knew the name of their clan or lineage. All greeted such questions with the scorn or disinterest proper to such irrelevant 'witu ya zamani' (things of long ago.) Similar reactions met my questions of polygamy. Though they did not generally regard it as immoral, barring the very religious among them, they usually saw it as something that made sense long ago when there was much land, but didn't now. "Having more than one wife is a thing of no 'faida' (profit) today." explained more than one informant.
4. An interesting example where polygamy seems to be on the upsurge among the Kikuyu, Meru and Embu (North-eastern Bantu) is recounted in Chambers' book on the Mwea Rice Settlement in Embu area. Here, the men belong to the cooperative formed in the rice settlement, but the wives do the work. When looking into what men did with their proceeds from the crops in the first few years of the cooperative's life, Hanger and Chambers found that a large number of them had spent their money on bridewealth for second wives. The interesting thing is why the women accepted this. One answer to this puzzle is perhaps that the second wives that the men were marrying (with very low bridewealth) were young rural girls who had a pre-marital pregnancy. (Hanger, Jane, 1972)  
(Chambers, personal communication).

### CHAPTER III

#### MATHARE VALLEY, A SQUATTER COMMUNITY IN NAIROBI: ITS HISTORY AND ITS DESCRIPTION

##### BOUNDARIES OF THE RESEARCH

All research must be bounded. Theoretically the boundary which would not exclude anything of relevance would be that of the world, but in practice this is impossible and could only result in generalization of such a wide nature as to be useless in application. The choice of the boundary of the research is one of the first decisions of the researcher, and by its nature this choice is arbitrary. The arbitrariness of a boundary must be fully recognised, and for this reason the criteria by which it was chosen should be explained as part of the analysis. The only proof that a choice of a boundary was right (or perhaps more exactly, not wrong) is that there is some sort of logical 'fit' between it and the data and the analysis. At the same time, the researcher-analyst must always remember that these analytical boundaries are imposed merely for the convenience of the observer and are not in and of themselves sacred. They are not water tight and much social action of importance may overspill the perimeters drawn by the researcher which he or she chooses to ignore because of lack of time or interest. The data must not be distorted in order to fit the researcher's arbitrary boundaries.

The social anthropologist who sets out to do research

in an urban area is faced with the difficulty of dealing with a large heterogeneous, complicated conglomeration of people. Anthropologists have traditionally limited themselves to small-scale societies, often doing their studies in villages of only several hundred residents. Nairobi has a population of 500,000. How to begin to grapple with such a mammoth unit using the tools of face to face research is the problem. The methods most commonly used by anthropologists in urban areas have been to study either a neighbourhood community, or a status or ethnic group (lawyers, civil servants, Hausa, prostitutes etc), (Foster, 1974, p.9) I chose a combination of both. The neighbourhood that I chose to study was a squatter community named Mathare Valley. There were two reasons for this choice. 1) My previous adviser, Peter Rigby, at Makerere University felt it was one of the only low-income and 'interesting' Nairobi neighbourhoods as yet unstudied by an anthropologist. 2) It was an area of Nairobi in which the ratio of women to men reversed the pattern found in urban areas as a whole in Kenya. Since I was interested in urban women, I thought to explore this community further. Because Mathare Valley has an approximate population of 60,000 I limited the majority of my participant observation to the two oldest "villages" in the Valley, a total population of 6,000 to 10,000. Within the limits of these two villages I concentrated my research on female independent heads of households, the great majority of whom were Central Northeastern Bantu (Kikuyu, Meru, Embu and Kamba).



For the purposes of simplicity I will refer to these women as Kikuyu throughout the body of the paper. Most of them were actual Kikuyu; and I have chosen to include the few Meru, Embu and Kamba with the Kikuyu since their cultures are closely related. These women due to their common economic activities of beer brewing and commercialized sexual activities can be called an interest group. They have a strong sense of solidarity against the outside world as represented by the police, and other legal authorities and are defined as a group by the outside society. "The 'malaya' (prostitute) of Mathare" is a constant phrase on the lips of people outside Mathare, from bus drivers who drop passengers on the road at the top of the hill to writers of letters to the Daily Nation.

It remains but to say a few words about the justification for choosing Mathare Valley as a boundary for research. By any choice of criteria, Mathare can be called a community. First it has discrete geographical boundaries; it is a valley separated from neighbouring areas by major roads or steep hillsides. It has a name and a definite sense of identity and solidarity vis a vis the rest of Nairobi. This is the result, as will be seen when I discuss its history, of the hostile attempts by City Council to destroy it in the late 60's and the constant large-scale police raids against the beer brewers of the areas (something that happens in no other neighbourhood of Nairobi). The media, which alternatively attacks and defends Mathare, have also contributed to this definition of this squatter area as a

community. The community has elected leaders, Kanu Committee members, both for each separate village in the valley (there are 10 named and geographically separated groupings of houses in the valley) and for the valley as a whole. Naturally the socio-economic behaviour of the residents is not totally bounded to the valley (they have friends and relatives in other parts of Nairobi and rural Kenya). However I hope I will show in the body of this thesis, that much meaningful social, economic, and political activity of its residents does take place within Mathare's boundaries especially for those who do not work outside of Mathare.

## HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

### Early Growth

Mathare is a relatively young community.<sup>1</sup> There was a small, rural-style settlement previous to the Mau Mau Emergency. These were small cultivators who were allowed to squat on the valley land owned by Indians who lived in neighbouring Eastleigh. In the early 1950's it became a centre of Mau Mau activity, and the few houses were burned down and the inhabitants detained, or dispersed to the rural areas. After the Emergency was lifted, movement between rural and urban areas became easier with the abolition of the Pass Law. Many of the migrants drifting to Nairobi lacked housing and jobs. As has happened in innumerable cities the world over, the migrants did not allow this to discourage them. In a piece of centrally-located, functionally marginal land (due to poor soil, and steep

topography), the migrants settled and formed a community which provided them with housing and income from the renting of rooms or petty commodity production. During the period 1962-7, the area expanded gradually from west to east, along the southern slope of the valley. After the initial successful confrontation with the District Officer's 'askaris' (police) they were left in peace and ignored by City Council officials. By 1967 the Housing Research and Development Unit of the University of Nairobi estimated that the population was between 15,000 and 20,000. By this time there were four separate named villages of mud and wattle huts. (H.R.D.U, 1970, 1957)

#### Conflict with City Council

In 1967 partly due to a cholera scare and partly due to increased governmental and planning authority awareness of the growing squatter problem, there was a period of confrontation with City Council. At one point there was a brief, abortive attempt to demolish the area. During this period political integration in Mathare, studied so lucidly by Marc Ross, reached its zenith. The various Kany Committees were elected and successfully put their case for formal recognition and for upgrading of the area, demanding such services as piped water, service roads, sewerage, and schools. Gradually the City Council yielded to pressure from the Central Government, from various organizations such as Christian Council of Churches, and from outside world opinion

whose interest was captured by world press coverage of the attempted bull-dozing of Mathare. Plans to eliminate the community entirely were dropped, and plans to upgrade the area were devised. Large amounts of money were promised to upgrade Mathare, and to build new housing for the residents at the empty, east end of the valley.

#### Company Housing

In 1968-9, while the usual administrative delays and wrangles took place over these grandiose plans, the residents of Mathare quietly began creating housing cooperatives locally, called Companies, bought empty land in Mathare and put up large blocks of wooden, tin-roofed housing on the upper edges of the valley, above the mud and wattle housing at the bottom. The membership of these Companies was made up of wealthy Old-Timers <sup>2</sup>. in Mathare, and businessmen and politicians throughout Nairobi. These new blocks were built in such quantities and at such speed that the housing stock of the valley was doubled in less than a year. By 1969 the HRD Unit estimated that the population was doubled to 50,000 to 60,000. At this time a moratorium on further construction was applied and successfully enforced by the District Officer.

#### Upgrading By City Council

In 1974 rents in Mathare were the lowest available in Nairobi. A mud and wattle room (usually with a cardboard roof, which is surprisingly effective) rented at K.sh 30-40,

while a room in the wooden Company housing was usually K.sh. 70 to 80. <sup>3.</sup> Living conditions in the area were improved in the period just preceeding 1970 by the introduction of some much-needed services by City Council. A service road was pushed through the muddle of houses along the length of the valley. Standpipes for water, lighting standards on the road, and public latrines with water borne sewerage made life cleaner and safer. In addition, with the help of the National Council of Churches, the City Council built 400 units in the Mathare Redevelopment Owner-Occupier Scheme, half of them completed houses and half Site and Service plots. <sup>4.</sup> This area, called simply New Mathare by residents of Mathare Valley to differentiate it from Old Mathare, was to serve as a place to receive owner-occupiers moved from Old Mathare. Naturally the units were limited and the number of owners that were eventually rehoused in New Mathare was a mere drop in the proverbial bucket. Their houses in Old Mathare were torn down and no effort was made to rehouse the many tenants. The realities of power dictated that it was the Kanu leaders and the more powerful home owners in Mathare who allocated themselves the few units there were.

#### Uncertainty For the Future

In 1974, my last year of research, the money allocated for the Mathare project had run out. There was an ominous silence on the part of City Council officials and politicians as to the future status of Mathare Valley. This is

demoralizing for the residents. The land ownership issue, which is too complex to go into here, further complicates the status of individual homeowners and companies in the valley. The area was gazetted by the government (which means the government has the right of compulsory purchase at a price they set) but the option to buy has not been taken, partly due to complaints made by Mathare homeowners to President Kenyatta. Rumours proliferate, MP's put questions in Parliament, and journalists speculate on the future of the Valley. The siphoning off of the Kanu leaders and local influential people in the area by the rehousing project of New Mathare has had serious implications on political integration and social cohesion, but their extent remains a question yet to be explored. Mathare occupies a very ambiguous status. The installation of services in the area means that City Council has granted defacto status, without in any way trying to clarify the legal situation and give de jure status to the community. The Council has made no attempt to stimulate local homeowners to upgrade the standard of their houses by putting on tin roofs, or stabilizing the mud walls with cement, both methods used with some success in Tanzanian upgrading of the many traditional style housing in squatter areas of Dar es Salaam. (Stren, 1975, Chapt. II.) No official thought has been given to the thousands of renters that would be without housing, even if the owners (who constitute only 40% of the residents of the mud and wattle housing, and 17% of the Company Housing residents) were all rehoused

somewhere else in 'modern', i.e. Western style, houses. Finally, many, (but not all) those in authority tend to have a less than sympathetic view of the residents of Mathare: at worst they regard Mathare as a den of thieves, drunks and immoral women; at best they may hold the unrealistic view that these shabby unemployed should "go back to the land" (a constant cry by Kenyan politicians) and stop causing difficulties for those in authority.

#### THE HISTORY OF MATHARE AS PERCEIVED

#### BY FEMALE OLD TIMERS OF MATHARE.

To complete this brief history of a squatter community, I add a few words about the women Old Timers and their perception of their role in the creation of a community. Time and again these anecdotes were told to me. They are never mentioned in the official histories of Mathare. It is not for me to judge their truth or falsity. I am reminded of two lines from a Sherwood play about Queen Elizabeth "It is not what happens that matters. It is not even what happens that is true". In this case, what matters about this female version of the history of Mathare is not whether it actually happened, but that it reveals that women Old Timers are firmly convinced of their own vital role in building, integration and survival of Mathare Valley as a community.

It was told to me, when people began to drift back to Mathare in 1960-1, the DO consistently sent his 'askari' (police) to tear down any house that people built in the

Valley. Finally a delegation of women sought an audience with Tom Mboya, the MP for the area, and successfully pleaded with him to intercede with the DO to allow residents to stay "and raise their families in peace". My women respondents were firm in their assertions that it was the womens' 'Harambee', or working together, that made Mathare what it was. during the period of expansion and successful community action to obtain water stand pipes from City Council, to build a community center, and to build a Harambee (Self Help) Nursery school. The major outside agent for change was, interestingly enough, a woman, Donna Huldane, who worked with the NCGK as a sort of community organizer, and the women of Mathare identified with her strongly. "We and Donna" was the usual phrase when describing the building of the Nursery school. At the same time, women often sneered that the male political leaders were only out to "eat the money" raised by the dedicated efforts of the women alone, who did such things as sweeping the streets for City Council and selling firewood on a cooperative basis. I know for a fact that the male political leaders were also active in the expansion and solidification of Mathare, and that money was also raised by levies or dances they helped to organize. What interested me was the often one-sided picture of Mathare's development presented to me by the female residents. In addition, many told me that when 'Mathare was famous' (i.e. was in the newspapers as an important issue in its fight with City Council) Mathare was saved because many of the women leaders who had been Mau Mau went as a delegation to



President Kenyatta to plead for the right to remain in Mathare unmolested. Though they admitted that male ex-Mau Mau had also come with them, they claimed that the appeals of these women Mau Mau had moved Kenyatta to tell City Council to stop harrassing them. Kenyatta is also well-known for his love of traditional dancing, and the female Kikuyu dance troupes of Mathare have always been frequent visitors to his home in Gatundu to dance for him. The members of these troupes often told me that their praise songs always asked him to show mercy and kindness to the poor women of Mathare, and because of this the President has always been interested in the welfare of Mathare. Because of this concern he 'instructed' City Council that it should help them and not chase them out of their homes. To quote the leader of one such dance group: "We dancers tell the troubles of the people of Mathare to Mzee (Kenyatta) and he helps us."

Since a large proportion of the residents are female, and an equally high proportion of the house owners in Villages I, II as well, it is obvious that women played an important historical part in the building of Mathare. What is interesting to me, in the light of my theme of developing female independence, is the fact that this importance has been symbolically represented by this woman-centred view of the history of Mathare. These events, as told to me in many interviews about "the beginning of Mathare" with older women who had been among the first residents, may be mythical, or if they took place may not have had the strategic importance

imputed to them by the self-styled historians. This is immaterial, and in many cases impossible to prove one way or another. What is important is that women believe this and tell this to the new women migrants to Mathare. A type of ideology is gradually emerging, in which Mathare women express their solidarity as a group vis a vis men, and see themselves as having acted as independent and effective agents for the community as a whole. According to this new philosophy women Harambee groups brought many of the good changes to Mathare, in the teeth of male indolence and greed. Women organized the Mau Mau delegation to Kenyatta though male politicians told the same story to me, claiming male leadership, and a delegation to Tom Mboya.

It is interesting that a certain ambivalence occurs in these stories. Here women go and petition a "big man" for help for themselves. This could be seen as classical male-female division of labour...women petition and men do. More likely it is just a reflection of Kenya's social stratification. Those who are poor and without power need a patron who is rich and powerful; so delegations petition a "big man" for support and help. The men of Mathare employ the same technique when circumstances warrant it. What then is most important, is that here women think they seized initiative and acted with positive effect to obtain the favours which the community needed for its survival. If, as I hope to show in a later chapter, women in Mathare are developing an increasing sense of independence and initiative along with a mythology of female competence, this

one-sided view of the history of Mathare could be seen as a reflection of an emerging ideology.

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF MATHARE VALLEY

According to the housing Research and Development Unit report (1970) nearly one third of Nairobi's population lives in unauthorized housing; that would mean nearly 160,000 people. Mathare Valley is one such area. It is located four miles north east of Nairobi's centre and has nearly 70,000 people living within it. The housing is crowded onto the steep sides of a valley formed by the Mathare River, and its boundaries are clearly marked. To the north it is hemmed in by the Mathare Mental Hospital (with a large male staff quarters) and the Nairobi Police lines, on the east by the Kenya Air Force camp, and further out by the General Service Unit Army Camp. Its western and southern boundaries are the once Asian neighbourhoods of Pangani and Eastleigh which are undergoing drastic demographic changes as Indians and Pakistanis leave Kenya. Large single family houses are being broken in multi-occupancy units, many of which are occupied by men without their families. I emphasize Mathare's ecological position, as it were, because being in the midst of these concentrations of men without families has important implications for the basic economic activities of the people of Mathare. Mathare is "well placed to provide a large number of people with liquid refreshment and entertainment." (Ross, 1973, p. 89)

### Type of Housing

The 70,000 inhabitants of Mathare live in 10 named villages, strung out along the river from west to east. I worked in the two oldest villages furthest to the west, commonly called Village I and II. There are two types of housing in these villages. Using Turner's housing typology, (1969) the older mud and wattle housing built at the bottom of the valley is 'Provisional', of low standard of construction in impermanent materials. The Company Housing built at the top of the slopes of wooden walls and tin roofs on concrete foundations, is what Turner designates 'Incomplete', or not complete in structure or utilities but built close to modern standards.

The 'provisional' housing is built with rough mud and wattle walls and the roofs are of cardboard or tarpaper, though here and there a tin roof marks a prosperous individual. This housing looks hastily constructed, temporary and shabby. The houses huddle, lean, cluster and crowd each other. The corridors between them are often narrow and wander as chance and the whims of different builders over time dictated. Informal courtyards were created sometimes and these teem with activity: children playing; women combing, washing, or braiding each other's hair; women preparing buzaa beer or food; customers sitting on stools enjoying the warmth of the sun or the cool of the shade as weather dictates. Goats and chickens wander throughout the alleys and courtyards foraging from piles of trash. Much of life takes place out of doors.

The 'incomplete' housing, or the Company Housing, has a more urban, less rural air. These houses have concrete floors, wooden walls and tin roofs. There was some attempt at layout, with blocks of rooms set out in rows having concrete corridors between them. Residents appreciate the concrete foundations when the rains turn the lower valley into a sea of mud, but in some ways these houses are less satisfactory than those built of mud and wattle. They are so close together as to exclude any breezes in the hot season, and the tin roofs make the rooms like ovens under the noonday sun. There is a problem of open space, since there are no courtyards. Density is high and there is no place for children to play. Children from both parts of the villages often cross the river and play their more active games in the brush and 'shamba' (cultivated patches in this case; it actually means a farm).

#### Description of Daily Life

The new service road that was pushed through the clutter of houses, at which time a number of houses had to be torn down, made a great difference in communication and commerce in the older villages. The road is now the focus for innumerable small shops selling charcoal, food, meat, or soft drinks. People meet on the road, visitors park their cars, children play with toy cars, tops, or hopscotch, literally weaving between the legs of adults. Here it is that all residents gather during a police raid on illegal beer brewers, standing in the hot sun or the rain, until the

feared police van (called "Miriam") pulls off. Trash trucks, ambulances and police cars now have easy access to the villages.

The new latrines made a significant difference to the general cleanliness of the paths and alleyways in Mathare, as did the regular trash collection by City Council since the advent of the new road. Before the latrines were finished people regularly urinated and defecated in secluded corners and alleys. Drunks were not so discreet and often stood swaying and smiling good naturedly near the main thoroughfares while pissing unashamedly. Quarrels often developed because someone thought that a passerby had defecated or urinated too close to his doorway.

### Life In The Valley

Noise hums through the beehive of houses: voices, laughter, radios, singing, children crying. What is said in one room is easily heard in the next. Joking, quarrelling or fights quickly attract a large and appreciative audience that participates verbally in what is going on. A man is beating his wife; two women shrieking imprecations at one another over the hitting of a child; two men having a fist fight over a woman. Then it is over as quickly as it began and people drift back to drinks, cooking pots or gossip.

Male customers from the Kenya AirForce, the Police Lines, or Eastleigh flood into Mathare after working hours. They range through the alleys seeking beer, friends, women and excitement. They can enter any woman's open door

without the traditional 'hodi' <sup>5</sup>. and seat themselves on the benches to drink. They talk and quarrel, drink and walk on. They are the life-blood of Mathare's beer brewing economy, and the support of the many single women who raise their children there.

Mathare at night is dark and fraught with dangers. Customers that have been drinking for many hours often start serious brawls which result in injury or vandalism. Groups of young 'wakora' (thugs) range through the alleys looking for unwary drunks who could be relieved of their money. Thieves do their solitary work. Groups of Kanu Youth Wingers (a sort of patrol run by the Kanu party) patrol the alleys to try and keep things safe for the local residents. Now and then friends of a sick person or a woman in labour goes seeking a car, an ambulance or a police vehicle. Women don't walk about much after 10 o'clock in Mathare but stick close to their house and neighbours. Customers may keep moving from house to house in search of beer on which to spend their last shilling until well after 2 or 3 a.m. After that almost total quiet descends on Mathare, only to be broken in the blue misty light of dawn by women brewers rising early to roast their maize flour before the first police raids. The sounds of stirring to life begin at 6 in Mathare; women shaking the charcoal in the 'jikos' (small charcoal burning stoves) to start the fires for making tea for workers and students. Many who work in Mathare walk to work, and the main roads leading from the eastern parts of Nairobi at 6:30 a.m. are flooded

with men and women on their way to offices and construction sites in the centre of town. Many of the older school children have several miles to go to school and also leave very early.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF MATHARE

The information for this section has been drawn from two separate surveys conducted in all of Mathare; Ross's survey in Mathare in 1968, and that of the Housing Research Development Unit in 1969. I myself carried out a survey on women in Village II.

The general demographic characteristics of Mathare Valley are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 following. Table 1 is taken from Ross's work and Table 2 from the HRDU's survey. The last is based on a sample survey of the whole valley, including the new Company housing built in 1969. The first table is not as complete as Table 2; but it is important because it provides a partial diachronic element to the surveys and a crude comparison with another low-income neighbourhood in the Eastlands of Nairobi (always historically the area where Africans lived).

#### Data on General Population of Mathare

One of the most important facts about Mathare that can be gained from examination of the tables is that many residents lack skills to obtain wage employment in the modern or formal sector. Anywhere from 40 to 80% of the adult population is without work in the formal sector.



Unfortunately it is not possible to break down the figures by sex in many cases. From personal observation I would say that the inclusion of females strongly biases the sample to the higher figure of unemployed, since many more women than men are without formal jobs in Mathare. The general education level of women is low; more than half have had no schooling and only 30% have a level of education that would allow them to compete in the skilled job market. In Nairobi, as in most African cities, the number of unskilled workers is much greater than the jobs available.

The age ratios conform with the Nairobi census results; the age category of 16-35 years being the most heavily represented for adults. The sex ratio is however, unexpected. In both surveys there is a higher ratio of women to men than occurs in the rest of Nairobi (or other urban areas in Kenya). According to census findings the male/female ratio for Nairobi as a whole in 1959 was 1.7. By 1969 this ratio had dropped to 1.4. (Gugler, undated).

According to these two tables anywhere from 66% to 45% of the adult population of Mathare was female. The 20% disparity in the results might be explained by the fact that Table 2 reports a survey which included the newer housing built by the Companies. This housing is more expensive, and it would be logical to assume that most of the renters are young men seeking employment or in low paid employment already. My observation is that there is a distinctive difference in the demographic makeup of the

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF MATHARE VILLAGE II ADULT POPULATION  
WITH TWO OTHER NAIROBI NEIGHBOURHOODS\*

	Mathare		Kariaker & Shauri Mayo	
% employed	40%	(233)	73%	(495)
% with no schooling	55%	(231)	17%	(492)
% not completing primary education	84%	(231)	44%	(492)
% female	66%	(234)	30%	(498)
% married and living with spouse in Nairobi	27%	(233)	45%	(498)
% without land	74%	(234)	40%	(497)

\*Kariokor and Shauri Mayo are two other neighbourhoods in Nairobi in which an interview schedule very similar to the one used in Mathare was used. The pooled data from these two estates, one a high income neighbourhood and one a poor one, are used in case point with which Mathare can be compared. The pooled data is fairly typical of the African areas of the city. In cases where there is census data available, the pooled data from these two areas is very similar to the census results for the African population of the city.

(Ross, 1968).

TABLE 2DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MATHARE VALLEY - 1970\*

AGE TOTAL POPULATION	<u>Above 50 years</u> 5%	<u>36-49 years</u> 9%	<u>16-35 years</u> 43%	<u>Under 16</u> 43%    100%
SEX	<u>Male</u> 55%	<u>Female</u> 45%	100%	
EDUCATION	<u>Secondary</u> 4%	<u>Stand V-V111</u> 26%	<u>Stand. 1-1V</u> 22%	<u>None</u> 48%    100%
EMPLOYMENT	<u>No answer</u> 7%	<u>Unemployed or student</u> 37%	<u>Self- employed</u> 35.5%	<u>Wage Employed</u> 20.5%    100%
HOUSING TENURE	<u>Tenants</u> 60%	<u>Owners</u> 40%	100%	
TRIBAL ORIGIN	<u>Kikuyu</u> 57.5%	<u>Kamba</u> 14.5%	<u>Luhya</u> 14%	<u>Luo</u> 14%    100%
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN MATHARE	<u>10 years +</u> 17%	<u>5-9 years</u> 33%	<u>1-4 years</u> 25%	<u>Less 1 year</u> 25%    100%
MARITAL STATUS	<u>Married</u> 56%	<u>Unmarried</u> 44%		

\* Housing Research and Development Unit  
of University of Nairobi

lower, older housing and the newer, "company" housing higher up the slopes. My own survey is based entirely on female respondents, and so is not useful in an attempt to calculate the number of male and female residents of the village. However my impressions, extrapolated from my notes and my observations in the several areas of the village where I knew every occupant of each house, are that the figure of 66% was closer to the truth in Village I and II. A realistic estimate for the female population would probably be somewhere between 50 and 60%

The figures on tribal origin show that Kikuyus (the Host group) make up nearly 60% of the population. This proportion varies greatly from village to village, a fact that is not clearly presented in the HRDU presentation of the data. For example, though Luos make up only 14% of the total population of Mathare Valley as a whole, most of them are concentrated in Village III. In Villages I and II nearly 90% of the population is Kikuyu, with a sprinkling of Kikuyu-related tribes (i.e. Meru and Embu), a few Kambas, Somalis and Borans and literally a handful of Luos. (See table 3 with the results of my survey of women in Village II). My initial decision to concentrate on Village I and II was prompted by a desire to keep the cultural-linguistic variable as constant as possible. The residents, the leadership and the whole cultural ambients of these villages were almost totally Kikuyu.

TABLE 3DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON WOMEN IN MATHARE \*

AGE	Over 50	35-49	16-34	
	8%	19%	73% 100%	
EDUCATION	None	Stand. I-IV	Stand. V-VIII	Secondary
	72%	17%	10%	0% 100%
EMPLOYMENT	No Answer	Unemployed/ Student	Self employed	Wage
	2.2%	69%	26%	3.3% 100%
MARITAL STATUS	Unmarried	Married		
	39.5	60%		

\* Extrapolated where possible from  
Housing Research Development Unit's  
Mathare Report (1970)

TABLE 4: LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE AND SAMPLE SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COMPARED

A. AGE		16 - 24	25 - 34	35-44	45 - 54	55+
Sample Survey		26%	36.6%	24.6%	8.9%	3.3%
Life History		20.7%	32.2%	21.8%	16.1%	9.2%
B. EDUCATION		None	A little	Stand VII	Form II+	
Sample Survey		50.3%	18.8%	27.5%	2.9%	
Life History		46.0%	28.7%	11.5%	13.8%	
C. EMPLOYMENT		Currently in Wage Employment			Currently Unemployed	
Sample Survey		10.9%			88.9%	
Life History		8.1%			91.9%	
D. MARITAL STATUS		Never Married	Widowed	Divorced	Married	
Sample Survey		37.6%	12.0%	27.8%	22.5%	
Life History		42.2%	11.1%	32.2%	14.0%	
E. CHILDREN		Percentage with no Children			Average Children per Woman	
Sample Survey		17%			3.4	
Life History		11%			2.4	
F. RESIDENTIAL STATUS IN MATHARE		Renter			Owner	
Sample Survey		82.9%			17.1%	
Life History		69.8%			30.2%	
G. TRIBAL ORIGINS		Kikuyu or Kikuyu Related Groups	Non Kenyan or Nairobi Born of Mixed Parentage		Western Kenya	Northern Kenya
Sample Survey		89%	7%		2%	2%
Life History		94.4%	2.2%			3.4%

### Data on Women of Mathare

Specific demographic data about the women of Mathare must now be presented in order to set the stage for further discussion of their socio-economic life. Table 3 and Table 4 present in summary form this data: Table 3 is extrapolated from the HRDU's report wherever possible, and Table 4 has some of the results of my own survey in Village II.

Age distribution and length of residence in Mathare for women correspond to the results for the adult population as a whole. Nearly 40% of the women are aged 25-30 and 30% aged 16-24. Almost 42% had been in Mathare for 5 or more years. Most of the women were Kikuyu and a predominantly large number of these came from the Kikuyu area closest to Nairobi. As would be expected, a significantly lower standard of education is to be found among the women than among the population as a whole. Approximately 50% had none at all, and only 10% of those with any education had reached Standard VII. (Table 3 HRDU Report). Of the women in my Sample Survey of Village II 50.3% had no education, and only 2.9% had reached Standard VII (Table 4). The education level of the women whom I interviewed intensively in Life History Interviews (86 women, non-randomly selected, details summarized in Table 5) was higher. Only 44.5% had had no education and 13.8% had reached Form II and beyond. The reason for this is that younger women with some education were more sympathetic to my research aims and understood more clearly what I was trying to do by asking all

these questions; they were more willing to submit to my lengthy interviews.

An interesting discrepancy appears in a comparison between my figures on marital status and those of the HRDU report. Only 14% of my Life History sample and 22.2% of my sample survey were currently married. This compares with the reported 60.5% married in the HRDU Report. This discrepancy can be accounted for in several ways. In the first place, I may have used a stricter definition of marriage. Secondly, because the report census was done with City Council help, many women may have thought this was a government survey and lied about their marital status to avoid being labelled prostitutes and therefore outside official help.<sup>6</sup> In the third place, since the report census was carried out in the whole Valley and mine was carried out in only one village, other villages may conceivably have a larger number of married people than the one in which I did my sample survey. Lastly, census surveys of this kind (HRDU Report) are notoriously inaccurate on sensitive issues such as this. I carried out my survey at the end of two years in Mathare Valley, after I was well known by many people. Moreover, I took with me when I conducted the random sample survey a much loved and trusted Nursery School teacher from the Village, who knew many of the women personally.

Approximately 14% of my sample Survey and 11.4% of my Life History women were barren, while 4% (Sample Survey) and 5% (Life Histories) were too young to have had children (i.e. under 18 years of age). The average number of children



(dividing the number of women with children into the number of children) was 4 in the Sample Survey and 2.8 in my Life History Sample. 33.3% of the women in the Sample Survey and 41.5% of Life History Sample had all or some of their children staying with relatives in the rural areas.

The importance of comparing in each case the figures for the Sample Survey and the figures for the Life History sample is to give some idea of how representative my Life History sample is compared to the universe (women in Village II Mathare). Because of the sensitive and demanding nature of my interviews (sometimes as many as 6 interviews of more than an hour each) I could only prevail on women who knew me well to submit to them. As a result the sample is not random by any means. It is therefore important that it be clear in what ways the Life History sample differs from the more general universe of Mathare women.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented both a history and a description of Mathare Valley, which was the boundary of most of my research. I have given some reasons for the choice of Mathare as the boundary, while recognising the need to remember that all boundaries are necessarily arbitrary.

The history of the development of Mathare as an unauthorized housing area falls into various stages: a period of uninterrupted growth from 1926-7, a period of conflict with City Council from 1967-9, the expansion of Company Housing and the upgrading of the community by City .

Council between 1970-2, and finally a period of uncertainty since then. After this brief summary, I gave a woman-focused view of Mathare's development that is held by many of the Old Timer women who participated in Mathare's history. This view of Mathare's development reveals an interesting belief that women were effectively involved in the expansion and consolidation of Mathare in the early days and in the provision of new services after that. How accurate is this version of history is difficult to ascertain. I maintain that its truth is unimportant; what is important is the insight it may give us into a new ideology of female competence and independent action that may be developing in Mathare. This will be pursued further in a later chapter.

In order to set the stage for the description and analysis to follow, I presented a physical description of Mathare; and I tried in the process to give some of the feeling-tone of life in that community. The type of housing, and the way that the spaces and buildings are used by the inhabitants.

Lastly I presented demographic data on the general population of Mathare from two previous surveys done in the area. In this context, I presented more specific data for the female inhabitants, some of it abstracted from the general surveys, some of it from my own random sample survey of women in Village II, and some from the 86 women whom I call my Life History respondents. In this way I hope to have given a clearer idea of the makeup of the female population of Mathare. Such glaring discrepancies that

exist between my data and that of Ross and the HRDU report (e.g. the number of married women) were discussed and some of the reasons for them given.

In the next chapter I will describe the economic activities of women living in Mathare.

### CHAPTER III - FOOTNOTES

1. I will not bother to footnote most of the individual pieces of data in this Chapter. For information about Mathare History I am grateful to the many City Council and National Council of Churches officials who patiently allowed me to interview them. I also owe much to the works of Marc Ross on Mathare, the Housing Research Development Unit of the Univ. of Nairobi Report on Mathare, and Rosenthal's paper for the world bank. (1972).
2. In this paper I have styled those who arrived before 1969 as Old Timers. Those who arrive later are Newcomers. Those who arrived early in Mathare's development had the chance of building one or more housing units. Those who came after the moratorium on building enforced after 1969 did not. Naturally, not all Old Timers are house owners or are relatively prosperous. There is however a marked tendency for the relatively prosperous in the area to be Old Timers.
3. To provide some basis for comparison here are some salary, rents and prices for the same period. The minimum wage in Kenya at this time was K.sh 200/. To rent a small room in a concrete-block house in Eastleigh (with a single electric light, communal latrine and shower) was K.sh 150-250/, which was relatively reasonable for private sector rented housing in Nairobi as a whole. A kilo of meat cost K.sh.6/, a litre of milk 70 cents, a loaf of white bread 50 cents.
4. A Site and Service scheme is a low cost method of providing urban housing, that ensures proper services, and standards, yet at the same time taps a maximum amount of private resources. The area for development is surveyed and the plots laid out with roads and basic services, such as sewerage and water, provided. Those allocated the sites build their own houses according to specifications laid down by the planning authorities. In some cases materials or low interest loans for the purchase of materials may be provided. Designs, construction supervision and advice may also be provided by planning authority employees. However, one of the drawbacks to Site and Service schemes in the eyes of many governments is that the quality of housing provided is very basic and does not come up to the high standards that many western educated politicians and professionals have come to accept as right and proper for urban areas. It is interesting that the political concern for low quality urban housing, called in Kenya by politicians 'colonial style African housing', does not extend to poor traditional housing in the rural areas.

This desire for international prestige standards of housing partially accounts for government hostility to

CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES (Continued)

4. (Cont) be found in Kenya towards communities like Mathare. It is felt to be an eyesore that will diminish Kenya's international prestige.
5. In Swahili it is traditional to say 'Hodi' as one approaches someone's house, and not to enter the house or compound until the owner of the house gives the answer 'Karibu'. Hodi has no direct equivalent meaning in English, but essentially means 'Hello, is there anyone at home?' It is a reflection of the commercial function of most houses in Mathare that visiting men rarely feel the need to give any request to enter a strange room. As can be imagined this frequently led to quarrels in the homes of those women who did not sell buzaa and who fancied themselves respectably married ladies.
6. This belief that all research is being done by the government to 'find out the troubles of the people of Mathare' was a source of embarrassment for me towards the end of my period of research. Certain women began to complain that I had been interviewing in the area for two years and not one had yet been given any 'help' from the government yet. My position in Mathare was further complicated by the presence of a European woman social worker for NCCK in the two years before I arrived. This Donna Huldane had spent a lot of time interviewing people in order to identify women who qualified for assistance from NCCK. Many people did not fully understand what I was doing. They only knew that I was a white woman asking questions, and I was occasionally challenged by someone that I had met casually a few weeks earlier. "When Donna asked us questions, we received food, clothes or money. You ask questions and that is the end of it."

## CHAPTER IV

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OPEN TO MATHARE WOMEN

#### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall examine in some detail the various ways that Mathare women support themselves in the urban area. All of the women, except those who came to Nairobi as children or were born in the city, had been cultivators in the rural areas. Thus they have all learned new skills, or reorganized old skills in order to adapt to urban economic life. There are two major categories of economic activities: wage employment, and petty commodity production. The latter is the more important of the two since most of the women living in Mathare support themselves in this way: house building for rent, buzaa beer brewing, gin distilling, commercialized sex of various kinds, small businesses, cultivating, and trading. Finally many women are educating their children. This last may seem an anomaly in a list of economic activities, but I have chosen to define this as a type of economic investment for the future.

#### WAGE EMPLOYMENT

My crude estimate of the number of adult women (over 16 years of age) using the simplest and lowest estimate of the percentage of women in Mathare of 50%, is anywhere from

26,250 to 22,000 (depending on whether one accepts 60,000 or 70,000 as the most accurate population figure for Mathare.) Again my rough calculations are that 60 to 80% of these women are supporting themselves and their children. Very few are employed in the wage sector of Nairobi. The HRDU Report estimates that only 3% of women are in wage employment; 10.4% of my Survey Sample and 8.1% of my Life History Sample are currently employed.

Most women in Mathare who are employed work as house servants, or bar girls; although those with a little more education might be lucky enough to obtain a job as a sales-girl or nursery school teacher. Work as a house servant or bar girl is characterized by low pay, long hours and difficulty in raising a family. Bar girls are nominally paid the minimum wage of K.sh 200 a month; but a common trick is to deduct charges from the monthly wage for lateness and breakage until the take home pay invariably comes to no more than K.sh 70-80. They have to work 6 or 7 days a week, usually from mid afternoon until well after midnight, thus entailing a dangerous journey home late at night.

Similarly a house servant works extremely long hours. It is not uncommon to hear of house servants expected to work from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m., seven days a week for a pittance of K.sh 70 a month, plus any food that the employer sees fit to give. If the servant is expected to live in the servants quarters, there is the added difficulty of how to care for her children. Employers are less than sympathetic with their servants having their children with them in

residence.

Because the hours of these jobs are so arduous, if a woman has young children she is forced to hire a house servant herself. This maid is usually a very young girl straight from the country, often a relative of the older woman. This costs the older woman K.sh.20-30 a month. The difficulties and high cost of maintaining a family of young children, plus the long hours and low pay, explain why women who do take wage employment, tend to do so cyclicly. They will work a short while and then leave and 'rest'; a fact which is otherwise inexplicable when one considers that wage jobs are so scarce. Wage employment has two advantages; it is relatively secure and safe. The pay is regular and there are no threats of arrest and fines by the police etc. Women have to balance this security and safety against the low pay, long hours and domestic inconvenience. Women who were lucky enough to break into the job market, initially may shift for a while to the petty commodity production sector hoping that at a later date they can find another job and counting on their contacts and letters of recommendation to help them to do so.

#### PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION

Petty commodity production includes both artisan production and trading, and provides goods and services considered unprofitable by foreign or large scale firms. Petty commodity production "is characterized by small, independent units exchanging their products in a free market,



whatever the internal relations of production of these units." The producing units own and rent the means of production. (Moser, 1977, p. 36) Petty commodity producers exist on the fringes of and are dependent on a larger mode of production system, usually capitalism. Most of the women in Mathare support themselves by some sort of petty commodity production. On the fringes of the formal economy they and their male counterparts remain uncoun- ted by the economists and official census takers. The ILO report estimates a possible 30,000 people in Nairobi (1972, p. 224) are in the petty commodity sector (or what they call the informal sector). This is an estimate of males involved and thus probably much too low.

There are major advantages of petty commodity production for Mathare women. One is the flexibility of the working hours and the working place. A woman with children can adjust her hours to fit the various duties and small emergencies that arise in a family. There are no set hours of work. Many of these types of work can be done in and near the woman's home (barring hawking of vegetables) which means that she can take care of her children herself and have them near her during the day. This was often stressed by Mathare women as a definite advantage of brewing beer or running a small shop. This is not an unmixed blessing, as will be seen, since there are definite strains and difficulties caused by conducting business in a domestic space. But in the end, women find it less expensive and less of a strain to work in their homes; a feeling that many Western

working mothers will sympathize with.

The second advantage of petty commodity production for women in Mathare is the low level of skills and capital usually necessary to enter this sphere of production. Naturally a seamstress needs skills which may take years to acquire, and a machine. But beer brewing, one of the most common of production activities to be found among Mathare women, needs a minimum of skills, a capital investment of K.sh.32 and the loan of some simple equipment. It therefore has an ease of entry that many other types of money earning activities do not have.

#### House Building

In the early 1960's many migrants to Mathare discovered the possibilities of building houses to live in and to rent. Many of the builders who erected these early mud and wattle huts were women. How many of the house owners in Mathare are women is very difficult to ascertain. Here again my data is at variance with the survey data available, which can be explained either by the variations to be found between Village I and II and the Valley as a whole, or by greater in-depth accuracy of my data. It is difficult to say.

The Housing Research Development Unit estimated that in the non-Company Housing 40% of the population were house owners, and of this number one quarter were women. This survey was conducted in 1966-7. In 1972, because there were 400 new units being built in New Mathare, the Kanu party officials registered the owners of every house in Mathare

Valley. Each village kept its own register which was to be used to assign the new units. I was able to examine closely only the register for Village II. 66% of the owners registered were women, though they owned only a little more than 50% of the housing units. I was not able to examine the registers for Village I and Village III personally, but was told by Kanu officials there that 'more than half of the owners registered' were women. It is difficult to explain this discrepancy in the two sets of statistics. As I said before the HRDU figures are given for the whole valley, and are not broken down by villages. Perhaps there was a higher proportion of women amongst the Old Timers of Villages I, II, and III which are the oldest villages. On the other hand, perhaps the painstaking registration of housing units was more complete. There is one other possibility. Male owners, who do tend to own more units per head than women do, may have been persuaded to allow a woman 'friend' or relative to register one of his units in the vain hope that this would qualify them eventually with a new house in New Mathare. There was much confusion in the early days of the building of New Mathare, and many of the residents of Old Mathare were under the misapprehension that a new house would eventually be provided for every house owner. However, I think that it is safe to assume that the HRDU report underestimates the number of women homeowners in Mathare. It is possible that if there was over reporting of marriage (as I explained in Chapter III) there was also a tendency to attribute house-ownership to the non-existent male head of household

rather than to the actual female head of household. It was certainly my observation at public meetings for the allocation of new housing that more than half of the recipients were women, though I never saw any official list of house owners in New Mathare. 1.

Women, who built in Mathare, heard about the housing boom in many ways, usually from friends and relatives in other places. Many had already built shacks in a number of other shanty areas in Nairobi and were sophisticated urban builders on waste land areas.

I met a friend of mine in town in a bar. She had a plot in Mathare and encouraged me to come and visit her. I came and saw the chance here. So I got a plot for free and permission to build. Then I built two units on it.

I was visiting a friend in the town of Eldoret. This friend had houses in Mathare and from her I learned about the fact that one could get free land to build houses on. So I came and eventually built 6 houses.

I was divorced in 1965 and living in Pangani (the neighbouring area). A woman friend had built in Mathare and told me it was good. I came to Ndururu (self appointed village leader, presently City Councilor for the area) and he took pity on my position with children and no husband. I built while still staying in Pangani. I built my one house a little by little as I got the money to do it.

Newcomers who had heard 'that it was good' to build in Mathare had to first approach the leaders of the village. Permission was granted without, it would seem, a bribe being necessary. House owners in Village I and II maintained that permissions were completely 'free', though rumour had it that a leader of Village II, always fond of a pretty face, would exact his payment in bed. One woman bitterly maintained that,

though she had been an early arrival in Mathare, she did not have an opportunity to build a house because she had rebuffed this leader's advances and in revenge he had thwarted her attempts to build. If someone built without the permission of the village leader, the house would be torn down. One woman related how she had built in ignorance of the necessity of obtaining permission first and had the first house torn down. Then she had gone and appealed to the leader and he had granted her the right to build "because she had many troubles, and her children were many". It would be interesting to follow up who was refused permission to build, and whether in the first instance, it was necessary to be friendly with the original leaders or have had many 'tabu' (troubles) in order to qualify for permission.

After permission had been obtained, the builder went ahead and put up a structure, always called in swahili by the word for house, 'nyumba', but in reality only 1 room. <sup>2</sup>. There are three ways to do this, and most people built by a combination of two or all three. One can (i) build the house by oneself (a relatively easy matter when it was a traditional mud and wattle construction which even women are accustomed to building in the rural area), (ii) hire people to build, or (iii) get friends to help. The most common way of building was to hire a workman to put up the frame and the roof, and then for the owner to do the 'mudding' herself. This was the most practical method, especially for an

older woman unable to climb heights in order to put up the frame and roof. One woman with grown sons built all her houses by herself with the help of her children.

Sometimes friends and neighbours helped. Waithira Mzee (Old Waithira) who had already been old and sick in the early 1960's, put up 2 houses with the help of friends in 1963.

I did none of the work myself. The men of the village cooperated and built them for me for just the cost of the materials because I was sick and old. They felt sorry for me and said that they would help me have a home in Mathare. They built me two houses, so I could rent one. I was too sick to brew beer, and too old for 'the other thing' (commercialized sex).

This was obviously a charitable version of the old Kikuyu work party mentioned frequently in descriptions of early Kikuyu life. Several women described a similar type of work party organized on more conventional lines. Women with large networks of friends in the neighbouring areas of Nairobi could muster such a work party.

People helped me to build. Mainfu (her friend) and I cooperated and built together. We asked all our friends. In 4 days they had built each of us 4 houses, on adjoining plots. Friends came and worked whenever they were free. Each day different people came. We two cooked food and provided beer for those who worked.

The cost of building a house in the older part of Mathare varied according to the method of building used and the materials used. Waithira Mzee, quoted above, said that her two units cost K.sh. 400. Njeri, a business like woman with a phenomenal memory, detailed the costs of having a house built for her by a contractor at a total cost of K.sh.500.

Poles ( 5 per wall): cost sh.50 each  
 Trusses for the wall: Cost sh. 2 each  
 Cross Poles for the walls (18 to a wall): cost .50 cents each.

Mudding between two uprights 3 feet apart: " sh. 4.  
 Cardboard for the roof: cost sh.20 (if it had been  
 'mbati' or tin it would have cost roughly sh.100.)

Comparing estimates given by those women willing or able to remember an average unit cost approximately sh.400-500. Since rents at this time (before the moratorium on building in 1969) were K.sh 30 per room per month, the entire investment could be realized in 16 months. After the original investment was realized, rent was pure profit since there were no rates, or water and electricity charges. The demand for rooms in Mathare is high, and no room is empty for more than a few days regardless of its quality. Investing in housing meant a quick and steady return.

In 1968, while City Council dithered over what to do with and in Mathare, the richer inhabitants and investors from Nairobi at large formed Companies to build wooden housing at the top edges of the valley on a cooperative basis. To join a Company, it was necessary to buy a membership fee, usually K.sh 1,000. This initial fee was the money that the Companies used to buy the land that they built on. After paying the membership fee, a member bought as many 'shares' as his or her resources would allow. The number of shares determined the number of rooms from which each member would have to collect the rents. After the units were built, the members continued to pay a yearly contribution, which is used by the Company officials for undetermined purposes; though some cynics say it goes to buying the

officers beer and meat.

Spora joined a Company in 1968 and contributed K.sh.7,900 which gave her 6 rooms in the area called Staff Houses ('Staff' was used as an adjective to mean elegant, classy, or European-style). Another investor in the Staff Houses paid K.sh. 3,000 for 2 units. Both women collect monthly rents of K. sh.80 per room, quite a substantial income from their investments, especially considering that they both live rent free in mud and wattle houses further on down the valley.

A fairly large proportion of the Old Timers who arrived before 1969 are also house owners, and many of these are older women. Only the feckless, lazy, and improvident early arrivals failed to raise the cash necessary to build at least one unit. Thus though not all Old Timers are House Owners, most House Owners are Old Timers. Among the 86 women whom I interviewed on the Life History schedules, 32 were House Owners. Of these only 6 (or 16%) were under 30 years of age and had arrived in Mathare after 1969. These were all young women who had inherited their houses from mothers, grandmothers, or aunts.

One interesting side light into the urban histories of the Old Timers that built in Mathare, is the fact that many of them were experienced builders and squatters before they came to Mathare. They had built houses in a number of different squatter communities in and around Nairobi in the years following the war. These houses were invariably torn down by City Council askaris (police), and then the owners



would move on to the next piece of unused land 'discovered' by the urban squatter scouts. In Mathare, they gained a de facto, semi-permanent toe-hold in the urban environment. For those lucky ones who were finally allocated a house in New Mathare this semi-permanent place had become permanent. For some house owners, the move to New Mathare along with the compulsory destruction of all their houses in Mathare resulted in a financial loss. Wanjiru was rather bitter about it. She, her husband, and her grown son lived in 2 rooms and ran a small shop out of another room of the new concrete block house in Mathare Redevelopment Project. She rented out the two remaining rooms for a total of sh. 300, but after paying off the mortgage, light and water charges, she was left with a profit of sh. 80. In Mathare she and her husband had owned 5 units. They had had their shop in the front of one of the houses and lived in the back. They had rented out 4 rooms at sh. 50/ each for a profit of sh.200/. When I asked her if it wasn't better to own one permanent, 'maridadi' (elegant) house in New Mathare than 5 mud and wattle shacks in Old Mathare, she continued to regret the loss of sh. 120 a month. "What good does it do to pay money to the government every month (the mortgage) we will be dead before we own the house" (it is a 20 year mortgage).

### Beer Brewing

The brewing of the illegal Kenyan beer (commonly called buzaa) can truly be said to be a local industry in Mathare. 75% of the women in my Survey Sample, and 83% of the women

in the Life History Sample brewed and/or sold beer. As was pointed out earlier, Mathare Valley is well placed as a market for the 'entertainment industry', drawing customers as it does from the nearby Mathare Hospital Staff Lines, the Police Lines, the GSU Camp, the Air Force Camp, and Eastleigh. It is an interesting fact that most beer brewing and selling is done by women; very few men are involved in either the production or the retailing of beer. Men have the monopoly of gin distilling, but again it is women who retail that as well.

Buzaa brewing is difficult and dangerous. First the fermentation process is difficult to control and impossible to predict. Secondly buzaa spoils quickly for if it is not drunk within 24 hours of completion it will turn sour and undrinkable. Finally, constant police raids result in either loss of valuable equipment and buzaa, bribes of as much as 20 shillings to avoid arrest, or arrest with court fines of up to K.sh. 200.

The selling of buzaa is also difficult. Most Kenyans are paid monthly, some every two weeks. This creates a cyclical spending pattern which could be termed 'splurge and scrimp'. Men can drink lavishly at the beginning of the month, but have little money to spend after the middle of the month, the period that the sellers colourfully call 'when the month is in labour'. Beer sellers know that in order to make a reasonable profit at the end of the month, they are forced to give credit to certain of their customers. At the same time they are without any recourse to law to

collect the debt, since the law doesn't recognise an illegal contract. Successful retailing of buzaa depends first on giving a certain amount of credit and second on an accurate assessment of which customers will be good credit risks. No matter how carefully a woman vets potential creditors, sometimes she fails in her judgement and the man 'runs with her money'. One brewer summed it up for me.

I lose money every month from men who run with my money. But I make more money in the end from giving credit and counting on some loss, than if I never gave any man credit. Without credit, I could not make enough money selling buzaa, because in the last half of the month no one would be drinking my beer.

While customers are demanding credit from sellers, the sellers in turn must obtain credit from the wholesalers who sell them beer, and from the sellers of the raw materials of buzaa brewing (the maize flour and yeast).

The returns on brewing beer are set out in Appendix I. The raw materials of brewing in 1973 were K.sh. 32/40. Four patterns of selling the beer are described in Section B., with the profits resulting. As will be seen, if a woman buys a 'debe' ( a large tin holding  $4\frac{1}{2}$  gallons) of beer wholesale to sell retail to her male customers, she makes a profit for that day of sh. 7/. Brewing is therefore more lucrative, profits vary from sh. 26/ to sh. 47/ depending on how much of the beer a woman retails and how much she wholesales. It can be seen therefore that women who brew make more money than those that only sell retail; and the more frequently they brew, the more their profits

will be. At the same time, a woman ideally should have beer in her house every night; thus she does not disappoint her regulars and get a reputation for unreliability. Even those who brew frequently will buy a debe wholesale to sell on those nights when there is not beer of her own available. Three possible mixes of brewing, selling wholesale and retail are described in Section C of Appendix I and the monthly income for each is estimated. As can be seen it varies from K.sh 200 to 400 for a month.

Buzaa is sold in private houses in Mathare, not in special bars. A woman sets herself up as a seller of buzaa merely by buying a number of clean  $\frac{1}{2}$ -litre oil tins called 'mukevis' in which the buzaa is drunk, and a bench which she places in her room. So wide spread is the practice of women selling buzaa in Mathare, that men walk throughout the villages and enter at any house that strikes their fancy, has a pretty proprietor, or has many people inside drinking. As I noted earlier men enter any open door without the traditional greeting given before entering someone's house and ask for beer. On some weekends, most women's houses will be crowded with male customers from early in the morning until late at night, or until the beer runs out. The men sit on the benches and the bed. These rooms are usually not large, and the difficulties of combining domestic and commercial functions in one small space can be easily imagined. Children must fall asleep on the bed behind curtains to the accompaniment of loud laughter and conversation; women must serve their customers

and be ready to indulge in cheerful repartee and flirtation (like the barmaid in an English pub) while trying to feed, clothe, and discipline their children.

The basic ingredients of buzaa are 'unga' (maize flour) and 'kimera' (yeast). 45 pounds of the flour are dampened and kneaded, after which it is left in a dark place to ferment for anywhere from 4 to 10 days. The resulting glutinous dough is fried for half an hour over a hot wood fire in a large flat pan about 5 feet long and 3 feet wide. This step is hot and smokey, and easily spotted by the police patrols. For both reasons it is usually carried out very early in the morning. The little fried pellets the size of peas, are combined in a large tank with 16 gallons of water. After 12 hours, 10 pounds of yeast is added; then the beer must be stirred frequently. Next day the muddy brown mixture, which has the consistency of porridge gruel, is strained through a burlap sack to remove the residue of the maize and yeast. It is then sold to the customers in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -litre oil tins collected from petrol stations by men who clean them and hawk them to women in the valley at the rate of a shilling a tin.

It must be emphasized that most women were both wholesalers and retailers of buzaa. Since profits from retailing a debe are fairly small (K.sh 7), women try to brew once or twice a month at least to increase profits. Those who merely wholesale are too poor to afford raw materials, too lazy or busy to bother, or have another source of income lucrative enough to make it unnecessary to go to the trouble

of frying and carrying water.

No woman brews regularly enough to have a batch ready every day. It would take too much capital to purchase the large quantities of raw materials necessary to brew so often. It would also entail too much hard labour to fry and strain every day (or so my informants claimed). But the two most important obstacles to frequent brewings, are first the reluctance to brew 'when the month is in labour' for fear of not selling all the beer and having to pour it away, and next the difficulty of concealing from the sharp eyes of the police large quantities of fermenting flour and beer. Most women conceal their flour under their bed and hide the tank of beer behind curtains in the corner of the room. Large amounts of beer brewing material would be especially vulnerable to police action.

Finding a debe of buzaa to buy wholesale, if she hadn't brewed, or finding customers to buy the rest of the batch of beer, if she has brewed, is the inevitable part of almost every woman's day in Mathare. It is in this reciprocal process in the wholesaling of beer, that one can see an important way in which women exploit their personal friendship networks in their villages. If a woman has a friend or neighbour who is preparing a batch of beer, she will reserve a debe. Conversely, women who are brewing tell all their friends and expect those who are not brewing themselves to buy a debe. Failure to do this can result in quarrels. In one such quarrel, one of the contestants grumbled to me, "I always buy her buzaa when she has some; now she refuses

to buy mine for no reason. That is not friendship." Oddly enough, if the buzaa batch should be bad, the brewer will not take offence if her friends refuse to buy. No woman can serve bad tasting beer and run the risk of losing customers. The Kikuyus have a saying often quoted to me, "In business one has no father or mother," or in other words practical concerns always come first in business over all sentimental considerations.

Certain women brew more frequently than others and gain a reputation of being important wholesalers. Others who need a debe will look to them for beer regularly. Each of these regular wholesalers develops a cluster of good friends and regular customers who more often than not take beer from her. Just as the retailers allow selected customers to build up large debts to be repaid at the end of the month, so do wholesalers allow their customers to 'carry buzaa on credit' and build up quite a large debt that will be repaid at the end of the month. The wholesaler is usually able to reclaim her debt since her debtor is a fellow resident and subject to the control of the Kanu Youth Wing (a voluntary policing arm of the Kanu Committee in the area). Many of the cases brought before the Kanu Youth Wing concern non payment of debts of various kinds incurred between residents of Mathare. As long as both parties live in the area, they are subject to the sanctions of the Youth Wing. For this reason wholesalers tend to select as their debtors good friends that they have known for some time, or women who live nearby (thus making it

difficult for the debtor to move out of the valley without being noticed). There is a definite correlation between being a big wholesaler and being a landlady. In the village that I knew best, all but one of the 'Big Women Brewers' were also landladies with a large number of units. The reason for this is easy enough to find. Rent money provides both the capital to finance a large number of brewings (as will be noted a single brewing costs approximately K.sh 30/) and also the economic cushion to absorb the loss from police raids, bribes and fines. This point will be brought out later on, when I try to show how women manipulate a number of economic activities in order to provide greater security and profit.

#### Nubian Gin

Besides brewing a fermented beer, residents of Mathare also produce and retail a distilled beverage called 'Nubian Gin' or Changaa. This is not as important economically for women in Mathare as it is for men. As buzaa is primarily a female activity in Mathare, so distilling of changaa is primarily a man's activity. The reasons for this are that the job is more arduous and requires setting up heavy equipment in a river and keeping watch for police raids. Also the law treats distilling more harshly and fines can be as high as sh. 1,000/. I have relatively little data on the actual production of changaa. For one thing, no one produced it in Villages I and II by decree of the village leaders. It was thought (with some



truth) to be a dangerous drink that leads to excessive drunkenness and poor health of the population. Also, production did not take place in homes, but in hidden places in the woods, sometimes far from Mathare. I knew only one woman who distilled changaa with her boyfriend. He had a car which they used to transport equipment and changaa to and from Mathare. He did the most strenuous tasks. The profits from brewing changaa are much greater than that of brewing buzaa, but so are the expenses, the effort, and the dangers.

Almost every woman who regularly sells buzaa will, especially at the end of the month, have a bottle of changaa to sell to those customers who want a stronger drink. The wholesaling procedure here is different from that used in selling buzaa. A runner (always male) brings the bottle from the wholesaler and collects the money on the spot. There is no credit allowed. For this reason, sellers will never sell changaa to their customers for credit. It is therefore an item that only sells well during the early part of the month. It generally accounts for a very small part of the budget of the average beer seller. Changaa bars exist in Village III, but as far as I could gather, these bars were usually run by men. It was rumoured that important people in Nairobi were silent partners in these bars, attracted by the high profits.

#### Commercial Sexual Relations With Men.

Most of the female heads of household in Mathare earn

a certain part of their income from men by offering them sexual and domestic services. Relationships between men and women can be viewed on a continuum which starts with minimal interaction and proceeds to a relationship of increasing intensity and complexity. At one end of the scale men and women have a purely instrumental, relatively brief sexual-economic exchange; at the other end of the scale men and women share a complex relationship called marriage which has long term domestic, emotional, kinship, child raising, economic, and legal parameters.

Some women, for personal reasons stemming from unhappy experiences with marriage and men, limit their relationships with men to the most instrumental end of the scale. These women usually frankly style themselves 'malayas' (prostitutes) and speak of being a malaya as a 'biashara', or business, like any other. Certain areas of Mathare, usually in the Company housing, are known to have a large number of this type of woman. Late at night, men in search of women, roam through the alleys, knocking on doors and whispering the sums each has available for the service. This quick sexual encounter is called rather wittily 'Quick Service', after a local bus firm. Women preferred, for a number of reasons to be explained in a following chapter, to take in only men that they knew; although when desperate for money at the end of the month, they could not afford to be so particular.

Some women with a rooted dislike for close ties with men, will have lovers but will not allow them to become

resident 'Town Bwana's (Town husbands). A lover (this is my own category, Mathare women would just call them friends or Bwanas) is a man that does not live with his woman. Nevertheless, the relationship is one that has more dimensions than the sexual-economic Quick Service. He may drink at his woman's house, eat an occasional meal there, or spend the night now and then; but he does not move in with her.

I hate being beaten. That is why I don't stay with a man in one house...what is the use anyway? Just because you live in one house with a man doesn't mean that he will be good to you. If you are not married, (really married) a man doesn't respect you, and will beat you. If he is married to you he will never beat you so hard as to really hurt you.

I only want men who come for the night and go. I want no man permanently. If men stay, they begin to make trouble. They demand that you wash clothes and have meals on time. They beat you cruelly. You see it all the time in Mathare.

This type of woman wants the pleasure of a more long-term relationship with a man without the difficulties of the domestic menage.

Most women, however, do not have such a rooted dislike of living closely with a man, and many lovers gradually spend more and more time in their women's houses until such time as they can be called Town Bwanas. A Town Bwana is a man that lives with a woman, though she usually rents the room. To all intents and purposes it is a marriage, but one that has not been legalized by either the traditional bridewealth exchange or national law and is of recognised impermanence by both parties. It is however

assumed that both parties will be faithful for the duration of the union, and any discovery of infidelity usually leads to a dissolution of the relationship.

The majority of women in Mathare strategize with a combination of these three types of male-female relationships in different combinations at different times. A woman may choose to be faithful to one man for a long period, but when the relationship begins to cool she may begin to secretly encourage a new lover in order to have a substitute available. Some women have a Town Bwana, yet at the same time have secret lovers, or an occasional Quick Service customer when the Bwana is not at home. A woman who is without lovers or Bwana, may or may not add to her income with Quick Service depending on how well her buzaa brewing is doing at the moment. An arrest or a fine might make Quick Service a necessity to buy food or pay the rent. The only combination that is impossible is more than one Town Bwana at a time. Women can have more than one lover, since lovers have fewer claims on their partner. Once a lover leaves he has little right to complain over what his woman does in her spare time.

These relationships differ in intensity, complexity and domestic involvement. What they do have in common is that the woman, in all cases, expects a monetary return for her services. It is impossible to ascertain what percentage of women's incomes derive from male customers, lovers and Bwanas. Women gave me information on their beer brewing budgets, but none were frank enough to admit

their earnings from men. In 1973-4 Quick Service had a set price, (usually K.sh 5/ for 20 minutes. A full night ranged from K.sh. 10-20, though this could vary depending on the economic need of the woman and the attractiveness of the man. Women confessed to me that they would lower the price for a man they found attractive. But knowing the set price for sex is no help in estimating a woman's income from this 'biashara' (business). The few full-time malaysa that I know well lived at a level which led me to estimate their monthly income at perhaps K.sh.300 or more. An example would be the life style of Kadogo and her friend.

Kadogo lives in Company housing and shares the monthly rent of K.sh. 100 with another woman. They eat meat every day and with it green vegetables and white bread. (an expensive diet for Mathare residents). They never eat cheap staples of 'ugali' (stiff maize meal porridge) or beans. They cook on a kerosene stove rather than the cheaper, but slower charcoal stove. Their room is nicely furnished with such expensive items as bedspreads, framed pictures, curtains around the beds, and a radio. Both women wear expensive synthetic fabric dresses that cost twice as much as the more common dresses of locally manufactured cotton. On an average, they bought a new dress every month or so, while most women in Mathare made do with a new dress once a year. Both girls preferred to drink bottled beer which cost sh.2.50 (as opposed to 50 cents for a mukevi of buzaa). Unlike others, they sometimes went into town to a film or to visit one of the night clubs, quite an extravagance for a Mathare resident.

It is difficult to estimate the income women get from their lovers and Town Bwanas, because the economic exchange is not formalized and is usually masked as a series of gifts and loans. These gifts and loans will vary with the income

and generosity of the man, and the need and greed of the woman. Some women claim that the basic minimum one might expect from a Town Bwana is help with the rent and with food. Lovers would give intermittent gifts, though amounts are impossible to guess.

Women of foresight, try to persuade their men to 'help' them in long term ways by putting a down payment on a plot in town, or by helping them to buy a share in a Land Buying Cooperative. Thus women utilize men, who are employed and have a steady source of income, to help them to capitalize investments in land, businesses, or houses. One woman house owner, claimed that the money for building some of her many houses in Mathare had come from a 'rich Bwana'. Another woman praised her Bwana because he had bought her a sh. 500/ share in a Land Cooperative.

Women profit in more subtle ways from their relationships by persuading important men to help them in various ways. The possibility that women obtained the right to build in Mathare Village II by accepting the village Leader's sexual overtures has already been mentioned. One woman who was rich and powerful in the context of the Valley, was said to have partially attained this position by being consecutively the lover of two men with important political positions. She thus, it was said, obtained an unspoken franchise to wholesale Tusker (bottled beer) to other beer sellers.<sup>3</sup> She had also received a place in a much coveted cooperative society. Several women were rumoured to have received houses in New Mathare because of their

love affairs, with Village leaders who put them at the top of the list despite the fact that they were not strictly eligible.

Beer selling and commercialized sex are definitely related activities, just as trading and commercialized sex are linked in West Africa. (Peil, 1975). It was my impression that many women selling beer did not 'sell their kiosk' (local polite euphemism for selling of sexual favours) as well. Many were faithful to their Town Bwanas, in the old fashioned sense. Some were married and intended to stay married. However, it is obvious that selling beer gives a woman maximum opportunity to meet and flirt with many unattached males. In this situation the sexual pressures on a woman to change partners are tremendous. Husbands frequently refuse to let their wives engage in the beer trade for fear that these temptations will prove impossible to resist. Only a real husband would have the final authority to forbid a woman to sell beer. I witnessed a number of serious quarrels where Town Bwanas tried, with little success, to persuade their Town Bibis (wives) to abandon a lucrative brewing business. One of the bibis resisting her bwana's pressure explained her refusal to stop business with the following practical assessment of the situation. "When he leaves me, what will I do."

It is true that women interested in Quick Service find selling beer an ideal situation for finding customers. Women use the opportunities of selling beer to find lovers, or bwanas, or at least to line up possible substitutes for

for the day when her current man leaves her. It is also true that a flirtatious, attractive woman has greater business success than an ugly, or dour woman. Many older sellers find the presence of an adolescent daughter a good draw for customers.

### Small Business or 'Biashara'

There are many small-scale, unlicensed businesses operating in Mathare. Certain types of businesses are dominated by men, others are run by members of both sexes. Men uniformly dominated the types of business that require skills taught to men in the colonial education systems, such as car repair, manufacture of 'jikos' (stoves), pots, and tanks, or carpentry. Men monopolize businesses requiring heavy lifting, such as wholesaling charcoal, water selling, straining buzaa, or delivering cases of Tusker beer to sellers. For no obvious reason, men also dominate such activities as selling meat and hawking clothes door to door. The types of small businesses that are run by women as well as men, are the following: hawking vegetables door to door, making food for sale, running 'hoteli' (restaurants) or 'duka' (shops), retailing charcoal or wood, dress making, and wholesaling maize flour and yeast to buzaa brewers.

All of these businesses, run by men or women, were unlicensed, and therefore illegal by City Council bylaws. The owners usually showed a lack of modern business skills. Few, if any of them, kept accounts or had any precise idea of cash flow or cost of stocking. Stocking is done



haphazardly and only when extra cash is available, The only type of accounting procedures I observed was one store-keeper writing down debts that certain customers ran up at the end of the month.

These small dukas carry a range of food and domestic items such as eggs, milk, sugar, beans, rice, potatoes, maize meal, cigarettes, matches, soap, aspirin, kerosene, combs, rubber baby-bottle nipples, safety pins, and wicks. I was never able to obtain adequate data on the turnover or profits of a duka. Several shop owners estimated that the value of the total stock in each of their shops was K.sh 1,500 to 2,000. They could not make any estimate of how much restocking they did, or how much they made in sales. "Money just comes in and goes out," was a typical statement. Money and food from the shop for daily expenses of the family are used as needed, further complicating any attempts to estimate income. One store owner guessed that he makes a gross profit of K. sh 1,000 a month, out of which he pays a rent of K.sh 100. Unfortunately he was also extremely vague as to how much he pays out monthly to restock the store. Dukas are open long hours (from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.). The the volume of trade is steady, it usually consists of small items: 1 cigarette, a packet of milk, 10 grams of fat, 1 pound of potatoes. Many of the items these stores stock, such as milk and cigarettes, have very small profit margins.

Two women set up a kimera importing business for an

8 month period. The best kimera comes from Kericho district, 200 miles from Nairobi. In order to increase their profits these women decided to by-pass the usual middlemen who deal in kimera. They alternated taking the journey to Kericho by bus, where each time they bought seven 180 lb. bags of kimera which they had milled there. The cost of buying and milling one bag was K.sh 115/. The total costs of one trip was as follows:

7 bags.....	sh.	775
transport.....		65
bus fare .....		28
hotel & food.....		20
		<hr/>
	sh	888/

They estimated that they could sell 7 bags of kimera in one week. The gross profit of retailing 7 bags of kimera at sh. 10 @ lb. was K.sh 1386. Thus the net profit from one journey to Kericho and one week's retailing in their little shop in Mathare was K.sh 498/. During 8 months in 1973, these women made approximately 3 trips per month. Though neither of the women were literate and able to keep records, they seemed to have a very clear idea of the costs and returns.

It is important to note that this type of venture could only be started by a person or persons with nearly sh. 1,000/ in cash to finance the initial purchase. Both of the women in question were Old Timers who owned houses and brewed beer successfully on a relatively large scale. They were childhood friends, which created the mutual trust and responsibility necessary to carry on such a joint venture involving large

sums of money and no bookkeeping. This business was given up in early 1974 'temporarily' because the police on the route were becoming increasingly difficult about the large loads of kimera they were transporting by public bus. In Kenya it is necessary to have a license to transport wholesale foodstuffs. Naturally these women did not have the requisite papers, and depended on bribery when caught by a police check. It is possible also the trips became increasingly difficult for them because of their large families. Each trip took a minimum of 3 days, and could stretch out to 5 days, if there was trouble locating the right type of kimera or in getting the police to accept the bribe they were willing to offer.

#### Cultivating

Very few women have the opportunity to cultivate while living in Mathare. There are some exceptions. Certain early arrivals had staked out informal (but recognized) claims to land across the river from the villages. Other very ingenious women cultivate in empty lots in and around Pangani, Eastleigh, and Pumwani or in the open space between the divided highway to Thika or beside the roadways. These plots are always small, and yield no more than three or four bushels of beans or potatoes, which could do no more than supplement the family's diet. One woman cultivates six separate plots, each no more than 1/8th of an acre, but the harvest of these plots provided maize and beans for her family for 2 months. A few women own land, belonging to

their dead husbands, lent by male relatives, or purchased in cooperatives. These women travel during the planting and harvesting seasons to their land, and hire people to 'cultivate' (i.e. weed and hoe) at other times. Such land owners either sold the produce to their relatives, or brought the produce into Mathare to retail there, or used the produce to feed their families. For Mathare as a whole, this was an unimportant economic activity. Few women cultivate, and for most of those that do it usually provided only a pittance. It would seem that the women who go faithfully to their tiny plots to cultivate, are not so much interested in the final yield as they are interested in relaxing and enjoying an activity that is nostalgically associated with happier, more peaceful times in the village.

#### EDUCATING CHILDREN.

I have chosen to include education in a chapter which discusses the economic activities open to Mathare women because it is a very significant form of investment for the future.

All women in Mathare recognise the importance of education for obtaining jobs in the Formal Sector. Most women make great effort to educate all, or at least some of their children. Out of the 89 women who completed at least a part of the Life History Interviews, 46 had children of school age. Only nine of these women had no children in school: three of these were the mothers of adolescent boys who absolutely refused to go to school, and one couldn't

force her recalcitrant 6 year old to stay at Nursery School. These four women all stated that they were eager to have their children attend school, but admitted that one cannot force children to study if they do not want to. That leaves 5 women (10.8% of the women with school age children) who were either too poor or too disinterested to send their children to school. Two of these women believed that only boys need to be sent to school. Julia refused to send her bright 6 year old girl to school but claimed that she would send her 4 year old son when he was old enough. Kasmara had 3 girls of school age and 1 boy. She had been sending the boy to school, but at the age of 12 he dropped out in favour of 'roaming the Village'; nevertheless, she showed no interest in sending any of the younger girls to schools, even though the 9 year old girl constantly begged her to be allowed to go. This low figure of 10.6% indicates the high importance that women attach to education. Many of the older women, who had not educated their children lamented that fact that when their children were school aged there were too few schools available to make it possible to educate their children.

This concern for education can be seen in the history of women's communal activity in Mathare. The building of a nursery school had highest priority for the women in Villages I, II, III in the middle sixties. Then the amorphous settlements began to organize internally, partly in response to government opposition to the squatters, and partly in response to the felt-need of the residents for

services such as sewerage and water. The two most important needs expressed by the women residents were for a source of water, <sup>4</sup> and a Nursery School. In Kenya it is easier to get your child into Primary School if he or she has previously been in a Nursery School, and has received a smattering of reading, writing, and arithmetic. When the citizens of Mathare banded together with the help of the NCKK social worker, one of the first things that they started to work to raise money for was the Nursery School. Women (many of whom even had no children of school age themselves) swept streets for city council or sold charcoal to raise money and formed the backbone of the work groups that convened to construct the Nursery School buildings. Men thought that the first building in Mathare should be a Community Hall, while women thought that it should be a Nursery School.

Women have a clear idea of the role of education in the modern world of work and business. "Without education no one can make money in Kenya today." "Education is the only answer, that is why I beg my girl to finish school." Unmarried women often expressed a sense of responsibility towards their children, who are in an especially vulnerable position, since in Kenya having no father means having no land to inherit: "Without land the only answer is to be employed" said one. Another expanded further on the subject.

Nothing is so bad as not to educate your children while you have any money at all to do it. It was my fault not to marry and to let my children have

the pride of having a father. So I must not punish them further by not giving them an education.

Though women realize all too clearly that education is the only route by which to enter the wage employment sector, they do not appreciate the full extent of the unemployment problem in Kenya. Education is becoming less and less a guarantee for a good job, or any job for that matter; and more and more a sort of lottery ticket one must obtain in order to qualify for the shrinking number of prizes (i.e. jobs) available in the urban area. When women do educate their children who fail to obtain employment, their reactions are those of mixed bewilderment and cynicism.

I struggled for years to get my girl Standard 7 education, and she has spent 3 years now without work. That is not right. I don't understand. Surely Kenya has many troubles.

David has Standard 7 and no job. It is impossible to get a job in Kenya today unless you have money or know 'big people'. It is necessary always to bribe officials. David has registered for the Mechanics Examination, but the form will not even be processed without money.

But it is not only the difficulty of obtaining work after completing education that dooms this particular strategy for the future to failure in most cases. The most tragic aspect of this strategy is the high drop out rate for students of both sexes. At the onset of adolescence boys begin playing truant, finding it more fun to 'roam' about looking for fun or trouble. Girls become pregnant. One mother described her experience with her two oldest children.

Boys have 'kichwa gumu' (literally 'hard heads', stubborn). My boy said I could cut his throat and he

wouldn't go to school. He would just disappear when I tried to speak to him. Girls are better. At least they don't refuse to go to school. They just get pregnant. They sit hunched over their tea in the morning. When you ask what is the matter, they lie and say they have a headache or backache. They try to hide their stomachs. Soon everyone knows they are pregnant, except you.

For a woman who has struggled to pay for school fees and uniform costs this is a cause of great grief or anger.

When Lucy (her daughter) became pregnant in Form II I felt a great pain here (laying her hand on her heart) because she didn't finish her schooling. But I had nothing to say to her, (did not complain). What could I do but take care of her, and help to care for the child when it came.

Other mothers are not quite so patient and forbearing, and in the course of my fieldwork I witnessed a number of violent quarrels between mothers and newly pregnant daughters brought about by the bitter parental disappointment over the girl leaving school. But no matter how angry the mother is she invariably responds to the need of her daughter; by the time the child is born, older mother and young mother are reconciled and often form a cooperative economic-unit. (See Chapter VI). This response is not unique to women in Mathare. Hellman, writing about Rooiyard in Johannesburg, describes a similar situation.

Most women insist that they would not tolerate their daughters in their homes if they became pregnant before marriage, but when the self-same mothers are actually faced with the premarital pregnancy of a daughter, they accept the situation comparatively gracefully and care for the daughter and grandchild kindly. (1948, p. 78).

Most women, many of whom are also unwed mothers, cannot seriously blame their daughters. "Pregnancy is the curse



of being a woman" said Sara who was bitterly disappointed when her 15 year old daughter left school to have a child. The older mothers respond to this most female of all dilemmas, and most of them swallow their disappointment over their daughters' interrupted education. Out of the 23 cases I recorded of pre-marital pregnancies which forced girls to leave school, 3 ended in marriage, and 20 ended with the girls staying with their mothers.

Women blame the delinquency of their sons, the premature pregnancies of their daughters, and their children's unsuccessful educational careers on the corrupting influence of the city. I will return to this again when discussing the fostering of children by Mathare women in Chapter VI. Many women prefer to have one or more of their children fostered with a rural relative in order to 'save' their children from this corrupting influence. Women maintain that it is impossible to raise children properly in the city.

Town children have bad behaviour because they watch other children, or people from other tribes doing different things. They also watch their own parents' mannerless behaviour.

Children in town learn lack of respect for older people.

When children are in town, they live in one room with their mother and she brings in men; the child sees her and learns what sex is all about too early. They then experiment for themselves.

In town children are without discipline. They get used to 'luxuries'. Money is easy to get in town. First they ask their mother for it, or steal it from her purse. Later they steal from others, learning by the example of older people. They crave sweets, clothes and films.

But despite the record of failure that all mothers see around them every day in Mathare, they continue to hope that it will be different for their children. If they can educate their children, and if the children can get jobs in the formal sector, then a good future is assured. Despite the many 'ifs', the rewards are great enough for success to make trying worthwhile. Muthone, a widow with three educated and employed sons, often praised God that gave her this "help for her old age", (each son gave her approximately 30-50 K.shillings every month). Wangari, while outlining her plans to educate her three children, put her arm around her daughter's shoulders and said proudly, "These children are my 'shamba' (farm)" In other words, she is investing in their education in lieu of investing in land, and this was to be her security for the future.

There is no clear observable trend that women prefer to educate daughters or sons. In traditional Kenya, women depended on their sons for security in their old age; this is one reason why to be barren was such a hard fate. Sons are still felt to be important for a Mathare woman's future. It was often said that one could expect an educated son to give more help than an educated daughter, "because a daughter marries and then she will give all her money to her husband's family." Perhaps too, there is also a realization that to date, it is easier for a man to become employed and highly paid than a woman. Yet equally common, were feelings that girls are kinder (therefore more likely to pity their mother)

and less likely to become 'wakora' (rogues), who generally tend to cut themselves off from their families. Two women articulated to me a need to give girls more education than boys, because boys can 'work with their strength' (being construction workers, manual labourers) and girls cannot. It must be added that this definite bias towards educating girls in preference to boys was not common. It is generally felt that girls and boys are entitled to the same amount of education. The fees in the lower grades are not too high, and most women could scrape together the requisite amount. Women are more likely to be able to keep their girls in school longer than boys; but usually the drop out rate for Mathare students is high for both sexes and a woman is lucky if one of her many children reaches Form I and beyond. <sup>5</sup>. Women will make an effort to keep all children who are willing in school as long as possible. Except for the cases of Kasmara and Julia mentioned earlier in this section, I never witnessed a woman refusing to send a daughter to school in lieu of a son. In fact, in the two years I was involved in four separate incidents of women trying to find places for their daughters who had failed their exams at the end of Standard 7 because they wanted their daughters to repeat Standard 7 and have another chance to take the exams. On the other hand, of the five boys I knew who failed the exam in that same period, none wanted to go back to repeat the year.

The final tragedy of education in Mathare is that after years of struggling to raise the money to and keep children

in school, women find that their children fail the exams. Study conditions are poor in Mathare, with the whole family living in one room, which is at the same time a commercial centre. Noise is great, temptations from non-schooling friends are great, materials for study and parental help nonexistent. I rarely, if ever, saw children studying in Mathare. Only two women (both well off, capable, and foresightful, though themselves uneducated) made efforts to facilitate their children's studying by renting separate rooms for them and providing them with tables on which to work. It never occurred to even literate women to help their children with reading and writing after school hours. Most children who get sent to school by eager mothers are doomed to failure. This is the situation that repeats itself in almost every low-income group in the world. The very group that most needs the education in order to participate equally in the modern economy is the group that is least able to obtain that precious commodity. The ignorance and poverty that education could help alleviate produce conditions which make education a barren tree.

CONCLUSION: THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.

In this Chapter I have examined in detail the eight ways that women support themselves in Mathare valley: wage employment, renting of rooms, buzaa brewing and selling, distilling and selling gin, commercialized sexual relationships, small businesses, cultivating, and educating their

children. In this conclusion I wish to emphasize the relative importance of these activities. Finally, I wish to pursue further the interrelationships among these economic activities, and the way that women manipulate them in order to maximize their economic returns.

Wage employment is relatively rare among women in Mathare. Anywhere from 3% to 10% of women are employed. Womens' low level of education, scarcity of low-skilled jobs, and the low hours and low pay of jobs open to relatively uneducated women combine to prevent or discourage women from holding down a wage job. As I pointed out women may circulate between the wage sector and the petty commodity production sector depending on circumstances at particular points in their life cycles. For example, young women without children, or older women with grown children may find that jobs as house servants are more convenient than women with young children. Women may work in the wage sector in order to save a little money to invest in some other economic activity. Some of the Old Timers claimed that they had saved money to build houses from wage jobs which they left after they had houses to rent in Mathare.

Petty commodity production is, in terms of the numbers engaged, the more important economic activity in Mathare. It is easier for a woman to enter, requiring little in the way of capital or skills. It may be less secure than a wage job, but often has higher returns and is definitely more flexible, especially for a mother with children.

Buzaa brewing and commercialized sexual relationships

are the most common petty commodity production activities of women in Mathare. Returns for brewing are high, those for selling less so, but adequate as a supplement to other forms of economic activity. I showed that as many as 80% of the women in both my samples brew and/or sell beer. Statistics on monetary relationships with men were obviously impossible to obtain, but from observation I conclude that the percentate is approximately the same. Only the very old, the very religious, or the very independent or successful women do not have income-earning relationships with men. In addition, it is impossible to estimate the incomes women make from their men. I tried to show that full-time attractive prostitutes enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. At the least many women manage to obtain part of their rent money from their lovers.

The making of Nubian gin is relatively unimportant as an economic activity practiced by women in Mathare, though many men make a very good living doing it. The reasons for this were explained earlier. Many women, however, supplement their beer selling profits by selling gin. Similarly small business activity is relatively unimportant for the majority of women in Mathare. Most businesses in Mathare are owned and run by men. In a limited survey of businesses in one part of Village II, only 44 of 204 small business enterprises were run by women. There is a segregation of business activities; only certain types of businesses are run by women. Sometimes the reasons for this segregation are physical, in businesses requiring

great strength; and sometimes the reasons are historical, as in types of activities which need skills taught only to men. Sometimes there seems to be no reason at all, as in the example of hawkers, where women hawk vegetables, but only men hawk clothes or trinkets.

The educating of children is an almost universal activity of Mathare women, but one which I showed has little chance of ultimate success. The high drop out rate of boys from disinterest and girls from pregnancy, and the generally poor performance of those who stayed in long enough to take the exams, means that few children actually obtain meaningful qualifications. Those that do qualify are having increasing difficulty finding jobs to fit their education level.

Finally house rental is possible only for those women who arrived in Mathare before 1969 with the capital to build. For those who did so, house rental provides a substantial income, as well as a measure of security not enjoyed by any other women in Mathare.

What are most interesting are the interrelationships among the various types of activities. Some of these relationships were already mentioned. For example, all the women that are important brewers and known for their frequent brewing and high profits, are house owners. This is significant; the security of owning houses and the capital provided by the rents gives a woman the leeway to take the financial risks of brewing frequently and in large quantities. Cash flow is the most pressing problem affect-

ing beer sellers, since most of a seller's income is received at the beginning of the month. In turn each seller must pay out most of that money to remove the debts she has incurred throughout the previous month. That leaves very little cash to buy large quantities of unga and kimera. Most of the unga and kimera dealers refuse to give credit, or if they do, it is in limited amounts to good friends. With another source of capital, such as house rental, women brew more frequently. Men are another such source of capital. Women often persuade their lovers or bwanas to 'lend' them money to brew a batch of beer. Whether or not such a loan is always returned was difficult to ascertain. I know that in some cases, the money was returned without any interest, the woman keeping the profits. "I kept his money only for a week, and the labour was mine," explained one woman when questioned why she didn't share the profits with her Bwana.

Several of the big house owners in the village boasted to me that the money to build the houses in the first place had come from men: husbands, lovers, or Town Bwanas now abandoned. In three separate instances, the woman was either exceptionally frank about her sex life, or had made the comment inadvertently. I never openly questioned women as to the source of the money they used to build the houses back in the early days of Mathare. Most of the Old Timers were already city dwellers living in other unauthorized settlements or low-income neighbourhoods in Nairobi. Most of them were selling beer and undoubtedly supplementing



their uncertain incomes by cohabitating with men. In Chapter VII I will return to this question of an urban career strategy.

Women who have wage employment or run small businesses like a shop or charcoal stands, may sell beer to supplement their basic incomes. A woman with a job or another a business does not have time to brew beer or to sell regularly. But such women often retail a debe of beer on a free night at the beginning of the month or on weekends. The K.sh 7 profit is a welcome addition to her salary or business income.

Conversely profits from brewing and selling beer enable certain women to set up small businesses. A large scale brewer set up a business selling firewood. Another woman started a restaurant and both hired people to run the businesses. The women cited earlier who had a kimera wholesaling business did so from capital raised partially from brewing and partially from rents. Proceeds from brewing help women invest in land or housing cooperatives.

Participating in one business can give a woman contacts necessary to compete successfully in another activity. As was mentioned earlier selling beer gives a woman a chance to meet with men, either for Quick Service or closer relationships. The women who sold kimera sold mostly to the same women who were regular purchasers of their wholesale beer. A woman vegetable hawker often 'reserved' a debe of beer, when on her rounds she came across a woman with a batch pending for the following day. "They already know that we are honest and will only give them good things (beer or

kimera)."

For these women heads of households, Mathare is an arena where low-income, poorly educated migrants from the rural area are attempting to make economic adaptations to urban life. For the Old Timers, Mathare is the last in a long line of such adaptations, while for the younger women in Mathare it may be the first. Women are involved in a number of small scale, low skilled, often illegal economic activities open to them in the petty commodity production sector or in the lowest paid jobs of the wage sector, often alternating the two types of economic activity. For a certain group of the more opportunistic and energetic women, these economic activities are mutually reinforcing. These women manipulate them to maximize their profits, to capitalize further business ventures, and to insure their future security. These women, as I hope to show in Chapter VII, form the basis for an emerging female, entrepreneurial, urban elite.

CHAPTER IV - FOOTNOTES

1. Here a personality clash with the Social Worker in charge of the office at the New Mathare Project prevented me from ever seeing the list of names of those receiving houses. I think the Social Worker feared that I was, in some way, trying to prove the allegations that many non-residents of Mathare had been illegally allocated houses in the new projects. The allegations were probably true; though the number of such people was relatively small. At any rate, I was reduced to taking a rough count of women's names at the public meetings where consecutive batches of lucky recipients' names were read out.
2. In the body of this paper I have used the word 'house' in a direct translation, as it were, of the Swahili. Thus wherever I say 'house' I actually mean a 'room' or a 'unit', unless indicated otherwise. For most peasant Kenyans a house and a room are the same thing.
3. Beer sellers with a large number of customers like to have some bottled beer handy at the beginning of the month, when customers are feeling flush. This is a service, since the profit margin on each bottle sold is only 10 cents. However, it prevents the 'Big Spender' from leaving Mathare and going into the bars of Eastleigh whenever he feels flush enough to treat himself and his friends to bottled beer.
4. Up to the time that stand pipes were put in, the women fetched water from the polluted Mathare river or carried it all the way from Eastleigh where they had to buy it from the inhabitants. Many women bought water from water sellers.
5. This is at variance with the observations of David Parkin on Luo youths' attitude towards education. He found that among the Luo families he studied in Nairobi, the young people studied very hard and rarely dropped out before Standard VII or Form II. At this point it is not possible to say if this difference is related to ethnic dissimilarities between Luo and Kikuyu or to the different economic situations of the respective research populations.

(Parkin, personal communication)

## CHAPTER V

### CHANGING DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIPS

#### AND WOMEN'S ACCESS TO RESOURCES

#### DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIPS DEFINED

In the last chapter I described in detail the economic activities open to women living in Mathare Valley. In Chapter II, I described some of the social parameters of women's lives in both traditional and modern Kenya. In this chapter I will discuss the structure and operation of dependency relationships found between men and women in the rural and urban social fields.

I have defined a dependency relationship as a dyadic status set in which one party has greater access to resources. The second party has to depend on the first party to share this access because he (or in this case, she) has no independent means to do so. Implicit in this type of relationship is an assumed affective tie (of loyalty or even love) and a number of reciprocal rights and duties. This set is reciprocal in the sense that a shared access to a society's resources, such as land, money, jobs, or even education, is usually paid for by services of some kind. Thus a wife performs domestic services for her husband, and a client sings political songs in support of his patron. A dependency relationship is one of relative durability, although this durability can vary greatly. It is important

to stress the asymmetrical access to resources characterizing this dyadic status set which forces one party to depend on the other for access to resources.

In Kenya today, a period of rapid social change, women are migrating from the rural to the urban social field. Traditionally women in Kikuyu society (and in all other Kenyan societies, as well) had use of resources only through dependency relationships with men. To a great extent, if we exclude from the discussion elite Kenyans, this male monopoly of resources has changed but little in modern Kenya, rural or urban. Women who migrate alone to the urban social field find that their initial means of obtaining money may once again be through dependence on men. If, as Barth does, we look at social behaviour as an allocation of time and resources, change is perceived by noting the changes in the patterns of allocation of time, energy and resources to different relationships. Social behaviour is not a sought-for condition that is wilfully maintained, but is the result of the process of cumulative behaviour of various people pursuing their private strategies in a nexus of constraints and incentives that is the socio-techno-natural environment. (Barth, 1966). In Mathare there is a pattern emerging of women allocating time and resources to different dyadic status sets than those which were important to them when they lived in the rural area.

Today, as well as traditionally, women have access to land and cash through a series of dependency relationships. These are father-daughter, brother-sister, husband-wife,

and mother-son. In Mathare, women find themselves severely limited in their participation in the urban economy by their lack of skills and education. One of the surest and easiest ways to obtain cash is to form other types of dependency relationships. They allocate their time and energy into forming dependency relationships with men as 'malayas' (prostitutes), lovers, Town Wives, and clients to male patrons. While some women who live in Mathare continue to depend on husbands and sons, I feel that for the purposes of this analysis they are of minimal importance, both theoretically, and in terms of statistical frequency. It is the four above named new relationships that<sup>are</sup> important indicators of change.

In choosing to look at male-female relationships as dependency relationships, it is necessary to oversimplify them for the purpose of analysis. I have done this in order to make clearer the importance of economic exchange in such status sets. However, it is necessary to point out that there are other dimensions to these relationships. For example I do not mean to deny the presence of emotion; on the contrary I hope to show that almost all of these relationships bring to the participants mutual satisfaction, security, and companionship. Yet it cannot be denied that these women in Mathare approach their relationships with men opportunistically, manipulating them in a way that indicates to the observer a distinct concern for maximizing their profits and consolidating their economic position in the city. In Chapter VII, when I present a model of a female migrant's

urban career strategy, I hope to show that when a woman reaches a position of relative economic security and wealth, she no longer enters into dependency relationships with men. On the contrary, she relates to men as an equal, or perhaps even reverses the dependency relationship by becoming the lover of a younger, poorer man.

#### RURAL DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIPS TRADITIONAL AND MODERN.

There are four dependency relationships of major importance to rural Kikuyu women, both in traditional society and today in modern rural Kikuyu society. These are the dyads of father-daughter, brother-sister, husband-wife, and mother-son.

Until the time of a girl's marriage, she lives in her father's house. As she grows older she helps her mother farm and, if there is adequate land, she will be allocated a piece of land that is her portion until she marries, and even after. (Fisher, 1956, p. 216). This last seems to be a custom that is falling into disuse, mainly because of shortage of land. But where a girl still does have access to such land, it also gives her access to cash, because the produce is hers to dispose of as she wishes.

Another resource that a girl has access to through her father is education. In this context, education can be viewed as a resource, since it is linked to wage employment. In the pre-colonial period this was obviously not the case; but even after the introduction of western-style education, girls were very lucky indeed if they were sent with their

brothers to school. The Kikuyus' early resistance to education for girls has been discussed in an earlier chapter. Only recently has this attitude begun to change; though if there is a shortage of cash, boys will still be given precedence over girls. A number of my respondents had had their education interrupted at an early period because their fathers could only afford to send their sons to school.

A daughter would not and still does not expect to inherit anything from her father. In the rare situation where a girl is an only child, and much beloved by her father, she might be his heir. Daughter can only expect shelter and food at her father's house until the time of marriage. At this time the rights to her work and her children are transferred to her husband's family by a series of bridewealth and childbirth payments. None of these payments go to the girl. After marriage, a woman has a right to return to her father's (or after his death, her brother's) house for visits, or for support in the case of a quarrel with her husband, divorce, or separation. Originally, the father would try to persuade her to return to her husband, since a divorce entailed some repayment of the bridewealth. I feel that recently, just as bridewealth payments became less institutionalized (i.e. more up to the individual) there has also been a trend away from repayment in case of divorce. I have deduced this from respondents' descriptions of their own divorces. Once the woman is no longer living with her husband, she has the right to stay with her father or brother. When, as has happened with increasing frequency



in more recent years, the girl conceives a child out of wedlock, she expects help and support from father or brother. The tensions and contradictions arising from the expectations of help and assistance held by female relatives and land pressures and rising costs of living experienced by male kin have already been described.

The brother-sister relationship is an extension of the father-daughter one. Just as the boy inherits his father's wealth and land, so he inherits his father's social obligations. A woman has a special relationship with her brother, which hinges on this latent dependency in times of personal trouble. This dependency relationship, for the reasons given above, is of decreasing importance in modern Kikuyu life. I saw a number of striking examples among the older generations. One old Kikuyu man in his 70's, was housing on his farm in Limuru two widowed sisters and one divorced half sister. The sisters, themselves quite old, farmed in a desultory fashion small patches of land and were helped with water and firewood by the old man's sons and daughter-in-laws. This was pointed out to me with great approval as an example of the way things were done 'zamani' (long ago), when Kikuyu custom still prevailed. The fact that he was a rich man helped him to fulfil his traditional role in dependency relationships with his sisters.

Once a woman enters the husband's households, she "exchanges the rule of her father for the rule of her husband", (in the words of one old woman). Traditionally, a woman had right to usufruct of land and housing through her

dependency relationship with her husband. She was given a hut and rights to a certain amount of land which was gradually increased as she produced more children; these rights were hers as long as she stayed married. (Kenyatta, 1962, p.171) This was changed little, except for the fact that the amount of land cultivated by a wife cannot be increased as she bears more children, since all land is now registered and owned. Today husbands also give a wife cash for household necessities and school fees. He obtains it from cash cropping or wage employment. It is true that a woman has always had the right to trade the surplus from her land, as long as she reserved enough to feed herself and her children until the next harvest. She can use this surplus as she wishes.

(Op.Cit) (Fisher, 1956, p.140) But both Fisher and Kenyatta go on to qualify this, by pointing out that if the surplus is a large one, the husband has the right to claim a part of it. "When the harvest is good...some (of the products) are handed over to the husband who buys livestock." (Kenyatta Op.Cit.) Fisher makes the same observations. Though the woman technically has the right to this surplus, she has it by consent of her husband and should he desire to keep it, he will have final say. This would severely limit a woman's ability to obtain cash from trading.

Another limit to a woman's success to cash resources, is the monopoly that Kikuyu men have over cash cropping. My own observations based on visits to 24 Kikuyu farms in various parts of Kikuyu-land (farms of relatives of Mathare friends) were that in every case that there was a cash crop

(e.g. tomatoes, tea, coffee, pyrethreum, grade cows, or chickens) the man of the house supervised the organization, and carried out the marketing of the crop, even where the actual work was done by his wife. These observations have been supported by economists and planners in rural development in Kenya. One such researcher told me that the Kenya Milk Cooperative paid the male heads of the household monthly for the milk delivered, while most of the work was done by their wives. Most cooperatives or marketing boards (for tea, coffee, milk, maize and pyrethreum) allow only the owner of the land to be registered as a member; and since men own the land, women are rarely members in their own right. (Tinker, 1976, p.133) Many of the male members of the cooperatives are working in town, merely supervising their wives' labour on the cash crop during weekends or holidays.

Very few rural women have access to wage employment. Many rural womens' husbands do have wage employment, either in the rural area or in the city. The only source of wage employment open to rural women are tea, coffee, and pyrethreum picking, or doing agricultural work on a day work basis. The wages for these activities are not great, but enough to buy food for a landless family. Few women with land of their own will have time to do wage labour; barring a few days of coffee picking in the harvest season.

Traditionally a divorced woman forfeited her rights to the house, the land, and her older children. In pre-industrial Kenya and in modern Kenya which lacks any universal Social Security, a son will care for his mother after the

death of his father. His wife will carry water and firewood for the old woman and cultivate her now-very small patch of land. Such a woman is blessed with security until the day she dies. That is why barrenness was and is considered a tragedy for a woman in Kenya. A divorced woman is in a similarly awkward position of having no one to take care of her in her old age. The plight of this category of women in traditional Kikuyu society is not treated in the literature. Possibly they stayed with brothers, as my older informants stated. Today, the custody of the children of a traditional Kikuyu marriage after it has dissolved, is less and less clear cut. It seems to be up to the individuals involved, and in many instances the mother may keep one or more of the children. Since there has been no recent research on modern Kikuyu family structure, it is hard to say if there are different patterns related to region, economic status group, religion, or type of marriage (e.g. Christian, Moslem, legal and traditional).

This brief summary of Kikuyu female dependency relationships, in rural society of both the past and present, illustrates how women have no institutionalized direct access to such resources as land, houses, children, money and education (though there have been changes in educational patterns in the last 10 to 15 years). This probably is true for all the cultivating peoples of Kenya, with some minor variations. A woman can obtain the use of such resources only through the mediation of a male relative; in other words by a dependency relationship with a father,

brother, husband or son. These relationships are both ascribed (father and brother) or achieved (husband and son); they are also of assumed permanency, though the husband-wife relationship is the least so. These relationships are customarily asymmetrical in regard to access to resources and provision of services. Men own the resources of importance (e.g. land, houses, cash crops, money etc.) while women provide the majority of the services to the domestic unit. As was described earlier, during the last 40 years labour migration has resulted in women having to take over the customarily male tasks of clearing land and putting up house-frames and fences while continuing to plant, hoe, weed and harvest the crops, care for cash crops, gather wood and water, repair, cook, clean, and care for children. Thus the traditional asymmetry of access to resources and provision of services has been exaggerated in modern rural Kikuyu society. The only exception is where a man is wealthy enough to hire labour to work the farm for his wife.

#### NEW DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE URBAN SOCIAL FIELD.

The cumulative effect of socio-economic changes in rural Kikuyu society that have been described in an earlier chapter, was the creation of a quasi-group of women whose dependency relationships with men in the rural community were inadequate to support them. Some of these women detached themselves from these unsatisfactory dependency relationships and migrated from the rural social field to the urban social field; or

in the case of women who came initially to live with husbands in the urban area, came to the urban social field, and then detached themselves from their dependency relationships.<sup>1</sup>

In my analysis of the urban careers of a number of female migrants living independently in Mathare, it became apparent that they were not only dissolving old rural-based dependency relationships, but forming new ones in town (i.e. malaya-customer, lovers, Town wife-Town husband, and patron-client). These new dependency relationships differ structurally from the old ones, though they function in much the same way, that is to allow women to gain access to resources. Women in Mathare manipulate these various relationships to their economic advantage, as will be shown. Ultimately, through clever manipulation some women achieve a degree of independence from dependency relationships with men, as will be shown in Chapter VII.

#### Arrival In The City: Commercialized-Sex Relationships.

What do poor women do when they migrate to the city? How do they get their bearings in the new environment? The following summarizes the results of the Sample Survey of 150 women.

##### Where Migrant Stayed When First Arriving in Nairobi:

Came to join husband .....	24.4%
Was brought by parents .....	20.0%
Stayed with sibling .....	11.1%
Stayed with other relative .....	8.9%
Stayed with a friend .....	35.6%
	<hr/>
	100 %

As can be seen, similar to the migratory pattern of men, the greatest majority stayed with consanguineal or affinal relatives of one kind or another: one or both parents, sibling, husband, or another relative. Of the 33 women who said they came to stay with their husbands, 30 of them were still living with their husbands. The largest single category however is that of friend; for the purposes of the survey I could not determine with accuracy the sex of the friend, since so many respondents refused to elucidate.

From my observations of the arrival of women to Mathare while I was there, and my reconstruction of the urban careers of women I interviewed, it is clear that there is a limit to the time that a new migrant can stay with relatives or friends (this of course excludes husbands). Those that stayed with a sibling or an aunt commented that "the room was too small" or that "it was shameful for me to see my sister's intimate secrets with her Bwana." With friends, the stay may be even shorter. If a new migrant is lucky she may stay with several relatives or friends in turn. But eventually she must start seeking a place to live and a way to support herself. It is my contention that the way that many, if not most, women begin this process is to engage in brief dependency relationships with men, either as a 'malaya' (prostitute) or as a lover. I will deal first with the role of malaya and come to the role of lover in the next section.

There seems to be an essential contradiction in terms to speak of a commercialized sex transaction as a dependency relationship. I realize that here I am faced with a problem

of categories: can a commercialized sex transaction be categorized along with lovers and a secondary type of marriage? My definition of the dependency relationship given in the introduction to this chapter included a relative durability over time as one criterion. For the most part commercialized sexual relationships in Mathare are too brief to fulfill this criterion; though many women claimed that they only took as partners men whom they had met drinking in bars or a friend's house, or selling beer in their own rooms. It was thought that only the most desperate or the most reckless women would accept total strangers. However, despite this, I have chosen to call this relationship a dependency relationship. For two reasons I feel that this is valid and does not strain my categorization unduly.

The first reason is that there is implied in the sex act, whether or not it is followed by a cash payment or not, a degree of intimacy that is not present in any other commercial and purely instrumental transaction. Secondly, and this was a point made by Mathare women themselves frequently, it is a relationship which mimics the marital relationship itself. I shall return to this at a later period. Mathare women seemed to look at a commercialized sexual relationship as one which was a mini-marital relationship, without the domestic services. It was briefer than a marriage, and the economic exchange was immediate and direct rather than delayed and diffused. Because Mathare women themselves do not perceive a malaya's relationship



with a man as qualitatively distinct from a lover's, a Town Wife's, or a Real Wife's I have not made a qualitative distinction between them.

My older informants rarely admitted that they initially supported themselves in their early stay in Nairobi by commercial sex; this would not have been in keeping with their dignity as older women talking to a younger woman. A great fog of vagueness would descend on their memories when describing what happened when they left the friends or relatives they initially stayed with in Nairobi. When asked where they lived at this period they would look blank and murmur "Hapa na hapa, tu." (Here and there). However, they were frequently not so discreet about their friends and neighbours; and I often learned through gossip that various women, now dignified "Mama Mkubwas" (Big Women) of the village, were once 'famous' malayas in Eastleigh or Pumwani when they first arrived in town. Networks of friendship connected many of these older women who arrived in town in the late forties and fifties, and many of them knew each other, or knew about each other before they arrived in Mathare. I learnt much through discreet questioning of several frank, old gossips. Sometimes in casual conversations women let slip comments about their pre-Mathare lives when they were younger and more beautiful. Under the influence of several 'mukevis' (tins) of buzaa in the company of friends similarly jolly, women would take to bragging about their past conquests or taunting each other with incidents of past quarrels over men, or even disputing who had made the

most money from men. At one such evening session I learned fascinating details about a woman, who recently had been 'saved' (converted to a strict Evangelical Christian sect) and who had consistently conveyed a most saintly image to me and my assistant. She and another woman began laughing about the days when they 'hunted men' in Eastleigh. I have no strict statistical data on this touchy subject but it is my firm opinion that many or most of the older women living in Mathare practiced forms of prostitution in their early days in Nairobi. I also observed the initial entry into Nairobi of girls who were arriving in Mathare while I was doing my field work. I realize that it is tricky to compare two similar events occurring in different historical contexts. What girls do today when they first enter Nairobi (and a specific part of Nairobi at that) is not necessarily sound proof of what occurred 10 or 20 years before when women of a different background entered Nairobi. However I am convinced there is enough similarity of circumstances to allow me to reconstruct the past lives of migrants, from what I observed happening to migrants in 1972 to 1974.

To illustrate this here is the case study of two friends who arrived in Mathare at the same time, Jane and Regina, called by their friends for reasons that will become self evident, 'the two Masais'.

#### Jane and Regina

Jane and Regina came to Mathare together. Friends in a rural school in Standard VII, they had both been expelled within a month of each other for abortions. Jane and Regina had both stayed with relatives separately in Eastleigh and met there again. They

started going to bars together, where they eventually heard about Mathare and began visiting there to drink and 'hunt men'. They struck up a friendship with a certain Mary, who worked in Eastleigh as a tailor, but who sold beer at night in her large room where she lived alone. She took a fancy to them and allowed them to camp out in her room for nearly 8 months. They did not pay rent, or have any bed in the room. They helped her to sell buzaa, used her room to wash, and on the odd night when they failed to find a man to take them back to his room, they slept on the floor. Mary found them useful because they sold buzaa during the day when she was not there; and they were young and blatantly sexy which was a great draw for her new customers. In the month following their arrival at Mary's, I estimated that her business must have doubled. The room was always packed with customers, where formerly there would be only one or two quiet drinkers.

Both girls threw themselves into their new roles with gusto. They wore very short skirts, and often unbuttoned their dresses so that their breasts could be seen (a rare occurrence in Mathare, and felt by most neighbours to be shocking because it would corrupt children). They flirted outrageously with passing men, sometimes engaging in laughing scuffles while trying to drag them inside the room to sell them a drink. Their initial amateur attempts at commercial sex were successful; though at first they charged nothing for their services, merely asking a bed for the night in exchange for a 'bed ride' (local term for sexual intercourse). As time went by I noticed that various other, more experienced women in the neighbourhood lectured the two of them for their stupidity in not charging the men. So they began charging K.sh 5/ a night. However, they continued to conduct their relationships in a slightly silly, amateurish way. Several times they went with men, lost their nerve, and ran away while pretending to go to the latrine; once Regina had already accepted payment. These incidents resulted in quarrels and fights on the morning after. Again the older women took them to task for what was essentially non-professional behaviour. They were told that if they got a reputation for being cheats they would no longer get customers. They were advised to decide whether they liked a man before they agreed to sleep with him. The professionals also had good advice about the proper way to fleece a customer without getting caught. They were told to wait until the man had gone to sleep, and then one could go through his pockets at leisure. It was advisable to take some but not all the money, since then the chances were greater that he would not notice the theft, especially if he was drunk.

Their existences during this initial period were very nomadic. In fact other people referred to them as the

two Masais, because of this rootlessness. Eventually Jane met Samuel and moved in with him to become his "Town Wife." This was 8 months after their arrival. Regina took longer to settle, and didn't move in with a man until a year had passed. Neither of these relationships lasted more than 6 months. Before I had left Mathare, both had taken up brewing and were renting rooms on their own.

One day in a confiding mood Regina explained her way of life to me. (This was during her nomadic period.) "I came recently to Mathare because I left school, and my parents were angry. I came to Nairobi to stay with an uncle and met Jane who was staying with a cousin. We liked to come to visit in Mathare because people were so friendly. One day a man offered me money for a 'bed ride' and I accepted because I needed money. I do not intend to become a malaya. That is not my career. I practice it for the sake of financial embarrassment. I would like to marry, because if a girl is not earning (with a wage job) or married, it is likely that she will fall to real prostitution, which she won't stop. She will regret it one day when she is old and men leave her to go to younger ones."

This rather extended case history illustrates a number of important points. First it points up the almost accidental nature of the initial commercialized-sex arrangements; accidental in the sense that the girls did not come intending to become malayas, but only gradually realized the monetary possibilities in this activity. 'Financial embarrassment' and an inability to earn money any other way makes it an attractive option. Both girls claimed to be looking for work, but lacking contacts and sufficient education they had no idea how to go about it. Next it shows the process of socialization they underwent. Taking the advice of more experienced women, they learned to be more practical and professional in their approach. Neither girl thought of commercialized sex as a permanent solution; but it is interesting to note that their objections seem to be practical rather than moral. Commercial sex

depends on attractiveness which fades with age. Therefore either a wage paying job or a marriage relationship is a more desirable solution. Both girls moved in with men for a period, and then, presumably having amassed a certain amount of capital, rented their own rooms and started brewing buzaa. I feel that this 'route' into Mathare is a fairly typical one.

Whether or not Regina and Jane continued to practice 'selling their 'kiosk' (commercial sex) after they settled into their buzaa brewing, I cannot say for sure. It would be likely that they did, in intervals between regular lovers or Bwanas, or when there was an especially pressing need for money that brewing and selling beer could not meet. Most women alternate commercial sex relationships with men with other types of relationships. It is my impression that there are relatively few women who are 'full time malayas', and those who are willing to talk openly displayed exaggerated feelings of contempt for and hostility to men or marriage.

I like men only for pleasure. I have loved them, but never to marry. I care for them when they are around, but not at all when they are away. Then nothing! Besides, why do I need a man? I have my children. If I lived with or were married to a man, I would have to wash, cook, clean, and stay at home. This way I am free to know many friends. I am never beaten. I am free to roam and when I come home I sleep in peace all night.

Other women, when they did talk about commercial sex transactions, while less hostile to men, described a transaction that was lucrative and pleasurable. During a long drive back from a wedding in the rural areas, four

middle-aged and pleasantly drunk women gleefully extolled the pleasures of the 'kasi ya malaya' (the work of the malaya). A brief summary of their discussion would be that such activity is pleasure and money without work. There was a consensus that those men who were especially pleasing could stay longer with no increase in fee, and vica versa, those that failed to please would be shown the door. Techniques are developed for this purpose, as another woman explained to me.

It is easy for a woman to do (being a malaya) because she can pretend physical passion and a man cannot. Sometimes when I need money badly, I take a man I don't like, but if I do that often, I will do it in a bad way, and the man will get bored and go away. If I like a man, he can stay until 3 a.m., and I won't charge him any more money. If I don't like him I send him away. There are various lies one can tell to get rid of a man quickly...for example, if it is the afternoon, you can tell him your father or mother is coming and jump out of bed and start dressing. Or you can tell him that your Bwana is due back from night shift any minute.

Though being a malaya may be pleasure and money without work, it is not without its difficulties. A woman who depends on full time soliciting for commercial sex may find herself beaten and even raped. It is much safer to limit one's transactions to a few trusted men. Men, dissatisfied with their partners, or drunk and aggressive often beat malayas. When a customer refuses to pay, there is little the woman can do except summon the Kanu Youth Wing or neighbours to aid her. Two cases reported to me by a Youth Wing informant illustrate this dilemma.

I was making my tours through the Staff Houses around 7 at night. I saw a man running very fast coming my

way. Behind him was a group of girls throwing stones and shouting 'Mwisi' (Thief)! I stopped the first girl and she told me. "That man came to my room and I went with him two rounds. Then he refused to pay me the K.sh 10 we had agreed upon." We then pursued the man into Eastleigh, but he was too fast and we didn't get him.

In this case the woman managed to summon her neighbours to her and accidentally ran into a Youth Wing patroller, but it still did not help her to regain her K.sh.10. In the next case, the woman not only failed to get her money but suffered bodily harm as well.

A woman came to the Kanu office at 1 o'clock at night. She said that a man had come to her and asked her if she had a vacancy for 'hit and run' (a quick intercourse) The girl let him in and asked for K.sh.10. The action took place, and when the action was over, the man asked her if she would like to accompany him to one of the bars in Eastleigh. She agreed and they started up the hill towards Eastleigh. When they reached the main road (on the edge of Mathare), the man stopped and grabbed her by the throat and told her that if she didn't give back his money he would kill her. He then punched her in the face several times, until the girl took the sh.10 out of her dress to help herself. The man ran away. When she came to us, her face was cut and bleeding. She couldn't name or identify the man, so we told her that we couldn't help her unless she saw him again. She returned home very sad.

This man was clever enough to lure the girl away from her house and neighbours. Since the woman didn't know him, she couldn't identify him to the Kanu Youth Wing. Stories like this were constantly circulated in gossip sessions in Mathare; it was a constant source of anxiety to Mathare women.

Thus commercialized-sex relationships are dependency relationships between men and women in Mathare, often of fairly brief duration though a man may return regularly to

to the same woman. It is characterized by direct economic exchange for a sexual service, with minimal emotional content. However, as was pointed out women claim to get sexual enjoyment from these relationships whenever possible. There are no domestic rights and duties involved, yet women, regarding sex as one of the major purposes of marriage, see themselves as acting out part of a wife's role with their Quick Service or over-night customers.

### Lovers

Many women maintain longer term dependency relationships with men, either simultaneously, alternatively, or alternately with their malaya relationships described above. I have distinguished between Lovers and Town Bwanas (town husbands) on the basis of residence and therefore the intensity of domestic interaction of the couple. Town Bwanas will be dealt with in the following section. Much that can be said about lovers, especially the contribution they make to a woman, holds true for Town Bwanas as well. In order to avoid duplication, I will merely describe the relevant features of a lover relationship in order to distinguish it from the Town Marriage relationship. The section on Town Marriage which follows will go into much greater detail about the social and psychological parameters of the relationship, and where they are similar to those of the lover relationship it will be so indicated.

A lover is a man who does not live with the woman in



question, but merely visits her, sometimes spending the night. The woman rents her own room; and the man maintains a residence elsewhere, either in a barracks or with another man or his wife elsewhere in Mathare or Nairobi. Women may sometimes cook or wash clothes for their lovers, but this is seen as a favour of love. There are few domestic rights and duties implicit in the relationship.

The economic exchange between lovers is much less structured than that between malayas and their men. Lovers give 'gifts' and these will depend on the circumstances of both parties. If a man is 'wellup' (has a good wage job) he may give the woman dresses, or larger gifts like a radio or a watch. Small 'loans' (sometimes never paid back) will be made to help the woman capitalize a brewing or make a necessary purchase. It was my impression, since naturally concrete economic data on this subject was difficult to obtain, that lovers contribute much less economically than Town Bwanas. Sometimes, a woman merely expects her lover to give her a periodic treat to an evening in an Eastleigh bar, a dance or a cinema.

Women have lovers in a variety of circumstances. Certain women, finding a malaya's life too dangerous, and at the same time anxious to avoid the closeness of ties (with the more binding rights and duties involved) of Town or Real Marriage, prefer to have one or more lovers. They would explain this as a need for independence on the one hand, coupled with a desire for a relationship which had a certain emotional content.

I like to love a man, but I don't want to be a wife.  
 I get all the love I need from my 'Night Friends'  
 (her picturesque way of describing her lovers) and  
 at the same time I don't have to cook his dinner every  
 night.

I love 'it' (sex) with a man I am attracted to, but  
 I never let a man stay in my room until daylight.  
 If they stay, they start wanting tea, and then food,  
 and then before you know it, you are washing his clothes.  
 I don't have time.

Other women have lovers because they want both an  
 emotionally charged relationship and variety; something  
 that is difficult to obtain if one is living with a man.  
 A woman of yet another sort keeps one or two lovers on the  
 side, secretly, while she is living with a Town Bwana, both  
 for variety and excitement and also to have another string  
 in her bow should the Town Bwana leave her. There never  
 seemed to be a scarcity of men willing to visit a woman while  
 her Bwana was at work for sexual enjoyment at the cost of  
 some gifts and loans. Thus while sexual variety and  
 titillation were part of a lovers relationship, there was  
 also a measure of strategizing, which I will return to later.

#### Town Bwanas

A Town Bwana (this is my own neater rendering of the  
 local phrase in Swahili, a Bwana ya Town or husband of the  
 Town) moves in and lives with a woman, who is his Town Bibi  
 (or Town Wife). In most of the incidents I recorded in  
 Mathare, the woman herself actually rented the room; thus  
 it was the man who moved in with her. Sometimes, especially  
 when the woman is newly arrived in town (note the case of  
 Regina and Jane just reported) she will move in with a man

who already has a room. It is felt ideal for a woman to rent a room for herself and her children, rather than drift around from man to man. In certain cases, men have other places of residence. This was especially true of the policemen and army personnel. But as long as such a man kept some of his clothes and possessions in the woman's house, spent his leave and whatever nights he was off duty with her, I then classified the relationship as a Town Marriage rather than a Lover relationship.

Town Marriage is an emic category and is contrasted in the Mathare woman's categories with Real Marriage, or 'marriage with goats and beer', referring to the traditional Kikuyu 'ruracio' (bridewealth). Like Real Marriage, the woman provides domestic services of the usual kinds, (e.g. food, clean clothes), they share a sexual relationship, and there is a generally (but as has been seen not totally) accepted ethic of sexual loyalty and faithfulness expected from both partners. The Bwana, often employed or earning money in some form of petty commodity production, provides some of the money for the running of the household.

The provision of food and clean clothes is considered an important duty of wives, whether Real or Town. Just as in the rural area, a man has the right to quarrel with his wife, or even administer a little salutary physical chastisement if there is no food awaiting him on his return. Children will wait for their food, but men will not. This is why the woman quoted above said she didn't have time to have a Bwana. This means a woman, while brewing and selling

must organize her day in such a way as to have food prepared for a hungry Bwana.

The sexual relationship is also an important one; usually sexual attraction is the basis for the formation of the relationship in the first place. Faithfulness, or at least the appearance of faithfulness, for both partners is considered desirable.

When you have a Town Husband you will 'face it' (have troubles). Just because he is helping you (with money) he thinks that you are a wife in actual fact. He doesn't want you to go around with other men, and if you do and he finds out, you will answer for it. I don't blame them, because when these husbands beat their Town Wives, it is because of the realization that they are not helping their homes (their legal wives and children) due to what they give their women and this makes them feel guilty.

If I have a Town Bwana who is a good and helping Bwana...that is we have stayed together for a year, and he helps me with rent, food and unga for brewing beer, I would have to respect him. If I went out with other men, and he was angry and beat me, I would feel it was justified and try to make up for it.

These two statements are representative of many women's feeling that if a man helps you then he has a right to expect faithfulness, or at least the appearance of it. That is why women with Town Bwanas and lovers are always careful to conceal the latter from the former, obviously with the connivence of the lover, who agrees to visit only when the Town Bwana is away. This careful concealment is not always successful, since people's schedules have a way of changing. One day when I was drinking tea with Maria, a woman came running in greatly agitated. Her GSU Bwana had returned unexpectedly from the camp and had found her in

bed with her lover. The door was locked and when he grew tired of beating on the door and yelling insults, he went away. The other man left and she was running to hide at a friend's house some distance away in order to let her Bwana's temper cool down. Maria sternly asked her why she would cheat her Bwana when he was away. The woman laughed and said this lover gave her money to brew buzaa. "I would do anything for money." Later I heard she had been beaten by the Bwana when she came home late at night.

Women are not the only ones that attempt to juggle more than one partner. Men do this as well. It is even easier for them, since they can have women with rooms in fairly distant parts of Mathare or the city; thus they can be a little less vulnerable to discovery. But should a Bwana's infidelity be discovered, his 'wife' will fight to preserve her own.

Jane the Nursery School Teacher was not at work one day when I went to visit her. Her colleague told me that Jane was not at work because she was recovering from a severe beating given her by another woman. It seems that Jane had been seeing a man who was the Town Bwana of another woman in another village in Mathare. The man had started pretending that he had to work at night (he was employed at a petrol station) so he could spend the night with Jane. One night, suspicious because of his new-found zeal for work, the woman followed him to Jane's house. She had then beaten Jane so badly that she was forced to stay indoors for several days. Her co-teachers agreed that the woman was right to beat Jane. "I would beat any woman who hung around my Bwana to death", exclaimed one woman dramatically to the approval of all the women listeners.

Thus in a situation where many women seem to desire and value independence by avoiding marriage, they still make conventional claims on their men, as if the relationship

was a legal marriage. This ambivalence is difficult to explain, unless it is just one of the trappings of marriage that has been held over in the secondary town version of that more customary dependency relationship. Sexual jealousy and exclusiveness is perhaps a basic human emotion.

Town marriage differs from its conventional, customarily legal counterpart in a number of ways. The parents of the two partners have not met, and no bridewealth has been exchanged. Related to this is the fact that a woman has complete rights and responsibilities for any children born of the union. Though a man is expected to contribute to the household, he does not have to be the complete support of it. The relationship is one of assumed impermanence by both parties. From an emotional point of view the relationship is often a stormy one, fraught with suspicion and conflict.

This non-involvement of the two families and the lack of bridewealth are key differences between the two types of marriage. Because of them the man has no claim on the children of the union. The Bwana's limited responsibility for the household, and the sense that the union can be broken at the whim of either partner also arise from this absence of bridewealth. Women claim that Town Bwanas are less 'caring' and 'gentle' than husbands at home because the lack of bridewealth symbolizes the lack of commitment men have in the relationship.

Town husbands do not value us because they have paid nothing to our parents.

Town Bwanas may father one or more children while living with their Town Wives but they are not expected to take any

economic responsibility for them. One woman, who had been living with her Bwana for more than ten years and had had 4 children by him, told me that he was paying part of the school fees for the children. Her comment was revealing.

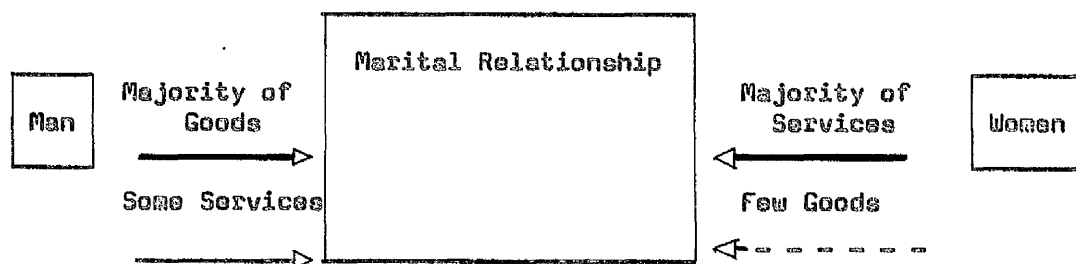
He does it out of the kindness of his heart; he does not have to do it. He has his own family in the rural area.

The children of such a union are thought to be those of the woman only. If a man chooses to contribute something to his children, it is out of the kindness of his heart.

In general, men give less to a Town marriage than they do to a Real Marriage. A woman is expected to continue whatever business activity she was doing before she met her Bwana. She must provide a large proportion of the household expenses and most of the clothes and school fees for her children. But the economic contribution of the Bwana is still significant, since he usually pays the rent and buys a large portion of the food. He must also be ready to provide cash for various emergencies in the life of his woman. One can compare Real Marriage and Town Marriage as dependency relationships with exchanges of goods and services. In the situation of a rural marriage <sup>2</sup>. the man has almost sole access to the resources of land, houses, cattle, and money, with the woman having the residue of the produce of her plot of land. The woman on the other hand provides most of the daily productive and domestic services of the household. I have chosen to exclude the genetical rights in children as a 'good' or a 'resource'. When the men are at home, they do the few heavier tasks. This

asymmetry could be diagrammed thus:

Chart I. Rural Marriage: Provision of Goods and Services



Key

- Major contribution
- Medium contribution
- - - - - Minor contribution

By contrast the contribution of goods and services to the Town Marriage approaches a much greater symmetry. The diagram would look like this.

Chart II. Town Marriage: Provision of Goods and Services



In a Town Marriage the man contributes fewer goods or resources. He usually does not provide the room, which is owned by or rented by the woman, though he may pay the rent. He does not provide land for the woman to cultivate. Both partners provide fewer services to the relationship. The woman has no land to cultivate, no house to repair, no



long distances to travel for water, and no fuel to collect. The Bwana contributes almost no services to the relationship, except for sometimes bringing his friends to drink his wife's beer.

This last is not as consistent a service as men provide for their women who sell beer in other African cities. Hellman states that the friends of a husband (whether of a legal or a temporary union) formed the core of the beer custom of every woman. (Hellman, 1948, p.41) Drinkers prefer to roam around Mathare at will, and do not form the permanent drinking groups like those described by Mayer in East London (Mayer, 1961) and by Pons for Stanleyville (Pons, 1961). Drinkers may frequent one woman more frequently than others, especially towards the end of the month when money is tight and men have to find credit at establishments where they are well known. Women did seem to expect that their Bwanas would bring their work mates to drink "for credit" at her house. What they didn't expect was that the Bwanas and their friends would drink full-time at their house. Perhaps men value their freedom too much to settle for this. Or perhaps this is another manifestation of the assumed transitoriness of the union. A woman who is not certain of the permanency of the union does not want to limit herself to her Bwana and his friends as customers, since should he leave, she will find herself without any customers at all. However since choosing low-risk credit customers is every seller's biggest business problem, and it is obvious why women like their Bwanas to bring their workmates to drink

for credit. This is usually a guarantee that she will be repaid, though sometimes this policy can back-fire. One seller was deeply in love with a CID policeman. He collected a drinking debt with her of almost K.sh.150/, while a couple of his friends had credit totaling nearly K.sh.100 over the course of their 3 month relationship. When he disappeared, the seller lost K.sh.250 in all. The neighbours all sympathized, but agreed that she had been 'foolish with love' to allow him to have such a large debt. It is interesting to note that the Bwanas of these women never drink for free, except when the woman is in a generous mood and offers him a 'free mukevi'. (tin) In almost all cases that I observed, the men paid for all that they drank. This is where the Real Marriages differed significantly. A legal husband expects to be able to drink free of his wife's beer; yet an impatient wife often sends her husband off to drink elsewhere, saying "Do you want me to make a profit on this brew, or not?"

There is another type of service that Bwanas (and lovers) can give their women in Mathare, and that is the benefit of their greater knowledge of and contact with the wider world of corporate business or civil service bureaucracy. This shades into patron-client type relationships, but frequently women in Mathare have as lovers or Bwanas men who are relatively rich or who have contacts or influence in the larger society. In some cases, shrewd women have managed to use the power and prestige of their past or present lovers (and it is always good policy to try

and remain on good terms with powerful ex-lovers) to obtain more than the normal amount of help and assistance. This help and assistance is not comprised of gifts of money and pretty clothes which characterize the exchanges between lovers, but involves the use of the man's contact or ability to distribute certain types of privileges or concessions. Gossip had it that one of the richest women in Mathare Village II owed some of her lucrative business ventures to an ex-lover who was a powerful man in Mathare. Another woman persuaded a man friend to sponsor her son for a job interview in his firm. This is a common occurrence throughout African cities. Obbo describes how city women in Kampala

befriend influential businessmen or civil servants 'of means' who become patrons and clients. These latter enjoy the company of these women, and at the same time can help them secure jobs or trade licenses in the Formal sector. (Obbo. 1975. p.293)

Mathare women are not so lucky. Other than the men of influence in the small arena of Mathare, very few powerful or influential men come to drink in Mathare. The average customer to Mathare's 'bars' are policemen, army enlisted men, self employed, unskilled and skilled labourers and perhaps clerks in middle positions in firms or civil service. The women of Mathare do not have much opportunity to 'befriend influential businessmen or civil servants.' The most they can do is befriend a police sergeant who may warn his friends not to harass her for bribes, or a middle level clerk who can get her son an interview for a job.

Town Marriage differs greatly from Real Marriage in

that both partners do not expect the relationship to last. "Town Bwanas never stay" was a remark constantly on the lips of Mathare's women sages; but the remark might as justly have been rephrased "Town Wives don't stay". One young woman made a revealing remark to me one day while discussing the recent break-up of a neighbour's 'marriage'. She said with a grin, "We (women in Mathare) are famous in Kenya, for dropping Bwanas because we anticipate trouble". In other words, both partners view the relationship as one which is to be dropped when trouble becomes too much to bear, or even if trouble seems imminent. There is built into these relationships a kind of self fulfilling prophecy; and men and women both display a lack of trust in the faithfulness of their partners. Women hold a stereotype of men which includes the characteristics of unreliability and fecklessness. It is felt that men will always move on to fresh experiences, and a woman must fight to hold them. Men also express frequently the belief that a woman of the type who lives in Mathare has been 'spoiled' by variety and has become incapable of sticking to one man. A man must always be ready for rivals.

This self-fulfilling prophecy is played out in a situation that offers maximum opportunities for meeting new sexual partners. The entire environment of beer selling with the resultant circulation of large numbers of men in the Valley is one where constant 'sexual pressure' is being applied to both sexes. Men and women then assess every situation in terms of possible rivals; and where there are

so many potential rivals, there are unlimited possibilities for jealousy and suspicion. Mama Kegio forbade one of her best friends to visit her in the company of her (the best friend's) Bwana.

She would always sit glancing suspiciously around to see if I or any other woman was looking at her Bwana, or even talking to him. If she noticed this happening she would start quarrelling and accusing me or another woman of trying to steal her Bwana. I got tired of this, so at last I told her to visit me alone.

A glance exchanged surreptitiously, a door locked in the middle of the day, a man seen coming out of a woman's house on a day when it is known she has no beer to sell: any of these seemingly trivial events can explode into a quarrel. This built-in suspicion and a social situation rife with opportunities for forming new relationships results in brief and quarrelsome relationships. The rapid turnover of Bwanas in the households of the women I knew, and the constant domestic friction that always preceded a break attest to this fact.

When the quarrelling starts, there exists little 'social cement' to hold the relationship together. There is no local mechanism to help settle domestic disputes on a constructive, supportive manner.

In the rural area of Kikuyuland marriage is imbedded in a social system which has a stake in maintaining the tie between husband and wife. "Without her (the wife) the homestead is broken, and therefore it is only when all efforts to keep the husband and wife together have failed that an action for divorce can be taken." (Kenyatta, 1962,

p. 176) This is as true today as in the times of which Kenyatta wrote. Women often described the visits and countervisits of the 'elders' from both sides that took place when a woman had fled to her father's house in the course of a domestic dispute. Not only does this going home to her father act as a safety valve to release tension, but the relative and interested elders of the village become involved in the dispute and soothe ruffled tempers and hurt feelings. The husband is constrained in his cruelty because he knows that his wife can go home to her father and brothers if he beats her too badly, and he may be forced to pay a stiff fine. "If a wife is ill-treated by her husband, she has the right to return to her father for protection, until such time as he pays a fine and promises not to ill-treat his wife again." (Kenyatta, p.178) The Bibi ya Town has no such recourse. There are rarely any older relatives living near enough to be either a refuge or a possible arbitrator in the case of a quarrel. Even if the relatives in the rural area are close enough to reach with a minimum of time and money, Mathare women rarely feel justified in turning to them for help in times of stress. The Bwana is not known to the parents, the relationship is perhaps of brief duration, and the woman is ashamed to take such troubles to her parents. As one woman expressed it to me, "My father would just call me a malaya if I went home after a quarrel with my Bwana." There is however, some evidence from the case studies I took of such quarrels that some women flee from unacceptable relationships (often

marked by violence) by making an extended visit to relatives in the rural areas. These visits are made as a last resort and signal the complete termination of the domestic menage. In some cases, when the man is unwilling to let the woman go, this seems to be the only way that she can literally escape from him.

### Mary and Njenga

Mary and Njenga had been living together for two years. They had had a child together. However Mary was unable to stay away from other men, and when Njenga was on duty at the GSU camp she would take casual lovers. Gradually they began to quarrel more and more violently. Nearly every weekend, Njenga would get drunk and accuse Mary of unfaithfulness (deservedly if neighbour's gossip was to be believed) and beat her. The beatings grew increasingly severe, as Njenga's frustration mounted. One night Mary ran away and begged to be admitted to the house of one of the important women leaders of the KANU committee. She admitted Mary hysterical and bleeding at 3 a.m. For more than an hour she talked to Mary inside, and Njenga outside. Njenga was enough in awe of this woman's redoubtable position and personality to prevent him from breaking into the house and dragging Mary away. Finally she told Mary that she could not 'seperate a man and wife' any longer and said that Mary would have to leave and return with Njenga. She told me that in such domestic quarrels the Kanu Youth Wing had no jurisdiction, unless the man was actually killing the woman. 'In Africa, a husband has the right to beat his wife,' she said sententiously. Mary left with Njenga, but tempers had cooled enough so that he didn't beat her any more that night.

The next day Mary returned to the woman leader to ask her advice. Mbuthia told her that as long as she stayed in Mathare, Njenga would not leave her alone. She advised Mary to go home to visit her Mother and take her child with her. 'Stay as long as it takes Njenga to forget you.'

The following day the women of the Kanu Committee met at Mary and Njenga's house and solemnly divided up all the furnishings. Both Mary and Njenga were there and were urged not to lie about which item was whose. When all the goods were divided up, the women took charge of all Mary's goods, locked the house (which was Mary's) and kept the key. Then one woman escorted Mary home to her Mother, some 20 miles outside of Nairobi, presumably to prevent Njenga from following her on the road. Njenga was given the advice to go back to his GSU barracks and

'forget this woman.' Mary was away for 3 months, though she continued to pay the rent on her house. Eventually she returned and picked up the threads of her beer brewing business, and no more was seen of Njenga.

This extended case history illustrates several points. Firstly the limited responsibility of the only local arbitrating body in the Valley, the Kanu Committee, which is an elected body of respected older people, usually called locally 'the Elders'. The Kanu Committee has been compared to the Elders of traditional Kikuyu custom by Marc Ross, a political scientist who did work in Mathare in 1967. (Ross, 1974) He points out that there are many structural and value continuities between the traditional institution and the urban institution; except that half of the Kanu Committee are women (unheard of in the traditional Elders) and that the disposition of cases heard by the Committee is different from those heard by the Elders. Due to the weakness of clan and extended family institutions in Mathare, the Committee is often called upon to hear many more cases involving members of the same household than traditionally would have been the case. Many of these cases involve the quarrels between town wives and their husbands. In examining 200 cases brought before the Committee there was the following Content Area Breakdown.

Fighting, arguments, verbal insults....	30%
Debt Collection .....	16%
Household Disputes, Sexual rights ....	16%
Theft .....	15%
Rights to property .....	13%
Other .....	10%
	<hr/> 100%



According to Ross one of the higher rates of resolution occurred in the category of Household Disputes; 56% of all such disputes reported were resolved. The only higher rate of successful resolution was in the category of Fighting. Unfortunately, for my purpose, this category of Household Disputes is much too crude a category. Many such disputes could involve room-mates, who quarrel about brewing rights or lovers. I maintain from personal observation of cases followed in the two years that I was there, that the successful resolution of domestic quarrels was extremely limited. In some cases, the Committee's warning to a man to stop beating his wife was successful. In most other cases the resolution consisted in insisting that the couple break up for their own good. The Kanu Woman leader tried to explain her role in such disputes.

I am often called in to hear cases on beatings. 'Mono, mono' (a lot a lot) almost every day. Usually when I go to speak to the man, he says that they are 'married' and it is none of my business. Men always say this and the case used to end there. One day I got the idea that it might be lies. I have a 6th sense for hearing lies. So I got the idea of telling them to summon their parents before the Committee to testify that they are 'really married'. Very few times does this turn out to be the case. If they are married the case is then turned over to the parents. If not, we warn the man. If he is called in several times, we do what we did for Mary (see case study of Mary and Njenga).

Sometimes men come and complain that the woman is drunk, doesn't cook or clean the children. Men ask me to advise their wives. Often they apologise and promise to be better. I act often in the capacity of parents in the 'Reserve'. The problem is that it is difficult to persuade people to do what is for their own good.

She could not, or would not, give an opinion of the success of this system of warning and counselling on local 'Town Marriages'. From my own impression, the Committee is often

asked to act in 'loco parenti', but does so with limited authority and few sanctions at its command. Even with this limited power the Kanu Committee serves the interests of women who wish to break relationships with lovers or Bwanas. First it provides women with the sanction to leave their Town husbands should they wish to. Secondly, it often acts directly to physically separate the two combatants, permanently. The reason that most of the cases cited involve men trying to keep reluctant women with them, is that when a man wants to leave a woman, he usually just disappears from Mathare and the woman has no recourse but to accept it. Women, who have a commitment to living in Mathare where they are renting a house and running their buzaa brewing business, do not want to leave Mathare and therefore they are more vulnerable to persecution. The Kanu Committee provides a partial protection under these circumstances, and supports the principal of the 'assumed transitoriness' of town unions. If the bridewealth has not been paid, then the Committee has no compunctions when recommending a break in the union after quarrels and fightings occur.

Thus Town Marriage, while structurally similar to Real Marriage in certain ways, differs in important respects from it. Some of the differences arise from the built-in expectations of the partners: the lack of bride-wealth payment symbolizes the lack of long-term commitment to the relationship by both parties, as well as the absence of any feeling of rights and duties by the putative father for his

children. Other differences arise from the different structural situation in which the two relationships are imbedded. In this case, the ability of women to earn money and rent a house makes the wife's resource contribution greater than her rural counterpart. In addition, Mathare's social milieu of what I have called high sexual pressure (on both sexes) linked with the absence of outside institutions or individuals committed to keeping the relationship functional means that the relationships are generally stormy and short lived.

#### Manipulations of Dependency Relationships.

A malaya's relationship with her man, a lover's relationship, a Town Marriage, and a Real Marriage are all different types of dependency relationships to be found between unrelated men and women. Despite the great differences in the relationships, they are all characterized by a greater or lesser dependency of the woman on her male partner who has greater access to resources than she. I have chosen to examine these four types of sexual unions which are also dependency relationships as if they were not water tight compartments but rather as if they lay along a continuum merging one into another. This is the closest approximation of the way Mathare women seem to view them. In Mathare women's ideology, all of these relationships embody a roughly comparable exchange of goods and services; some of them merely include more transactions spread out over a longer period of time. Thus a malaya's

relationship with her Night Bwana is of the shortest duration, includes only sexual service with a direct economic exchange and little emotional content. If one visualizes a continuum going from malaya through lover and Town Marriage to Real Marriage, there would be a quantitative increase in the number of functions, the emotional content, and the assumed duration of the relationship. Marriage, in the

CHART III

Morphological Continuum of  
Dependency Relationships

Malaya relationship	Lovers	Town Marriage	Real Marriage
Least emotional content - - - - -			Most emotional content
Shortest assumed duration - - - - -			Longest assumed duration
Fewest functions, or transactions - - - - -			Most functions, or transactions

traditional or modern legal sense of the institution has the widest range of functions (or looked at another way, transactions between partners). A partial list would include sex and its regulation; economic distribution; domestic services; companionship; raising and socializing and legitimizing of children; regulation of inheritance; the carrying on of the names of the grandparents; and the caring for the older generation. This relationship has perhaps the greatest affective content, and is of the longest assumed duration. By contrast, the malaya relationship is a male-female dyad which differs merely by being shorter and simpler with fewer emotional ties. Mathare women

verbalize this when they maintain that a malaya is merely doing part of a wife's work. "A malaya is a wife that doesn't clean for her husband." Surely a simplistic statement, but the message is clear; how can Mathare women view themselves as moral outcasts, when they are merely doing part of a wife's work.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, it is my contention that most women when they come to town enter first into a malaya type of relationship with male acquaintances. After this initial period, they may proceed in a variety of ways. They may get a house and take a lover; they may move in with a Town Bwana; they may choose to go on forming malaya relationships. The continuum proposed in the above paragraphs is not meant in any way to be a diachronic continuum, but a morphological one. It could hardly be diachronic since most women come to town after the dissolution of a Real Marriage. During their urban career, at the same time, or at different times women will enter into the three major types of male-female dependency relationships. Only rarely does a Mathare woman enter into a Real Marriage in town after a period of strategizing as a malaya, lover, and Town Wife. Later in this section I will give one such case and the reactions of the woman's friends to this atypical move.

But before I come to a strategy of forming a Real Marriage I wish to present two case studies which will illustrate the strategizing of different women at particular points in their lives.

### Jolly Jane

Jane, whom I call Jolly for obvious reason, was 30 years old, barren, and a successful beer brewer. Her unvarying good humour and joking made her very popular with her female neighbours and her men customers alike. During the whole period I knew her, Jane had a Town Bwana, a young Arab who was handsome and employed as a highly paid, long distance oil tanker driver. Jane was very proud of him, and displayed his photograph on her walls. However, Ahmed was often away from Nairobi on his long distance trips. One day, Jane confided to me that the two well dressed office workers that often came to drink at her place were her lovers. They knew about each other and Ahmed, but Ahmed did not know about them. She maintained that a woman should have a 'Bwana ya kuzaidia' (helping Bwana) and a couple 'Bwana ya zawadi' (Bwana of gifts) if she was not shortsighted. She explained that Ahmed was young, as yet unmarried but with strong family ties. Some day he would marry a woman of his mother's choosing; and Jane felt that he would then no longer stay in Mathare, but would be faithful to his wife. Jane's deception was successful partly because she was so loved by her neighbours that no one ever breathed a word to Ahmed about her lovers. Jane said she preferred 'friends' (lovers) to Quick Service customers because it was safer and more fun; but she did laughingly add once that in the case of an emergency all women might have to take a Quick Service man.

### Njoki

Njoki was a beautiful woman in her mid-thirties, divorced with her two sons living with their maternal grandmother on a shamba Njoki had bought. Njoki was one of the more successful, younger, New Comer entrepreneurs in Mathare. When I first met her she had a lover, a certain policeman named Sam, who had a wife and 7 children living in a house he owned in Eastleigh. He was relatively well off, and Njoki often boasted of the nice things he gave her (e.g. record player).

Six months after I met Njoki, she started to flirt with a much younger man named Alan, who was a petrol station attendant, much less well off than Sam, but unmarried. Perhaps she hoped to have both as lovers, but she had not bargained on Sam's touchy pride and the betrayal of her neighbours. Unlike Jane, Njoki did not get on well with her neighbours, frequently attacking them with her sharp tongue for various misdemeanours. Her neighbours thought her 'proud' (an insult for Kikuyus) and I suspect they willingly

took this opportunity to take her down a peg or two. When Sam found out about his rival, it was whispered that a certain woman, often insulted by Njoki for dirtiness, had told him. At any rate, Sam repudiated Njoki in a rage, and for weeks could be found loudly mourning the perfidity of women while drinking in the neighbourhood. He claimed that he had been about to buy a house for Njoki in Eastleigh, but had now transferred the deed to his wife. If this was true, Njoki had made a serious miscalculation.

After Sam's departure, Alan moved in with Njoki. For 6 months they lived in harmony, until one day Alan went home to visit his mother and returned with a young wife of his mother's choosing. Alan explained that his mother was longing for grandchildren and had forced him to marry. His mother was living with a relative, and there was no family land, so Alan rented a house for his young wife in another village of Mathare. Alan now divided his time between his two establishments. At this point Njoki began to show discontent with the relationship. They quarrelled frequently; neighbours said it was usually about money. Obviously Alan was finding it a financial strain supporting two women on his salary, and Njoki was having to do with less money.

4 or 5 months after Alan's marriage, Njoki began entertaining some of her beer drinking customers at odd times when Alan was on duty (either at his job, or with his Real Wife.) Whether the motive was purely financial, or whether Njoki realized that Alan was about to give her up completely, I do not know. The final rift was precipitated by a neighbour dropping a hint in Alan's ear. There was a violent fight, and Njoki was forced to flee to the house of an influential Kanu leader to avoid being cut up with a 'panga' (a long knife for cutting grass.) Frightened by Alan's threat to kill her, Njoki closed up her room and went home to her mother's to nurse her black eyes and her anger against her neighbours, whom she rightly suspected of having betrayed her. Alan was never again seen in Village II, having been warned off by the Kanu Youth Wing.

When Njoki returned after 3 weeks of rustication, she made several unsuccessful attempts to attract Sam again. Eventually, she formed a lover relationship with one of the men she had been entertaining with Quick Service in the period before the break up with Alan.

There are a number of interesting points of comparison and contrast to be found in these two case histories. For one thing women could manipulate the situation because Lovers or Twon Husbands were often away a great deal either because they were working or living with Real Wives elsewhere in town.

Jane was obviously cleverer in her juggling, since, to my certain knowledge, this state of affairs continued undisturbed for more than 3 years. Also Jane was well liked by her female neighbours, whereas Njoki's sharp tongue had made her enemies. In both instances of discovery, there was more than a hint of a betrayal by neighbours who didn't like her. This is one rule for successful juggling of men; there must be no one around who can get revenge by revealing secrets to the man. Hellman describes a similar situation in Rooiyard, where most wives practice prostitution on the side. "Unless they quarrel, they do not reveal this fact to the husbands".

The aspect of strategizing for the future is visible in both case studies. Jane thought that her very young Bwana was only a temporary affair. His strict religious observance, and his strong ties with his family convinced Jane that it was only a matter of time before he married and "settled down". Perhaps Jane was misinterpreting his religious orthodoxy, for I do not think that strict Islamic observance precludes keeping a mistress. What is important is what Jane obviously believed, while she kept relationships with other men going. While Njoki was obviously attracted to Alan, unwisely as it turned out, she may have seen it as economically advantageous to have a man with a smaller salary but no family obligations. When this turned out to be abortive, because Alan suddenly married, she turned to Quick Service to add to her income. I have not the slightest doubt that the objections Njoki raised to Alan's marriage stemmed from the economic loss it caused



her.

The two case studies above also illustrate that few women in Mathare ever expect to become Real Wives. Jane did not expect Ahmed to marry her. Njoki was not (at least overtly) jealous that Alan married; she merely objected to the loss of revenue and the fact that the wife was living so close, since she feared being beaten by Alan's wife. In my 2½ years in Mathare, I only witnessed 4 marriages. Three of these involved young girls, one only was an older independent woman.

#### Mainafu's Marriage

Mainafu was a heavy set, ugly woman with a squint and a rather dour personality. She was in her late forties, and had lived 20 years in Nairobi after having been divorced for barrenness. Her childless state saddened her greatly. She was a clever businesswoman, and had a thriving beer brewing business, and had been allocated a house in New Mathare. When she was allocated a new house, her mud and wattle units were torn down and Mainafu began to operate her beer brewing business out of the house of John, who ran a wholesale maize flour business in Village II. John had recently lost his wife and had 6 motherless children staying with him in Mathare. Gradually Mainafu spent more and more time cooking and caring for these children until she rented out her new house, and moved in as full-time Town Wife. She was very loving to the 6 children.

After a year of this arrangement, John announced that they were going to be married in the Catholic church. This news was received with disbelieving shock by friends and neighbours. Opinion seemed to be divided between a feeling that John was getting the worst deal (Mainafu was a well known malaya, and generally regarded as a very ugly woman, 'an old bag' as they called her in Kikuyu) and a feeling that Mainafu was foolish to give up her freedom.

After the marriage Mainfu was settled on John's shamba (farm) with the children. John continued to live in town, managing his business and collecting the rent from Mainafu's house. Friends who went to visit her said she was lonely and missed her friends, but that she loved the children.

What I found most interesting about this case were the

reactions of the observers. The complete stunned surprise with which the initial announcement was greeted shows how rare an occurrence it is for a Town Marriage to evolve into a Real Marriage. Those who thought that John had made a bad bargain by marrying 'an old bag' were obviously only thinking of the sexual aspect of marriage. He married a good manager who loved his children, and all admitted that she had much money saved, as well as the house she owned in New Mathare. John certainly had access now to the rent from her house, perhaps K.sh 150/ a month after the mortgage payments. Those who commented negatively on Mainafu's decision to marry John were mainly concerned with her loss of economic independence. Most of them thought that she was obsessed by dying alone, having no children, and was willing to give up her economic independence for the chance to be a mother to his 6 children. It is possible that there was more than a tinge of jealousy in the malicious comments made about Mainafu's marriage. Perhaps some envied her new 'respectability', in the conventional sense. It is difficult to know. Such ambivalence would be a very human reaction.

#### Patrons, Brokers and Female Clients

The last form of dependency relationship that women form in Mathare is that of political patron and client. I must hasten to add that these are not unique to women in Mathare, Nairobi or Kenya. In the words of Eric Wolf, patron-client relationships are functional where formal

institutional structures of society are weak and unable to deliver a steady supply of goods and services. It is an instrumental relationship in which the reciprocal element is carried to the ultimate disbalance: the patron providing economic aid and protection and the client providing fame, information and political support. (Wolf, 1966, p.16)

A patron is a person who has a better access to resources than clients do and thus a different access to power.

(Boissevain, J. 1969) Boissevain makes a distinction between patrons and brokers; the latter being those who dispense "second order resources" such as strategic contacts, with those who have "first order resources" of land, work, and scholarships. This type of relationship falls under the rubric of a dependency relationship as I have defined it at the beginning of the chapter. The patron (or broker) has access to resources desired by the client. Thus there is a built-in asymmetry in the relationship; but the client must reciprocate with loyalty, support and services such as information.

Women in Mathare form patron-client relationships with local leaders, who are both patrons and brokers at the same time. These patrons are certain of the early arrivals to Mathare who were "the first to build on the land." The process whereby certain early builders became leaders locally (and thus patrons) was not clear to me, nor was it a question that concerned me at the time. Ross, who did work in 1967 on political integration, reached no conclusion on how particular leaders obtained power in the first instance.

"The leaders' authority within the community rests on their ability to induce compliance with their decisions." (Ross, 1973, p.173) The leaders are all Kikuyu, fairly old (at least late middle aged), relatively well off in the community (house and business owners), poorly educated, usually unemployed, landless, and had been connected with Mau Mau activity during the Emergency. For example, 73% of the leaders had been detained during the Emergency as compared to 27% of the total Mathare population. (Op Cit.) These leaders formed the Kanu Committees and Youth Wing Leaders of the various villages.

Half of the leaders of the Committees, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter are women. This is a departure from the traditional Kikuyu institution of the Elders, from which the Kanu Committees derive (Ross, 1974) where women had their own Age and Generation Sets to manage their affairs. Though women hold positions on the committees, the most important offices are monopolized by men. There is a Women's Leader for each village, and a woman to head the sub-committee concerned with the running of the Nursery School. Thus it is obvious that male politicians are more important as patrons and brokers than their female counterparts. The men leaders seemed to be more sophisticated and secure in meeting the agencies of the larger society that contribute the resources for Mathare politicians to distribute.

The village leaders act as patrons to their women clients because they have had access to two first-order resources:

the right to build in Mathare, and the new houses in New Mathare. The early leaders, as was explained earlier, had to give permission to build. Though they didn't own the land, they were distributing rights to build on certain plots of land. The most important resource of all came to the Committees to distribute in 1973 when a joint City Council and National/<sup>Christian</sup>Council of Kenya project of 400 housing units and a slightly larger number of Site and Service units came up for allocation. Admittedly the Committee did not have sole responsibility for distributing these units to Mathare residents. The Kany leaders met with the District Officer, representatives of the NCKK and City Council, and the MP for the area to decide which house owners in Old Mathare were to receive the new houses or the Site and Service plots. But in the process of distribution, it became obvious that favourite clients were being given favoured treatment. The residents of Mathare were very well aware of this and stated it as a reason why one woman received a house, while another, with more units in Old Mathare and a longer residential history than the first, did not. "Watu wa Ndururu" (the people of Ndururu, the Councillor and strong man of Mathare) will receive the houses" was a common statement in those exciting days when the residents of Mathare were awaiting the final distribution of the housing units. Two women, who were Old Timers and owners of houses in Old Mathare, but ancient enemies of Ndururu were left out of the list for distribution. The common sentiment was that they had lost their chance by opposing Ndururu in the last election

and supporting another candidate.

Ndururu came up for re-election as City Councillor in 1974 and was opposed by the All Mathare Secretary of Kanu. As the factions lined up behind the respective candidates, it was often explained to me that so-and-so had to support one or the other of the candidates because he had been responsible for that person receiving a house. The clients in this instance lined up behind their patrons to repay their debt with political support. Similarly, ex-clients who felt that they had not received a house in New Mathare when they deserved one, took their anger out on their ex-patron by supporting his political rival. Particularly rabid <sup>who</sup> anti-Ndururu factions in the elections of '74/ used to walk through the village singing scurrilous songs which cast aspersions on Ndururu's mental and sexual capacities and morals, were often described (by themselves and others) as "those who were cheated out of houses."

Village leader patrons control the management of certain services such as the water supplies and the Nursery School and supervise the collection of money for water and school fees. The Committee also makes collections throughout the village for various purposes to pay transportation of a body home for burial, or to pay a police fine for a woman recognised as too poor to pay for herself. This gives the patrons control over sums of public money which they collect and distribute. If one regards protection and public order as a 'first order resource', the Committee has its Youth Wing, a local vigilante group, which patrols the village,

settles local disputes, and often administers rough justice on the spot to recalcitrant drunks or disputants.

Village leaders also act as brokers, because they occupy a strategic place in the communication net-work and can put local clients in touch with officials in the larger government. "One of the most important services that the village leaders render is mediation between people in the community and the bureaucratic structures in the wider society." (Ross, 1973, p. 174) Clients ask brokers to intercede for them with the institutions of the City of Nairobi and the central government, or to seek advice on how to get what they want. The Chairman of Kanu makes periodic representations to the police to lessen "their corrupt practices" in regard to bribery. Kanu officials help women who are arrested for various offences, and notify the social workers of City Council or the National Christian Council of Churches when certain individuals are in dire need of monetary assistance. Ross cites many cases of this type of intercession and assistance. My own data is filled with a multitude of similar cases. The residents of the villages automatically turn to their leaders when they are faced with difficulties such as filling in job applications, or obtaining free milk for children.

When Mathare residents, turn to leaders for specific help, they become clients of certain patron-brokers. In each village there are a cluster of people attached to each of the major leaders of the Kanu Committees. These patron-client dependency relationships are not restricted to female

clients alone. Poor urban residents, whether male or female, form patron-client relationships to obtain protection services, or first order resources. In traditional Kikuyu society certain rich men may well have been patrons in the rural society. Later during the colonial period the chiefs created by the Colonial Administrators fulfilled the role of patrons or brokers. However, in both the pre-colonial and colonial era, patrons would have had only men as their clients. A woman would have had no need to contact a patron or broker directly, since this would have been done by the male relative that she was dependent upon. However, when a woman has broken the ties that bound her in the rural area, and has entered the urban social field as a head of a household, she enters into patron-client relationships in her own right.

Women in Mathare also attempt, with less success, to form patron-client relationships with leaders in the National Government, such as MP's and even President Kenyatta himself. Certain older Kikuyu women formed dance groups that are often called upon to perform at public events. Sometimes these groups go to sing at Kenyatta's country home, or go in a delegation to an MP that they wish to petition. Here they sing songs praising the political leaders and outlining the troubles of the people of Mathare.

Not only dance groups go to perform before real or potential patrons in the wider political arena. I have mentioned earlier delegations from Mathare residents that approached Tom Mboya (MP for the area), and at another time



President Kenyatta, to beg for the survival of Mathare's community. As far as I could ascertain, Mathare residents' (men or women) attempts to form those higher level patron-client relationships have not been very successful. This is easy to understand in Bailey's transactional terms (1969). Mathare residents have little to offer a potential patron, since they are the least articulate and least wealthy urban residents. A potentially powerful patron is unlikely to expend much of his material and moral resources to bind them to him tightly. Mathare residents have little political weight and no "channels open to rival leaders", and thus have no way to change teams. (Ibid. p.75) So Mathare men and women go on sending delegations and making humble petitions for changes that will never take place.

One exception might be the delegation that appealed to Kenyatta in 1969.<sup>3</sup> This delegation of leaders, and house owners, both men and women went to beg him to stop the bulldozing of Mathare being carried out by City Council. They told him that they had fought for Kenya's freedom in the Mau Mau and now had no land. Their houses in Mathare were all they had; their houses were their 'shambas' (farms). They begged to be left in peace because of what they had done to help Kenya in her fight. As a leader of the Mau Mau and the Father of his nation, Kenyatta depends for his political power on the propagation of an ideology, a moral resource (Ibid, p.60). Thus the Mathare residents fall into a category of the 'faithful' to Kenyatta, bound to him by the ideology of the Mau Mau and their mutual

'kikuyu-ness'. To quote Bailey once more, the 'faithful' make their gift to the cause and impose the obligation on the leader "not merely to serve the cause..(and he) must expend resources to keep the lamp shining brightly."

(Ibid, p. 37) The ex-freedom fighters of Mathare, both men and women, called in their debt and to maintain his credibility as a moral leader of the Kikuyu, Kenyatta may have felt it was important to make this gesture that undoubtedly cost him little but meant so much to the residents of Mathare Valley. A telephone call, a hint to the right person would have been all it needed to convince City Council to re-think its stance towards Mathare. Mathare women, because many of them had participated actively in the Mau Mau freedom fight, were part of this appeal to ideology made by Kikuyu patrons to their client.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have viewed male-female relationships in a transactional sense; examining them in terms of exchange of goods and services. I have hypothesized that in Kenya most male-female relationships (excluding those of the urban elite) can be characterized as 'dependency relationships.' A dependency relationship is a dyadic status set in which one party has a greater access to resources than the other. Therefore there is an asymmetry in the provision of goods or resources. Conversely there is an asymmetry in the provision of services, since the dependent party usually provides more service. In one sense the relation-

ship is actually reciprocal, for each party needs the other to survive. However, if viewed from the point of view of resources, it is the woman who is the dependent party in her relationship with male relatives and her husband.

When women migrate to the city, at least the category of poor female migrant that I found in Mathare, they usually broke (or have had broken by circumstances beyond their control) these dependency relationships with affines. Upon settling in Nairobi, and or Mathare, they form other types of sexual dependency relationships with men: those of a malaya, a lover, a Town Wife, or a client. These relationships are formed and broken at the discretion of the woman and are of a shorter duration than the rural dependency relationships women enter into. Therefore women can and do manipulate these relationships for maximum economic advantage. They form and break relationships, and often run different kinds of relationships simultaneously, picking and choosing among the various men in their lives on the basis of what these men have to offer.

In this chapter I described the differences and similarities between these types of dependency relationships which are also sexual unions. While there are important structural differences, I have chosen not to put them in water-tight analytical categories, but to place them instead on a continuum based on duration of time, number of functions, and emotional content. This is in keeping with the ideology of the women of Mathare themselves, who feel that as malayas, lovers, or Town Wives, they are doing a 'wife's work.'

An important aspect of the above mentioned classification of dependency relationships is that as duration, functions and emotional content increase, female dependence on her male partner also increases. It seems that the more transaction and functions there are to bind a man and a woman together, the greater the asymmetry of access to resources. This is one aspect of marriage and other consensual unions which needs further exploration. It is possible that the control of procreation could be the significant variable in the need for society to limit woman's economic independence, and mobility, as well as to control her sexuality. The most economically independent and sexually independent women are those least dependent on men.

I have also pointed out that there may be a common pattern of urban career for women. This will be developed further in a following chapter. Many women who break their marital ties and come to town, frequently begin their urban careers as malayas. This is an easy, relatively lucrative way to get money from men that requires no new skills. But it is also dangerous, and perhaps less emotionally satisfying. Most women subsequently form more durable dependency relationships with men they meet in this way, while beginning a business activity like hawking or brewing beer.

# CHAPTER V - FOOTNOTES

1. In a case like this it is impossible to say why certain women migrated and others remained behind. Certainly all widowed, landless, divorced, or barren women, or girls with children out of wedlock, do not leave the rural social field for the urban one. Without further research in the rural area, one is reduced to mere speculation. Structural factors might account for differential migration: the woman's natal family might have enough land, or a member of her family could be in wage employment, or she might be an only child. Psychological factors could also be important; i.e. the relationship between the woman and her family, or the personality of the woman herself. Halpenny has suggested that only the most energetic and adventurous woman migrated to Kampala. (Halpenny, 1975)
2. I cannot deal here with elite, urban marriages where educated women work at high paying jobs.
3. The reason I say 'might' is that there is no way now for a researcher to easily reconstruct the events of 1969 leading up to City Council's adoption of a softer line on Mathare. There is no way to know for certain whether or not President Kenyatta took an interest in Mathare's fate. I am assuming that Mathare resident's folk history of the incident is largely true because it does explain an otherwise unexplained about-face by City Council on the question of Mathare's survival.

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## CHAPTER VI

### REORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

#### AMONG WOMEN IN MATHARE

##### INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I examined some of the changes in dependency relationships formed by women migrants to Mathare. Such migrants cease to allocate time and energy to the maintenance and manipulation of dependency relationships with fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. Instead they form and use to their economic advantage new dyadic status sets with men as malayas, lovers, Town Wives, and clients. However, women migrants also reorganize their social relations with other women as well as with men. Women consolidate their positions in town by restructuring old relationships and forming new relationships with other women. In order to provide for the various contingencies of the new environment and new concerns, women reorganize the reciprocal status sets of mother-daughter and sister-sister. They also form new types of women's groups: instrumental friendship networks to help in the buzaa brewing process, and formal associations such as dancing societies and land buying cooperatives.

##### MOTHER-DAUGHTER STATUS SET REORGANIZED

Undoubtedly, the tie between Mother and Daughter was always a close emotional relationship, whether we are talking

about traditional Kikuyu culture, or modern village Kikuyu life. Before the advent of modern education, the mother instructed her daughter in all the domestic skills and activities which were necessary to her woman's role. She taught (and still teaches) "her daughter all things concerning the domestic duties of a wife in managing and harmonising the affairs of a homestead." (Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, 1962, p.100). The girl is often in the fields with her mother (Ibid. p. 102); and should she marry close to her father's house, she will continue to come and cultivate her childhood gardens in order to have the produce for the use of herself and her husband. This means that she would undoubtedly be working near her mother and perhaps sharing weeding or planting tasks with her. (Ibid. p. 55) However, usually the tie between Mother and Daughter is, after marriage, an emotional-psychological tie rather than socio-economic one. Most of the interactions between Mother and Daughter consist of visits back and forth and the naming of the daughter's second girl child after the old mother. One would surmise that this tie remains stronger where the daughter's married home is close to her natal home. That would mean the possibility of frequent visiting and perhaps the daughter's being able to help her mother in daily tasks of water fetching or looking for firewood. In these days of labour migration and land purchase resulting in greater geographical mobility, married women are less and less able to live close to their own parents.

The closest tie between Mother and child usually

develops between Mother and Son, since the Mother expects to live with the son in a separate house built for her near his own. In almost all of the rural households which I visited this was the residential pattern when the Mother was a widow. In only one case out of 24 was the wife's Mother living with the daughter and her husband. Therefore, in terms of day to day transactions, the Mother Son relationship was the more important. It was the son that housed and fed his Mother. This tie had its traditional basis in the fact that in the polygamous households, each wife worked her fields for her own children. As has been mentioned before, a wife did not actually own the fields she worked but held them in trust for her sons. Therefore, the sons who took over the fields at their "coming of age" and setting up of their own households were responsible for the care of the old mother when her husband died.

Traditionally the severing of the tie between a girl and her natal family was symbolically represented both by the ritual kidnapping of the bride, the couvade described by Kenyatta, (Ibid. p. 164-7) and the subsequent adoption of the new wife into the clan of her husband. After the adoption, a day was fixed for the girl to visit her family to receive her parents' blessing. On her way she was supposed to act as if she was blind and was led by a small girl. This can be seen as representing the severing of the tie between a daughter and her parents: the girl no longer "knows the way" to her parent's house and must be led like a blind person to their house to receive their blessings and



gifts to start her married life. From the time of the marriage, until such time as there should be a dispute or a break between husband and wife, the wife is supposed to give her full allegiance to her husband's family.

Thus for a Mother, the most important of her children are her sons. In the first place it is by producing sons that a wife gains a high status in the household. Though traditionally girls were important to the family unit because they brought bridewealth, sons who would stay to contribute labour and protection to the group were most desirable. A woman who produced only daughters might even be divorced. This, of course, is more likely now in modern village Kikuyu land where polygamy is becoming the exception rather than the rule. Several of my informants had been divorced because they had had only daughters. Secondly, sons are, as I have pointed out, important to a woman because it is to them that a woman turns in her widowed old age. This is certainly part of the value system of almost all of the women that I interviewed in Mathare. They spoke most often of their 'sons' taking care of them in their old age, rather than their 'daughters' or 'children'. Ironically, as will be discussed presently, it seems that things will probably not work out as these mothers hope. For various reasons that will be discussed later on, sons in Mathare will probably be less important to their mothers' old age than will be the daughters.

The mother-daughter status set as I observed it in Mathare was being restructured in a number of ways. Women

in Mathare can be divided into those who have their mothers in the rural areas and those whose mothers also live in the urban area, often in Mathare. For each group the restructuring has been different. For the first group, a whole new set of transactions is now taking place revolving around the fostering of children with the mother's mother in the rural area and the financial help given by the urban daughter to her rural mother. For many of those daughters with mothers living in Nairobi or Mathare, an increasingly common restructuring of the relationship is the development of a matrifocal extended domestic unit.

#### Fostering of Children

Fostering of children is not uncommon in Africa. It is defined as "all forms of childhood residence with persons other than the natural parents involving the exercise of some parental rights and obligations by persons other than the natural parents, but not the surrender of rights by the natural parents." (Schildkrout, 1973, p. 51) In West Africa fostering of children is seen as a natural solution to many family crises. Children may be sent to live with relatives because the natal family has broken up, in order that they may be taught skills not available at home (such as carpentry or sewing), to help in a grandparent's home, or to cement family ties. Migrants' children may be sent home so that they will learn the parents' languages and grow up to be familiar with the customs and relatives of the ancestral home. It is not uncommon that a child will be

sent to stay with a relative employed in an urban area in order that he may attend the school there. Sometimes it operates in reverse, with the parents sending the child to stay with rural relatives because it is easier to be admitted to schools in the rural area. It is even thought that a child will be better disciplined by others than by his parents, who might tend to indulge him, and therefore the child fostered with a relative will grow into a better-trained adult. (Goody, 1966) Most fostering is fostering with a relative, but some non-kin fostering has been observed in West African cities. Schildkrout has described the formation of fictive kin ties between residents of Kumasi in Ghana. This non-kin fostering occurs often between patron and clients and serves the function of adding a new set of rights and obligations associated with kinship to an otherwise purely politic-economic relationship; though in certain cases equals, such as good friends, may establish fictive kin ties to foster each other's child in order to raise the relationship to another level of intimacy. (Schildkrout, 1973)

There has been little work done on fostering in traditional or modern Kenya. The subject is not mentioned in any of the standard sources on traditional Kikuyu society. There are, to my knowledge, no current studies or statistics of the custom in modern urban Kenya.

It was my personal observation that kin fostering in East Africa is not uncommon. Rural to urban fostering transactions are found in elite families living in town,

where the child of a poor rural relative is taken into the household. Sometimes the child is brought to help provide domestic services, and is paid by being given a small salary or by having his school fees paid. Sometimes the child is raised as a member of the family. The incidence of such types of fostering must vary from culture to culture; and it is my impression, supported by others, that it is less frequent among the Kikuyu than it would be among the Luo. It occurs among the Luo but is not as institution-alized on the West African scale. (Parkin, personal communication)

Urban to rural kin fostering, the type of fostering to be discussed in this section, is undoubtedly correlated with economic status. The higher the economic status of a family, the less likely it would be that it would send its children to stay with rural relatives. The Kikuyu elite in Kenya are thoroughly committed to a Western style of life, and naturally can give their children the advantages of excellent housing, private schools, and servants to care for them. There are no practical reasons to send the children to live with rural relatives. In addition, such families are eager that their children should gain the best education and adopt the new western-derived, elite life-style so as to enter the elite later on themselves. For such people the advantages of living in the rural area and learning the old ways would not be very important. In many elite families the children speak English as a first language and barely know their parent's language. They visit rural relatives infrequently,

and on the occasions that I witnessed, it was interesting how uncomfortable and ill at ease the children were: frightened by the cows, unhappy about the food, bored and restless until it was time to leave. Mwangi Ruheni in his novel about a young Kikuyu engineer raising his family in Nairobi, What a Life, captures this culture gap very succinctly.

(Father to his son) 'Gerald, can you tell me where you come from? I mean which is your home area?'  
 'Where do I come from? I think we come from somewhere called Makadara.' (Makadara is a neighbourhood in Nairobi)

'OK Gerald, I will tell you the answer. You come from Nyeri. Do you remember where we went to when I came back from Europe? The place where we saw grandfather, grandmother, and a lot of uncles? The place where a goat was slaughtered for us?'

'Oh, yes, I remember. All the houses were full of smoke and there was no toilet. We came home with a football-like piece of African meat.'

For elite children it seems that the rural area is fast becoming a place where houses are inconvenient, and uncomfortable and food unedible. It is to people for whom urban life is crowded, uncomfortable, and uncertain that rural life is most attractive. It is the low income urban residents such as women in Mathare who are forced by high cost of living, crowded housing conditions, crowded urban schools, and poor social conditions to send one or more of their children to live with rural relatives. Such people may even regard rural life as idyllic and serene, far from the stresses and fears of urban life.

#### Fostering Transactions In Mathare.

My data on fostering transactions in Mathare are taken

from my Sample Survey, my Life History sample, and my field notes. Table 5 summarizes the incidence of fostering and the foster parent.

Table 5            Incidence of Fostering Transactions  
                         and Foster Parents

		Sample Survey 41 mothers out of a possible 123 (33.3%)	Life History Sample 27 mothers out of a possible 65 (41.5%)
Foster Parents	Informant's mother(rural area)	33	18
	Informant's mother (urban)	2	2
	Informant's sister	3	4
	Informant's husband's mother	2	3
	Informant's brother	1	4
	Informant's uncle or aunt	1	-
	Informant's friend	1	-
	Total +	43	31

+ discrepancies in total occur because some women had fostered a child with more than one relative.

For both groups of women, I calculated the number of mothers. There were 123 mothers out of the 150 informants in the Sample Survey. Out of 89 Life History Informants, only 65 had children.<sup>1</sup> As can be seen, 33.3% of the Sample Survey mothers, and 41.5% of the Life History mothers have fostered one or more children. The discrepancy can

be explained by the fact that I collected no diachronic data on fostering when questioning the Sample Survey informants. When questioning Life History informants I also elicited data on past fostering transactions.

As can be seen, the great proportion of recipient foster parents are mothers' mothers. Table 61, which also includes data from an additional 29 cases recorded in my field notes, shows the great importance of the mother's mother, by converting the number of these transactions to a percentage of the total number of transactions.

Table 61      Fostering Transactions With Mother's Mother

	Total Transactions	Number with Mother's Mo.	Percentage
Survey Sample	43	33	76.7%
Life History	31	18	58%
Field Notes	29	25	86 %
Total	103	76	73.6%

The average percentage of these mother's-mother fostering exchanges is 73.6%. Interestingly enough there is considerable variation in the percentages. Only 58% of the Life History respondents fostered their children with their mothers, as opposed to 76.7% and 86% respectively of the other two categories. It is difficult to account for this. It may be that since a number of the cases of fostering transactions recorded in the Life History interviews

had taken place many years ago, in some cases as long as 25 years ago. It is possible that if my data could permit a careful diachronic examination of fostering transactions in Nairobi it would reveal a trend away from other types of fostering for example with siblings. It may also be that women now not married, but married in the past when the fostering took place, fostered their child with relatives of the husband. At any rate, the average percentage total indicates a strong tie between mother and daughter, the implications of which I will return to further on.

#### Reasons for Fostering

First, it is necessary to go into some of the reasons Mathare women have for fostering their children with a relative. A fairly high proportion of women in Mathare (one third to nearly a half) are or have fostered a child with a relative. There are five major reasons: the high cost of living in the city, inadequate housing, difficulties of combining motherhood and income-getting activities, educational strategies, a belief in the rural area as the best place to rear children, and the need of relatives for children. I will examine each one of these in turn.

Cost of living in the urban area is admittedly high. I calculated from observations and budgets filled in by some respondents, that a woman with four children could spend on average 10 shillings a day to maintain a moderate diet without much protein. For those women who have a mother in the rural area with a field at her disposal, leaving a child or children with the mother is a great saving. Much of the



food that the children consume could be raised in the fields, and the children's labour could be employed after school as soon as they were old enough. Margaret, who left two of her four children with her brother was especially lucky, since he was a man with a rich 'shamba' (farm) with cash crops and this was his way of helping his sister. He paid the two childrens' school fees and they visited her during holidays. Njoki, on the other hand had worked hard enough to save money to obtain land with a building society. She had then settled her mother on the land with her two boys, aged 9 and 11. The mother cultivated the land with the help of the boys. In this case Njoki paid the school fees for the boys and made visits once a month to take clothes or luxuries such as tea and sugar to her Mother and her sons. Njoki calculated that keeping her sons with her Mother saved her much money. When pressed to elaborate, she estimated that she spent twice as much on food when the boys stayed with her. The Mother, with the boys' help, grew enough maize, beans and potatoes to provide their staple diet during the year; while Njoki settled a bill at a village store of approximately 30 shillings a month for staples. Njoki spent nearly K.sh.7/ each day when the boys lived with her, and only K.sh.4/ when she was alone. That is an estimated gross saving of K.sh.90/ in a month. If one subtracts the monthly store bill and bus fare, totalling K.sh. 40/, one is left with a net monthly saving of 50 shillings. Njoki's monthly intake from buzaa brewing was approximately K.sh.400 (moderately high on average for Mathare brewers,) so one

can see that this saving is a significant amount of her monthly income.

Housing in Mathare is also expensive, and few women can do more than rent a single room; more often than not they have to share this with another woman and her children. This means crowding, especially as the children grow older and cannot sleep three to a bed. This crowding is exacerbated when a woman runs a buzaa brewing and selling business out of the domestic premises. Customers, equipment, fermenting flour, and beer fill every available space. Children have to play outside, and go to sleep with people sitting on their beds.

Being confined to one room creates a situation of awkwardness for a woman as her children become older. Most women think it shameful for children to witness a mother's sexual activity, especially when it is with a number of different men. Partly this arises from a conviction that children should not learn the intimate details of sex at too early an age.

It is not good for children to learn about what adults do in bed too soon. Otherwise they start to experiment too early and girls become pregnant at 12.

Children should not learn about sex. It spoils their heads. That is why my children stay with my mother.

Small children copy grown up behaviour, small children learn drinking and bad behaviour. They sleep in the same room with parents and learn about sex. In the nursery school where I teach, I find little 5 year olds behind the school practicing sex. This would never happen home in 'reserve'. The child would not learn about these things so early. In reserve children sleep apart

from parents. ('reserve' (the country).)

In town many parents sleep with children in one room and this is shameful as the children learn early about sex and this is bad.

There also seems to be an implied feeling that it is better that children not know that their mother had sexual relations with more than one man. Whether or not this indicates uncertainty about the new sexual mores adopted by Mathare women is difficult to know. It could also indicate an awareness that the outside world defines this type of sexual activity as immoral, and a desire to keep this from the children as long as possible, so that the child will not call his mother an insulting name in a quarrel.

It is bad for children to know that their mother sleeps with many men. That way when they grow up they might call her 'malaya' in a quarrel.

It is bad for children to know that I sleep with many men. It would shame me. Therefore it is better that he stay with my mother.

I think it would be a mistake to assume that this desire to conceal one's sexual activities from one's children as revealing a hidden sense of shame felt by Mathare women for the irregular sexual mores they practice. For Kikuyus, sexual things are very private and it is shameful to make them public, especially to those for whom one should show great respect. Traditionally older children slept with an older woman who no longer had a sex life. One doesn't tell sexual jokes or secrets to older people. A woman, whose mother lives in Mathare, prefers to live in separate rooms, even when her mother is also engaged in sexual unions. This is

not caused by a sense of shame for irregular sex unions, but from a feeling of the rightness of being respectful to one's parent by concealing sexual secrets from her.

I hate to stay too near my mother (who was living in the same village in Mathare) because I would hate to offend her in any way, such as being seen entering my room with a man for reasons of sex.

Amina (a woman under discussion) stays too close to her mother (Amina lived next door to her mother). She cannot feel free in doing private things.

To be seen by one's own parents, or children to be engaging in 'private things' reduces the necessary dignity of the parent.

It has been pointed out earlier that buzaa brewing and other types of petty commodity production are more acceptable to Mathare women than the low-paid, long hours of the only alternatives available in the wage sector. At least a woman can work near home, and need not hire a maid to watch after her small children. This is true, but it is also true that it is a great strain to combine successful buzaa brewing and on-going dependency relationships with motherhood. It is interesting to note that many of the richest women in the Valley were barren; the correlation is probably not accidental. A woman with three or four children can find her work load intolerable. It is difficult to combine the long hours required of her as a self-employed brewer and bar maid, with a number of flirtations or dependency relationships. In this case, sending a child to stay with a rural relative can make a substantial contribution to a woman's well being, as well as to her purse.

A fourth important reason why women send children to stay with a rural relative is that it is often part of an educational strategy. In rural Kikuyu areas there are quite surprising educational opportunities. Before Independence there were many independent as well as state schools, and since Independence there has been an astonishing proliferation of Harambee schools. <sup>2</sup>. Many of the schools that Mathare women send their children to are Harambee Schools. Because they are fee paying schools it is often possible to get a place in such a school, especially when one has failed to find a place for a child in an over-crowded Nairobi school. This is a great advantage for Mathare women, most of whom are intent upon educating their children.

The second advantage <sup>3</sup>. of rural Harambee schools perceived by Mathare women is that they are thought to be better than those that are state run. It is a constantly expressed belief that tuition at Harambee schools is better than education at state schools. It is felt that the teachers at the Harambee schools work harder and take their tasks seriously, because the parents association concerns itself closely with the workings of the schools. It is also believed that the performance record of Harambee school students on the State exams is much better than that of their peers at state schools. It is difficult to determine how pervasive this view of Harambee schools is, or how basic it is to the issue of fostering children in the rural area. Only three of the Life History respondents gave educational matters as the main reason for sending a child to be fostered.

Better education however was commented upon by a number of other mothers when they discussed the life their children led in the rural area; therefore it may have been one of a cluster of relevant factors in cases where it was not already mentioned.

The child in town often drinks buzaa in the morning and cannot listen in school. In the reserve, children fear teachers and study hard.

Children in 'Reserve' (the rural area) are well taught and learn better.

This preference for rural schools may be part of a more general preference for rural life, especially as an environment in which to bring up children. This brings me to the fifth major reason women gave for sending their children to be fostered by rural relatives. Village life is highly valued in Kikuyu culture. This has been commented on by other writers on the Kikuyu. Carlo Dutto writing about Nyeri (a mainly Kikuyu town north of Nairobi) mentions this. "Most people still feel that rural life is the best and desirable." (1975. p. 169) This may be related to a basic concept of Kikuyu culture that "the land is the people". "The visible symbol of this bond of kinship is the family land," (Kenyatta, 1962, p.298) "The Kikuyu person who drew his entire existence from the land felt an intense personal attachment and sense of identification." (Dutto, 1975. p.166) Living on the land, either one's own or one's relative's, is a source of security and identification of 'home place'. The village is also identified with kin, and growing up surrounded by one's kin is highly valued, as in most essentially peasant

societies. For this reason, it is felt better that a child grow up identifying with a particular piece of land and rural kin rather than grow up rootless in town.

Children raised in town do not know where they come from.

Children raised in town do not have a home. They are 'lost to home'.

More than that children raised in the village learn respect for the traditions and beliefs of the Kikuyu; whereas children growing up in the urban area do not value traditions, partially due to the dilution of Kikuyu culture in an environment where there is great cultural heterogeneity.

children raised in town don't learn about their kabila (tribal group) but they copy the different types of behaviour that they see around them from other kabilas.

children in town do not know their father and do not learn to respect adults.

People in town do not work together. At home (in the rural area) people work together, but not in the urban area. This is good for children because they learn to work together.

Children in town have bad behaviour because they watch other children from other kabilas doing different, and mannerless things.

Children raised in town do not learn Kikuyu, therefore they are town people and will never know their home.

Town is also corrupting, in and of itself. There is easy access to money and luxuries which woo the child away from school and hard work. Children learn to love films, dances and drinking and are taught by the example of the many rogues and thieves in the urban area to do anything to get money to

enjoy these luxuries. <sup>4</sup>. By contrast, rural children have little to do after school. They come home and work on the shamba and rarely have money to spend so they do not learn the seductive powers of cash.

In town your children meet other children who don't go to school and get corrupted and refuse school.

Reserve (rural) children rarely see money. They go to school and then come home and work. Therefore they are clever at school.

Town children are without discipline. They get used to 'raha' (luxuries). Money is easy to get. They ask their mother or steal it from her.

A child raised in the Reserve is obedient and 'mannerful'. After school they go home and work on the shamba. Working on the shamba is good, because children learn about discipline and hard work. In town there are many children around who don't go to school, and who have no manners. If you turn your back they will lure your children to skip school and to get into trouble.

Frequently a mother may keep a child with her until it is felt that he is getting out of hand. Then he or she will be packed off to a rural relative with the hopes that he or she will learn better behaviour.

I can no longer afford school fees for my son. He is beginning to run around with boys that are known to be rogues. If he stays here any longer he will become a rogue too. I shall send him home to 'dig' (cultivate) with my Mother.

My young daughter (8 years old) is a terrible nuisance. She fights too much, and is always beating the children around here. The parents are always coming to complain to me that she hurts their children. I am tired of beating her. At home there are few children around and she won't be able to get in so much trouble.

In the rural area the network of kin and friends can more



more easily supervise children. It is more difficult for children to get into trouble, or to skip school.

Children cannot hide as they do in town because the neighbours know them and report if they are not going to school.

Thus many women feel that children raised in the rural area, even without their biological mother, are better off in many ways than children raised in the crowded, culturally heterogeneous, money-minded, luxury-laden environment of the city. Only a small minority of women thought the urban area superior to the rural for child raising. For them, cleanliness and exposure to many types of stimuli seemed to be important.

In Nairobi you can keep children clean because you are free from kulima (digging). In reserve one doesn't have time to wash and one has to carry water.

In Nairobi children become clever. Reserve children may be academically clever but not clever in life. If children become rogues it is due to bad upbringing.

Sixthly, and lastly, another reason for the fostering of children (and this holds true for all types of fostering, not just fostering from urban to rural relatives) is the need of a relative for a child. 5 of the 31 fostering transactions listed for the Life History Respondents were explained to me as being necessary because the mother's mother was alone and "wanted someone to cook for", or "needed a child to send to the shops and to help in the shamba". It is certainly true that the 3 women who were fostering grandchildren in Mathare, gave as a reason the fact that they were lonely and

and wanted to have their grandchild with them. It seems as if the presence of a child gives a woman a reason for living because it gives her a reason for caring. The phrase "someone to cook for" is very telling in this regard. Certainly life in the rural area must be very lonely when an old woman lives alone, and it is very natural that she should want someone to stay with her. But even women living in the crowded, lively environments of Mathare crave the presence of a young child in their households and importune their daughters to "give them" one of the grandchildren. Sometimes this desire to have a child to care for has comic results.

Rachael had 4 young sons. She lived in Mathare Village II in a house owned by her mother and near her sister who had 3 children of her own. Rachael's mother lived in New Mathare in one of the newly assigned houses. She loved her grandchildren and though none of them actually lived with her, they visited each other daily, and the children often slept over at the house of their grandmother. One day, Rachael's grandmother, a very old, but very lively woman, came from her farm in the rural area where she lived alone. After spending a week visiting her child, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, she prepared to leave. She had decided that Rachael's children were the most lovable, and so she demanded them from her. Without informing her own daughter of her intentions, she browbeat Rachael into "giving" her the two oldest to go to live with her. She left with the two boys. When Mama Rachael heard of this, she was furious since she loved the children deeply. She scolded Rachael and sent her hotfooting up country with a warning that she might as well not bother to come back if she returned without the two boys. Rachael brought them back, but not without some difficulty. Rachael said ruefully afterwards, "My mother loves her grandchildren so much, she couldn't bear to see them out of her sight."

### Fostering: A New Tie Between Mother and Daughter

Urban, independent Kikuyu women are sending their children to be fostered by rural relatives, in order to cope with the high cost of living, crowded housing conditions, and difficulties of urban work, or to seek better education and social environment in which to raise their children, or to 'help' an aged relative. I maintain that this is a relatively new institution for the Kikuyu. But more than that it is a new set of transactions between mother and daughter. By far and away the preponderance of the fostering transactions recorded in Mathare took place between mother and daughter. The women saw that this transaction was between them and their mothers; even when the father was alive, he did not come into the equation. When questioned, women always smiled and said that men did not raise children, women did. The mother's mother, not the mother's father, takes responsibility for the children, and the urban daughter recognises that fact.<sup>5</sup> This new set of transactions between rural mother and urban daughter entails a constant exchange of visits, goods and services. The old mother cares for and feeds the children, usually on land to which she has rights of usufruct because of her marriage. In a few instances the land has been purchased by the daughter for the use of her mother and children. The old mother is assisted in cultivating and other household tasks by the grandchildren. The daughter in the urban area provides as much cash as she is able for household expenses. Though my data is sketchy, the Life History

Respondents with children fostered by mother's mothers visited their mothers six times as often as those who didn't. Most fostering women visit their children, and therefore their mother, on an average of once every two months; while those who had mothers living in the rural area, but did not foster, visited their mothers on average once a year. The mother and daughters spend more time together now because of the fostering relationships. There is in addition, a greater flow of material goods, The daughter in the urban area provides cash for school fees, clothes and some staples. Whenever she visits, she goes with gifts for the mother as well as the children. When possible a Mathare woman will invest in some substantial capital investment to make life easier for the old, rural mother: a water tank, or a tin roof for the farmhouse. Again from my incomplete data on this subject, it is my impression that daughters who fostered children with their mothers gave them more financial help than did those daughters who did not foster. The link of fostering creates a stronger tie between mother and daughter.

I am saving money to build a water tank at my mother's shamba. She takes care of my sons for me and so I have to help take care of her. My brother helps her with clearing the land, because he lives near her. All I can do is to help her with money when I go to visit.

My mother is the mother of my children. I have to be the father, so I work in town and make money to help them live well.

This image of the working mother in the urban area earning money like a father to care for her children staying with

their grandmother in the rural area was frequent; it is an obvious metaphor, since in the modern, urban situation the unmarried mother is both father and mother to her children, in the domestic, economic and jural sense. When the children move to the rural area to be "mothered" by their mother's mother, they often reinforce this metaphor by calling the grandmother "Mother" or "Maito".<sup>6</sup> Thus a new status set is created by an urban woman and her mother (usually in the rural area) when fostering transactions take place, resulting in a new socio-economic exchanges and stronger emotional ties between the two women.

#### Matrifocal Extended Families

While some Mathare women are restructuring their relationships with their mothers by fostering their children with them, other Mathare women who have mothers living in Mathare are reorganizing the reciprocal status set of mother-daughter in another way. These women live with their mothers in matrifocal extended families, some of them 4 generations deep, composed of a mother, her daughters and their children. Different patterns of allocations of time and resources occur that would not have occurred in the traditional Kikuyu or in modern village Kikuyu society.

#### The Socio-Economic Parameters of Matrifocality

Matrifocal family units are not unique to Mathare. Their formation has been observed throughout the world, and though the contexts have been various, there are parameters

in common wherever matrifocality is found. Work done in British Guiana, Puerto Rico, Mexico City, Venezuela, working class neighbourhoods in London and Ireland, black slums in the USA, and poor neighbourhoods in Uganda and South Africa, all illustrate these common parameters. (Smith 1956, Safa 1965, Lewis 1961, Peittie 1968, Kerr 1958, Suttles 1968, Hannerts 1969, Obbo 1973, Hellman 1948).

The first of these parameters is poverty. Lewis has cited matrifocality as one of the major characteristics of his Culture of Poverty Concept. But it is not just poverty alone that makes a situation in which matrifocal family units are functional. It is rural poverty in which men have to spend most of their lives migrating to find jobs, (as in British Guiana), or the type of urban poverty in which male occupations are uncertain, and poorly paid. Due to the insecure economic position of low income men, they cannot fulfil the obligations towards wives and families normally expected of them. In many of these poverty situations, (urban or rural) women have constant, if low paid, employment which allows them to continue to feed and house the offspring of the union. (Smith, 1956, Hellman 1948) The urban area in particular offers much of the type of low-skill self employment (such as house work, service in a bar, beer brewing, prostitution, food preparation, hawking and petty commerce) by which women can procure a regular, source of income. Obbo makes the point that because this type of informal sector self employment is "invisible", men do not feel threatened by female competition

for wages. (Obbo '73, p. 129) Thus women quietly set about supporting themselves in this invisible sector and in other low status jobs such as domestic work. City life can be said to have given low-income women new opportunities and men new insecurities. (Ibid. p.129) Men are expected to support their families but because of low wages, unemployment or under employment in the wage sector, men suffer from a chronic shortage of money and lose their role as chief provider. (Lewis, 1968, p.17)

Even in situations where the wife is left in the rural area and has no access to employment, the low-income male migrant may find it impossible to maintain a position of authority in his own household unless he leaves the wife in the care of a patrilineal kin structure. (Safa, 1965, pp. 135-9) In the urban area, the lack of effectiveness of the husband is even more exaggerated. Pieltie states that the question should not be "why is marriage breaking down in urban areas?" but "why does marriage persist at all?" In La Laja a low-income neighbourhood in Ciudad Venezuela, there are none of what she calls the "supporting factors" for marriage. There is no economic need, since the women have low paid domestic jobs, and the men are chronically unemployed and looking for work. There are few social pressures extant to maintain the marital union, such as pressures from families; or division of labour needs, as might be found in a rural area where a man and woman cooperate to till the fields, or even status reasons, since the force of religious morality is considerable weaker in

in the towns. (Pieltie, 1968, pp. 47-9) I might add that there is no longer the need for the woman to marry in order to gain access to necessary resources for survival, as in the case of rural Kikuyu women, who must marry in order to gain legitimate access to land for cultivation. In town, employment either in the wage sector or in the self employment sector is the only resource necessary for survival. As has just been pointed out, women may even have a slight edge on men in obtaining steady incomes in urban areas for a variety of socio-economic reasons. They are willing and able to do low status jobs, and provide much needed services such as beer, low cost food, entertainment, and the domestic-sexual services of a Town Wife. Women cooking food and brewing beer fill a much needed gap in services of towns by providing food and beer cheaper than that available in restaurants and western-style bars. (This is certainly the case in African cities). In African cities where there are more men than women, women are in demand for entertainment and sexual-domestic functions. Women are providing emotional and sexual companionships and domestic care for a number of male migrants which may give relief from the "strain of strict working hours and narrowly defined segmental roles" (Southall, 1961, p.58) and, one might add, the impersonality and difficult social conditions of city life.<sup>7</sup> These various types of male-female dependency relationships, described earlier, are very much part of the economic strategizing of urban women. These unions can be easily broken when a woman's tie to a man becomes dysfunctional,



that is, when he is no longer willing or able to contribute adequately to her and her children. "As women see men as more of a burden than a help, they do without him. (sic). No wonder that one in three households around the world are (sic) headed by a woman." (Tinker, 1976, p.37)

#### Ideological Parameters of Matrifocality

There is another set of factors, this time ideological ones, which may be contributing to the rise of matrifocal families in urban Africa and elsewhere in the world. These have not been touched upon in the theoretical literature available on matrifocal family formation. These factors are a combination of psychological reactions against men and against the institution of marriage as conventionally recognised by the larger society and the stirrings of emerging ideas concerning female economic independence, competence and enterprise. Philip Halpenny has pointed out the high percentage of Ganda female migrants to Kampala who had a rural marital breakup before coming to Kampala; they account for half of the migrants to Kisenyi. As he says it is reasonable to suppose that those who migrate are those who are more adventurous, competent, and possessed of such entrepreneurial qualities as aggressiveness and willingness to take risks. (Halpenny, 1975, p. 238) Longmore states that many of the self employed women in Johannesburg, especially the brewers, "refuse to marry" or remarry on various pretexts and prefer to maintain themselves in order "to suit themselves." (Longmore, 1959, p.296) Pandawa,

doing work in the Chibili Squatter area of a mining town in Zambia, was told by women who ran businesses and mashabeens in the area, that many had first come to town only to visit friends and had gone home to end their marriages when they had seen that they "might enjoy life by running a beer garden". (Pandawa, 1973, p. 21). Obbo describes in Kampala, both educated and uneducated women who "are capable of supporting themselves... and for this type of women, marriage may seem a hindrance rather than as a necessary way of life." (Obbo, 1973, p. 20). Peter Marris speaks of "emancipated (African) city women who take no husband", but bear their children by a series of liaisons. (Marris, 1966, p.8) Many of the respondents in Mathare had had very unhappy experiences with former marriages and seemed to genuinely think of marriage as a trap, something to avoid at all costs. While keeping in mind the possibility that the attitudes expressed by Mathare women could be motivated by sour grapes, a way to rationalize an otherwise unacceptable situation, I feel that there is a ring of truth in this rejection of the institution of marriage. In Chapter V I recorded instances where some women refused offers of marriage from eligible men. For them the best thing was not to formalize the union, but be more flexible. There is also an audible note of cynicism concerning what marriage does to male-female relationships.

He says he loves me now, but I am afraid that  
after marriage, things will not be the same.  
I want to be free to lead my own life.

I live more happily than most married women (spoke  
an unmarried woman). You have more freedom of every-  
thing when you are not married.

Marriage is not very necessary for happiness.

One can be happier without a husband, because one can do what one pleases.

Husbands are not important! I can do without one.

Marriage is something that used to be respected, but not any more these days.

Long ago people wanted to marry. Nowadays there is no profit in it. I don't know what happened to people. 'Maisha' (used in this sense the 'good life') is more important.

I do not want to belabour the point since it has already been discussed in a previous chapter. However, it must be obvious that the rise of matrifocal families in a place like Mathare might be correlated with a shift in female ideology (attitudes and ideas etc.) that rejects the institution of marriage as it is known in Kenyan Kikuyu society, by a group of women who favour an economically independent existence in the urban area. To illustrate this, it is interesting to examine expressed attitudes toward marriage given by 64 of the Life History Respondents. They were asked first to put a value to marriage with the question "What do you think of Real Marriage?" They were then asked to define marriage. The 64 respondents made 156 statements in attempting to define marriage. Table 7.1, and Table 7.8 summarize the answers given to these questions.

By no means all of my respondents rejected marriage outright. In a breakdown of answers given by 64 women valuing Marriage as an institution, there are three categories nearly equal in size. These are presented in Table VII.

TABLE 7  
VALUE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is Good and Desirable	Marriage Unnecessary	Marriage not Desirable	Total Neutral value, neither good or bad.
34.4%	31.3%	3.1%	31.3%

64 Respondents

34.4% positively valued marriage as a good, moral, and decent thing for men and women. 31.3% saw marriage as a "nice thing if you could get it" but not really necessary in the modern world. The phrase recurred constantly.... "marriage is not necessary". In actual fact only 3.1% of these respondents stated categorically that marriage was a bad thing. Finally 31.3 couldn't put any value on marriage one way or another. Marriage, for them, was merely a collection of rights and duties, neither good nor bad in themselves.

Table 8 gives the complete breakdown of the way that informants defined marriage. The 64 informants gave among them 156 responses on the definition of marriage. By far the largest category ( $23.7\% + 25\% = 48.7\%$ ) of these definitions were instrumental, referring to the provision of food and rent by the husband or to the domestic duties of the wife. The care of children, which includes the

TABLE 8 - DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

MATERIAL PROVISION BY HUSBAND (FOOD, RENT)	DOMESTIC DUTY BY WIFE (COOK, WASH)	CARING FOR CHILDREN (PHYSICAL CARE, UPBRINGING, SCHOOLING)	SEXUAL/ PROCREATION FUNCTIONS	SECURITY, RESPECT FOR WIFE	MORAL OR RELIGIOUS	ROMANTIC LOVE OR COMPANIONSHIP
23.7%	25%	14.1%	12.8%	7.5%	11.5%	5.8%

upbringing as well as the physical well-being of the children, was the next largest category of responses; romantic love or companionship functions was the smallest. This shows most women hold extremely instrumental conceptions of marriage (e.g. the purpose of marriage is to provide food, rent for the wife and children, and food and clean clothes for the husband) as opposed to either a moral or social conception (e.g. "Marriage provides a respect for the wife by other people". "God wishes us all to marry". "Marriage means that the children know their father, and so have respect in the world,") or emotional or companionate conceptions (e.g. "Marriage means that the man and woman work together in harmony." "In marriage, a man and woman should love and help each other.") This only serves to underline how important are economic forces in making marriage a workable institution.

Perhaps this very instrumental view of the institution of marriage explains the changes occurring in the ideology of Mathare women. The correlation between changing socio-economic circumstances and ideology will be explored further in Chapter VIII, but suffice it to say here that when an institution becomes less than functional in a changing set of circumstances, people redefine that institution. An interesting insight into this is provided by cross referencing the answers given in the two Tables. 25% of the respondents gave only instrumental definitions of marriage, and these respondents all felt that marriage was without any value. It is interesting to note that those who gave religious, or

moral, or love-companionship definitions of marriage were also those who felt marriage had a positive value. It is also important to see that all the currently married members of the Life History Sample put a positive value on marriage. This of course is predictable, since one would expect that in urban Kenya today, only those women who valued marriage would stay married.

#### Matrifocal Extended Families in Mathare

It became increasingly apparent early in my stay in Mathare that most of the women I was meeting were heads of matrifocal families. Gradually I came to realize that many of them were members of matrifocal extended families that included three generations (and in some cases four generations). In my Life History sample 18% were members of such matrifocal extended households. It is very difficult to estimate the percentage of women in Mathare living in such households. My survey did not include questions on matrifocal extended families, and neither have any of the other surveys done in the area. In Village II, I recorded 41 matrifocal extended families including 123 women.

Assuming that this was the total number of such units in Village II, (obviously not the case) which had an estimated adult female population (by my rough calculations) of 1500 women, this means that only 7.5% of the female population live in matrifocal extended units. This is admittedly a low percentage, even allowing for incomplete data collection. However, it must be pointed out that

Mathare is a young community and most of the women are too young to have grown children. 62.6% of the female population is under 34, and 13% were barren. Viewed in this context, a percentage of 7.5% might appear to be more significant. I believe that it represents a growing trend in low-income Kikuyu family patterns in urban Kenya. This is supported by observations of David Parkin in Nairobi (forthcoming) who sees matrifocal family patterns as one of the increasingly common options open to Kikuyu women in the urban area.

The organization of the matrifocal, extended family in Mathare consists of a woman with one or more grown daughters and one or more grandchildren. There were variations on this pattern: in some cases a grown son with or without a family lives with his mother, sometimes the head of the household has a Town Bwana (or in once case a husband) living with her. The following extended case studies demonstrate the organizational principals of the matrifocal extended families, as it has developed in Mathare.

#### Mama Lucy

Mama Lucy<sup>8</sup> was one of the early arrivals in Mathare Village II. She had been abandoned in the rural area with 6 children under 13 in 1960. Her husband had received his gratuity from a large firm in Nairobi upon his early retirement and had gone to 'live with malayas' in Mombasa. After two years of trying to feed and educate her children on a small shamba, she had heard about Mathare, because she came from the same area as a local leader. This leader gave her permission to build and she erected 6 units with the help of her older children, using money that she had borrowed from a relative for materials. She used 3 of the units for housing her children and herself, and rented the rest. In 1967, her husband returned



from Mombasa, sick and destitute, and begged to live with her. She forgave him and took him back.

When I came to Mathare, Mama Lucy had educated her two oldest children and was educating a son of 17 and three daughters (the youngest of which was 12). The oldest son had completed his A levels and was now employed as a mechanic by the Kenya Air Force. He occupied one room with his wife and two children and paid her no rent. The oldest daughter, Lucy, had not completed her education, but had left school at Form III due to pregnancy. She lived with her two children in another room of her mother's and paid no rent. Mama Lucy, her husband and the remaining 4 children lived in a very large room.

Mama Lucy was a very successful brewer of beer. She brewed a great deal for wholesale. Lucy and she worked together. They used one of Mama Lucy's rooms as a store room for the beer and equipment. They sold beer in Lucy's room because Lucy was very pretty and was a successful retailer, popular with a clientele of fairly 'well-up' (well off) and respectable men. Since all the rooms were built in the same area, it was very simple for Lucy's sisters or Mother to care for her two young children (a boy of 3 and a baby girl of 1) when she was busy selling beer. Mama Lucy preferred not to sell beer in her own room, because that meant that there was a quiet place for her children still in school to do their homework. She was one of the only mothers I observed in Mathare who recognized the importance of homework and made provision for a proper environment conducive to study. For this reason all her children seemed to do well academically.

Mama Lucy also involved herself in a number of retail business ventures while I was there. Her plot of land at home was farmed by hired labour and supervised by her brother. Out of the proceeds of her business she was a member of a Company that was buying plots in town. She fed, clothed, and housed 5 children, 2 grandchildren, herself and her husband; paid school fees for 4 school aged children and also for her son's 2 young girls: and gave a rent free house to her son and his family. She cared for her sons 2 girls when his wife was at work (she did piece work at a local NCKK tailoring concern) and later when Lucy found a job in town as a bar girl, she also cared for her two babies. Her husband never did any work but just sat around the house. She gave him free beer from her brew and enough spending money to allow him to smoke.

Mama Lucy was a hard working, organized, cheerful woman. Her work day started early with frying maize flour for brewing at 6 a.m. With the help of her daughters after school, she kept her houses immaculately clean and cooked vast amounts of food for all her

dependents. She was proud of saying that no one ever went hungry in her house. She was very anxious that her children do well in school; and constantly gave them encouragement and active support. She confided in me that Lucy's pregnancy had been a bitter disappointment to her, but that Lucy was a woman and knew what 'she had to do'. She supervised her younger daughters very strictly, expecting them to come home straight after school and to stay near the house always. I suspect she was anxious to avoid a repeat of Lucy's school leaving.

This matrifocal family unit was unusual in Mathare for two reasons. First the presence of a 'real' husband of the head who contributed nothing to the household in either goods or services and who had absolutely no say in the way the household was run. Though Mama Lucy was always polite to him, she never to my knowledge consulted him or deferred to his wishes when they interfered with her work. On one occasion, a particularly busy Saturday when Mama Lucy was harassed by the needs of many customers, her husband complained that he was hungry. She turned on him impatiently and said that couldn't he see that she was working, that he would have to wait till later in the day, and since he never did any work he had no right to complain. This type of behaviour would be unheard of in a normative Kikuyu marriage, where the husband has the right to demand food at any time of the day or night and expect to see it produced instantly. Revealingly enough, he took the rebuke meekly and wandered off to sit in the sun and wait until such time that food was ready.

The second way that the unit was unusual was the presence of a regularly employed son who was only partially dependent. Mama Lucy let him have the room for nothing, and paid the

school fees for the children. She also cared for his children when they were not in school and the mother was at work, thus making it unnecessary for the couple to hire a maid to care for the children. He and his wife must have had between them an income of sh.400/ or more. Mama Lucy said that she was "helping them" because they were saving to buy land in the rural area. Her son was a loving brother and had agreed, since he was in regular employment, to forgo his rights to the land from his father in favour of Lucy who had no regular job and two children to support. Mama Lucy added that this was contingent on the second son doing well in his studies and becoming employed (he was currently studying for his Form II exams and subsequently did well and got a place in a government school to finish his Form VI). Otherwise it would be necessary to give him the land "since Lucy can live with me and brew beer." This latter comment is an interesting recognition of the point I tried to make earlier, that women are in many ways more capable of making a living in the self employed informal sector of the town. Thus Kiganya was a well employed, not a dependent in the household, but receiving a certain amount of help in exchange for his agreeing to give over his land rights to his sister Lucy. It is notable that though the land was the husband's he did not seem to have any say over its disposal. Since he was older than Mama Lucy, and suffered from ill health, it is very likely that she calculated that he would die before her, and that the land would not be an issue.

However, Mama Lucy's matrifocal unit is typical of many

other such units in Mathare. First, it is not a unit that resides under one roof. Because of the previously mentioned shame that young women feel about exposing their "private affairs" (sexual) to the eyes of their mothers, it is obviously necessary for them to live under a separate roof. Mama Lucy could keep her children near her, because she had built early in the settlement of Mathare a number of adjacent rooms. If a woman owns several rooms, she keeps her children near her, often on the same alley or leading off a courtyard. Usually women built all their houses at the same time, so they are commonly adjacent. If a woman owns only one room, or is a renter, then her children can be scattered around the village, though an attempt is made to rent rooms as close to the mother as possible. Thus the matrifocal units in Mathare are not technically residential units; though depending on the individual circumstances of the woman who heads the family, the rooms may be adjacent. Of course, this latter pattern is similar to the rural pattern, where generations were segregated in separate huts.

However, though the members of Mama Lucy's matrifocal family do not live under the same roof, they usually cook together. This again is typical. Most often the cooking is done in the house of the head, though generally one or more of the daughters help with the preparation. As often happened the younger children eat frequently at their grandmother's house, probably more frequently than at their mother's, who may be working or busy with their brewing businesses. Provision of food falls mostly to the head of

the family, but the daughters contribute money or raw materials for cooking as they are "in funds". It was difficult, even with daily observation, to decide how the payment for food was divided up amongst the various members of the household. In Mama Lucy's household, she did most of the buying in bulk of maize and beans when she visited the rural area, and of course some of the basic food consumed by the household came from the family plot (worked by her brother). However, when Lucy had had a good night's work, or a generous "gift" from a Night Bwana, she purchased tea, milk or bread: the everyday extras that the household enjoyed. Later when she was employed in town, she contributed on the first of the month, such things as a large tin of 'mafuta' (cooking fat) or a pound of tea. Observation indicates that each adult member of the household contributes what is considered by the group as a fair share. I never heard any quarrels concerning financial contributions to the household between mothers and daughters of any matrifocal families, though I heard quarrels on many other aspects of family life. It seems to be an aspect of the running of the household that is handled with relatively little friction.

Mama Lucy's sharing of work and division of labour with her daughter illustrates another common characteristic of matrifocal families in Mathare. Often the younger women do the selling, and the advantages of this arrangement is obvious. A second case study illustrates further this division of labour.

Mama Grace

Grace lived near the road in a large airy room. She was an attractive young woman of perhaps 20. She had left school after Standard 7 because she was pregnant. She now had two small girls, one was 4 and one was 1 year old. Grace lived near her mother, whose house was about 200 yards down the hill from the road. Her brother, Charles, still in school, occupied a room some distance away at the end of the village. Grace's mother paid the rent for her room, Grace's and Charles' room, and school fees for Charles. Charles had his tea in the morning with his mother, but Grace fixed breakfast for herself and her children alone. The main meal was fixed by either Grace or her mother, depending on who had the most onerous brewing duties that day, and usually the expense of the food was divided in the same way. Only Charles contributed nothing to the purchase or preparation of food; but he turned up wherever there was food available, ate and disappeared. He was wont to call his sister a 'malaya' if food was not ready when he appeared. This naturally annoyed Grace, who was also jealous of the money her mother spent on Charles. Charles was taking a part time art course at a recreation centre in Nairobi, and in Grace's opinion was just wasting time, when he could be better employed looking for work. He spent his free afternoons wandering around with unemployed young men of his own age, and always dressed very smartly. The money for his leisure time activities was obtained from his mother or from his various nefarious activities that were never explained, but only hinted at.

Grace and her mother had a system of alternating brewing and/or selling which worked very smoothly. They, in turn, capitalized and kept the profits from alternate brewings, or purchases of wholesale debes. Grace's room was always used for selling, because it was the largest and close to the road (thus well placed to catch casual drinkers). The children spent their day in their grandmother's house, and usually the main meal was cooked there, unless it was a midweek day in mid month when few customers could reasonably be expected. Grace and her mother seemed to be very flexible over the labour division. Grace usually did the most arduous work, the fetching of water and afterwards the retail selling in her room. Mama Grace would do the frying (though if she felt tired, Grace often helped her) and supervised the straining and addition of yeast. Thus while Grace was in her room near the road charming the customers, Mama Grace was supervising the next day's brew and watching the children and cooking in her room down the hill.

This case study illustrates a typical type of division of labour found in matrifocal extended families in Mathare. The older and younger woman cooperate in brewing beer. The younger woman doing more of the hard physical work and the selling, while the older woman cares for the children and does more of the domestic chores. This is a great economic advantage, in light of the above-mentioned difficulties in combining motherhood and entrepreneurial activity. It is no coincidence that the women living in matrifocal clusters were on average more successful as brewers than young women raising children alone. The older woman has the advantage of having her beer retailed by an attractive, younger woman; the younger woman has a built-in baby care service.

Mama Grace's family also illustrates a social phenomenon that I will return to in more detail below, and that is the uncertain role of the son in the family in contrast to the well-integrated role of the daughter. Mama Lucy was very fortunate in having an employed son in her household. Charles was much more typical of Mathare sons: unemployed, interested in luxurious living, seeing his mother as a source of food and clean clothes.

One more case study, this time the complicated family of Wairimu, will illustrate further all of the structural and operational aspects of a matrifocal extended family in Mathare.

#### Wairimu's Family 9.

When I was first introduced to the family headed by Wairimu, I was so confused by the large numbers of

mobile adults and children that it took me months and hundreds of boring questions to straighten out the kin relationships of all the members.

Wairimu had one son, and 5 daughters. One daughter had no children and was employed by the City Council Police. Another daughter was a bar girl in Mombasa and her children lived with Wairimu. The other 4 daughters lived near their mother when I first came to Mathare. After the first year, Alima joined her sister in Mombasa and left her two children with Wairimu to be cared for. and the Police woman got a flat in the Police lines. That left one son (unmarried, 25 years of age) two daughters in their thirties and 11 grandchildren ranging in age from 16 to 3 living near or with Wairimu.

When Wairimu came to Mathare she built many units. Rumour had it that she had 14 units, though she was too canny to confirm this. To my certain knowledge she had more than 7. She lived in one with a changing number of grandchildren sleeping with her. Fatuma had one with all or some of her 5 children; sometimes one of them would drift over and stay with Wairimu. Miriam lived in another room with her three children, her son had a room to himself, and a niece of Wairimu's (Sister's daughter,) occupied another. These houses were all within shouting distance of each other.

In 1973 Wairimu was awarded a house in Mathare Redevelopment Scheme and her oldest daughter Fatuma was awarded a site in the Mathare Site and Service scheme, on the strength of the fact that Wairimu had succeeded in registering one of her houses in Fatuma's name when the Kanu Committee's survey of house ownership was carried out in 1971. Because the rent on the new owner-occupied stone house was so high, Wairimu could not afford to do more than live in the kitchen of the new house and let out the 3 rooms at rents calculated to cover the mortgage payments. This created a serious difficulty of how to house all of her children and grandchildren, since owners who received a new house in Mathare Redevelopment were supposed to tear down all their old units in Old Mathare. By dint of much political manoeuvring she managed to save the houses occupied by each of her children, though the askaris came and tore down a number of the units that she rented out to other people. After this time the family was split by a good  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours walk.

Fatuma had a tailoring job with the NCCK Tailoring Centre which brought her K.sh. 100 a month. This was a moderately good wage since she did not have to pay rent or have someone take care of her children. Miriam and Wairimu brewed together; but Miriam did all the selling, since Wairimu had many other political and economic activities to occupy her. Wairimu had a number of smaller ventures, including two farms which were supervised by relatives. One of these farms was



partially supervised by Fatuma's eldest girl while she was still in school. When she finished Standard 7 she returned to Nairobi and stayed with her mother and grandmother. She was encouraged by her mother to look for a job, but she seemed likely to end up brewing beer, since she was already helping Miriam.

When they all lived together in Village II, eating patterns of the family varied with circumstances. Most often Wairimu and Miriam, by virtue of their more flexible schedule of brewing and selling beer, did the cooking. Fatuma having to attend her job from 9 to 5 was not in a position to cook a mid-day meal, which was generally the major one. Much of the food staples (beans, maize and potatoes) were provided by Wairimu's shambas. On several visits to these shambas with her, I transported back large gunny sacks of these staples and quantities of greens to be retailed at the local market.

After Wairimu moved to her house in Mathare Redevelopment Scheme it was no longer possible to cook together every day. However there was almost daily contact, with visits back and forth, and a rotation of the grandchildren staying with her. When Fatuma started to construct her house on the Site and Service Scheme, Wairimu moved into the half-completed house to supervise the building, keep thieves from stealing the building materials, and to do some of the work (such as painting) herself. 3 of Fatuma's children and 2 of Alima's children lived with her. Fatuma had in the meantime moved in with a man who had received a house in New Mathare near Waitimu's, (in which Wairimu was no longer living) and 2 of her children and the other child of her sister in Mombasa. Miriam's oldest child left Mathare and stayed in Waitimu's new house in order to look after it, and to maintain a semblance of it being "Owner occupied" (in the initial stages, the new owners were very impressed by threats that the authorities would throw out anyone found not living in the houses they were allocated.) That child ate with Fatuma rather than with her mother, because the walk to Mathare was too long. Meanwhile, another niece of Wairimu's moved into the room vacated by Fatuma after her move to New Mathare, and proceeded to form a cooking and brewing unit with her sister, already living nearby in another of Wairimu's rooms. At this point, due to the dislocations caused by the move to the new houses at the far end of the valley, the matrifocal family had broken into 3 or 4 separate cooking units of various size, depending on which children were sleeping where. However, the members were still dependent to a large degree on Wairimu, who provided housing, child care and some food, and, it might be added, the school fees for all the grandchildren of school age.

Her son was unemployed and reputed to be a member of a gang that mugged drunks in the neighbouring Eastleigh.

He was always smartly dressed and moved independently without reference to the rest of the family. He would disappear for days on end. When he returned from whatever adventure he had been involved in, he would eat with his mother. Sometimes she gave him money for a new shirt or beer.

As can be seen from the case study, there was a good deal of economic interaction within Wairimu's extended family. I was never able to unravel all of it. The various children profitted from Wairimu's early building efforts in two ways. First, they lived rent-free in her units; even after she had moved to New Mathare she had managed to bring her political influence to bear on the KANU officials and prevent them from destroying all her housing units, so they could continue to live there. Secondly, as in the case of Fatuma, her oldest daughter, Wairimu managed to transfer one of the housing units to her name, and afterwards to get her awarded a site in the new Site and Service Scheme. Exactly how much capital Wairimu put up for Fatuma's new house on the Site and Service Scheme was impossible to determine, though it is certain she helped Fatuma a great deal. Fatuma's oldest daughter acted as farm manager for Wairimu's small farm in Machakos. The two daughters who worked at the coast and who had left their children to be cared for by Wairimu, visited twice a year in the period that I was there, and each time brought money and clothes for the children. The cooking responsibilities rotated from one female adult to another; and though they depended to a great degree on the food provided by Wairimu from her plots, the employed females contributed as much as

they were able to the common stock of food. Wairimu's extended family ate quite well, compared to many Mathare families, with meat appearing in the 'irio' (potato and bean mixture) and other vegetable stews, and the children getting such luxuries as oranges regularly. Finally, before Wairimu left old Mathare, she helped her daughters brewing beer; though she herself never actually retailed beer. Thus it can be seen how a large extended family cooperating and utilising all the means at their disposal (building and renting illegal urban housing, informal sector economic activities, farming, and wage employment) managed to support themselves in a difficult urban environment,

There remains but to mention one last, important way that matrifocal extended families cooperate, which was not touched upon in any of the cases. In the daily battle with police and police raids, mothers and daughters cooperate with each other closely to protect and support each other in times of arrest, raids, bribery, bail, trials, and even imprisonment. As will be shown below, it is the closest friends or relatives who are expected to come to the assistance of a woman faced with any one of these emergencies.

Matrifocal Extended Families: Daughters Stay and Sons  
Leave.

The last case study given, as well as the case of Mama Grace's son Charles, point out the generally marginal role of sons in these matrifocal extended families. Obbo has

commented on women of a similar economic background in Kampala "It does not seem that the women in the future will be supported by their sons." (Obbo, 1973, p. 160) The tensions and insecurities she observed between mothers and sons were strikingly similar to those I observed in Mathare.

Mama Grace's son, Charles, unemployed, was registered in a rather dubious course of study, and spent most of his day loafing around with a group of other smartly dressed unemployed youths. His blatant manipulation of his mother to get spending money, was greatly resented by his sister and led to many violent quarrels between them. Grace felt that she was working and contributing to the family coffers and Charles was doing nothing. There was every sign that Mama Grace was also losing patience with Charles, since she constantly worried him for some signs of progress in his art course. Several times I witnessed scenes in which she nagged him with questions about his job prospects and whether or not the teachers were going to try and find him work. Charles patently had little real talent or enthusiasm for the sign painting course, and was much more interested in obtaining money for going to films and dances with his peers. Eventually Charles will drift off, getting himself more and more deeply involved with his peer group and becoming an increasingly peripheral member of Mama Grace's family, only dropping in occasionally for a meal.

Wairimu's son lived with his mother but his major role seemed also to be that of a consumer of goods and services. He was continually asking Wairimu for small loans of money.

He ate with his Mother or his sisters; and when he was able, he inveigled one of them to wash his clothes. He led a dubious existence in the neighbouring area of Eastleigh where he was reputed to belong to a gang. His mother disclaimed all knowledge of what he did, or where he got the money that he sometimes mysteriously flashed around. When he was in funds, he only reluctantly gave any of his money, to his Mother. Once she complained bitterly that when she wanted money for a perfectly legitimate purpose (i.e. to pay school fees for one of her grandchildren), Ali was rarely prepared to help her. He was a great disappointment to Wairimu. He was her only son, and she had worked hard to keep him in school. He had been very bright in school, and she had begged money from every source she could think of (including her Mosque) for his school fees. Then he had given up his schooling in Form II for no apparent reason. "That is the way with boys," Wairimu sighed, "They don't like to work, and are easily seduced by money and luxuries in town." The great hope of Wairimu's old age was nothing better than a smartly dressed, charming petty criminal whose main attachment to his mother seemed to be purely utilitarian (the money, free housing, meals and domestic services he could expect from her).

Wairimu was lucky in that at least she was on good terms with her son, though perhaps that was due to her willingness to lend him the money he wanted. Also he was reasonably self supporting, and had not yet gotten into serious trouble with the law. In many other cases that I

recorded of mothers with grown sons, the mothers had not been so fortunate. The two cases below illustrate the level that tension between mother and son can reach. Big Ester and the woman called 'Masai' (she was Kikuyu with a Masai grand parent) were both independent heads of households supporting themselves by beer brewing and supplying domestic-sexual services to a regular Town Bwana (in Big Ester's case) or a series of lovers (in the case of the Masai). I have chosen these two cases, since they represent the mother-son conflict situation at two different points in the family developmental cycle.

#### The Masai :

The Masai had three children, a boy of 10, a girl of 8, and another boy of 6. The two oldest children were in school. She made a marginal living as a beer retailer. She claimed that she never had the money to capitalise a brewing. She owned one room which she lived in, and entertained a constant flow of males there. The oldest boy refused to go to school, and constantly quarrelled with his mother. His mother would beat him severely whenever she found that he ran off with some friends "to roam around" rather than attend the school. Several times the boy disappeared for several days at a time, much to his mother's distress. She constantly harped on the theme that boys were very wild, and no help to their mothers.

#### Big Ester

Big Ester was the mother of 8 children ranging in age from 16 to 3. The oldest and the youngest were boys. Big Ester had a number of sisters and brothers living in Mathare, with whom she cooperated in brewing beer. She also hawked vegetables many days a week. When I met her all the girls were in school, and seemed to be doing well. The oldest boy, Benji, was not in school and seemed to spend his time at home quarrelling with his mother and tinkering with old radios that Ester claimed he had stolen. Neighbours told me that until Benji had left school permanently, Big Ester had beaten the boy unmercifully for months on end in order to

make him attend. One day he turned on her and beat her up, and she had to admit defeat. Once he stole some of the school fees that she was saving up, and she had called the police. Because he was her son, the police would not handle the case. Finally, one day I saw Ester walking along with a big, happy smile. I asked what was the good news, and she told me that Benji was caught breaking into a neighbour's house, and had been taken to the police. She expressed the hope that the police would put him in jail for many years, since she couldn't do anything with him. She was very bitter about Benji's refusal to go to school, and his exploitation of her (stealing the girl's school fee money). One day, after Benji had been convicted and sentenced to two years in a juvenile detention centre, she was sitting with her favourite, the youngest boy, on her knee. The little boy hit her in a moment of childish frustration. She sadly put him down and said to him. "I suppose one day you will beat your mother too."

Both these women were coping (or not coping, as the case may be) with young, rebellious sons. Not all rebellious sons turned out as vicious and sullen as Benji. Most of them just disappeared from their mother's lives. Women who had grown up believing that one's sons were the support in one's old age, were embittered to discover that their sons brought them nothing but physical and verbal abuse, demands for money, and fears of involvement with the police, due to the son's illegal activities. Women feel no shame at being arrested for brewing beer, since they feel that the beer law is arbitrary and irrational; but they are shamed when a relative is jailed for stealing. Though Big Ester was pleased to get rid of Benji for a couple of years, she was still conscious of neighbourhood disapproval. Wairimu too avoided discussion of what her son did, for the simple reason that she didn't want to know, fearing the worst.

One can isolate three possible explanations for the fact that sons are less supportive to their mothers and less likely than daughters to be integrated into the matrifocal family after they reach adulthood. First is the syndrome of what I call "spoiling andbeating" which characterizes the relationship between mothers and sons in Mathare. A second, and related factor, is that boys seem to grow up psychologically divorced from their natal families. Thirdly, women have more practical help and advice to offer their daughters than they do their sons.

Women continue to put their faith in their sons as the security for their old age; either because they still held the traditional Kikuyu ideas about sons and mothers, or because they perceive clearly that men still have the best chance for wage employment and they hope desperately to get their sons educated and well employed. They tend to raise their boys in a manner that can be succinctly described as "spoil and beat." On the one hand young boys are greatly spoiled in contrast to their sisters. Mothers tend to give them more treats, handle them more indulgently, and exempt them from work around the house. When little boys were disobedient or naughty, women would nod their heads indulgently and smile. "Boys will be boys." But girls would be quickly disciplined for the same offence. This is very speculative, but there might have been a measure of unconscious emotional bribery here. Sometimes it is not unconscious as one mother's observation on raising sons shows.

A mother must be good to her sons in order that they will love her when they grow up. They must



remember their growing up with happiness.

At the same time a mother is desperately eager that the self-same son should do well in school in order to gain that elusive prize: a wage job. Children in Mathare do not do well in school; for the many reasons listed above in Chapter IV they are severely handicapped in their performance. When the son does not do well, the mother starts to nag and pester him. The sons often do not attend school regularly, but prefer to spend their time with peers who roam around in gangs seeking fun and excitement. Tensions rise between mother and son, and she may even start beating her son. As the boy approaches adolescence she finds it harder and harder to get him to obey her, especially since she has laid the ground work of permissiveness in the earlier years. As boys play truant and openly defy their mothers, the mothers panic and try by desperate measures to force obedience. When girls do badly in school, they do not refuse to attend school. Accustomed through years of strict discipline to be obedient, they don't rebel quite so overtly. They just get pregnant and are forced by the school authorities to leave school.

Thus the early upbringing of the boy encourages him to defy his mother and follow his own inclinations. The early upbringing of the male children also contributes to their later lack of identification with and integration into the household. The bond between mother and young daughter is one of mutual assistance and cooperation in domestic matters, while the relationship between mother and young son is one where he is cared for and indulged and contributes nothing

to the household. This differs from the rural households where the boys had as many tasks to do as girls did, and were well integrated into the day to day running of the family's affairs. In the urban area there is little expected of the sons, except perhaps water carrying and perhaps babysitting when no female sibling is available. From an early age girls help their mothers with many of the household duties. Boys rarely do. It was considered shameful to ask a boy to do household tasks, and if a woman had only sons she would do such tasks herself rather than ask them to do them. Sons grow up marginal to the family unit. One woman commented that already at six her son spent the day 'on the road' (Mathare's main road) playing games with his peers. She said wistfully.

I hardly ever see him, and when he is ten I will only see him at meal time. But what can one do? Boys you can't control.

That same woman's daughters of 8 and 9, were required to come straight home from school and start preparing dinner and washing clothes etc. Daughters grow up expected and expecting to help and cooperate with their mothers. I never heard a word of resentment from the many school girls of Mathare concerning the time they were expected to devote after school to household chores. It is the natural order of things, that daughters should help their mothers. They never seem to resent the free time their brothers have after school. Only when the brothers grow up and continue to sponge off the household, do they express resentment. This is usually because the non-contributing brother is consuming resources

which could otherwise be used for their own children. Daughters grow up with a bond of solidarity with their mothers, and perhaps a strong feeling of having to stand together with them.

Boys may also feel increasingly psychologically divorced from their families as they grow older in a household with no male authority figures. The males they do see and come to use as role-models, are the lovers and Town Bwanas of their mothers' who come and go with varying degrees of regularity. Thus, to speak in psychological terms, the boy may learn to perceive himself as essentially peripheral to a female household. A female household is for him a place to eat, to have his clothes cleaned and mended, and to demand money. When these comforts are not forthcoming, it is time to leave. It is interesting to note that the breakdown of a Town Marriage begins on the woman's side, with the increasing withdrawal of the woman's "services" (cooking, sex etc.) from the man; much in the way that traditionally rural wives either forced an issue or a divorce. When the mother finds her son an increasing disappointment, because he does badly in school, fails to get any sort of job, or turns to crime, she increasingly resents having to cook and clean for him. She may eventually refuse to provide services. In many instances the sisters who are still at home add to the tensions since they are jealous of the resources and time their "useless" brothers eat up. (See the case of Grace Mukamba)

In addition boys grow up accustomed to seeing men drift in and out of the family, always leaving when the tension

levels rise. In the light of the role model theory of socialization, boys must learn to perceive men as shadowy figures on the periphery of family life as so vividly described by Liebow (1967). Men are peripheral to the families of the women they have sexual-domestic unions with; they leave when the going gets tough; they avoid conflict and responsibility. I do not wish to overstress this psychological explanation, but I feel that there is something of this in the reactions of sons to the demands their mothers make on them. The very factors that make the contribution of women to family life more important, lessen the importance of those of men. One result of absent fathers and strong mothers may be a son's diminished sense of importance to and integration into his natal family.

Thus boys do not have feelings of responsibility to their natal home. Their mothers generally have little to offer them except meals and clean clothes. Quarrels when they do go home, discourage them from returning. Gradually they go home less and less. The need to be independent of the mother's control and psychological pressure overcomes any sense of responsibility for their mothers. Love for the mother is further weakened by the long drawn out conflicts that lead up to the final break.

It is revealing that it is the wealthier women whose sons are integrated into the matrifocal families. Women like Mama Lucy and Wairimu who have rooms to offer their sons will be more likely to have their sons continue to live with them. Those with other resources such as businesses have

work to offer their sons. One relatively wealthy woman had amassed a rather large empire of houses and businesses in Village I which included 20 houses, a butcher shop, a cardboard retailing venture and a charcoal business. She employed her three sons in various capacities and supported a family of 18 people including children, grandchildren, and a blind sister.

Most of the women in the Valley had few resources to offer their sons. However, even if a woman is merely a house renter supporting herself with her beer brewing, she has more to offer her daughter in terms of advice, assistance, and cooperative economic activity. She can help and advise the girl through her pregnancy and care for the children afterwards. She cooperates with her daughter in beer brewing activities, and provides a model for a daughter on how to manage men. While mothers and sons quarrel a great deal when the boys reach adolescence, mothers and daughters seem to do so much less. A strong bond of affection and cooperation bind the two women; and the daughter can follow in her mother's footsteps, helping her mother with her petty commodity production (usually beer brewing). Women who cook food for sale, sell vegetables, or brew beer, start working with their young daughters. As the girl bears children and sets up a separate residence, the mother and daughter continue to cooperate together in their economic enterprises. For reasons which I was unable to uncover, boys rarely help their mothers with their petty commodity production. Only women who own a number of non-sex-specific businesses like charcoal

selling had their sons working with them. Mothers and daughters with their common bond of domestic chores and child raising and with their common economic activities in Mathare, seem to have more to offer each other in practical day to day transactions.

An interesting sidelight to this female centredness of the family pattern developing in Mathare, is the variation on Kikuyu naming patterns taking place. Girls who bear children while living in matrifocal families do not name their first children after their father's mother and father (that is assuming that the girls have not married, as is usually the case), but after their own mothers, fathers and siblings.

#### Sister-Clusters in Mathare

Traditionally, little is said in the literature about the relationship between sisters. Reading between the lines of the standard ethnographic sources on the Kikuyu, one can hypothesize that the relationship between sisters was not as important as that between brothers and sister. A sister had to maintain a potentially close relationship between herself and the brother. It is to the brother that the sister would return in the event of a divorce after her father's death. Though sisters would undoubtedly share a close affection forged over the years of sharing household chores together; after they had married into their respective husband's households, their interaction would of necessity be limited. There is no clear data on the distances that

girls married away from their parents' homes, but undoubtedly it would be necessary for them to marry with men from a distance since the residential pattern was organized on the basis of patri-lineages, and patrilineal exogamy was the rule of marriage. Unless sisters married into the same lineage (and there is not mention of sororal polygyny), they would be physically separated in their teens, and unless they were visiting their homes at the same times, might see little of each other. Whether sisters visited each other much is a matter for speculation, but it would seem logical that such visits would be a function of distance more than anything else. She would see her brother when she visited her parents. The relationship between a sister and brother would be one of latent utility to the sister, and she would undoubtedly always have this in mind.

In recent times, this pattern has continued, with the physical separation between sisters often being exacerbated by the increased geographical mobility of the Kikuyu. The geographical distribution of sisters of some of my informants was widespread. Some of them had sisters in Kisumu and Mombasa, as well as areas where Kikuyus have in recent years bought large amounts of land, such as in the Rift Valley. Kikuyus have been quick to take advantage of the vacuum left by the departing White settlers and Indian traders, and have scattered all over Kenya. As a result, sisters may not see each other for years at a time. However, sisters still think of their brothers as a possible source of refuge (after the death of their father) in the case of divorce. As I have

pointed out above, this is changing. With the current land ownership situation, there is less and less leeway to absorb new adults into the family. Sisters discover to their chagrin, when they return to their brother's house, their welcome is a short one. Many of the women I interviewed in Mathare had disappointing experiences with their brothers when they had sought refuge with them. Depending on the unpleasantness of the experience, the women's attitudes ranged from resignation ("things have changed since the old days, when a brother would always feed his sister") to bitter anger, especially if the brother had refused to help at all. A girl whose father had died, and who had been forced to drop out of school because of a pregnancy, was told by her brother to "go to town and be the malaya by profession since she obviously was one in her heart." Through these unpleasant personal experiences a number of women have realized that under the constraints of the present day, brothers are not and cannot be to their sisters what they once were, especially when the women in question have broken away from the acceptable norms of behaviour (as in living in town alone, or having children outside of marriage).

In the Attitude Questionnaire, one of the questions explored the respondents' attitudes towards their brothers and sisters and the differences they perceived between them (if any). In the following Table, Table 9, the 64 respondents fell into two nearly equal categories: those who perceived no difference between the brother-sister relationship and the sister-sister relationship, and those who did perceive a



TABLE 9.ATTITUDES TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS

No Difference Perceived Between a Woman's Brothers and Sisters	A Difference Perceived Between a Woman's Brothers and Sisters
- Both perceived as loving and helpful ... 20 (31.2%)	- A brother is better than a sister ..... 3 (4 .7%)
- Both perceived as unkind and useless ... 14 (21.9%)	- A sister is better than a brother.....27(42.2%)
- Total ..... 34 (53.1%)	- Total.....30(46.9%)

difference. 53.1% of respondents perceived no difference in the roles of brother and sister. This group was further broken down into those who put a positive value and those who put a negative value on their siblings. More than half thought that both sexes of siblings were likely to be loving and helpful to their sister; and slightly less than half thought that siblings of both sexes were essentially "bure" (useless) for a woman in trouble or needing help.

46.9% of the total respondents perceived a difference in brothers and sisters. Again this category was further divided on the basis of the value they placed on the two sibling categories. The overwhelming majority considered that sisters were more "loving", "more merciful", more "helpful", more "caring" to their sisters than brothers were to their sisters. It seems that if a woman perceives no difference

between her siblings by sex, there is an almost equal chance that she will regard them positively or negatively (i.e. as not especially helpful by virtue of their relationship with her; comments such as "a brother and sister are people who come out of the same stomach as you do, nothing more" were frequent.) Conversely, if a woman has definite opinions on the differences between her relationship with her siblings of both sexes, she will perceive the sister as the most loving and helpful. Respondents explained their perceptions with the following statements.

Sisters are more kind because women are kinder by nature.

Sisters are more merciful to their sisters. Brothers become especially indifferent after they have married.

Brothers care little for their sisters because they marry out of the family.

Brothers are not good to their sisters, especially if they (the sisters) have not married.

You can starve to death as far as your brother is concerned, but a sister always feeds you.

Sisters are more kind to you. They bring forth too, so they know the trouble of childbearing.

Several themes appear in these comments. Women are considered kinder by nature, perhaps through the sharing of a common female experience of childbearing and child-care. Secondly, brothers were often mentioned as ceasing to care for their sisters once they themselves had married and started their own families. Finally, brothers are often perceived as arbiters of conventional morality. They disapprove of their sisters when they do not marry or produce children

only in wedlock.

These attitudes alone mean very little by themselves. However, coupled with my observations on the importance of the sister relationship in Mathare they become more meaningful. In my field work, I was impressed by the number of what I will term Sister Clusters in Mathare. I have differentiated a Sister Cluster from the sisters who lived with or near their Mother in Mathare. The sisters in the Sister Cluster have migrated to Nairobi on their own. It is a result of the tendency of migrants to stay with a relative when first arriving in town. The typical migration pattern is that the new migrant will stay for a period with the relative, until such time as he has worn out his welcome. The new migrant then moves on, either to another friend or relative, or into his own house. An interesting version of this pattern, has created many Sibling Clusters, of which by far the greatest number were Sister Clusters. (I will return to the Brother-Sister clusters later on). In Village II, I recorded 24 such Sister Clusters who totalled 64 people. The largest of these clusters contained 6 sisters, another contained 4 sisters. These are all sisters whose mothers and fathers live in the rural area or other towns of Kenya. If I included the sisters who cooperated together (this as I shall show, is the operative factor in terming two or more sisters a Sister Cluster) but who had a mother living with them or near them in Mathare, the number would be much greater.

How have sisters in Mathare started to redefine their relationship with new investments of time and resources? A sister cluster, as I have termed it in Mathare, consists of two or more sisters living reasonably near each other in Mathare who cooperate together in a variety of ways. Much like the cooperation described for members of a matrifocal extended family, these ways include the following: cooking together, reciprocal care of children, visiting together, brewing or selling beer together, reciprocal borrowing, assistance in case of arrest or being approached by the police for bribes, <sup>10</sup>. and assistance during illness or other emergencies. Sisters in these Sister Clusters spend more time with each other than adult sisters would normally expect. Aside from cooperation and assistance, daily visits and gossiping and going together to 'itegas' (a contribution party) were characteristic of the daily interaction of these clusters. Sisters not only invested more assistance and material goods in their sister relationships, but more time. The following cases study will serve to illustrate these points.

#### Ester and Her Sisters

Ester was a big, sloppy woman with 6 children. She lived in Village II fairly close to her 4 sisters, who each had rooms further up the hill. 2 sisters lived in one room, and two other sisters lived separately close by. The two sisters who lived together were both childless. One sister had a husband and 3 children, and another sister had 1 child and just a series of boyfriends. Ester cooperated in brewing with her sisters. The group that brewed together varied according to the time, circumstance and financial condition

of the individual women. Ester never sold beer in her room, because there was no place to accommodate customers with her 6 children making it already crowded. The two childless sisters usually sold the beer in their room, though Ester took her turn going up the hill and helping with the retailing. Eating arrangements varied as well. Ester, because she had the largest brood usually cooked for herself, but the other 4 tended to switch around, sometimes cooking together, sometimes alone. Dropping in at a time when food was ready was frequent. Angela who had only 1 child, and many boyfriends, frequently went to bars in Eastleigh, leaving her daughter with one or other of her sisters. If the married sister sold beer late one night, I might meet one of her children sleeping at Ester's the next morning. The sisters saw each other practically daily, with much gossiping and drinking of tea and beer. There were a number of incidents during my stay in Mathare, that illustrated the extent to which the sisters depended on one another. On two occasions when Angelica was badly beaten by jealous lovers, it was to her sisters that she fled for protection. When another sister was arrested, Ester took a collection from the sisters and a couple of close friends, and paid the bail for her. While the woman was in jail, the other sisters cooked for the husband and the children. Interestingly, the husband did not go to the court for the trial, perhaps because he was employed and couldn't get off work.

This case history of one of the largest groups of sisters in my sample, clearly illustrates the various types of visiting and cooperation between the sisters. The migratory history of this Cluster is typical. One of the childless sisters came first to Nairobi after a divorce, and was followed soon after by the second barren sister. They heard about Mathare and came there from Eastleigh. They built 4 units, in one of which they lived. Ester had a complicated residential history in both rural and urban areas outside of Nairobi, including a stint in Tanzania as an agricultural labourer on a tea plantation. When she had 3 children, she came to Nairobi where she lived rent free

in one of the original two sisters' houses. The married sister came to Mathare because of the difficulty of obtaining housing in other parts of Nairobi. She and her husband rent one of the two barren sisters' units. Presumably sisterly love and cooperation is tempered with practical considerations, since the married sister's husband had regular employment.

This pattern was followed by the members of the clusters that I studied in detail. One sister would come and establish herself, either by building houses or brewing beer (or both), and then would summon other sisters whom she knew were looking for a place to live or a way to support themselves. Or perhaps, a sister would come to visit and grow interested in the opportunities open to a woman in Mathare, after which she would make the move to join her sibling.

Due to the bias of my data collection, I collected no information on Brother clusters.<sup>11</sup> However, I have some data on Brother-Sister Clusters. I have included under the rubric of Brother-Sister Clusters only those brothers and sisters who cooperate as well as share a common residence in Mathare Valley. A number of other women had brothers in Nairobi or Mathare but they did not in any way cooperate with or assist one another on a regular basis. It is interesting to note that in those groups which I have called a Brother-Sister Cluster, the woman has been older and financially more secure than her brothers. For example Jacinta had two younger brothers staying in a room near her.

She paid the rent on the room they occupied, and did their cooking and clothes washing. They were 15 years younger than Jacinta, just out of school, and they were newly arrived in Nairobi and were seeking employment. In return for her help, they assisted Jacinta with the arduous brewing tasks, such as straining and carrying water. This Cluster had formed about 6 months before I left, and I do not feel it will be a long term arrangement. Then there is the case of Njeri who had a large number of houses for rental, ran a buzaa brewing wholesale business and a number of smaller business ventures, including the raising of goats for sale. She had brought her younger brother, who was slightly simple minded to stay with her. He did all her heavy labour in exchange for food and beer, and slept in one of her rooms with the goats. Spora had come to Mathare in its early days and had built some houses. She had summoned her younger, landless brother to stay with her and had given him a house and K.sh.1500 to stock a duka (a small general goods shop). Spora was childless and had taken one of her brother's many sons into her household and raised him as her son. In all the instances of Brother-Sister Clusters that I recorded (5 in all) the woman was, the dominate factor in the relationship, either due to a disparity of age, intelligence or wealth.

This close cooperation must be a change from the traditional Kikuyu sister relationships, but how much so is difficult to determine with any exactitude, since there is almost nothing on this particular kin relationship in the

literature. It is possible only to make an intelligent guess on the basis of the data available and the statements of informants. The best summary of the changing relationship between sisters was that of Muthoni Maina who once explained to me,

Once only brothers were helping to a woman;  
but now, because women can work and earn money,  
a woman can turn to her sisters for help.

In Mathare, a number of women seek reciprocal assistance and emotional warmth from one or more of their sisters who live close to them. The significance of the 24 clusters that I recorded is difficult to establish. My own data is sketchy and haphazard. It would have taken a separate survey questionnaire on its own to determine the statistical significance of this phenomenon in Mathare and level of interaction and cooperation between the siblings. The cases recorded in my notes were those of women whom I contacted frequently enough to make some sort of assessment of daily interaction. Also, as I said, I did not include as a Sister Cluster those sisters who were linked by a mother living in Mathare. A number of them will surely continue to live close and to share daily tasks and responsibilities after the death of the old Mother, forming a Sister Cluster rather than a Matrifocally Extended Family as they do at this point in time.

#### WOMEN'S INSTRUMENTAL NETWORKS

During the last 15 years, many social scientists have



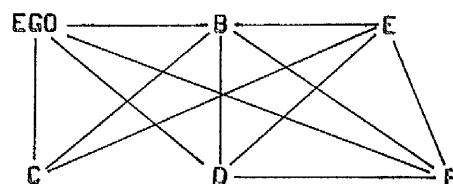
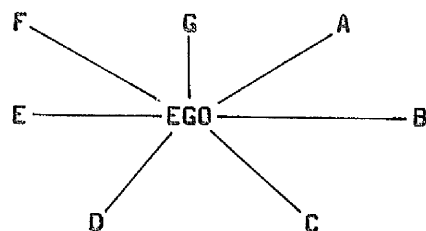
begun to use networks as an analytical concept. There is no such thing as a theory of social networks and perhaps never will be. However, in fluid, heterogeneous urban situations the use of networks as an analytical tool can be useful to demonstrate how the individual articulates with the institutions of his society. It can also be useful in analysing processes of institutionalization occurring in areas of rapid change. The basic idea behind the analytical uses of networks is that of a "configuration of cross cutting interpersonal bonds in some unspecified way casually connected with the action of this person and the social institutions of their society." (Barnes, 1972, p.5) The use of networks in this thesis will be that of a partial network, often called personal, or ego-centred networks as opposed to larger networks as discussed by Firth (1969, pp. 289-291). These partial networks are ego-centered and are seen to be the links that join Ego to friends, kinsmen, workmates, etc. All individuals are seen to be at the centre of such a personal, partial network; but understandably the type of interactional criteria of networks in small, homogenous societies and in large-scale societies will be different. "The detailed study of networks in urban studies promises to yield important insights into social behaviour in towns." (Mitchell, p. 55, 1966) It may be most useful in analysing the processes of institutionalization in areas of rapid change.

#### Relevant Aspects of Network Analysis

Certain aspects of network analysis that are relevant

to the following discussion must be defined here. First, networks are described and compared by different Interactional Criteria. (Mitchell, J.C., p.20, 1969) The Content of a network delineates the purpose for which the links between two individuals come into being. This link may have only one purpose (such as the sale of a pound of maize), in which case it is called uniplex; or it may incorporate several distinct kinds of content, (such as the link between a father and son who also farm together), in which case it is termed a multiplex link. The Directedness of a network link explains the direction in which a link moves; that is whether it is uni-directional or reciprocal. The Durability of a link deals with the period a link exists between two individuals. Some links have only limited durability, that is until a certain object has been achieved. Other links exist for extended periods, some for as long as the two individuals lives. The Intensity of the links or the strength of a link between two people in a network can also vary. The intensity is the willingness of one or both people to "forgo other considerations in carrying out the obligations associated with these ties." (Reader, D. p. 22, 1964) Daily face to face links are not necessarily intense. And finally, the Frequency is the simple quantification of the frequency of contact between members of a personal network.

Lastly, two types of personal networks can be distinguished. The Effective Personal Network and the Extended Network when diagrammed have a very different shapee

Effective NetworkExtended Network

The Effective Network can be said to be dense, since links connect all the members to one another.

By contrast the Extended Network is a relatively open network, and the various members of Ego's network do not necessarily know each other.

In Mathare a residential cluster can be called an Effective Network, and a resident's friendship network can be called an Extended Network. (Epstein, 1969 a)

#### Instrumental Friendship Networks in Mathare

In Mathare, women who brew and/or sell beer face a number of difficulties that are impossible to solve individually. Women do not form groups to brew beer, which would at first glance seem to be a sensible solution to absorb some of the financial and legal uncertainties of buzaa brewing. This could be because of the heavy police pressure on the area, which makes any large concentration of equipment or beer especially vulnerable to confiscation. As it is, with each woman brewing in her room, the police can in a raid only affect a small proportion of the women in the village; and often as not they raid a different part of the village each time. Thus the risks are spread out over the whole village, in a giant lottery of loss, as it were. It is interesting that buzaa 'stores' (the local term for a room hired by a number of women to keep their beer stored in) are specially vulnerable, and once spotted by the police they must be moved.

To assist them in the constant problems of brewing beer

in Mathare, women activate the links in two types of networks. These are instrumental networks, that is instrumental for the brewing of buzaa. Each woman in Mathare is the centre of two instrumental networks, an effective and an extended network. Each of these networks is constituted differently and is utilized by the women for different purposes. Some personnel may, but do not necessarily have to overlap.

#### Effective Network, Description and Function.

In Mathare, built as most squatter areas are without plan or layout, there can be discerned small, natural residential clusters: either a line of rooms facing a common alley, or a courtyard. The people who occupy these residential clusters are a randomly selected and constantly changing group. Changing because the only stable, permanent residents are the houseowners; and random because house-owners mainly rent to the firstcomer and seem to disregard age, sex, home area or relative status of the prospective tenant. Renters of rooms move frequently. Interestingly enough there is a fair amount of residential stability within Mathare in general and within each village in particular. In my survey, 33% had lived in Mathare 2-5 years, 35% for 6-10 years, and 10% for more than 10 years. Of the 150 women interviewed only 16% had ever lived in another village of Mathare. Yet within each village, they shift rooms frequently. Women shift an average of once a year; the most common reasons are inability to pay rent, quarrels with landladies or neighbours or fellow

occupants of the room.

This residential cluster forms the effective part of the instrumental network. Proximity is not necessarily a cause or an effect of friendship. Even women who share a room together can be initially total strangers. But the cooperation and mutual assistance of one's neighbours are an essential daily part of existence in Mathare, especially if one is involved with buzaa brewing.

The Content then of this instrumental network is determined by the demands of buzaa brewing and domestic life in Mathare: the constant police raids in the area, the intense competition for limited numbers of customers, the high cost of equipment, and the fact that many women are raising children while conducting their businesses. Police raids make necessary a complicated system of warning, where each neighbour warns all the others if they hear or see anything suspicious and then aid each other in concealing telltale pieces of buzaa brewing equipment or beer as fast as possible. Residents choose to lock and leave their houses during a raid, so when police break in they cannot identify whose room and whose beer it is. Thus a woman loses only her beer but is not arrested. Neighbours are also required to notify the close friends or relatives of an arrested woman, so they can go to her aid; and neighbours will care for an arrested woman's children in the short run. Equipment is expensive, and often women must borrow or rent for a minimal sum certain items. Again police raids make it functional that this borrowing be done

between close neighbours so as to eliminate the risk of carrying large pieces of equipment long distances around the village.

There is keen competition for customers. Partly this is because buzaa spoils very rapidly and must be sold on the day it is ready. This means that women when they brew wish to sell wholesale or retail their whole  $4\frac{1}{2}$  gallons in one day. For this reason women who are sharing a house or are close neighbours do what I call "alternate brewing". They arrange a system whereby they have beer for sale alternative days. This eliminates destructive competition for the limited number of customers that might come into one residential cluster.

Finally, there is constant reciprocal assistance among neighbours: minor borrowing, comforting of a crying baby while the mother fries her buzaa, sending someone else's child for cigarettes for one's customer, sharing of food or tea when one woman has had an especially hectic day. Most of the reciprocal assistance noted in this section are types of assistance that do not require substantial outlays of time, effort, or money. There is also a strong emphasis on "neighbourly" behaviour: being friendly, not "gossiping one's neighbours" (that is, spreading malicious stories; friendly exchange of news is a common daily occurrence), joking, mutual hair braiding, and helping each other with food preparation. These activities all help to maintain the atmosphere of calm and cooperation that is the ideal for any housing cluster, and ideal that, it is needless to

say, is frequently not achieved. However, since there is in Mathare relatively little status differentiation based on occupation and only some based on income there are not the exclusive gossip sets and cliques set up by women in the neighbourhood similar to those described by Parkin (1969, pp. 60-8). The housing project which Parkin described in Kampala included a wide range of wage sector occupations. It was relatively high income, compared to Mathare, though there was wide differentiation in income. Neighbours did not depend on each other for anything but minor assistance and companionship. Muller has described a low income neighbourhood in Kitale, Kenya, where "the economic conditions make the maintenance of at least a 'working relationship' between neighbours a necessity." (Muller, 1976, p. 70) She goes on to describe the institutionalization of a very similar set of norms of interaction to those I have described for Mathare. Where economic situations are difficult, and (as in the case of Mathare) the social situation is uncertain and full of threat, neighbours cannot afford the luxury of cliques and quarrels. Landladies eject tenants who quarrel often with neighbours. A good working relationship between members of an Effective Network is important.

The Directedness of these links is definitely reciprocal. Since there is often not even the intervening variable of friendship among women of a neighbourhood cluster Effective Network, this reciprocity is strictly kept track of. Any neighbour who receives more than she gives is immediately



sanctioned, by complaint, by gossiping, and by quarrelling. It is through gossip that the normative behaviour of the housing cluster or Effective network is expressed and to some extent maintained. Epstein has commented on this 'normative' function of gossip in another urban context. (1969, p. 125) If these sanctions do not work, more drastic measures may be taken, as in the case of a woman who was notoriously 'unneighbourly' in one housing cluster. One day, her neighbours, fed up with her careless and quarrelsome attitude, did not warn her about a police raid and the woman was arrested in her house with a tank of fermenting buzaa. Comments of a satisfied nature from her neighbours afterwards indicated that she would now have to either cooperate or leave.

The links in this type of Effective network are not very notable for their Durability. This runs contrary to most Effective networks described in the literature on networks. Most such networks are also characterized by great Durability, and, as shall be seen, Intensity as well. The particular situation of Mathare, where so many people are renters and move so frequently, plus the undeniable demands put on the residential cluster during the police raids etc. lead to this seeming contradiction in terms. It is true that links between women in such a network are only durable for the period of co-residence, yet perhaps in another sense they can be viewed as latent links waiting to be reactivated. Jacobson attacks Leibow's use of the word "unstable" to describe the relationships between street-corner men in

Washington DC on the grounds that intermittent, short-lived links may have a different kind of durability. In his work on members of the white collar elite in Uganda who are frequently posted to different towns, he claims their friendships cannot be "viewed in a single place, time or neighbourhood...but within a larger context." He poses the idea of an "intermittently activated network links," (Jacobson, 1973, p. 123) Thus links of this Effective Network could be seen thus not as lacking in durability, but as intermittently activated links, activated when the women are co-resident and latent when then they move apart.

Unless friendship develops between two members of the Effective network, the links last only as long as the women are co-resident. This lack of durability is shown up when women shift residence. As happened a number of times in my fieldwork; two women who had shared a seemingly quite close relationship while neighbours in their daily round of buzaa brewing and neighbourly activity, would almost never see each other after one had moved, unless they met accidentally on the road. On the other hand, a woman moving into a cluster where there was someone she had lived near previously, quickly reactivated the link with her former neighbour. When I followed Kagure to her new room two days after she had moved, she proudly introduced me to Nyambura as someone she had been "good friends" with two years earlier when they had lived as neighbours in another part of the village. She admitted that they had rarely seen each other in the intervening period, but they were already friendly again. Kagure

sat cosily drinking tea with Nyambura and finding out about her new neighbours. In this case, knowing one of the members of her new residential cluster had eased Kagure's entrance into it, providing a quick introduction and orientation to her new neighbours.

Finally, though the interaction between the women of an Effective Network is marked by high Frequency (that is daily contact), I would not characterize them as having great Intensity. Reader has pointed out elsewhere that daily face to face links are not necessarily intense ones (Reader, p. 22, 1964) and anyone who has worked in close daily contact with colleagues that they never see after working hours can vouch for the truth of this statement.

#### Extended Network, Description and Function

The second part of a woman's total instrumental Buzaa Brewing Network in Mathare is the Extended Network. This is made up of women who are joined by so-called multiple links. That is, the women are linked as friends and/or relatives, and perhaps in some cases also as neighbours. The recruitment of members to this part of a woman's instrumental network is the same as that of friends in general, except that it is usually bounded by the limits of Mathare, and usually the particular village a woman lives in. In addition, it is made up of other women who do not actively disapprove of buzaa brewing. For example, one of my respondents had a mother living in Village II who for religious reasons actively

disapproved of her daughter's brewing. In this case she was not part of her daughter's Instrumental Extended Network. By contrast, in the above quoted case, Grace and her mother had a reciprocal arrangement of brewing and domestic work. They were in each other's Instrumental Extended Networks.

There is not the space here to go into the criteria for recruiting friends into one's friendship network in Mathare. The criteria which are most important seem to be ethnic background, relative age, relative status and education. Ethnic background is perhaps the most important single criteria. As my Friendship Network interviews revealed, only a small fraction named Best Friends from an ethnic group different from their own. With some Kikuyus, it was not only belonging to the Kikuyu ethnic groups that mattered, but the exact home area (such as Limuru, Muranga, or Nyeri). Women chose friends of similar age and similar status. It was notable that the so-called "Mama Kubwa" (Big Women) of the villages tended to befriend each other. The exception to this was the patron-client relationships. Younger girls with some education preferred friends with a similar educational background; though this was perhaps a variable of the least importance.

Patrons or clients are also recruited into this Extended network. This is another way in which women find beer to buy and customers to sell to. As Epstein has pointed out, status differentiation will be characteristic of an Extended Network (1969 p. 111) due to the different social categories from which members are chosen. This is true of Mathare women's Extended networks, but it is also true of their

Effective networks, due to the random formation of residential clusters. Thus landlords/ladies and renters, successful entrepreneurs, and relative poor beer sellers all live in the same areas.

The Instrumental Content of these relationships, was concerned with buzaa brewing. There is no time to go into the other content which was not related to Buzaa Brewing; suffice it to say that the major difference between the Extended and the Effective links of a woman's networks was that the content of the Extended links was much more varied and much of it had no instrumental value. The instrumental content was the following: (i) the buying and selling of buzaa wholesale and obtaining of extended credit (ii) putting up bail and collecting money for police fines (iii) extended help in serious emergencies.

The difficulties inherent in wholesale buzaa and the credit relationships involved were many. There is trust required to permit the carrying of large amounts of credit. A woman will buy debes of buzaa wholesale when she herself has not brewed. She does this in order to maintain a regular clientel and a reputation for always having beer for sale. A woman in the middle of the month is selling retail to men on credit, and in order to use what cash she does get for food, she is forced to buy beer wholesale on credit. Hopefully by the end of the month, a woman's customers pay up so that she can pay back the woman to whom she is in debt. This delicate balance of credit, makes it important that women who buy and sell wholesale know each other well.

Women depend on their friends or on their clients to buy their beer. Ordinary women brew maybe once a week and they noise it abroad among their friends that on such a day they will have beer ready. Conversely women seeking beer to buy walk about asking friends where there is a brew ready for that day. This ensures that women find and get rid of beer with minimum stress, that day. A woman may obtain credit for buzaa from a stranger by asking a mutual friend to guarantee her. If the creditor defaults the beer wholesaler can rightly ask the guarantor to pay the debt; a fact that makes women very chary of whom they recommend.

Certain rich women brew frequently, perhaps as often as once a day. For these women, finding enough customers among their friends is not always possible. They are often the patrons of younger women to whom they sell buzaa on credit. The relationship between these women is one of respectful friendship, where the poorer, usually younger, woman relies on the richer, older woman for credit. In such cases, the criteria of similar age and status are suspended, though similar ethnic background is still important. The relationship between a patron and a client would better be called friendly rather than a friendship in Mathare terms. For women in Mathare friendship is seen to be between relative equals (in age, status, education and ethnic background and sex) and involves a large element of shared secrets and gossiping of a sexual nature. This type of patron-client relationship does not fit this definition, since the client is usually younger than the patron.

Finding the fines and bail money and assisting a friend in all stages of her arrest and trial entail large sums of money (sh.100 to 200). It also means a great investment in time and energy on the part of the helping friend or relative, who has to go around collecting the money and spend long hours at the police station or court, carrying out bail procedures or waiting for her friend to come before the judge. A woman may spend a whole day at court during a trial. This has serious repercussions on her own business. Only the ties of blood or friendship can guarantee this degree of commitment and effort.

The same is true for asking for extended help in serious emergencies. This type of help includes such activities as spending the afternoon at a clinic with a friend's sick child, selling a friend's buzaa for her for a day when she must go to a funeral, frying and fermenting another woman's beer for several weeks because she has broken her leg. The kinds of aid and assistance that require the greatest output of risk, energy and time cannot be expected of mere neighbours. The emotional content of a link between friends or relatives gives the parties greater leeway to ask more of each other than would be the case between members of an Effective network who are only linked by common residence and the sharing of day to day practical tasks of beer brewing. Or to put it another way, the Intensity of the relationship is high.

The Directedness of these links are still reciprocal, but it is certainly less so than between members of an

Effective network. Keeping count is not as important, and the cups of tea and acts of help are not added up in the same way that they are between neighbours. Friends and relatives usually give freely of time, help and loving care. The reciprocity that exists is certainly not direct but generalized reciprocity.

The links between members of an Extended Network have higher Durability and Intensity, but a lower Frequency than those found between members of an Effective network. Naturally the durability between relatives will be well nigh permanent (barring some terrible quarrel). Friends and relatives who are part of this buzaa brewing network will try to contact each other, of only briefly every two or three days to keep up with the news. Sometimes, as in matrilocal extended families, the frequency of contact is high, especially when they live quite close together. With other women whose mothers live further away, the contact might only be for a few minutes a day, or for the duration of a meal. Because there is more to the linkages than the instrumental content, when members move away contact (though now there may be months between visits) is maintained either by visits, letters, or messages by word of mouth.

### Conclusion

One of the ways that women adjust to urban life and its demands in Mathare, is to form instrumental networks for the purpose of helping them in the various practical problems



involved in brewing buzaa. I have discussed two different types of networks which have this instrumental purpose. One is an Effective Network, made up of co-residents of a housing cluster. It's content is made up of the day to day exchanges of protection from police, buzaa brewing problem solving, and 'neighbourly' activity designed to ensure friendly relations between neighbours. The linkages in these networks are characterized by direct reciprocity, low durability (though this lack of durability may be misleading, since links can be easily reactivated at a later date,) low intensity, and high frequency. For more serious problems, such as collecting money for fines, help in case of arrest, and long term assistance during illnesses, women activate the links of an Extended Network. This is made up of women who live in Mathare, usually in the same village as Ego and are either friends or relatives. Because the links are multiplex, there is generalized rather than direct reciprocity and the links are durable. However, since the members of the Extended network may live scattered in Mathare, frequency of contact is significantly lower than that between members of the Effective network. By manipulating the links in her two networks, a woman can ease the difficulties of living in a poor, crowded urban area and practicing an illegal mode of petty commodity production while raising a family alone.

#### WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS.

Traditionally Kikuyu women belonged to Age Grades which paralleled those of men. There is little explicit inform-

ation about Age Grades; but there is evidence that they had disciplinary power over other women. Possibly they also operated as social clubs with singing and dancing sessions. Recently in the rural area, women have taken to joining land buying associations or investment societies or even forming ones of their own. Women in Mathare also belong to a variety of formal and informal associations. These associations have not only a social function, but also they are an important way for women to save money, gain power over other women (i.e. accumulate clients) or conversely to meet potential patrons. The types of associations which women join fall into two categories: (i) informal associations such as rotating credit associations, and (ii) formal associations such as Dancing Societies, Investment Associations, Mathare Building Companies, and Land Buying Associations. These groups, except the Mathare Building Companies, have an all-female membership. Men have parallel associations, some of mixed sex membership. Men do not form rotating credit associations or dance societies, in Mathare, (though there are usually one or two men in each of the Dance Societies).

#### Rotating Credit Associations

These associations are informally organized between a group of friends. They range in size from four to approximately twenty. In my experience the smaller groups stay together for long periods of time. This is because the women involved are usually close friends and this ensures

that they will all be fair and pay up in their turn. The larger groups are plagued with organizational problems. Women who receive their money early in the cycle receive basically an interest-free loan that they repay. Those at the cycle's end are financing these loans. It is also possible that early recipients will lose interest in attending the meetings; thus penalising those at the end who may even lose money. Similar problems have been noted wherever such associations have been described. (Lewis, 1976, p. 140; Little, 1966, p. 51) What these associations allow is capital accumulation by low income people who would otherwise have to save their money in their rooms, a notoriously chancy activity. This way a woman can count ahead on a lump sum on a particular week.

Most women use this money for school fees or buying uniforms, since the sums involved are generally not large. The average contribution was sh. 5/ each week. There were however, smaller groups of richer women that contributed sh.20/ or even sh.50/ each week. Women who join this type of rotating credit group use their lump sum (perhaps as much as sh.100 or sh.200/) to finance a brewing, or a large scale purchase like a brewing drum or cardboard to repair a roof. It is only in this range of saving that one could see the rotating credit association acting as a means of capital accumulation in Geertz's sense (Geertz, C. 1966, p. 422).

#### Dancing Societies

There are a number of dancing societies in Mathare,

perhaps five in all. They are all Kikuyu and have large memberships. The one that I knew best in Village I has perhaps 60 members, though not all of these women are full-time members with a complete uniform. Each society has its own uniform, based on the traditional dress but made of modern materials such as plastic beads and fake leather material. These costumes cost up to sh.50/ if they are completely decorated with all the requisite bead embroidery and jewelry. This means that the poorer members may have only minimal costumes.

The societies perform at public functions inside and outside of Mathare. They often receive invitations from the Provincial Commissioner to entertain at the opening of a school, a trade fair, Independence Day celebrations, or to informal Sunday folk dance celebrations at President Kenyatta's country house. For these events they usually receive beer, food and transportation, but rarely a fee of any kind. For celebrations within Mathare, they usually receive beer only.

The function of such Dance Societies therefore cannot be seen as a method of capital accumulation in the same way as are the other associations. A more important function is that they allow members scope for political manoeuvring. They provide another arena for women patrons to extend their sphere of influence among women of Mathare. These groups also give the women of Mathare a means of communication with the leaders of Nairobi and Kenya. As I have mentioned earlier, these dance groups when they perform before political leaders express in their songs their poverty and persecution

while at the same time flattering the leaders and assuring them of continued allegiance. How effective women dancers were in advertising the 'tabu ya wanawake ya Mathare,' (troubles of women of Mathare) is open to serious question. However, membership in a Dance Society was more effective in local politics. Officers of these groups certainly used their members to consolidate their positions in other associations or in the village. The leader of the Village I Dance Society, who was involved in a quarrel over leadership in a large Investment Society in Village I rallied those Dance Society members who also belonged to the Investment Society to assist her in defeating the President of that Association.

#### Investment and Land Buying Associations

There are a number of these investment associations; I never determined exactly how many in Mathare as a whole. I personally know of five large ones, with an average membership of one hundred. These Associations are legally registered with the government, and conform to a greater or a lesser degree to the laws of incorporation with elected officers, books, and bank accounts.

It was very difficult to obtain accurate information about the financial affairs of these associations, because they guarded their secrets jealously. Members who joined pledged to pay a certain amount each month, and also to pay up a predetermined 'share'. The Kiambu Thinami Group had 103 members, of which 30 odd formed a type of well-organized

rotating credit association within the structure of the larger group. This latter sub-group varied in organization depending on the inclinations and personal finances of the membership. The smaller rotating credit society worked with a fair degree of success because of the umbrella of the larger association. Members could not default because they already had a substantial investment in the Kiambu Thinami Group and could be easily reached and sanctioned by the officers if they didn't pay up. Each of the 103 members were expected to finance a share of sh.2,000/ each over a period of time. Meetings were held every two weeks, and each member gave sh.12/, if they were able. One of the biggest tasks of the officers was to chase up members in arrears. Interestingly enough, some members allowed their contributions to fall into arrears, and then paid for them in a lump of sh.100/ at a time when they received payment from a rotating credit society. When one set of "shares" had been completed, a new round would be begun.

The Kiambu Group seemed to be doing fairly well. In July 1972, they put sh. 20,000/ down on a shop in Eastleigh, the total price of which was sh. 80,000/. They hired a lawyer who had helped them to draw up the contract for a fee of sh.1,887/. What the total assets of the Group were I could never determine. It was also unclear how the property would be managed, and how it would benefit the members. I was told that when they fully owned the shop, they would use it as an outlet for goods produced by poorer members and provide employment for some of the unemployed women. They

were also planning to buy houses which would yield rent. Some other societies invest their contributions in land. Members then receive a parcel of land to cultivate, which most of them do with hired labour.

#### Mathare Housing Companies.

There were perhaps 22 of these Companies formed at the end of the 60's in Mathare. There are no Companies with an all-female membership. I did not have the time to investigate these Companies in any detail. The books were held by male leaders and a great deal of secrecy cloaked them; partially, I think, because they were in some disorder. Two of the Companies that I knew something about had not had an audit of their books for nearly 3 years, despite legal requirements to have it done yearly.

These Companies were formed to buy land in Mathare Valley and to invest in housing for rental. Probably two-thirds of the members are local people, and as far as I could determine, a little less than half of those are women. The rest of the members are important men from outside Mathare (business men, MP's and Civil Servants). Each member pays an entrance fee varying from K.sh. 1,000 to sh.2,000. This is a contribution to the cost of the land, I think. Then each member purchases a number of "shares" according to his or her individual means. The number of shares a member buys determines the number of housing units they then "own", or more literally have the right to collect

the rent from. This means the investment is very fruitful. I calculated that investors recoup their investments within 12 to 18 months quite incredible by Western standards.

### Conclusion

This was a brief review of the different types of associations women can join in Mathare. Most of them entail saving, whether it is sh.5/ a week for a rotating credit association or sh.1,200/ for a share in an investment company. All of them allow all members to accumulate capital and some members to consolidate positions of power. Women who ran into difficulties can turn to fellow members for help, advice, or loans. These associations are definitely important for female migrants trying to establish themselves in the urban economy. Women can accumulate capital or a following with which to carry out political activity within Mathare.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored the various ways in which women in Mathare have been changing patterns of allocations of goods, time, effort and resources to relationships with other women. These have included relationships with relatives (mother, daughter, and sister) and friends in friendship networks and associations both formal and informal.

The evidence for the reorganization<sup>of</sup> the mother-daughter status set, whether it is in Mathare or spans the



rural-urban social field, is found on the extensive fostering of children with Mathare women's rural mothers and the development of matrilocal extended families within Mathara. Mathare women foster their children with the rural grandmother to save money, to ease their work burdens, to give children what they consider a more suitable environment, and to find school places for their offspring. Approximately 80% of all fostering transactions took place with the mother's mother. The formation of this transaction entails an exceptional investment of time, and resources by the urban woman.

Other Mathare women have grown up with their mothers in the urban area. Many continue to live with their mothers, giving rise to a matrifocal extended family three or even four generations deep. Due to a variety of socio-psychological factors, daughters grow-up integrated into the matrilocal family unit while sons are often alienated and peripheral. Except where a woman has a number of business interests other than buzaa brewing, a son rarely stays with his mother after he has achieved maturity. Daughters remain and form a cooperative social and economic unit with their mothers. Mother and daughter do not live in the same room, but in all other ways form a household: cooking together, pooling resources for household and brewing expenses, cleaning, caring for children, brewing and selling beer. They turn to each other for help in serious emergencies, especially those connected with police arrests or bribes. The mother-daughter set under these circumstances has been reorganized

to include more transactions (especially those economic and security aspects) than such a set had or still has in the rural area. Both mother and daughter have changed the traditional patterns of allocations of time and material resources to their relationship.

Sister clusters are also in evidence in Mathare, though their statistical significance is uncertain. A sister cluster consists of two or more sisters (without the presence of their mother) who cooperate in a number of ways. The cooperative unit formed by sisters of such a cluster is similar to the one described earlier for mothers and daughters. Brothers in Mathare do not participate in such close cooperative units. This reordering of the sister status set is also an innovation indicative of the increased importance of female relatives in women's social adaptation to the urban environment.

Women in Mathare however do more than reorder relationships with female relatives. They also create instrumental friendship networks within Mathare: instrumental in that they are networks specifically organized to deal with the exigencies of beer brewing and the daily problems which beset women living in Mathare. I described the organization of Effective and Extended Networks. The former includes neighbours, who are not necessarily friends, who must form close cooperative ties with regard to beer brewing and the police raid warning system. These Effective Networks do not generally include close friends, but norms enforce an ethic of neighbourliness. The uncertainties of life in Mathare

do not allow cliques and gossip groups to fragment the residential clusters.

The Extended Network of a Mathare woman includes friends and relatives within Mathare to whom they turn for help and assistance in more serious or more extended problems which relate to beer brewing and Mathare life. The ties between women of such a network are less purely instrumental than those of the Effective Network and also have greater duration and intensity.

At the same time Mathare women join associations with specific purposes. They do so in order to obtain companionship, to save money, to make capital investments in land or houses, to create ties with potential patrons, or to seek clients to support their bids for political power within the local community. Women join informal savings societies or formal land buying associations, local housing companies, or dance groups.

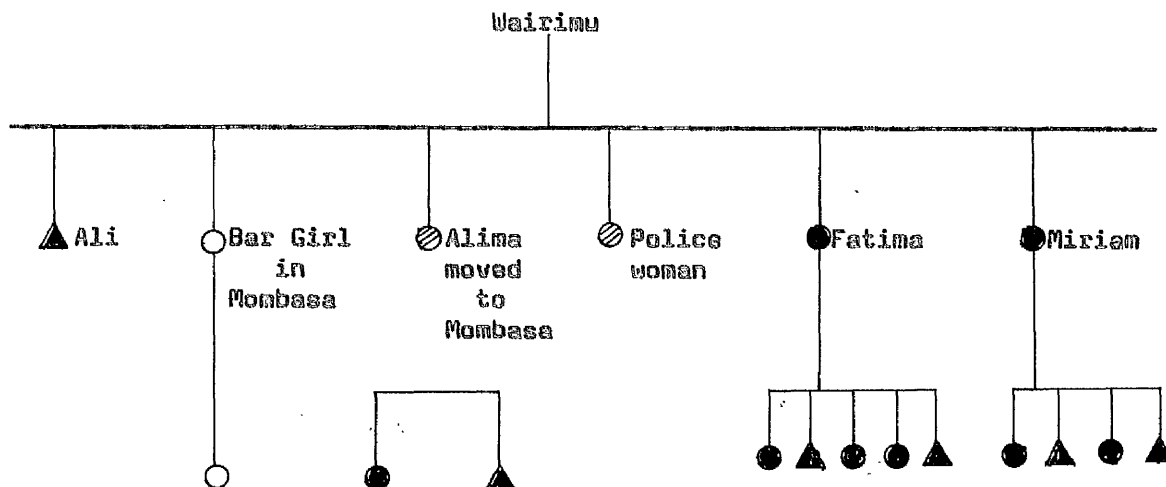
All of these changes in transactions among women have been directed toward maximization of security, help and assistance of femal migrants within a difficult urban environment. These women have left the rural area where they were well integrated into family systems, and have come to the urban social field where they find themselves cut off, at least partially, from rural kin or friends. They can no longer count on the help and assistance from rural kin, at least for more immediate problems. In addition they exist on the periphery of the urban economy, carrying out illegal and uncertain activities. These new patterns

of exchanges between mother and daughter, sister and sister, neighbours and friends are elements of a strategy for survival.

# CHAPTER VI - FOOTNOTES

1. This low percentage of mothers out of the universe (only 73.3%) of Life History informants might not be entirely caused by barrenness. For one thing I interviewed a number of young girls under the age of 20, and they may have been too young for children. However, there were also a number of the Big Women of the Village and many of these were barren. There seemed to be a correlation between barrenness and economic success in Village II.
2. "Harambee" is a Swahili word meaning "pull together", and has been used as a political slogan for the Kanu Party to encourage a spirit of working together and group self help. Harambee projects can most easily be translated as Self Help Projects. Among the types of Harambee projects most popular in Kenya are schools, community halls and clinics. A survey in 1960 revealed that out of 809 schools in Kenya, 478 of them were unaided by the governmental education agency. These unaided schools are Harambee schools, built by, and the teachers paid by, the local community. Out of the 140,719 pupils in schools, 60,000 were in these unaided schools. The greatest growth in this type of school was in the area of primary schools. (James Sheffield, 1973, pp. 86-90) I have not seen any more recent data on the number of Harambee Schools compared to state schools; though there has been a large expansion in governmentally established schools, there has undoubtedly also been a growth in the number of Harambee Schools as well.
3. There are two serious disadvantages of Harambee schools. One, the expensive fees (plus additions for desks, building funds, and watchman's fees) was most certainly perceived by Mathare informants. However, the second and more serious drawback of Harambee Schools is not universally realised by Kenyans of lower educational standard (or no education). That is that the level of tuition and equipment in Harambee Schools is very poor. A report carried out on 47 Harambee Schools in 1966 showed minimal, unreliable financial support resulting in poorly educated staff, crowded conditions, and shortage of facilities available for students. In 1967 only 35% of the Harambee School students passed the Kenya Junior Secondary Education Certificate. (An examination which was given after 8 years of primary school education. (Sheffield, 1973))

4. Women often complain that their children very early learn the "use of money" and often turn to stealing from their own mothers. Ironically, to an observer conversant with modern socialisation theory, these same women frequently bribe their children to stop crying or to be good, with pennies. By two years of age, the little ones know how many sweets a penny will get them at the duka.
5. I am grateful for Scarlett Epstein, IDS, Univ. of Sussex, for pointing out to me that sending an older, and perhaps recalcitrant, child to the rural area may be an effort to seek stronger discipline for the child. It may be implicit that the mother's father, or another older male relative, like the mother's brother, is going to provide this stricter discipline.
6. This latter was often a wistful complaint made by mothers who had left their children with their own rural mothers. "They think that their cūcū (grandmother) is their mother. They call me 'aunt' and run to their cūcū when they fall and hurt themselves.
7. In cities of Africa where women are more numerous than men, such women may find it difficult to support themselves, since it is a buyers market. Gloria Lowenthal describes a situation in Ethiopian cities where women trying to maintain themselves by beer brewing and sexual relations with men, live in great poverty. She relates this to the large number of single female migrants living in these cities. (Personal communication as well as Lowenthal 1976)
8. In modern Kikuyu society, a woman who has borne a child is often called 'Mama' (or Mother of) with the addition of a child's name, either a first born, a first son, or a favourite child. Thus Mama Lucy was "Mother of Lucy."
9. In order to clarify the complicated structure of this family, I include a chart with the members of the family, their names, and place of residence. (See page 287)
10. Sisters are very supportive of one another when coping with the legal problems and difficulties of police raids, bribery etc, in much the same way as mothers and daughters are in matrifocal family units. If a woman has a sister living in Mathare, she will be the first person that neighbours will notify if she is arrested. When Mary was arrested



Key:

- = resident with Wairimu
- = resident elsewhere
- ◐ = a change of residence during fieldwork period
- ▲

with buzaa, neighbours ran to tell her sister, who abandoned everything, hastily collected enough money for bail, and ran the length of the village to arrive at the Police van before it had departed from Mathare. She ran after the van all the way to the police station and paid the bail on the spot.

11. Since I was interested in women and their activities, I did not look for or record much information which described Brother Clusters. On the other hand, it is also possible that they did not exist as cooperative units in the same way as Sister Clusters. There are groups of brothers who live in Mathare, but my data does not indicate much cooperation or mutual assistance. Ferraro's work (1973) in another neighbourhood of Nairobi, however, indicates that urban Kikuyu men do interact and mutually assist their kinsmen both in the city and the rural area.



## CHAPTER VII

### A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF A MATHARE WOMEN'S

#### URBAN CAREER

#### ENTERING THE PUBLIC DOMAIN IN AFRICAN CITIES

In the three previous chapters I examined the economic activities of Mathare women, the changes in the type of dependency relationships with men which women enter to gain access to resources and the new relationships with other women in which women are investing time and resources while pursuing their private strategies of adapting to the demands of urban life.

#### Women Entering the Public Domain in African Cities

In this chapter I describe a process whereby certain Mathare women become successful entrepreneurs and patrons. These women, within the limited social field of Mathare, have done what Sanday calls: entering the Public Domain. (Sanday, 1974, pp. 189-206) She sets out a developmental model of female status which starts from a situation of a balance of power in men's favour and develops to one of more equality of power between the sexes. In a situation of an unequal balance of power, women are confined to the domestic domain and do not have access to strategic resources. Sandy sets out an operational definition of Female Status in the Public Domain. There are four indicators or dimensions

of female status that have been scaled using the Guttman scaling procedures. They are as follows. (1) Female material control, where females have control over things such as land, houses etc. beyond the domestic unit.

(2) Demand for female produce: female produce has a recognised value outside the domestic unit, whether within the smaller social unit or an external market. (3) Female political participation: women have institutionalised ways of articulating their opinions and affecting the course of political policy. (4) Female solidarity groups devoted to female political or economic interests.

Sanday sees that women gain status in the public domain under two different sets of circumstances. The first is when women enter the subsistence sphere with men and what she calls a balanced division of labour develops. The second, more pertinent to this analysis is in a situation of changing economic demands. If female produce is valued, and males are absent from the distribution of the demanded product, then there is a development of female public status. If a female activity, such as the growing of cassava, or vegetable trading, as all over Africa, becomes through changing economic circumstances more in demand and more lucrative, women may obtain economic importance and increased independence from men. Afikpo women support themselves and their children through cassava production. Afikpo men, find it increasingly difficult to keep their wives at home in their traditionally subordinate positions. (LeVine, R. 1970. p. 178) The same is true with Yoruba women, whose

women seem to LeVine to be among the most independent in Africa. Their autonomous economic role and mobility through market trading has made them notoriously "difficult to control." (Ibid, p. 179)

In modern Kenya, as in many parts of Africa, two types of women are entering the public domain: the educated woman, usually married, who is in the modern wage sector, and the poorer, uneducated woman who is involved in petty commodity production and is less likely to be married. Carlo Dutto in his study of Neyri in Kenya (1975, pp.125-6) comments that many women are learning to take on new economic political opportunities in the urban area. "As women have taken over new roles, new ways of behaving and accompanying attitudes are increasingly being accepted...(they) are developing a new type of individualism and free enterprise." He goes on to say that this applied both to educated women (working as nurses, business-women, secretaries and teachers) and to prostitutes. It does not apply to the non-working urban wife. The elite working wife and the independent head of household are exploring new ways of gaining access to public resources other than that of forming stable dependency relationships with men.

In both cases there is a change in the economic system which leads to a demand for the production of the women; In a developing country, there is a shortage of trained manpower, and educated women have no difficulty in obtaining jobs. Prostitutes and petty commodity producers like beer brewers and traders also have products which are sought after.

It is not possible in this paper to pursue in any detail the entry into the public domain by educated African women and their increasing independence. Writing about professional Ghanaian women, Dinan states that this new freedom to earn their living outside their lineage and independent of their husbands, gives professional women a remarkable degree of socio-economic freedom from male control. They employ such strategies as postponing marriage, concentrating on their own careers and economic resources, and consolidating their position with their own kin groups. (1976, p 9) Schuster describes similar independence and similar strategies among young working girls of Lusaka. (Schuster, 1976) These women, equipped with modern skills through education, compete on a more or less equal basis with men in the wage sector.

#### Low Income Women In The Literature On African Cities

The literature on African cities yields a number of descriptions of women petty commodity producers (notably beer brewers, traders, or prostitutes) and their evident financial independence, wider options, greater freedom to establish economic and sexual freedom from fathers and husbands (Baker Bird, 1959; Ardener, E. 1961), or quasi marital relationships (Gugler, 1972, Southall, 1961), and overall emancipation from a male dominated tradition social system.

Underlying or directly associated with these various motives (for going to town) is the fact

women perceive an opportunity of improving their status. Like the young men before them, the women are increasingly impatient with their traditionally ascribed position. They speak of their desire for "freedom" and "emancipation" and many see town as a place where this can be achieved. (Little, 1973, p. 20)

Mayer found that urban women in New London appreciated town life because "here is their business, here alone is the possibility of maintaining themselves by their own efforts." (Mayer 1971, pp. 249-50) An Xhosa woman told him that in "town a woman is independent. You are free to do as you please. There are no homestead people watching you."

Hellman observes for women in Rooiyard

Women are making use of opportunities of the urban area to become economically independent by supporting themselves in the urban area and not returning to their homes as deserted wives. (Hellman, 1948, p. 87)

Obviously the status of women must be affected as a result of the earning power which the sale of beer affords them. They become an economic asset to their families, and this secures for them a degree of economic security and independence. (Ibid. p. 50)

Hart, studying entrepreneurs in urban Ghana, speaks of the urban milieu making the emancipation of women easier than at home in the rural area; women through a combination of petty trade, commercialised sex, and brewing attain a higher standard of living independent of male control (Hart, 1969). Skinner in Ouagadougou (1974) and Beinfeld in Dar es Salaam (1974) describe "independent-minded" women making lucrative profits brewing local beers and running bars. Skinner claims a brewer can make more in a month of trading than many white collar workers (1974, p. 74). Elkan concludes

from interviews with factory women in Jinja that "it would seem that women were inspired (to come to work in Jinja) by a real desire for independence and for emancipation from men." (1956, p. 43); and if the violent opposition expressed by his male respondents to women working was any indication, women were partially attaining it. Leslie, describing the socio-economic life of prostitution in Dar es Salaam, concludes that these women did well economically, sometimes accumulating a dowry to go home with, and making regular visits home to relatives where "they are much admired as successful business women". (1963, p. 234) Older women build expensive houses and "keep" younger men for companions.

It must be mentioned, in all fairness, that there is also a strong school of "pessimists", as Dinan refers to them in her paper on Ghanaian women. (Dinan, 1976, p. 1) These scholars feel that women, especially low income, or self-employed, uneducated women, have lost more in the long run than they have gained in the short run. Few real occupational options exist for them in the urban area, except for trading, brewing and prostitution (Pons, 1969, p. 214 and Boserup, 1970, pp. 85-105). Schwartz (1972) maintains that urban women have entered a worsening situation of subjection and dependence (ignoring, rather summarily I think, the stated perceptions of his women informants that they were freer and had more options in their urban employment). One of the problems, as pointed out by Bujra (1975, pp. 214-5) is that Marxist analysts, like Schwartz, view commercialised

sex as a result of an exploitative society. Therefore a prostitute is, in this model, a degraded victim, not as I believe an active social actor. It is certainly true that there is limited opportunity for employment for women; partially because women have a very low standard of education and partially due to overt discrimination. In Ghana, 58% of economically active women are involved in agriculture, and 27.8% in commerce, leaving only 10% in manufacturing and 4.2% in professions. In Nairobi, only 22.6% of the female population of working age is employed in the wage employment sector. (Greenstreet, 1971; ILO Report, 1973)

It is also true that urban women, even educated single women, bear the onus of a stereotype of being superficial, pleasure seeking, immoral and wicked. Wipper points out that all urban single women are regarded as prostitutes as a matter of course. (Wipper, 1972). Eleanor Wachtel, in her review of stereotypes of African women in Kenyan novels, shows that in novels (mostly written by men) "the city woman is without virtue. No distinction is made between a prostitute and any other woman who lives in town."

(Wachtel, E. Unpublished 1972, p 2). A short story written by a woman appearing in Joe, a Kenyan humour magazine, underlines this negative image of urban women. Two men, at an elegant cocktail party, recognise a beautiful woman as a former classmate of theirs. They spend the party making scurrilous comments about her possible source of income, her expensive clothes etc. After they have dismissed her as a "good time girl" with no husband, children or responsibilities,

they speculate on their chances with her; "She's on the common stock market. We can both have a go. Anyone can have a go." They are shocked later on to discover that she is respectably married, with children, and with a responsible job in a school. (Were, 1973). It is no accident that this story was written by a woman.

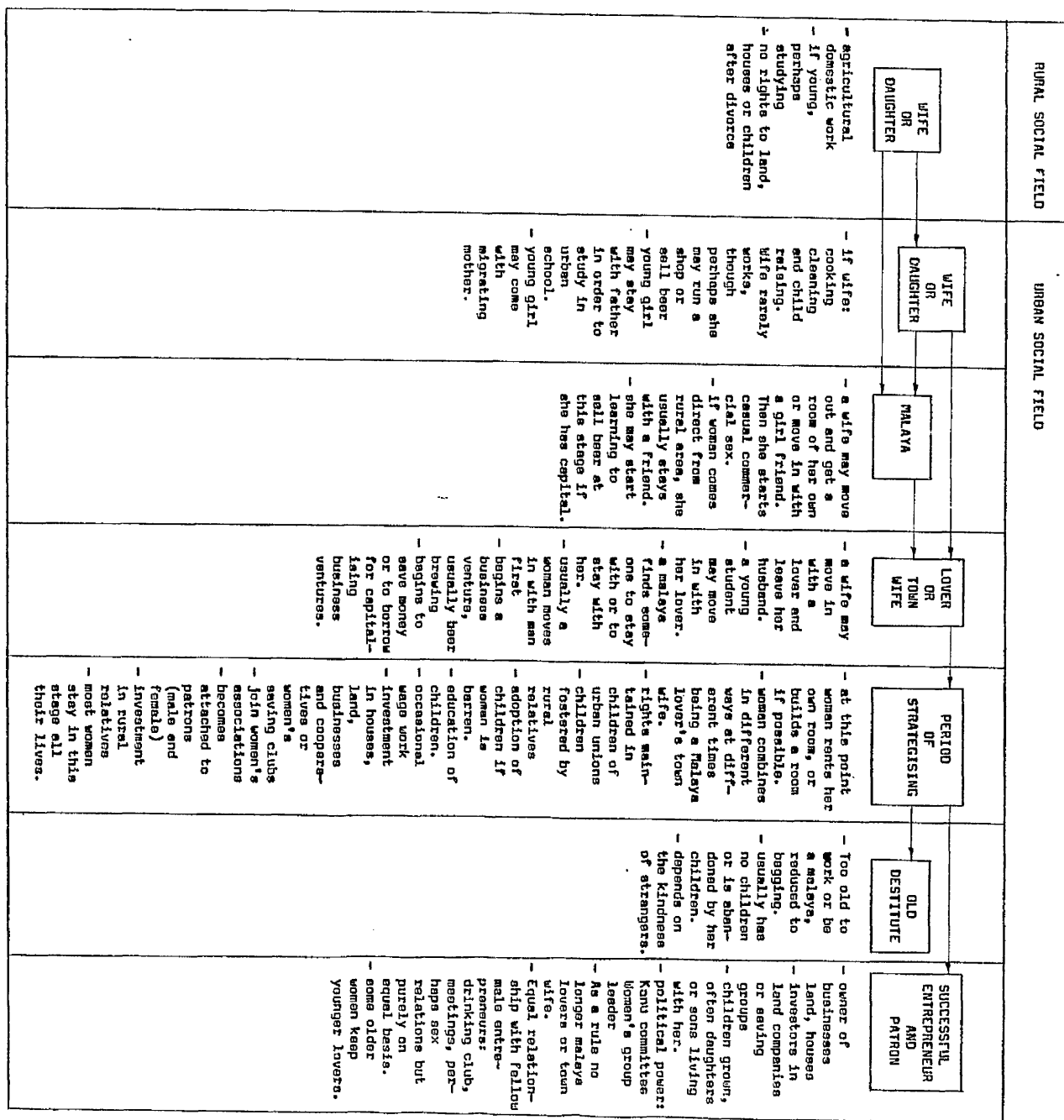
It is difficult to reconcile these attitudes with the change in women's status in urban areas. Admittedly, many of the above observations are based on slender evidence, and the measurement of relative status is at best an uncertain exercise. What is clear, is that despite negative social images, most of the women described above have, using Sanday's indicators of female status in the public domain, certainly made a start entering the public domain. They all have products that are valued, and perhaps more importantly, there are no male figures that are able to organize the distribution of the demanded product. Thus these women, it is commonly agreed, have a great deal of material control. They buy land, join saving societies, build houses and bank their savings. They have control over their children, since they do not marry. What is less clear is the degree of effective political participation of such women in their respective urban societies or whether these women form strong, effective women's solidarity groups which protect their interests. There are a few good examples such as the market women of Ghana who played an important part in putting Nkruma in power, and who have a tradition of forming purchasing cooperatives to by-pass middlemen. (Lewis, 1976, pp. 144-6) Cohen



describes a prostitutes' association with a chieftess who settles disputes involving its members. He also maintains that prostitutes have been "a significant factor in the politics of the Quarter", organizing women's branches of the main parties. (Cohen, 1969, pp. 63-4). But the spread and effectiveness of women's political power, and the importance of self-employed women's groups in protecting women's interests in urban Africa, are still unclear in the literature.

It is also dangerous to generalize for uneducated, self employed groups of women all over Africa. It is obvious that in some areas urban life has led to an increase of participation in the public domain. In other areas, where perhaps women had a stronger position in the traditional sector, it is conceivable that low-income urban women have even lost status in the public domain. For the rest of this chapter, I shall concentrate on the career strategies of the women I worked with in Mathare. I shall present first a model of a typical Mathare woman's urban career strategy reconstructed both from observation and the Life Histories I collected from 89 women. Finally I will compare the stage of Successful Entrepreneurs and Patron (an end point in the urban career of only a certain number of these female migrants) with the last stage of Sanday's developmental model of female status in the public domain.

Chart IV. Model of a Mathare Woman's Urban Career Strategy



A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF A MATHARE WOMAN'S URBAN CAREER

Chart IV schematizes the Model of a typical urban career strategy of a Mathare female head of household. As explained, many Mathare women have "voted with their feet" and left a difficult domestic situation in the rural area caused by barrenness, widowhood, divorce, or having a child out of wedlock. Others originally came to live in the city with a husband, mother or father. If the latter is the case, the migrant spends a period running a household for her husband or studying while living with a parent. A few women with lucky contacts may start out directly working as bar maids or house servants. Most of these female migrants begin their urban money earning career taking money for sex. The young girl living with her father yields to propositions by neighbouring men; the wife who has left her rural husband and is living with a sister or a friend accepts an occasional 5 shillings from a man interested in casual sex in order to contribute her share to the house-keeping. It is during this period of initial casual, commercial sex that a woman is looking around for a room of her own to rent, a man to form a more permanent love-relationship with, or a business to give her a more steady source of income, (or all three). She accumulates money to finance her first brewing or to pay a month's rent.

Certain women do not practice commercial sex initially. A wife who has lived for some time with her husband in the urban area may have had time to find a new lover to move in with. A daughter forms a relationship while studying and

leaves her father's or mother's house to live with her lover. Other women who have been involved in casual sexual relations with men often try to regularize their situation by becoming Town Wives. As I noted before, commercial sex is often a risky proposition, especially when it is the only way that a woman has to earn her living. A woman at this stage of her urban career moves in with a man, or if she has obtained a room of her own, invites him to move in with her. At this point in time she begins more regular petty commodity production (trading or beer brewing), using the man as a source of regular rent and food money. She begins to accumulate some capital or to borrow (interest free) sums from her Bwana. For many women I knew in Mathare these initial stages took place in other neighbourhoods of Nairobi. Many of the Old Timers that I will describe in greater detail, lived in a number of other similar, low-income areas before they came to Mathare. From what I can piece together from the Life Histories, their career strategies bear a striking resemblance to the career strategies of younger women who are now trying to gain a foothold in the urban area in Mathare.

At this point begins a period of what I call strategising, for want of a better word. I have called it this, because each woman now proceeds to manipulate the various demands, needs, relationships, and opportunities impinging on or open to her in order to maximize her economic position and minimize her dependence on men. (Admittedly this may not always be directly articulated.) If the woman is young and bears children, she knows that she retains full rights in them,

though they may be fostered with her mother. If she is barren she may try to take care of a child of a relative, or even in some cases "marry" a young woman in order to gain rights to her children. (I recorded two such cases.)

Whatever children she has under her care she is trying to educate them. As the years pass and situations alter, she may at any one time be involved (simultaneously or consecutively) with different men as a malaya, a lover, or a Town Wife. If a Town Bwana becomes disinterested or too jealous, she tries to persuade a lover to move in to take his place. Most women at this point are renting their own rooms. After enough capital has been accumulated, some build houses.

This was the point at which the Old Timers built their houses in Mathare. Some had already built houses a number of times in other squatter areas, and had seen them torn down by City Council Askaris. Some had profited by this, receiving compensation which they then converted into another house somewhere else. Women, at this stage, are investing whenever they have the cash. They work at beer brewing or trading; do stints as bar maids or house servants. They join Companies which raise money to buy land or urban houses. They join Savings Clubs or cooperatives which dance or make baskets or run butcheries. They connect themselves with one or more women's associations both for economic reasons and social prestige. They begin to attach themselves to patrons, both male and female, either political leaders, rich beer brewers who give extensive credit, or women's associations leaders.

The money that they make from their dependency relations with men is invested in their businesses or one of the associations they belong to. Sometimes they can persuade men to make large contributions to their Companies or to help them obtain licences or other favours. Finally women invest some of their money in consolidating their position with rural relatives; by presenting small gifts, or if they are able, larger items such as tin roofs, school fees for young relatives or water tanks.

Most women never manage to invest enough, or to obtain enough influence in associations and political organizations to enter the category of successful entrepreneurs who themselves become patrons. Most of the older women whom I knew, no matter how old they were, were still strategising madly, with hopes of someday (in some unspecified way) making that large amount of money which would enable them to buy concrete-block houses or comfortable shambas. Many were already in possession of a cardboard house, and some obtained a concrete house in New Mathare. Most had some sort of business activity and depended little on support from men, but could hardly be counted as successful entrepreneurs.

Indeed, some women find themselves reduced to beggary when they reach a sick, old age. Most of these women have no children, or are deserted by what children they have had, and have no business and no investments. Too old and sick to do any work they sleep in corners or subsist on charity. There were remarkably few such women in Mathare. I only knew two or three in Village I and II. They were regarded as

pitiabile and "mujinga" (mad), whether because of their senile behaviour, or because they had allowed themselves to reach that pitiabile state I could not decide. These women had not strategised successfully, through bad luck, bad judgement, or laziness.

Certain women, through a combination of successful manipulation of the men in their lives, and clever investment and hard work on their businesses become what Mathare residents call "Mama Kubwa", or what I call Successful Entrepreneurs and Patrons. These women are the owners of land, houses and businesses (such as shops, firewood or charcoal or maize meal retail or wholesale outlets, or 'hotels' which are small restaurants). These women have invested surprisingly large sums in successful land buying companies, or in one or more of the House Building Companies that built the wooden houses in upper Mathare. One woman in my sample had invested K.sh.8,000 in a Company in Mathare, owned plots in two land cooperatives, a goods store and paid down the sh. 1,500 for her house in New Mathare in a lump sum. Women at this point have grown children, some of whom may be employed and some living with their mothers helping them to run business ventures.

These women are powers in the Kanu Committee and various women associations. They belong to the more prestigious saving societies in which members may contribute sh.20 or even sh.50 each week. Only the most successful women hold leadership positions in Kanu. Other entrepreneurs hold leadership positions in associations of various kinds,

or have political influence through their strong economic position in the Valley. One woman in my sample, though she did not have any leadership position, was frequently consulted by Kanu officials who would come to drink at her house and discuss valley political events.

These are the women who are the patrons in the Valley. They are large wholesalers of beer or run large businesses where they give credit to their clients. They have groups of followers who support them in their political activities, whether on the Kanu Committee or in women's associations. They settle disputes and assist other women in their difficulties.

Women at this stage of their lives do not form relationships with men as either malayas, lovers, or town wives. They have much more equal relationships with men. If there are sexual relationships with partners, the relationship is one of peers. The entrepreneurs of Mathare belong to a club called the Mbuzi Club. This club symbolises the peer relationship that developed between the economically successful men and women of Mathare. To join this club, one has to be accepted by the other members, and membership entails a substantial entrance fee: a contribution to the Club Building Fund, estimates varied from sh. 1,000 to 1,500 shillings. The membership was almost half women. Members meet frequently for informal drinking together at the club house, built out of the Club Building Fund. Weekly formal dances were also held, and the members take it in turns to provide beer, roasted meat and live music for these



events. This can mean an outlay of 200 shillings, despite the fact that non-club members can go to these dances for a small fee that helps defray the costs. I gathered from gossip sessions on mornings after such dances, that the members often stay late drinking and enjoying themselves. After which certain members couple off to spend the night together. "You may think we are all too old to enjoy 'that thing' anymore... but we all enjoyed 'it' last night," laughed one of the more daring women.

More rarely, these older entrepreneurs formed dependency relationships in reverse with younger men. A number of such women supported younger men who lived with them, and received money and gifts from their Mama Kubwa.

#### Case Studies Of Successful Entrepreneurs

At this point, to illustrate the career strategy that I have just outlined, I wish to present three case studies, drawn from the Life Histories of three informants.

##### Mama M.

Though and Old Timer, Mama M. was not a very old woman. She would never admit to any age, but I calculated that she was not more than 45. A plump, light-footed, pretty woman whose occasional flights of high spirited, girlish high spirits did not conceal the shrewd, ruthless entrepreneur. She was styled Women's Leader by the Kanu Secretary, was on the Kanu Committee for her village, and was one of the most respected dispute-settlers there. When I knew her, I calculated that she was also one of the richer women in Mathare, though wild horses wouldn't have been able to drag from her exact information on her financial position. What I know of her finances is pieced together from intensive observation over a

long period of time.

Mama M. was born in Limuru , one of two children. She led an active life, and did many of the chores of a boy, since her brother was older than she and in school. She was a herder of goats, and delighted in telling how she would defeat the boys in their rough games, even though she was very small. What she lacked in size, she seemed to have made up for in courage, speed and cunning. The boys soon learned to give her a wide berth. She was never educated, a fact that she often mourned. She had taught herself, late in life, to read and write a little; but used to say that had she the opportunities of today's girls, she would have become president. She married young, and had no children; the 'Mama' was a courtesy title only.

At this point in her history, Mama M. became very vague. In fact, she was a very poor informant and I was never able to pursue the interviews very far with her. I learned much that I know about her from conversations in her house with other people, and from what others told me about her, including her relatives. As far as I could piece together from isolated fragments, her husband became involved in the Mau Mau early in the emergency. Whether or not she was divorced by this time, due to her barrenness I am not sure. She could well have been living with her mother on the farm in Limuru. She had a close relationship with her mother and her brother. When I met her, her brother was a District Officer posted in Rift Valley somewhere, and he had given over the Limuru shamba to her because he had bought land elsewhere. It was a small shamba, but fertile and well watered. By the 1970's she had built a tin roofed, concrete blocked house for her mother, and hired regular labour to help her old mother cultivate. Her mother was lively as a cricket and visited Mathare frequently, always taking away money and goods. When I left she was nagging Mama M. to build her a water tank so that she wouldn't have to carry water any more.

Sometime towards the end of the Emergency M.came to Nairobi. Mama M. was one of the lucky ones, since she had a relative who worked for a European. She worked as a servant for a number of years. During this time she built a house in the Eastleigh shanties and met a man who was instrumental in the early development of Mathare. She may have lived with him in Eastleigh and then in Mathare; it is unclear. She must have been somewhat of a femme fatale, since there was a persistent story that this man was once badly wounded in a knife fight over her. Later he died in an automobile accident, and she bacame the lover of an important local leader. This was during the biggest building period of Mathare and Mama M. (perhaps due to her influence with the village leader)

was given a prime, central, level site on which she built very substantial houses with tin roofs. She was also one of the leaders of the early village associations which raised money for the Meeting Hall and the Nursery School. She was granted what amounted to a concession by the Kanu Committee to wholesale bottled beer to the beer sellers in that part of the village. In the 1969 elections she was elected a member of the Kanu Committee.

When I knew her in 1972-4 Mama M. was a wealthy woman. She owned 7 units of housing in Old Mathare, and a new unit in New Mathare. (She only lost 4 of the old ones in the process). She wholesaled bottled tusker to beer sellers, and also wholesaled buzaa. Due to her privileged position as political leader she was never raided by the police and was known to hide the beer and equipment of various clients of hers during bad raids. She owned a maize meal wholesaling business, a firewood selling business, and a small store. She was a member of the largest women's investment company in Mathare, as well as a large defunct association, the Kinama Mathare Harambee Group mentioned earlier. She also belonged to two or three such organizations outside Mathare in Eastleigh. She belonged to at least 3 successful land buying associations, and claimed to have plots of land in Rift Valley and around the Ngong Hills which she had cultivated by hired labour. She owned her father's shamba in Limuru, and cultivated herself a large piece of land across the valley where she raised beans and greens for sale in her small store. She belonged to the Mbuzi Club.

When I met her she was no longer the local leader's town wife. She now lived with a handsome younger man named Joe, who had a job as a driver. However, he was definitely henpecked. He handed over his whole salary to her, and she banked it in her savings account. She doled out money for cigarettes and drinks. People sneered at him behind his back for allowing Mama M. to control him....and it was true that he had to ask her for the smallest thing. She was even wont to publicly chastise him for going into her money box to take two shillings for cigarettes. I once sat in on a long argument over whether or not Joe needed a new shirt or not, Joe claiming rather pathetically that he wanted to look smart and Mama M. wondering why he wished to have so many new clothes. Mama M. was always smartly dressed and even carried a handbag, sign of modernity and status. Mama M. had partially adopted a daughter of a widowed friend of hers. At the time she was sending the girl to typing courses in Eastleigh. The girl performed various duties around the house, cooking, cleaning and selling beer.

## Wambui

Wambui was an Old Timer. A handsome, vigorous old woman with a shaved head, she wore the draped clothes of the more traditional type of rural woman, and her stretched ear lobes hung in long loops down her neck. She was an exceedingly shrewd, cunning woman with a shrewish tongue and a gay, earthy sense of humour. She exploited me shamelessly, but I always forgave her. She lived in a rabbit warren of tiny, falling down rooms (17 in all) which she had built. Some were rented and some were lived in by her and her three sons, two daughters-in-law and 5 grandchildren, and her blind sister.

Wambui had been married very young to an old man, a friend of her father's with many wives. Unfortunately, he died while Wambui was pregnant with her first child, and before she had any established right to any land. She was chased away by his co-wives and the dead man's grown sons. With nowhere to go, she returned to her brothers. In the meantime her beautiful sister Amina (now a blind old woman who lived with her) had met a Moslem in the nearby trading centre and ran away to Nairobi with him. Wambui followed her to Nairobi and lived with her in Eastleigh and Pumwani. The two of them were beautiful and greedy for money and life. Neither married again, but they "hunted men" together, and "made many men cry for them" (in their own words). Amina was barren, but Wambui bore four sons, one of whom was half witted. Amina started to lose her sight in her late forties, and was plagued by ill health. Wambui was more lucky and seemed to have the constitution of a young woman. Even at her age, she could do more work than both her daughters-in-law combined.

Wambui was involved in Mau Mau activity during the Emergency though she was never anxious to reveal exactly how. I think she was a messenger, and may have even been involved in the meetings in Mathare before the early scattered houses were bulldozed. She was detained along with Amina in the middle years of the Emergency (about 1956-8). After the emergency she returned to Eastleigh, and eventually heard from a man she was living with that Mathare was the place to go for investments. He lent her the money for the first unit she built there. He is still a friend of Wambui's, though now he lives with his wife in Limuru. I sometimes met him having a drink with Wambui for old time's sake, a tall spare grizzled old man.

Wambui, with her young sons, then set about expanding her investments. With their help she built more and more units as she saved the money to buy

materials. She brewed beer, honey beer, and dealt in changaa gin. She raised goats, cultivated land about the valley, sold firewood and had educated her sons. The eldest had a low paying job in some uncertain capacity in a business premises in town. The second son was trained as a mechanic, but drifted in and out of work, usually with the small informal-sector garages down by the river near River Road. He may also have dealt in stolen goods, if the rumours I heard about him were anything to go on.

Wambui belonged to a number of saving cooperatives. She was a leader accused of "eating the money" in a scandal involving a large cooperative which went into liquidation. Later, she and a group of followers took their share of the money and formed a bar and butchery cooperation. Gradually this cooperative business became more and more hers and less and less the members of the cooperatives, until the younger son ran it single-handed.

Wambui was a member of a Village Kanu committee, though not the top woman leader. She was the leader of the Women's Kikuyu Dance group that was thought to be very instrumental in influencing Kenyatta, because he was very fond of their particular brand of tribal dancing. They would be invited to Gatundu (where the President lived) to sing "the troubles of the women of Mathare", as she put it. She also had great prestige in the valley because she was the only female circumciser in that part of Nairobi, and was in great demand at the season when girls were being circumcised.

Wambui was a strong minded and outspoken person. She made enemies with her frank, abrasive tongue. She was not a person that others sought to settle disputes; on the contrary she was more likely to be in the centre of controversy. She was energetic and always had an eye to the main chance. She was able to bully people into following her lead; such as the time that she hived off a number of the members and some of the assets of a failing cooperative to form another business venture and then gradually took it over for herself. Those grumblers who complained were shouted down by Wambui; and I even suspect that she threatened some of them with retribution by her three strong, and non-too-honest sons. These sons were always at hand to back up any of Wambui's more outrageous ventures. When she raised the rents on all her rooms, the sons strong armed those that objected.

Wambui was a woman of remarkable strength and no mean courage. She must have been a force for men to deal with when she was younger and "hunted men" in Eastleigh. Once she told me how she dealt with a man that tried to abuse her. He had come in and

had found that his dinner was not ready. He had slapped her around a little and yelled at her. She pretended to take this meekly and went creeping away to fix his dinner. While he sat and brooded over a beer that she had brought him, she snuck up behind him with a large piece of wood. She struck him a strong blow on the elbow and then the knee. "You see, then he could not hit out at me, or run after me for pain," she explained gleefully. While he was doubled over with pain, she bashed him a couple of times on the back and shoulders and told him to get out. He left, much the worse for the encounter. "No man ever beat me twice," she stated firmly. "Women are not as strong as men, so they have to be more clever," (referring to her fighting tactics).

### Njoki

Njoki was a young woman, who had only been in Mathare for 3 years when I met her. She had arrived after the moratorium on building in Mathare. She was definitely a New Timer and in terms of the model of an urban career set out in Chart IV, she was not yet a successful entrepreneur. She was still very much in the stage of strategising.

Njoki had married when she was 18. She moved to her husband's shamba and lived there with his parents for 8 years. At first, the marriage was a happy one, because her husband was there with her. After the 3rd year of marriage, he left and came to Nairobi to look for a job. She stayed behind and found increasingly that she did not co-exist peaceably with her parents-in-law. Her husband travelled to Kisumu and was away for long periods. She claimed that her parents-in-law were "cruel", but did not go into details. Eventually she returned to her own parents and eventually considered herself divorced. She kept custody of the two boys, which is unusual in Kenya. She explained that she and her husband were not on bad terms. Though he provided nothing for the children, he visited them sometimes. Her husband was poor; there were many brothers and sisters to share a tiny plot of non-too-fertile land and in addition he was frequently unemployed. He was living in Kisumu. Njoki had lived with her eldest brother and her mother in Limuru for several years. She worked in bars in the market town near her brother's farm. If her performance in Mathare was any criteria, she was no doubt entering into relationships with men whom she met there. Njoki was a very attractive woman, intelligent (if uneducated), happy, and flirtatious. She had a plethora of admirers. Njoki capitalized on this constantly, changing her lovers and Bwanas when

it seemed advantageous. The long case study given in Chapter V, involving Njoki and her men illustrates the complicated dependency relationships that Njoki juggled. She did so with varying success.

In 1969 Njoki left her mother, brother and children in the rural area. She felt that Nairobi would be better for 'biashara' (business) than the small trading centre near her. Her brother took care of her children, Njoki remitting money to pay for food, school fees and clothes. This state of affairs went on until 1973 when her brother died. By this time Njoki had accumulated enough money to buy into a Land Buying Company which had actually obtained a farm near Lake Nakuru. She built a small house there, and put her mother and two sons in it. The mother farmed her four acres with the help of the boys who also attended school. Njoki visited them every month, in the mid-month period when beer selling was the least profitable. The land was not terribly fertile, being too dry. The old mother just managed to grow enough maize and beans to feed herself and sons for the first year. Njoki provided extras: tea, sugar, milk etc.

Njoki was one of the most successful of the younger women brewers whom I knew in Mathare. She made K. sh. 300-500 a month from brewing. She had a bank account, opened for her with the help of one of her boyfriends who worked in a bank. (It is not easy for an illiterate woman to open a bank account in Kenya). She was in the process of accumulating the capital to buy a house in Nairobi. When I left Nairobi, she had formed a relationship with another man, employed in a white collar capacity. Njoki was learning how to read and write from him, because she said she would be a better business woman if she could keep proper records. The man had promised to 'lend' her sh.1,500 for a down payment on a house. There were no houses available in Mathare, but there were other neighbourhoods where concrete block houses could be built for rental. Njoki was hoping to buy a house with 4 units for rental. She had a friend who lived in such an area, and was hoping to find a place through her.

Njoki belonged to one savings club which had the fairly high contribution of 20 shillings weekly. She was going to join the most prestigious of the women's associations, sponsored by the women's leader of Village II, as soon as she could save enough for the sh. 1,500 "share" which each member had to buy upon joining. She also talked of joining one of the House Companies of Mathare, one of which Mama M. of the previous case belonged to. There the "share" would be much more expensive, (perhaps sh.5,000). She could be called a client of Mama M. She rented a house from her and bought beer wholesale from her

on credit. Mama M. thought highly of her.

These rather lengthy case studies illustrate the type of career strategies followed by three women, one of whom is just beginning and two of whom have already achieved the status of successful entrepreneurs. The similarities in pattern can be seen. All of them are capable, independent, attractive and intelligent. They have utilized their dependency relationships with men to accumulate money or privileges. They have invested in resources such as land, houses, and businesses. Houses for rental are particularly important to provide a steady income and it is interesting that Njoki is looking around Nairobi for possible housing investment. They have educated their children or their adopted children, often utilising the labour of their children in the process of establishing themselves. (Njoki's boys help on the farm; Wambui's sons collect her rents and run her businesses; Mama M. has adopted a young girl to help her with selling beer.) The three case studies do not illustrate as well as others might the process of matrifocal family formation and the uses the heads of such matrifocal families make of their daughters in their entrepreneurial activities. Wambui and Njoki had only sons and Mama M. was barren. In Chapter VI, the case studies of Mama Lucy and Wairimu, both also successful entrepreneurs, make this clearer.

All three women belonged to women's organizations as part of their career and all three had an Extended Network



of friends which they could call upon in times of need. The two older women were established women leaders in a variety of associations, thus securing pools of clients to assist them in their political activities. Njoki, not yet a successful entrepreneur, and therefore not yet a patron, was a member of these organizations to save and accumulate capital. She utilized the important women in her network, such as Mama M., in order to gain entry to one of the largest and most prestigious of the savings groups, the Kiambu Thinami Group. She was a favoured client of Mama M.'s, consistently buying beer wholesale from her.

Sanday includes in the final stage of her developmental model the formation of solidarity groups as a pre-requisite for entering the public domain. Can one safely say that these formal associations and the informal instrumental networks of which women are all a part are types of solidarity groups? Or at the very least, are they emergent solidarity groups? There are no organizations in Mathare which unite all women or protect their interests, specifically in regard to beer brewing. There is no institutional position similar to the one Cohen describes for the prostitutes of Sabo, a Chieftainess of the Prostitutes. (Cohen, 1969, p. 63). Neither is there a women's branch of the local political party. There is a Woman's Leader of each separate Committee, but there is no official women's branch. Thus women must agitate for action on their particular concerns within the larger party contest. Such women as Mama M. and Wairimu, (see case in Chapter VI) are important advocates of women's

rights and concerns.

Similar Urban Career Strategies For Low Income  
Women In Other African Cities.

I began this chapter reviewing some of the literature on women in urban Africa. Some researchers support the view that women can achieve a measure of economic and social independence through petty commodity production and commercialized sexual relationships with men. The strategies employed by such women in their urban careers have only been hinted at in most of these sources. Here I would like to discuss several which reveal a pattern similar to the one I have described above for the women of Mathare. For example, Bujra (1975, pp.213-31) in her article on women entrepreneurs in early Nairobi describes women leaving the rural area in the 1920's, usually escaping marital discord or childlessness or widowhood, but a minority coming to be with parents or a husband. Women took to prostitution and formed various consensual unions with men in Pumwani, a neighbourhood near Mathare. Marriage was not an attractive option. The fluid model put forward by Cohen in Sabo, (Cohen, 1969, pp. 51-70) where women move back and forth between prostitute and wife status, does not exist in Nairobi. Exploiting their position in a situation of demographic imbalance, in pre-war Kenya, these women lived in Pumwani and combined prostitution with petty commodity production and trade to support themselves and their children. All wage employment opportunities were too low paid and arduous for them to under-

take. When women had difficulties with violent customers they depended on the good will of the community around them to assist them. Bujra describes the urban strategy of these early female migrants to Pumwani as having three aspects. First they converted to Islam because it offered both a type of urban social security and a moral neutrality. Secondly, they created pseudo kin: both Islamic blood sisters and adopted children. Thirdly they acquired urban property. 40% of the houseowners in Pumwani were women and the money from rentals provided a steady income to branch into other business activities. (Bujra, 1975, p. 20)

This pattern is very close to that described for Mathare women at a later date. There were a number of converts to Islam (21% of my Life History Sample were converts or children of converts). However, most of these women were not deeply involved in Islamic observances such as attending mosque on holidays, praying, or fasting. They adopted a style of dress identifiable as Moslem, and cooked food with rice and pili-pili (hot pepper) as the coastal people are thought to do. I do not feel that in Mathare the Islamic religion offers the same social support that it did in pre-war Pumwani. However, Mathare women's urban career strategies are similar in the other two aspects. Mathare women form friendships which are not blood-sisterhood exactly, though the women call each other 'dada' (sister) if they are close in age. Women adopt children if they are barren. They have created a close-knit community (friendship networks) to help cope with difficulties

of beer trade etc. And finally they follow a strategy of acquiring urban and rural property. Mathare women now have the chance to buy farm land, which their Pumwani sisters did not have in pre-independence days; so this could explain the greater importance of land buying in the urban strategies for Mathare women.

The data of Mandeville from unpublished research done in Kampala is discussed at length in Little (1973, pp.39-44). Single women, who were house servants supplemented their low wages with lovers but expressed the desire to be free of marriage and of men in any relationship whatsoever, if possible. They were attempting to accumulate money to build houses and let rooms to achieve independence. It is not clear from the information available whether or not any of the older women had achieved this goal of independence.

In other work done in Kampala, C. Obbo (1973) describes women similar to those of Mathare. Most of her sample had left the country because of difficult domestic situations. They lived in an area similar to Mathare, and involved themselves in petty commodity production (selling cooked food, trading, and beer making). The most prosperous women were the ones who sold native beer. The urban career strategies which they pursued were again strikingly like those of Mathare women. They did not marry, but formed relationships of varying durability with men. They manipulated their more important lovers to obtain licences and other favours, as well as money. Many of the more successful women maintained younger men. 'Though men as husbands are nuisances, no

normal woman can do without them', said one woman (Ibid, 1973, p. 37). Women financed the education of their children; often they were the centres of matrifocal families. They hoped to be helped by their children when the latter found employment. Meanwhile they invested in urban resources; education for their children, bars and houses. Perhaps women had also created patron-client relationships with the chiefs in the areas where they built their houses, though Obbo doesn't go into this. For a "small fee" chiefs would close their eyes to illegal building. (Ibid p. 10) She does not say whether any woman achieved political power, or formed organizations which articulated their needs.

Pandawa, on the other hand, describing a squatter neighbourhood in Zambia (1973) goes into great detail on the women who ran the mashabeens in a mining town. These women followed the pattern described above. They came to town, stayed with friends, entered into dependency relationships with miners. They worked in the beer gardens for low wages that had to be supplemented by earnings from the sale of sex. They made friends (business clients?) with women who already owned mashabeens, and eventually were allowed to join them in brewing beer. In time if they obtained the backing of other mashabeen operators and the permission of the local UNIP Party officials they could open a mashabeen of their own. Could this be seen as the formation of client relationships with male patrons? The women had an unofficial organization with leaders who acted as spokesmen for the women beer brewers to the UNIP Party officials. When efforts were made to

relocate the community, it was these leaders who made representations (unsuccessful as it turned out) that the new site would not be as favourable for their business. A woman who started a shabeen usually did so with the help of a man, who provided capital. Later, her favourite of the moment helped her by providing a steady stream of his friends as customers. (Op. Cit. p. 21) However, there seems to be implied in Pandawa's data a confrontation between women who joined the Women's Brigade of the UNIP party and the mashabeen women, since the Women's Brigade attempted to 'discourage prostitution'. This would seem to indicate a division between those women who obtained political power and the mashabeen women which is at variance with the former's role to act as a spokesmen for women beerbrewers. Sadly Pandawa does not include information sufficient to settle this contradiction. For example it is unclear whether or not mashabeen women were excluded from the women's wing of the party. It would be interesting to know more. Did successful mashabeen women move upward in the local political hierarchy as they achieved more resources, economic independence and status in the community? If so, this was similar to the career strategy of the successful woman entrepreneur in Mathare.

Keith Hart, in his study of informal sector activity by the Fafra of urban Ghana, has a small amount of data on women in urban centres of Ghana. (1967, pp. 168-177) The richest and most successful of the women in his sample of business people were unmarried. He concludes that women who achieved a

measure of economic independence then broke matrimonial ties. However, since he did no in-depth interviewing of women entrepreneurs, it is possible that the process was the other way round; that is, that they broke out of the bonds of matrimony before they achieved this economic success. Perhaps, in West Africa, with the respectable option of trade open to uneducated married women; women can accumulate capital while married and then choose to pursue their careers independently. There is some hint of this in Peil's survey of women's roles in West African towns (1975, p.77). Older married women, especially those in polygamous marriages, may tend to drift away from their husbands. Migrant women traders either sell food or alcoholic beverages; some are relatively successful. In both Hart's and Peil's works there is, however, little data on women's political status within the community and their success in accumulating urban resources. In fact, Hart makes the 'qualitative judgement' that the unmarried Fra Fra women squander much of their savings on male gigolos. He admits that this evidence stemmed from the expressed male disapproval of the sexual licence of these women. (Ibid, p. 168) The keeping of a male gigolo (a reverse dependency relationship) would surely not consume all a woman's profits from beer brewing.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have put forward a proposition that poor women migrants to Kenya's cities follow a similar urban career strategy in attempting to enter the public domain in

the urban social field. Sanday's concept of the public domain and women's entrance into it is less vague and more definable than such concepts as women's status. How typical this career strategy is for women of no education in African cities, and whether or not one could say that African cities as a whole offer women the opportunity to enter the public domain, are not as yet questions which can be answered. In a brief review, the literature a number of researchers was cited who feel that the urban area offers women greater chances for economic independence. Whether or not this possible 'independence' can be seen as certain status groups of women entering the public domain, and how this state of independence is achieved is usually only hinted at.

I have proposed a developmental model of a Mathare woman's urban career, with certain types of social and economic transactions for each stage. The last stage, that of successful entrepreneur and patron, is achieved only by a small number of women. The developmental model can be summarized as follows. Most women come to Nairobi after fleeing some difficult domestic situation, though some initially come with a husband or a father. They tend to start their urban economic life obtaining money for sexual services. Gradually, as they meet a number of men, they select partners for a more permanent type of consensual union. As her lover or Town Husband helps her economically in exchange for sexual and domestic services, such a woman accumulates money to capitalize types of business ventures, such as trading or brewing beer. When this relationship dissolves



the woman, who has now extended her acquaintance among other women in the neighbourhood, may find a room of her own, if she hasn't done so already, and settle there. From then on she receives her lovers and Town Husbands there. Afterwards, the woman enters into a period of strategising, where she accumulates money through a combination of trade, beer brewing, dependent relationships with men, and even wage employment. She has complete rights to children born to her, and she educates them in the hope that they will get gainful employment later on. She may foster her children with a rural relative to save money and to make her business life more efficient. If she does not have any children she may adopt one. She forms close relations with the other women in her neighbourhood, becomes a client to women and male patrons in the area, joins women's associations and savings groups, and begins to explore the various ways in which she can invest in resources such as land, houses, and shops. She invests in her own rural relatives, helping her parents with various expenditures such as for tin roofs or school fees for her close relatives.

This stage of strategising is that in which most women stay until they die. Some are completely unsuccessful, and become sick and penniless beggars, abandoned by children and relatives, too old to make money with their bodies, and too weak to trade or brew beer. In Mathare there were few such women. Perhaps they were socially invisible, or did not stay in places like Mathare, therefore escaping my notice. Other women were singularly successful. At least 50% of the house

owners in Mathare were women, and I say that most of those could be called successful entrepreneurs. These successful entrepreneurs own some resources, are often the heads of matrifocal families, are leaders or important members of their community and women's associations and become themselves patrons to younger women, or less economically successful women. Most of them now have peer relationships with male fellow-entrepreneurs; some of them have a reverse dependence relationship with younger men. They have contributed in some substantial way to the development of their rural relatives and are usually, I might add, on very good terms with them. Their children often help them run their businesses, daughters staying close to their mothers more frequently than the sons.

Three lengthy case studies illustrated this model. I then showed in the literature of urban Africa that there is information indicating this model may be one followed by women of similar status groups in other African cities, though admittedly, comparative data is unsatisfactory.

At the beginning of the chapter Sanday's model of how women enter the public domain was presented. Women can be said to have entered the public domain where there is the presence of female control over material objects beyond the domestic unit, where there is a social demand for a female product which women distribute without the interference or control of males, where there is female political participation, and where there are female solidarity groups. More than one way exists to reach this stage, but that of concern here is

characterised by a new demand for a female product which females distribute without male control. It is my contention that the oft-cited economic independence achieved by women in African cities is achieved by women entering the public domain.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to consider if and how educated African women are entering the public domain. Its purpose is to examine if and how women of lower economic and educational status, such as those in Mathare are doing so. They have a desired product. They produce beer, domestic services, sex, entertainment, food and trading services for urban African migrants. By breaking marital ties, or by playing down the permanence or dependency of such ties (for example, Cohen's Sabo women or Peil's Ghanaian women traders), women manage to control the distribution of this product without male interference. With the proceeds of the sale of these products, Mathare women and women in other cities purchase property and other resources.

In Mathare women form solidarity groups, friendship networks, strong matrifocal and female associations to further their economic ends. There are no associations dealing directly with beer brewing; a fact that is directly related to constant police pressure. In Kibera, another neighbourhood of Nairobi where Kikuyu women brew beer, but where there is almost no police raiding, women form such strong economic brewing groups, (David Clark, personal communication) Without the disruption and threat of police action, I feel that Mathare women would form similar groups. These, like the

associations of market traders in Ghana would act to further the economic interests of their members. Though in Kenya there is no women's branch of the political party to articulate women's needs, a number of women leaders who effectively do emerged in the local party system of Mathare. this have/ In Mathare women's political participation is strong, and no leader can succeed without wooing their votes. On a national scale this is less true. As yet there are no powerful women's leaders.

As a group, Mathare's women can be said to have at least a foot in the door of the public domain, and this position was achieved in the manner presented in my model of an urban career. Individual women, the successful entrepreneurs and patrons, have of course achieved relative success. It is more difficult to make hard and fast statements about the success of the group as a whole. In the national polity and economy, Mathare women are certainly a negligible force and bear the added handicap of a negative social image. However, I feel that as a status group, Mathare women are entering the public domain with differing degrees of success and security. Perhaps, if the numbers and economic position of such women grow in Kenya, they will become a political force to be reckoned with by politicians and government administrators, as are their West African market traders today.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TOWARDS AN IDEOLOGY OF FEMALE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND INDEPENDENCE

#### IDEOLOGY

##### Definition

The term ideology has been used in a number of ways by different social analysts. For the purpose of this chapter, I will use the Parsonian definition put forth in his book 'The Social System'. Here Parsons defines ideology as a set of ideas and beliefs "which is oriented to the evaluative integration of the collectivity" (either a society, or a subgroup, or a movement deviant from the main culture of the society) and which interprets "the empirical nature of the collectivity and of the situation in which it is placed, the process by which it has developed to its given state, the goals to which its members are collectively oriented and their relation to the future course of events." (Parsons, 1952, pp. 349-50)

Ideology doesn't just focus on the empirical aspects of the "interpretation of nature and the situation of the collectivity" in order to justify the ultimate goals and values of the collectivity. Ideology does rationalize certain patterns of value-orientation, which define situations in terms of types of solutions of action-dilemmas, and to explain "why one direction of choice rather than it's alternative was selected and why it was right and proper that

it should be so." (Ibid. p. 351) I believe that an ideology also has implications for future action of collectivities. Parson hints at this when he says that ideology establishes the "relation to the future course of events" of the goals held by the collectivity. Cohen speaks of the "integrated ideological scheme which is related to the basic problems of man, his place in society and in the universe." (Cohen, A. 1969, p. 208) Though he is concerned chiefly with political ideologies which "give legitimacy to power and thus converts power to authority," he extends his point to cover ideology as a general world view. Ideology in this instance doesn't just reflect the component parts of the system it seems to explain, but it may also have some part in the future development of the system. In other words, ideology does not just play a passive (i.e. explanatory) role, but may also play an active role. (Op. Cit) He further develops this point on Two Dimensional Man, discussing the role of ideology in the organization of a group. Ideology allows "the articulation of the organization of an informal group" and validates both the group and the self by giving both a place in the scheme of the universe. Thus ideology becomes "a significant variable in its own right contributing further to the development and functioning of the group." It becomes "an autonomous factor" which motivates and impels people to action in its own right. (1974, pp. 80-81) Thus as "the situation of the collectivity" changes, different value-orientations are mobilized in response to different socio-economic situations. The

ideology mediates between normative culture and concrete social action; not only does it explain why "one direction of choice" was taken, but also in turn determines concrete social action. When using ideology in this sense, I am not concerned with personal ideology (or the beliefs of individual actors) but with the ideology institutionalized for specific societies or sub-groups within the society. If ideology is a blueprint for social action, it includes the culturally transmitted ideas, values, beliefs and myths that are mobilized by people of a particular group to explain and to organize their behaviour and social relationships. In a situation of social change, structural alterations in the socio-economic environment may force a group to make new behavioural choices. Reduced to the simplest terms, a social system merely consists of a number of social actors interacting with each other in a physical-social-economic environment. These actors are motivated by what Parsons calls "optimization of gratification" (1952, p.5) and changing situations require changing behaviour to achieve this. The new values and beliefs, or the reinterpretation of old values and beliefs come about through the processes of selection and distortion. (Parsons, 1976, p. 152) They are gradually legitimized for the sub-section in question by becoming motivationally relevant to that group, by being spelled out in norms, by being integrated with the goals of the group, and by being expressed in new role formations. (Ibid . 155) I believe that I was witnessing in Mathare Valley a process whereby new situations created the need for

new types of social relations, and new economic behaviour by low-income, poorly educated, urban female migrants as they attempted to enter the public domain. This new social behaviour was gradually legitimised by new values and beliefs. If this process continues through time, will it be possible to talk about the institutionalization of a new ideology for this group living in an urban slum? To what extent is this process being duplicated in Luzaka, Kampala, Ouagadougou, and Ibadan? Does the institutionalization of new values and beliefs intensify the development of new life styles? There is an irresolvable chicken-and-egg argument inherent in this discussion of ideology social action, and the environment. How much do values affect action, and how much does action (brought about by responses to the environment, both physical environment as well as the socio-economic structures in which people live) effect ideology? It is a problematic question, as Parsons himself recognises: "the degree that values are compatible with 'non-cultural components' (by which I assume he means the social system with its particular economic exigencies) becomes problematic." (Ibid, p. 153) It is not a question which can be addressed in this paper. Suffice it to say that between ideology and action there is a circular relationship, each impinging on the other: new social situations illiciting the reinterpretation of certain aspects of a collectivity's ideology; these changes in the ideology feeding back into the arena of action and perhaps in turn bringing about slight shifts in behaviour. If life is seen (as it is by Parsons)



as an effort to maintain consistency, people try to predict and control events on the basis of an ideology to which they are committed. When the constructs of this ideology fail to do this and there is a discrepancy between expectations and outcome, individuals experience anxiety which is called "cognitive dissonance". According to psychological theories of social action, people act to reduce cognitive dissonance, either by altering the various cognitions (attitudes, opinions, world view, values and self concepts) held by the individual or by altering behaviour so as to bring social results closer to expectations. (Barnouw, 1973, pp. 9-12) It is perfectly possible to consider a group defined as deviant by the larger society as experiencing a collective cognitive dissonance. New values and ideas (or slight adjustments to old ones) would arise to help resolve cognitive dissonance. These would become institutionalized in new norms, commitments, and roles. These shifts in ideology may in turn make the members of groups more responsive to new types of behaviour, or more committed to behaviour about which they had felt uncertain previously.

#### "Models of Women" and "Women's Models"

It would be useful at this point to introduce the concept of a "model for women" as used by Ardener (1975). She defines a "model for women" as the set of ideas which represent women in the minds of those who generate the model. "Women's models" are "the concepts which women themselves generate in their minds (which will of course, include the

models of women)." (Ibid, pp. xi-xii) She feels that it is possible to perceive a group as sharing or generating a common model of society or its components. (Op. Cit)

In the summary of Edwin Ardener's conception of these models of the universe, Shirley Ardener points out that a dominant group generates a model of society which in turn impedes expression, and perhaps even articulation of models held by subordinate groups. Women, who are a group subordinate to men, will generate "ideas of social reality at the deepest level" but must inhibit some of these ideas because the conceptual space in which they would lie is overrun by the dominant model of events generated by the dominant group." (Ibid, pp. xiv-v) Therefore, the subordinate groups establish transformational links between "their own perceptual structures and those of world events presented to them by the dominant ideology." (Op. Cit.) When such links become overstrained then orderly conduct is no longer possible.

Using this conceptual model of male and female "ideologies" to understand ideological changes taking place within women's subculture in Mathare, two observations occur immediately. The first concerns the transformational linkages which may cease to be effective under changing conditions. Possibly independent women of Mathare are those rural women who in part could no longer make the "connections" between the dominant model of women and their own women's model. "Orderly conduct" became impossible and the women migrated to resolve resultant conflict. Secondly, it is possible that Mathare women, by moving out of the conceptual space of the dominant, normative Kikuyu

ideology, especially those aspects of it which make up the model of women, have found themselves better able to articulate their own women's model.

To continue our speculations, we may imagine that this group will generate and perhaps articulate a new model of women. Though one could not say that the independent urban women have completely escaped from the dominance of males or from the dominance of the larger society (male and female), perhaps they have achieved a certain freedom in their very social marginality. A sub group which is defined as "deviant" by the larger society is, in many ways, rejected by that larger society. This rejection, or marginality, means that they, as a group, have become of limited interest to the larger society in one sense. They become of great interest in another as moralists rant and rave against increasing immorality in the cities and vilify the evil women who seduce good men, and campaigns are undertaken to send the malayans back to the land. However, having put themselves out side the pale by contravening the accepted model for women, there is perhaps more conceptual breathing space for this marginal group to generate a new model of women more acceptable and with a better "fit" to the perceived surface of events.

#### KIKUYU MODEL OF WOMEN

##### Traditional Model of Women

In order to develop this hypothesis of emerging changes in ideology (specifically a new model of women) to be found

amongst Mathare independent women I begin by presenting the model of women found amongst rural Kikuyu/Meru/Embu. The overwhelming majority of the women in Village I and II in Mathare were Kikuyu/Meru/Embu. Therefore, the ideological changes take place within the rubric of the dominant ideology of these linguistic-cultural groups. I hasten to add, that the new model of women which I will describe in due course was also held by women of other tribal origins within Mathare (such as Boran, Somali, Coastal or Swahili women of indeterminant origin). There were almost no single Luo women in these villages, and I knew only a couple. But those whom I visited and observed superficially in surrounding villages did not seem to differ markedly from their Kikuyu sisters.

There is a disappointing paucity of data on ideology (in Parsons' sense) in the literature on the Kikuyu. Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya, true to his Malinowskian heritage, is mainly concerned with social structures (and male social structure at that). In his chapter on religion and ancestor worship he is almost totally concerned with male beliefs and religious participation. Women are mentioned three times in passing. One quote is typical.

If women are to be permitted...to be present at the rain ceremony...they must be only those who have passed child-bearing age, for they are considered to be immune from worldly mischief. (Kenyatta, 1962, p. 235).

Middleton is equally lacking in information and insight into this question. Therefore, much of the following section is derived from talk with older informants and a number of

non-anthropological sources (such as novels and poetry).

The Kikuyu ideology incorporated a model of women which combined strength in submission. When Westerners think of an ideology of submissive womanhood, they are apt to conceptualize a Victorian model, in which women were not only submissive but shy, shrinking, physically weak, prone to fainting at the least sign of vulgarity or conflict, without business sense or managerial skills (except those related to the ordering of domestic comforts,) artistic, and willing to leave all of the hard, cold realities of life to the management of their husbands. The Kikuyu model was very different and can perhaps best be summed up in the concept of the "Model Housewife". This is the term applied to the wife in a polygamous household who best fulfills the ideal of wifehood. She knows how to cook well, always has food ready for her husband and his visitors, keeps the house clean and swept, and looks well after the children. She is a good cultivator, knows how to store crops properly, and always has enough firewood and water for her household and that of her husband. She is a good manager, and never sells so much of her food crop as to be left short at the end of the year. She takes care of all aspects of the homestead when her husband goes on a long journey. She always comes when her husband calls, and obeys him in all things.

(Fisher, 1956, pp. 5-7) A woman is allocated her own fields and has responsibility for all the farm work and theoretically has control over all her crops, but husband always has final word. "There is no war of the wife with

her husband". (Ibid. pp. 273-4)

Women in Kikuyuland are strong; perceived as stronger than men and capable of doing more hard work. Anyone who has seen the startling sight (to Western eyes) of a man walking free and unencumbered along a dusty red road, followed by a woman bent double under an enormous load of firewood weighing perhaps 50 lbs, can bear witness to that. "Men have not the strength of women, Men cannot carry heavy loads. The women of the Kikuyu have great strength," explained one of Fisher's informants. (Ibid, p. 4) Informants often said the same to me.

Thus the Kikuyu "model of women" incorporates the following elements. A woman is strong, in some ways stronger than a man and capable surely of more hard, back-breaking work. After all, traditionally, women did most of the agricultural work, while the husbands hunted, conducted warfare and trading. Now women do the preponderance of it while their husbands migrate away to seek wage labour in the cities. Kikuyu women should therefore be strong and hard working, cultivating their fields well to provide food for themselves and their children and husbands, and carrying water and firewood for the household (no mean task in the hilly regions where streams are at the bottom of ravines and households on the tops of ridges.)

Secondly, the Kikuyu woman has all the comfortable nurturing qualities. She always has food ready for her husband, no matter the time of day or night. An old woman told me,

The wife who provides food for her husband when he comes in will be the favourite of all the wives. If the irio (food which cooks slowly for a long time) is not ready, the good wife will have roasted bananas or yams for him to munch on. This will make him feel, loved and satisfied.

She is a good mother and her children are always clean, well fed and well cared for. She never refuses to sleep with her husband within the limits of religious correctness.

Thirdly, Kikuyu women should have good managerial qualities. They should know which crops to plant in which fields, and all the proper cycles of planting and maintenance of soil fertility. They are allowed to trade the surplus of food crops at the local markets to obtain small luxuries for the family, but they must never sell so much that they run out of food before the next harvest. They must be able to run the household when their husbands are away. This is as true today as it was of days gone by when Kikuyu men went on long military or trading expeditions. It is estimated that in certain areas of rural Kenya as many as one third of the households are headed by women whose husbands are elsewhere working or seeking work. (personal communication Joseph Senyongo, Graduate student at IDS Sussex currently writing his thesis on the Rift Valley; Diane Hunt seminar on "Mbere Economy and the Women's Role" IDS Nov.3, 1976; and Barnes, 1975, p.9) Women are often left to manage the farm. Their important managerial role is increasingly recognised by Kenyan Agricultural extension services. Smithells, investigating agricultural extension work among women in East Africa, frequently heard the

Agricultural Extension Workers describe rural women as "the silent managers" or "the rural extension of the husband who is working in the city". (Smithells, 1972, Chapter II)

And lastly, an ideal Kikuyu woman is submissive and obedient. She comes when her husband calls, she provides him with food, and she bows to his will in all things, even those over which, theoretically, she has control (such as food crops). Even, as in the folktale related by Charity Waciuma in her autobiography Daughter of Mumbi, if obeying one's husband means certain death, a good wife must always obey. Miss Waciuma tells the folk story of a beautiful girl unable to go to dances upon pain of death (due to a curse put upon her at the time of her circumcision). After she was married, her husband insisted that she attend a dance with him, though he knew the terms of the curse. As Waciuma states with sententious acceptance, "as a wife, she could not refuse" to go dancing and she died. (1969, p. 77) There is truly "no war between husband and wife" because the husbands must always be right. That is what is meant by strength in submissiveness.

While stressing the submissiveness and obedience of women, there is a strong concern for controlling the polluting and dangerous qualities of womens' sexuality. In his quote given earlier, this is implied in Kenyatta's statement that women past menopause are also past "worldly mischief". He expands in his section on the "Duty of Wives" (1962, pp. 175-6) For a woman to have sex outside the homestead (presumably with a lover) will bring evil and bad luck to the homestead.



For a woman to have intercourse while her husband is on a journey, or on a military or hunting expedition, will bring misfortune to him. When Kenyatta discusses the customary grounds for divorce in the section on divorce (Ibid, p. 177) he does not mention adultery as grounds either for a man or for a woman. Yet in the previous section on the duty of wives he states clearly that a man who catches his wife in an adulterous situation has the right to divorce and demand back all his bride payment along with the custody of the offspring. (Ibid, p. 175) This severity undoubtedly arises from the belief in the pollution caused by a woman's illicit sexual activity. It also implies that adultery committed by a woman is a more serious and punishable offence than that of a man. This double standard was confirmed by my informants.

A woman's sexual activity must be controlled and limited to her husband in her husband's homestead in order to prevent evil and ill luck from befalling the group. Women who are menstruating (and therefore presumably sexually active) are up to mischief at all times and their presence at important ceremonies cannot be tolerated. It is interesting to speculate whether the Kikuyu custom of clitoridectomy, done as part of the girls' circumcision rites, can be viewed as another way to control women's sexuality. This is a tenuous point, perhaps overly ethnocentric. But most medical authorities to whom I have spoken in Kenya agree that in many cases clitoridectomy can seriously impair a woman's enjoyment of the sexual act. This whole complex of beliefs

about women's sexuality in the traditional model of women in part accounts for the virulence of attacks on urban women, especially women like those who live in Mathare. They are not only contravening the traditional model of women (and thus presenting an alternative model for other rural women) but their sexuality is "out of control."

Another interesting manifestation of the Kikuyu model of women is the origin myth of the Kikuyu, the Daughters of Mumbi. Though not appearing in Kenyatta's or Middleton's writings, it was related to me innumerable times by male informants eager to prove to me that women were "not fit to rule." These conversations often cropped up over a mukevi of beer on rainy afternoons in Mathare. Men would introduce the subject of whether or not women were fit to rule; the women in the room would cite Margaret Kenyatta (then mayor of Nairobi) as an example of a woman who ruled, or (if they were better informed), Mrs Ghandi of India. The discussion would range in a desultory fashion over the pros and cons of the argument until some man would triumphantly end the discussion with "Look what happened to the daughters of Mumbi."

In the beginning god or Ngai created Gikuyu and Mumbi, the first couple. Mumbi produced many daughters (accounts vary, but the number is usually about 12) and these daughters grew up to marry. Where these male humans came from is not clear. The 12 couples established the major clans of Gikuyuland, or Kikuyuland. The daughters of Mumbi ruled the Kikuyu people, but the men were jealous and dissatisfied

and began grumbling about the women's power. "Why shouldn't we rule?" they asked each other, and plotted together to overthrow the women. This they accomplished by a trick. They all impregnated their wives at the same time; and when the women were giving birth, the men seized power. Thus the men have ruled ever since, and have "controlled" women, who learned by this experience to subordinate themselves to their husbands. Another story with a similar theme is that of Wangu wa Makeri the only woman to have been a chief among the Kikuyu in living memory. Charity Waciumu tells how she used to thrill to this story as a young girl in school. Wangu's husband had been appointed chief, but she had such a powerful personality that she assumed actual power. A council of the elder men were jealous of her power. They told her that she would become more famous and beloved of her people if she danced naked in front of her people. Wangu was persuaded and called a day of festivities on which she danced naked before the people. They were shocked and horrified by this immodesty, and Wangu realized that she had been tricked and could not face anyone for shame. "She had lost the respect of the people and was no longer able to rule anyone." (1969, p. 80)

There are striking parallels in these two stories, one mythological and the other oral history. (Waciuma claims that it happened in living memory). Both have much to say about the Kikuyu model of women. In both, women are competent enough to hold power (as in Wangu's case to seize power) and able to administer this power. The opposition

to them is not based on any incompetence on the part of the women. Rather, the men object because they are jealous and power hungry, as if some natural order of things is reversed when women hold power. In both cases the men gain power because of their superior cunning (or deceitfulness, depending on how you look at things) and the women's gullibility or stupidity. In both cases, the women are humiliated or overcome through their own sexuality. Men manipulate their sexuality, turning the incapacitation of pregnancy and the shame of nudity to good advantage. And in both cases, the women learn that opposing men brings only defeat and/or humiliation. The natural order of things is women subordinate to men.

These two tales reinforce the model of women embodied in the concept of the "model housewife". Women are not lacking in ability and strength of character. They may even show greater strength of personality than certain other males. (Wangu displaced her husband through force of personality) But in the end the natural cunning of men reverses the situation and women learn that their natural place is under male authority. Strength in submission, once again.

#### A Modern Model of Women

There is an interesting insight into a modern version of the traditional Kikuyu-Meru-Embu model for women. An educational psychologist administered Thematic Apperception Tests to students in Secondary School and University in Nairobi and Nyeri. The students, male and female, were

asked to write an imaginative story about a successful student of their own sex in medical school. In the same test were other peripheral interpretative questions; two interpretative essays on certain "neutral cue" pictures, and essays on related topics (e.g. a man and a woman discussing national development, a description of the successful woman student, and descriptions of ideal marriage partners.) The results are telling. 53% of the High school girls and 36% of the University women wrote essays which revealed fear of success, as opposed to 9% of High school boys and 20% of University men. That is to say, their essays either attributed the girl's success in the medical school to cheating and favouritism, or described the girl as a social reject, e.g. "Anna is sad because the boys regard her as too scholarly for a woman." Some of the stories rejected her success altogether by twisting the medical school around until it became a nursing college. (Hamilton, 1972, pp. 11-21) The decrease in the fear of success as students get more education is seen by the author as a result of both the selective process and competition, which leaves only the most aggressive and ambitious men and women in the education system. Also fear of success decreases as proximity to the goal increases. (It is interesting, however to note that the disparity between the males and females is greater at the High School level, a fact not explained by the author.) For the purpose of these tests, it must be added here, tribe was not considered as a variable. However, a test administered at an all-Kikuyu

High School in Nyeri produced very similar results. Therefore I assume that the whole of the findings is representative of the ideology of young educated Kikuyus.

Even more interesting were the other questions in the test battery. For example, the High Fear of Success women showed a significantly higher preoccupation with sex, romance, and marriage than the Low Fear of Success women when answering to the neutral cues (a neutral picture for which the respondent must make up an explanatory story). Marriage is still the all-important goal for these women, and their fear of success is often expressed in a fear of social rejection. Males, when asked to describe the character of the successful female medical student, either rejected the possibility of her having obtained her results honestly, or saw her academic excellence as incompatible with a feminine personality, proper morality, or even normality. Extreme fear of the successful woman was expressed in such terms as "lunatics", "abnormal" and "absurd". The same men, when asked to describe the ideal wife, were almost unanimous in stating that the ideal wife was one who "respected the superiority of the husband" or was at least deferential to the husband.

Finally, the respondents were asked to list the most important things they would teach their own children. The results for male and female respondents were strikingly similar. The teachings listed by both males and females for their sons were "almost entirely non-traditional; achievement oriented and upwardly mobile in character: competitive-

ness, creativity, need to achieve success, education, self reliance, independence, resourcefulness, hardwork, leadership, and good citizenship." (Ibid, p. 21) <sup>2</sup>. Clearly as parents, they are eager to prepare their sons for the modern, urban industrialized world. But when asked to list teachings for their daughters, more than half of the teachings listed were those that could be considered traditional in reference: domestic work, obedience, discipline, morals with regard to sex. manners, good behaviour, respect for elders and parents, and how to cultivate a shamba (farm). The remainder of the teachings were similar to the ones listed above for the sons. Again it is obvious, that while the parents wish to prepare their daughters for the contemporary society, it is also true to say that there is strong pressures to socialize them in the traditional model of women.

Until recently education and wage employment has been the preserve of males in Kenya. Undoubtedly the educated elite have adopted certain new values, and have consequently altered the model of men to incorporate them. However, the process is only beginning to occur with regard to women, and even among the educated elite one finds that the old model of women still has a strong hold. The women high in the educational system and well on their way to success in the modern, urban interpretation of it, still manifest a stronger fear of their own success, and much of this fear is expressed in terms of social rejection by men, and the difficulty of finding a husband. Men also express a strong fear of

female success, seeing successful females as a threat to their male superiority. When questioned about the values they would inculcate in their children (which is, of course, merely a round about way of asking individuals which values are important in their own lives) women as well as men stressed the teachings of obedience, respect for those in authority, and chastity.

In many ways, these highly educated young people have altered very little the model of women which was articulated by their parents and grand parents. This was my own experience while teaching for 3 years at the University of Nairobi. Most of my female students were contemptuous of or disinterested in the Women's Liberation Movement in the West; and in the main were steadfast in maintaining that their marriages were or would be "real African marriages" (i.e. marriages where the husband was superior to the wife). I have taken part in numerous arguments among students where the males contended that education made "girls unfit for traditional African marriages" and the women stoutly maintained that this was not the case. Presumably the women fully intended to be good traditional wives when they graduated and married. They expected to work and contribute to the household (but that was always the "traditional" African model anyway), yet they would take second place to the authority of their husbands. They were still perceiving women and men with the old models. Only time will tell whether the actualities of modern urban life will alter this perception among elite women. There is some proof of a



change occurring as found in Ilse Schuster's study of elite working women in Zambia (1976) and Dinan's account of professional women in Ghana.

I have presented up to this point, pieced together from a number of unrelated sources, a picture of the Kikuyu model of women. There is little that can be said of the Kikuyu woman's model, since few Kikuyu women have either been consulted by anthropologists or have been able to articulate this model in literature. Perhaps the best attempt at such an articulation that I have found is the poem by a Kikuyu girl quoted in Castle's Growing up in East Africa (1966, pp. 26-7). After the poetess describes the women's unremitting toil in the fields, going about "their timeless duties...with loads on their backs, and babies hanging down their bellies," she concludes:

Toil and Sweat/ what else is there?/ For their minds  
are like dwarfed plants/ Full of blisters at the  
roots;/ Their joy is in the load, the hoe, and the  
cooking pot./ What other joy is there/ When the men  
ride away at dawn?

Here one woman perceives women as reduced to beasts of burden and baby producers, bent double with toil and abandoned by their men. Their minds have been dwarfed as their bodies have been bent, and there is no joy in them. A gloomy, dispirited picture indeed.

#### A NEW IDEOLOGICAL MODEL EMERGING IN MATHARE

##### Mathare: An Arena of Sexual Conflict

In the course of numerous conversations and interviews

with the independent women in Mathare, I gradually became aware of a new spirit expressed by these women. In this next section I describe the women's model and a new model of men. Mathare women articulated these new models with surprising unanimity. Often as not, this articulation was completely unsolicited. Numerous spontaneous comments and observations on the nature of man, woman, marriage, and family were daily volunteered by my informants. In many ways, Mathare was an arena for an on-going battle of the sexes being played out against a backdrop of beer brewing and "cardboard" houses (a local term referring to the cardboard roofs). Hardly a day went by without its tale of a woman beaten up, or tricked out of money by a male customer, or made pregnant or abandoned by a man. All of these tales, revealed in the telling the speaker's perception of male and female relationships and models of men and women. They were often concluded with a moral. For example, a story about a beer brewer's loss of a credit debt through the disappearance of her customer, would be rounded off with a sententious "It shows that one cannot trust men." And all the women in the room would nod their heads sadly and wisely. The following account includes much data presented in earlier sections which I will summarize again for emphasis and clarity.

This new women's model is not completely new. It has not been manufactured whole cloth, with no reference to the previous, normative ideology. Quite on the contrary, it is a change of ideology that rises quite naturally from the old

ideology. The old ideology has been subjected to what Parsons refers to as a selection and distortion process. The old model of women admitted the competence of women (mainly in productive and domestic matters only, it is true) and the reliability of women (e.g. in always providing for her children and having food) but it emphasized the subordination of women to their husbands, fathers and brothers. Now, as will be shown, the emphasis has merely been placed on the competence and reliability of women, and the subordination to men has dropped away. What is perhaps new is an assertion of the freedom of women in sexual matters, and the needs of women to a satisfying sexual life.

In numerous discussions on the events of the day, there were many opportunities for women to comment on their model of men and of women. As I have said previously, Mathare was an arena of constant confrontation between members of the two sexes. Relationships economic or social between the sexes in Mathare seemed fraught with jealousy, friction, frustration, distrust, and conflict. Most of the women whom I knew formed and dissolved several consensual unions in the two years I was present. There was great scope for conflict and great scope for gossip under such circumstances. Is it any wonder that not a day passed without men and women being a topic of conversation?

It is instructive to relate here an incident in which the perceived opposition between male and female was made entirely explicit. It occurred unfortunately, only 2 months after I had started my field work which put obvious restrict-

ions on comprehending what was happening. There was a large and flourishing women's cooperative group in Village I. It was said to have K.sh. 20,000 in the bank. One day, a delegation of the male leaders of the Kanu Committee demanded of the District Officer in charge of Mathare that he confiscate the books from the women leaders of the Cooperative and hand them over to the men. The charge was that the women leaders were corrupt and had "eaten the money." There followed a month of quarrels, public meetings, in-fighting in the Cooperative, furious gossip, delegations and counter delegations to the D.O. It was the big talking point for all the village. Who would win in this head-on confrontation? I learned that two years previously the Cooperative, whose membership was almost entirely female, had a male leadership. The present women leaders of the Cooperative (many of whom were also Kanu officials) carried out a similar coup, by going in a delegation to the D.O. and complaining of corruption in the male leadership. The D.O. had after consideration, handed the books, including the all-important bank book over to the women. Now the men were attempting a counter-coup. As it happened this signaled the death of the Cooperative. The D.O. let the proceedings drag on for months, until eventually the group dissolved in despair and disinterest, and the assets (according to rumour) divided among the women leaders. But at the height of the conflict, women angrily articulated a strong perception of a case of "men against women".

The men are jealous of us women, and want to take our money away. We earned this money ourselves

(by sweeping for the council and selling coal and wood in the cooperative business) and now they want to steal it.

These men are corrupt and bad. We women are working for the Harambee of Mathare. This cooperative raised money for the nursery school and no thanks to the men, we managed to get it built. They were reluctant to use the money, but we forced them to (referring to the previous women's successful coup) Now they want to ruin our Harambee again.

"Women work together and men eat money. That is all there is to it." Several women even spoke of the incident as nothing more and nothing less than "vita kati ya wanawake na wanaume" (warfare between men and women). The vitriolic, bitter anger expressed by the women went far and beyond the limits of the case; it seemed to be pent up frustration and anger of a much broader scope.

#### A New Model of Men

Because Mathare women see much of their life as warfare between men and women, it is necessary at this point to discuss Mathare women's 'model of men'. The model of men that they agree on is largely one which emphasizes the following attributes: aggressiveness, cruelty and brutality, lack of concern for the children they father, unreliability, unfaithfulness, and a tendency to cheat women "with love talk." The words and actions of women in Mathare articulate this model. For example, many spontaneous descriptions of men or morals capped stories related over tea or buzaa drinking in gossip sessions. Table 10 summarizes the results of questions put to 64 respondents concerning their

TABLE 10 - MATHARE WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO MEN AND WOMEN

A. Valuation of the Two Sexes by Respondents

- Negative Valuation Male and - Positive Valuation Female	- Neutral Valuation Male and - Positive Valuation Female	Neutral Valuation for both	- Negative Valuation Male and - Neutral Valuation Female	- Positive Valuation Male and - Negative Valuation Female	No Answer	Total
37 (57.8%)	7 (10.9%)	11 (17.2%)	3 (4.7%)	1 (1.6%)	5 (7.8%)	64 (100%)

B. Categorization of 77 Characteristics Attributed to Male Sex

Negative Characteristics	Neutral Characteristics	Positive Characteristics
- Like Fighting and Beating Women .....19 - Unkind, Unmerciful.....15 Brutal, Cruel - Don't care for their children..... 9 - Cheat Women in love, Unfaithful..... 6 - Think only of Drinking 6 - Thieves, Corrupt.....4 - Thoughtless, Stupid....3 <hr/> Total 62 (80.5%)	- Good at Practical Work such as Mechanics or Carpentry..... 6 - They Dominate Women ..... 2 - They are Sex Partners ..... 2 - They work for Wages ..... 1 <hr/> Total 11 (14.2%)	- Good at Politics..... 2 - Kind ..... 1 - Intelligent ..... 1 <hr/> Total 4 (5.2%)

C. Categorization of 103 Characteristics Attributed to Female Sex

Negative Characteristics	Neutral Characteristics	Positive Characteristics
Bad at Governing or Politics ..... 1 Unable to Handle Money ..... 1 <hr/> Total 2 (1.9%)	Good at House- keeping or Cooking ..... 10 Controlled by Men. 1 <hr/> Total 11 (10.3%)	- Kind, Merciful, Loving .....34 - Work Harder than Men, get Rich, are Independent..22 - Love Children ....16 - Intelligent, as Intelligent as Men ..... 6 - Are Men's Equal... 5 - Faithful in Love.. 4 - Work well together, Coop- erate together... 3 <hr/> Total 90 (87.4%)

attitudes towards and definitions of men and women. As can be seen, 68.7% of the respondents had positive feelings about women and negative or neutral feelings about men. 3. Only 1.6 of the 64 respondents felt that males had positive characteristics, a shockingly low percentage. The 64 respondents made a total of 77 statements defining men, and out of those, 62 of those statements were negative, 11 neutral and only 4 were positive. The model of men thus constructed is the same model articulated by women in their day to day conversations. Men like fighting each other and beating women. They are unkind and brutal, don't care for their children, dominate or cheat women, and think only of drinking. They are thoughtless, stupid, dishonest and corrupt. Their neutral characteristics are that they earn wages, are good at such work as carpentry, and provide women with sex. One woman thought them kind, another admitted their intelligence and 2 acknowledged their political abilities.

That women believe in this model for men is evident in their relationships with men. Women rent their own rooms and are assiduous in maintaining this measure of independence. Men who stay with them, be it for a night, a month or a year, do so only with the permission of the woman involved. Women who bear children make no attempt to seek any help from the putative fathers, even if they continue to live with the fathers. This partly reinforces their independent claims to the children, but also because they perceive that it would be futile to attempt to claim support from the fathers. Kenyan law does not support a legal claim of this sort at any rate.



Many women avoid domestic arrangements with men because they feel that it is only a matter of time before a man will get drunk or annoyed and then deliver a beating. Women also dislike trusting men with debts, but as was pointed out earlier, it is necessary for beer sellers to give credit in order to make sufficient sales over the course of the month. They go to great lengths to ensure that the credit customer is a reliable one, but they manifest continual anxiety over these debts. "Men will always try to find a way to run away with money. They are thieves at heart, all of them".

As an interesting adjunct to this model of men were the attitudes to fathers and brothers expressed by the respondents on the same test. 27 of the 64 respondents (42.2%) thought that brothers were useless, unfeeling and unhelpful to their sisters, while feelings about sisters were quite the reverse. (See Table 9). The women had a much more positive attitude to fathers as a category since (as with the question on brothers) they saw the question in a personal context, and many amended their answers with such comments as "I should respect my father because he gave me life." Even then only 37.5% gave a positive evaluation of a father with such statements as: "A father respects his children and vica versa." "A father is good." "Without a father no one can be happy." 42.2% gave neutral or instrumental definitions of the father: "A father disciplines his children." "A father provides food, housing, clothes and school fees." Finally 20.3% evaluated fathers

negatively. For example they said such things as:  
 "Fathers care more for drink than their children." "A  
 father wouldn't stay at home if his child was sick, only  
 mothers do that". "Fathers neglect their homes." "Fathers  
 are only good to aid in biological conception."

TABLE 11

MATHARE WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO FATHER AND MOTHER

	POSITIVE EVALUATION	NEGATIVE EVALUATION	NEUTRAL OR INSTRUMENTAL DEF.	TOTAL
FATHER	24 37.5%	13 20.3%	27 42.2%	64
MOTHER	35 54.7%	- -	29 45.3%	64

A significant number of women have strong reservations about the role of father. By way of contrast none of the respondents gave a negative evaluation of the category of mother, 54.7% attributing positive qualities to her. ("One is always proud when one's mother is near." "One cannot be sad when one's mother is alive." "One's mother tells sweet stories to and has good jokes with her children." "One can never be hungry, or need anything with one's mother near.")

The generally negative evaluation of men in the ideology of Mathare women extends therefore even to such relatives as brothers and fathers. There are strong pressures to love and respect one's relatives (e.g. "one must respect one's brother because you both come from the same womb, but that is the only reason.") Yet all males, even relatives, such as brothers and fathers partake of the same untrustworthy and non-caring image.

#### A New Women's Model

The Model of women seems to embody quite an opposite set of characteristics. I use the word "opposite" advisedly, since it was not uncommon to hear someone make a statement like "men are brutal and untrustworthy, women are the opposite." (There is a strong case to be made here for an ideological perception of men and women as opposites.) Only 1.6% of the respondents evaluated women negatively, and as I said above (see Table 10) a total of 57.8% assigned positive attributes to women. The 64 respondents had more to say about women than about men. They made 103 separate statements about women as contrasted to 77 about men, and 87.4% of those statements about women were positive in nature. The largest number of statements understandably concerned women's attributes of caring, kindness, or mercy. It is to a woman that one would turn in the case of trouble of any kind. Many people attributed this to the fact women had experienced the pain of childbirth. Through her sexuality, as it were, she had learned about pain and sorrow of life.

The next largest category of responses was one in which I have grouped a number of related characteristics: hard working, ability to make money, ability to get rich and be independent. I realize it is my subjective judgement that this group of characteristics is positive rather than neutral (or more exactly instrumental). I think I am fully justified in doing this because of the strong positive value placed on these attributes in the general ideology of the Kikuyus. To call a person hard working, or capable of making a monetary success is for the Kikuyu an accolade of the highest order. Therefore, it is correct to give this group of characteristics a positive value. However, upon consideration it is striking that this category of independence - linked characteristics was named with greater frequency than the characteristic of loving children, an attribute one would naturally expect to find given to women in any culture, due to their procreative role. Related to these independence - linked characteristics are the last two categories (see Part B of Table 10) : intelligence (equal to, or greater than men) and the fact that women are equal to men in rights and abilities. In all the cases where respondents mentioned intelligence as a characteristic of women, they also pointed out that this was not the case zamani (long ago) thus indicating their perception of a change either in the opportunities or the qualities of women today.

Another manifestation of a new women's model in Mathare were the answers given to the question (on the same

questionnaire) "What are you most proud of in your life?"  
 These reveal the self-perceptions of Mathare women and my  
 extension to their model for women.

TABLE 12

STATED PERCEPTIONS OF SOURCES OF PRIDE

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<u>In my life I am most proud of:</u>		
My Independence .....	32	48.5%
e.g. "I rely on no one"		
"I sleep on my own bed and buy my own clothes and food."		
"My courage and strength, no one can beat me."		
"My intelligence and power of helping my home with money and clothing."		
"My ability to feed my children without help."		
My children .....	9	13.6%
When people ask me to help them or lend them money, and I can .....	5	7.5%
Nothing .....	4	6.1%
My job .....	4	6.1%
My husband, or my mother .....	4	6.1%
Passing my exams well .....	3	4.6%
My beauty, or my clothes, or my possessions ..	3	4.6%
My religion .....	2	3.1%
Total (64 respondents have 66 answers)	66	100 %

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The largest single category of answers were related to  
 independence: 32 women or 48.5% gave "their independence"  
 as the thing they were most proud of when looking back on

their lives. In other words, they stated explicitly that they were proud of being self supporting and making their own way in the world. In addition, looking more closely at the answers, one can see a set of what could be called independence and competence-linked characteristics appearing in other answers. In this set I have included answers which related to a job, an ability to lend money or assistance to friends, and the passing of exams. These answers, plus the direct statement about independence make a total of 44, or 66.6%.

Pride of children is the next largest category of answers: 13.6% of the responses. This is a surprisingly low percentage for women in a culture which traditionally defined women as child-bearers. The remaining 20% of the answers were scattered; including such things as religion, beauty, and nothing at all.

The two thirds of the respondents who were proud of their independence, their accomplishments, and their competence were articulating a new aspect of the women's model. Or rather, to be more accurate, they were merely changing the emphasis in the old model of women. Kikuyu women have always been perceived as strong, hard working and competent but not as independent. Mathare Kikuyu women, are supporting themselves and their children, and are making a virtue of their necessity. Now independence is something to be desired, to be proud of.

These questionnaires taken alone are of limited value. Their results however compare strikingly with unsolicited

statements I recorded almost daily concerning men and women and social transactions in Mathare. This similarity adds greatly to the validity of the questionnaire results. Solicited and unsolicited statements are the closest that an anthropologist can get to an ideology. The degree to which such statements attain internal consistency is the only criteria for judging whether or not they can be said to constitute an ideology. The women's model which emerged from respondents' statements, both within and without a structured interview situation manifested this internal consistency. It stressed independence, self sufficiency and competence. Women ought to be able to support themselves and their children. They can and do get education, jobs, buy shares in land buying companies, build their own houses for rental, pass examinations, and make loans.

The "history" of Mathare related to me by older residents stressed the important organizational role of the women. Women were instrumental in persuading Tom Mboya, MP for the area, to obtain permission for them to build after the Emergency was lifted. It was the women who did most of the work collecting money to build the social hall and the Nursery. It was a delegation of "poor women" that went to Kenyatta to beg for mercy when Nairobi City Council threatened to tear down the "cardboard houses" (i.e. houses with cardboard roofs.) I might add that this version of Mathare's history differed from the one given me by male informants. However, what really happened is immaterial. What is important is the central role that women perceive they have

had in the establishment of their community. Women seeing themselves as independent and strong and resourceful working hard in their own interests forms, therefore, a key part of the new women's model in Mathare.

Women are also seen as kind and caring. They are perceived as more cooperative and amenable to working together than men, who are status conscious and care only for money rather than the community and their fellow residents of Mathare. Time and again it was explained to me that only women could really fulfil the true ideal of 'harambee'. (Harambee means 'working together' and is a political slogan that embodies the ideals of African Socialism) In Mathare women think that Harambee has been advanced and made possible by women residents. Scornfully, the older women's leaders who had been involved in the early harambee efforts of the Mathare residents, dismissed the men leaders with such epithets as "thieves", "rogues", and "power hungry." "Without us there," claimed one venerable women's leader, "they would have 'eaten the money' and there would have been no Nursery School..." In point of fact, it was my experience that the women leaders were equally capable of 'eating money' when it came right down to it. Here again, it is the expressed perception of reality and how it has been incorporated in some sort of group consciousness that is important here. Mathare women perceive their sisters not only as more cooperative and able to work together, but as more honest than men. Considering the instrumental importance of female daily cooperation (see Chapter VI, Section on



Friendship Networks), this aspect of ideology is more than a mere description of a women's model. It is also a statement of an ideal for action, an ideal which acts to reinforce and generate necessary transactions in the Mathare social field. The women's model is a blueprint for social action which helps to socialize new members of the community and to guarantee that old members will continue to cooperate in a way which enables the community to maintain a solid front against the hostility of the larger society. An ideology largely presents a picture of the ideal which contributes to the maintenance of social order by providing the limits within which individuals can act without incurring social censure. At the same time the women of Mathare are censured by the larger society (both physically by arrests and imprisonment, and psychologically by the media's severe criticisms, of the malayas of Mathare) for transgressing the model of women held by the larger society.<sup>4</sup> This new women's model allows Mathare women to rationalize their behaviour and to cope with the cognitive dissonance which must arise from the negative social image given them by the larger society.

#### Redefining Women's Sexual Behaviour and Marriage

One way in which the new women's model allows women to rationalize their behaviour is to redefine women's sexual behaviour and marriage. Under the old model of women, women were restricted to sex with her husband in their own homestead. In recent years male migration in search of

work took place on a wide scale, leaving women without sex partners for weeks, and even months at a time. Kikuyu men often assume that women can do without sex for long periods, unlike men. Under the old models of men and women, men are assumed to have stronger sexual urges. Therefore it is right and natural both that they should seek the services of women in town, and that their wives should be happily celebrate in the rural areas. A number of the migrant men with wives in the rural areas who drank in Mathare put to me versions of this model of male and female sexuality, while evincing fears that all might not be as close to reality as they wished. The ambivalence (or lack of complete belief in the model) would come out in such back to back statements from the same absent husband as: "Women don't need sex as often as men," and then "I won't let my wife have medicines for Family Planning because she would then be able to play sex while I was away, and I wouldn't find out (i.e. by her being impregnated)" At any rate, men partially believe (or hope) that women's sexuality is more controllable than their own. Mathare women refute this statement.

People say that malayas play sex only to get money. This is not true. We do get money for it, but we also do it because we enjoy playing sex.

It is not possible for men or women to go without sex for a long period. Priests and nuns always try to cheat us that they do...but it is impossible.

When one is not playing sex, one feels sluggish, unwell, and one's skin breaks out in spots.

I would never marry because then I couldn't play sex with anyone I wanted to.

Frequent playing of sex is necessary for health and happiness.

Women frequently put forth such views that sex was fun, that regular sex was necessary to health and sanity, and that access to a variety of sexual partners was a woman's right. This concept of women's sexuality is expressed in the attitudes to marriage held by Mathare women discussed in detail in Chapter VI. To recap briefly, out of 64 respondents, only 34.4% saw marriage as having positive value, 31.3% saw marriage as unnecessary, 3.1% saw it as a bad thing, and 31.3% saw it as a functional arrangement with no positive or negative value. Respondents, and other women in un-structured discussions, viewed marriage as an institution which bound them too closely and limited their freedom. Part of this was the felt need for sexual freedom. A husband represents a "barrier to one's freedom" and often this was expressed in terms of sexual freedom.

I am glad I am not married. If I see a man that I like, I can ask him back to spend the night with me and there is no one to blame me.

Women, who admitted taking money for sex, usually explained that there were no hard and fast rules concerning payment. If they like a man, they will charge him the minimum but allow him to stay all night and vica versa. The typical picture of a Western prostitute is one of a sexually disturbed woman that does not enjoy sex, but who often uses commercialized sex to wreak her revenge on men. Not so with Mathare women who make money from sex. Women would often spend the early morning gossip sessions over cups of tea comparing notes

on men with whom they had spent the night. The man's prowess in bed and the pleasure or lack of it would be alluded to in ways which usually greatly amused the listeners. These gossip groups consisted entirely of women; such things were never discussed in the presence of men.

When he undressed I yelled with fright because there was a huge black snake between his legs.

I thought I would taste 'it' up to here.  
(indicating her mouth)

I told him to go. I don't like overripe bananas.

These sallies would naturally be greeted with gales of laughter. But the underlying message is serious enough. Women have a right to enjoy sex, and do assess their sexual partners on grounds of equipment and performance. Women have sexual urges that need to be filled. I have witnessed even old women start these joking sessions on sex in which they would make reference to the fact that if they hadn't had a man for a long time they had "sex hunger". This frank admission by women of desire and the need for sex may have been a part of more traditional Kikuyu culture. There is no way of knowing. But it is evident that this part of the women's mode is certainly one which reinforces the sexual freedom seized by Mathare women. If one needs sex, sexual variety and pleasure, then one is justified in contravening society's norms and seeking these things.

Tied in with this frank avowal of women's needs for sex is a rejection of the immorality of being a "malaya". Malaya is the nearest equivalent that can be found to the

English for prostitute. It is the word which has connotations of immorality, uncontrolled sex, commercial sex, and seduction of honest men by the corrupt but irresistible urban woman. All women who live in Mathare are, by society's definition, malaya. Women know this, and to protect themselves when dealing with hospitals or other such institutions give their address as Eastleigh rather than Mathare. One woman whom I had driven to the hospital with her sick child explained why she had given her address as Eastleigh.

If you say you live in Mathare, they call you a malaya, start lecturing you about dirt, feeding your children, and treat you roughly.

The contempt that people from the wider society heap on malaya make women of Mathare very defensive. "Malaya" is a deadly insult between women; one which will lead to fist fights. Those women who are defined as malaya react in one of two ways. One group maintain stoutly that they are not malaya and that what they do is purely a type of marriage and not sex for money. The other group (the smaller) admits boldly that their profession is that of a malaya and then goes on to redefine the profession. An excellent example of this is in the anecdote quoted earlier where a woman proved to her satisfaction by a beautiful piece of pure logic, that the only difference between me, (a married woman) and her (a malaya) was that I did 'it' with one man all the time for rent and food, and she did 'it' with many men for short periods for money. Where the logic of these two

groups meet is in eliminating the watertight compartments for married women and malaya. One group protests that their short term relationships with men are merely variations of marriage, while the other claims that traditional marriage is a type of prostitution (a stance held, interestingly enough, by many members of the Womens Liberation movement of the West.) In both cases, the new ideology succeeds partially in defusing the word "malaya", but only partially, since as has been pointed out "malaya", when said in a certain tone of voice, is a great insult. Yet it can also be a term of affection between friends, much in the same way that "nigger" is between American Blacks who use it in a friendly jesting fashion. Perhaps using terms of insult in such joking fashions among friends is another mechanism to rob the word of its power to hurt.

#### Redefinition of a Malaya

Mathare women, whether they admit to being malaya or not, have great sympathy for all those besides themselves who may be classified as malaya. In the attitude survey and in day to day conversations women rarely expressed contempt for malaya as a category. Only the few married women, or very religious "saved" women spoke slightly or self righteously of them. On the Attitude Questionnaire women were asked to define or explain what a malaya was. The breakdown of answers indicates this sympathy. The largest category of responses, as can be seen from Table 13 (see next page) was a purely functional definition of a malaya; i.e. "one

TABLE 13 -- MATHARE WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO MALAYA

FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION OF MALAYA'S JOB	MALAYA ARE SIMPLY PEOPLE LIKE ANY OTHERS	MALAYA ARE GOOD	REJECT CONCEPT OF MALAYA ENTIRELY	MALAYA ARE BAD	NO ANSWER	TOTAL
22  34.4%	18  28.2%	7  10.9%	8  12.5%	4  6.3%	5  7.8%	64  100%

who does sex for money". It was often explicitly stated that "selling one's kiosk" is a business like any other, and as such has no moral connotations at all. In the third largest category, 10% stated outright that malaya are good because they support their families rather than let them starve or go to orphanages, (in other words they are doing the State a service).

Even more interesting, from the point of view of the reordering of an ideology, are two groups, one of which stated explicitly that malayas are simply women like any others (28.2%) and another which rejects the concept of "malayaness" using a most fascinating logic. The first group stated quite explicitly that there was no boundary between the wife and the malaya.

You (the researcher) are a malaya as well.

A malaya is one just like every woman, married or single.

Malayas ask for money outright. Girl friends and wives get it in other ways by getting boy friends or husbands to buy them clothes or give them presents.

Wives are given money for sex.

In other words they are reordering the model of women which states that those who perform sexual services within the boundary of an institution of marriage are moral, and those that do it outside that institution are immoral. All women are paid for their sexual services, and there is nothing good or bad, moral or immoral about it. This group extended to all women the functional meaning of the term malaya,



rendering it devoid of moral judgement.

The second group, 12% of the respondents, rejected the concept of a female malaya by taking the seduction aspect, and attributing it to men. Thus these respondents said with unanimity, "Men are malayas, not women." When pressed, they explain this extraordinary perception as follows:

Men seduce women to selling sex for money, not the other way around. Without them there would be no malaya."

Men are the true malaya. They use money to trap young school girls.

No woman would offer to sell sex for money, it is the men who ask.

By this curious logic, the illicit quality of the relationship is transferred. In the ideology of the larger society the malaya is blamed for seducing good men away from their families and homes, "eating up" their money. In this new version, the malaya is a seducer not a seductress, tempting women or young girls with money. Thus the onus of the initiative is placed on the men, and by implication women are their victims, not their temptresses. It is true that women in Mathare don't solicit in the manner which Westerners associate with prostitutes. There are well-dressed, educated girls who patronize the expensive hotels and nightclubs in town whose activities conform more closely to the Western model. But the women in Mathare ostensibly sell beer; it is that which they hawk. Except for a few women who profess to be too "lazy" to do more than make a pretence of making or

selling beer, most women make a substantial part of their income from buzaa. The sexual relationships long or short term, mainly come about because of beer-selling relationships. Men drink in the house of a woman, they joke with her, they proposition her, and they stay behind when the rest of the drinkers have left. Men also seek sexual partners by knocking on shutters of strange houses in the dead of night with the provocative whisper of "I have 5 shillings" to the sleeper inside.

This is supposed to be a less frequent method of forming a liaison and if men do make contacts in such a way, it is usually at the house where a woman whom they know lives or used to live. Thus in Mathare, men do take the sexual initiative and women can conceivably perceive themselves as the targets of a constant pressure to succumb to sexual advances and the temptation of the money proffered. Thus it is the men who are guilty of initiating commercial sex transactions, not the beautiful temptress of the city.

Further evidence that men are the true malaya is that many of the younger unmarried women (most of the older women were divorced or widowed) started their lives as independent urban women because a premarital pregnancy terminated their schooling. Whatever were the facts of each individual case, women felt very bitterly about this betrayal as they saw it. Sometimes older men used money to tempt school girls to have sexual intercourse. In the case of a student love affair, the boy and girl would talk of marriage, and inevitably the boy would conveniently "forget" his promises

when the girl became pregnant. It was the girl who then got into "trouble" and had to leave school. At most, the boys parents would pay a fine. This pattern of pre-marital sex is tragically all too frequent in many other countries, including Western ones. Though both parties may be equally to blame for initiating the sexual encounter, it is a sad fact that women end up bearing full responsibility, in every sense of the word. In Mathare, women felt very bitter about this fact. Whether or not it had happened to them, most women had a relative or friend, or daughter of a friend who had been "betrayed" in this manner. Girls who have had a premarital pregnancy have a difficult time getting married afterwards, and may be forced to migrate to town to earn their living. They also earn the title of 'malaya' in the process. Thus in another way, men can be seen as having created malaya by the initial seduction leading to a "fall". They use money or honeyed words of love to trap young school girls into sex and then into pregnancy.

The New Women's Model's Role in Socialization  
and The Initiation of Social Action.

At this point, a few words are appropriate about the role of this new women's model in socialization and in the initiation of new types of social action. Mathare is not a very old community. The time span of my field work was limited, and therefore my comments on the process of social change and the development of the next generation are admittedly hypothetical. There is evidence that daughters

will follow in their mothers footsteps in Mathare, and that sons will leave their mothers to seek refuge in the anonymity of other parts of Nairobi. In the socialization of their children, women are transmitting among other things, their ideology; and parts of that ideology are a model for men and other parts a model for women. If one's self image is drawn partly from the prevailing sex model, as well as from identification with members of one's immediate family and the events and experiences of early childhood, then the women's model will have important consequences in the socialization process. In the above section on matrifocal families in Mathare, there was a long exposition on sons and mothers. It is interesting to note how many of the sons of Mathare's women are growing up adhering to the model of men outlined in this chapter. They appear to be untrustworthy, violent, and without concern for their mothers. On the other hand, the daughters I knew are growing up strangely close to the model of women outlined above. They form cooperative units with their mothers and their siblings to perform housework and the work of beer brewing and selling. They exhibit early sexual precocity and choose partners from their mother's customers. Though their mothers hope that they will finish their schooling before they get pregnant, few mothers make any serious attempts to control their daughters' sexuality. In addition, few mothers express any wish to marry off their daughters.<sup>5</sup> Young Mathare girls also express little concern for marriage. All that Mathare women hope for their daughters is that they will finish their education in order

to earn a "better living" than their mothers. The mothers regard sexual activity among young people as inevitable, and only regrettable because it leads to pregnancy. (My few religious informants took a much more moral stance on this question.) Unfortunately young girls do not use contraceptives because it is felt that they will sterilize a woman who has not yet borne children. Thus any hope of greater economic opportunity in the formal job market for their daughters is rendered an impossibility. The 23 cases of schoolgirl pregnancy that I recorded illustrate this poignantly. In no instance had the mother rejected her daughter, although usually she was initially angry with her pregnant daughter. In all cases, the mother expressed resigned inevitability: it was "shauri ya mungi" (God's will) or "bahaiti mbaya" (bad luck) that the girl had gotten pregnant at that particular time. As one woman said to me with a sad laugh,

What could I have done? You cannot keep girls from being interested in men, once they have learned about the joys of the thing between the legs.

Women are thought to have strong sex drives which must be fulfilled, and mothers can only hope that the inevitable biological event will be postponed. When it comes, they will give succour.

This women's model is also of importance for the socialization of new migrants to Mathare. The emphasis on the kindness and cooperation of women is a pressure on women to come together in the face of police threats and the disapproval of the larger society. This aspect of the model

for women encourages a solidarity of women in the face of men and of the instruments of the larger society such as the police (who incidentally are also men). Women are supposed to support each other in cases of police raids, bribe situations, or in quarrels with customers (see the description of friendship networks at the end of Chapter VI). It is, of course, overstating the case to paint a picture of Mathare as a homogeneous female community facing a hostile outer world of men. There are many male residents of Mathare, especially those manufacturing Nubian Gin, who are also part of the community solidarity of Mathare. However buzaa brewing, one of the major focuses of police raids and society's hostility, is so much a female monopoly that it is easy to see how women can perceive themselves as standing together against a male world. When a woman comes to live in Mathare, the most common pattern is that she stays with a female relative or friend. Occasionally I have even witnessed a woman wandering from house to house looking for someone who would be willing to share a room with her. Women receive such a seeker for shelter with sisterly concern. Even if they are not able to take her in, they may offer her a cup of tea, question her about her reasons for wanting to come to Mathare, and give her hints about such and such a woman who may be wanting someone to share the rent. These women usually have some tale to tell about marital desertion or mistreatment which meets with sympathy and the usual resigned exchanges about "we all know about men." These women express a desire to set up in some "biashara" (business) of their own so that

they can feed themselves and their children. They have heard about the "biashara" of Mathare. One might think that women, aware of the already stiff competition for customers and the overcrowding, might try and discourage such prospective residents; but oddly enough they never do. When a new woman finally finds a place, either with friend, relative or stranger, it is older women residents who teach her how to brew buzaa. Buzaa is not a Kikuyu-Meru-Embu drink. They brew honey beer. It is a drink that originates from Western Kenya. Thus a woman from Kikuyu-Meru or Embu must be taught the recipe and the lore of "cooking sweet buzaa". Women are very free with their knowledge, and are always willing to explain to a newcomer why her first batches have come out too sour to drink, and to lend her all the necessary equipment until such time as she has been able to buy some of her own. I once heard a woman upbraid another with the words "How did you learn to brew buzaa?" because she was reluctant to lend a debe to a woman who had recently moved into Village II.

While the model for women articulated by Mathare women helps to insure cooperation and continuation of appropriate social behaviour in the community's day to day interactions, it has been only partially successful as a support for political action by women for women. As was explained in the previous chapter, there are female politicians in the local Kanu Committee, some of whom hold fairly important positions, though critical examination of the workings of the local Kanu party reveal that men have more power and

are more important brokers and patrons than their female counterparts. Women leaders do however operate to protect the interests of other women in Mathare. In dispute settlement certain women leaders are frequently sought, especially when the disputes are those concerning personal relations rather than serious bloodshed or violent crime. I feel there is a strong tendency for the women leaders to "find for" the female disputant, even when the facts of the case are unclear. In a number of cases which I witnessed the benefit of the doubt was given to a woman who had had a quarrel with a lover or customer. Despite this bias many male residents sought these women leaders' assistance and respected their judgements. A woman leader explained to me that due to her innovation it was now standard procedure to call in the woman's parents in a beating case, where the man claimed to be married to the woman he had beaten. This is to ascertain if there was a legal traditional marriage because if a man is not legally married to a woman, he is liable for the beating he gave her. Thus men often claim the immunity of marriage to avoid a fine or a warning from the Kanu leader. It was a woman leader who was sensitive enough to the needs of her female clients to find a way to bring justice to them. I also believe that women Kanu leaders were instrumental in making sure that many of the houses in New Mathare went to their fellow female house holders. A very high proportion of the new houses were allocated to women, despite heavy competition and conflicting claims of men within and without Mathare on the male



leaders of the Council who allocated the houses.

However, Mathare women still support male candidates for City Council and Parliament. As yet no woman has challenged the male competitors for these posts. Sadly I missed the campaign for the national elections in 1974, by months. I heard that a Mathare woman (unknown to me, since she came from Village X) ran for office of Councillor but lost. It would have been most interesting to have witnessed her campaign and the response that she met. Her lack of success is indicative of Mathare women's lack of support. I feel they were reluctant to support women candidates for political office in the city and national government, not because they lack faith in women's ability to do the job well, but more because they have a cynical assessment of the sexual bias operating in Kenyan politics. Though a coalition of women would have enormous political power, this has not yet occurred in Mathare or elsewhere, in Kenya.

#### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have been discussing aspects of ideology called model of women and women's models. I have adopted a Parsonian definition of ideology as a blueprint for action articulated by a group, status group or society. If a group holds a set of ideas, values and beliefs which maintains a certain internal consistency it can then be called an ideology. A model of women is a set of beliefs, ideas and values concerning women and their role in society held by members of

the society, while a women's model is such a set held by the women about women. It may or may not differ significantly from the model of women held by the larger society. However, Ardener maintains that the model of women held by the dominant group (men) may often act to stifle the expression of a women's model held by subordinate women. I have viewed a group's ideology as an articulated evaluation of the collective, its historical development, its current situation and the material and non-material transactions that go to make up its social life. But I have also viewed ideology as playing a role in the future development of a social system, though the degree of importance of that role is open to speculation.

In order to provide the context of change, I first attempted to construct a traditional Kikuyu model of women as completely as scanty data permitted. Using an analysis of psychological tests administered to University and High School students measuring fear of success among males and females in Nairobi, I also attempted to show that this traditional model may have altered only slightly even among the current urban, educated elite.

This traditional model of women is one which emphasized the following features: strength, hard work, good domestic management, nurturing skills, obedience to men, and close control over women's sexual behaviour. I feel impressionistically from my experience in Kenya and communication with other social scientists who have done work in Kenya that this model is similar to that of most of the sedentary agricultural groups in Kenya today.

One of the most interesting aspects of this study of female heads of households in Mathare is the extent to which their way of life appears to be institutionalizing a sub-culture within the wider Kenyan society, with its mixture of rural, traditional, and modern-urban traits. To the extent that a sub-culture develops an internally consistent set of beliefs, values and ideas about its particular collectivity, then that particular sub-group can be said to be developing an ideology of its own. This sub-group does not have to be spatially bounded. I don't feel that Mathare is a community with water tight boundaries that set off Mathare women from their counterparts in other parts of Nairobi or other Kenyan cities. However, because of its special ecological and historical position in Nairobi, Mathare allows a clearer, more homogeneous expression of the ideology of this women's subgroup. In this chapter I have constructed the model for women which possibly is being articulated by such women. The sources I have used were formal interviews and the frequent informal discussions which revolved around the topic of men and women. My attitude questionnaire was a simple unsophisticated attempt to tap expressed attitudes of women at one point in time. This questionnaire is relevant only to the extent to which the responses echo women's unsolicited comments on the same topic and reflects the life style they lead. The correspondence, as I have tried to show, is striking.

Mathare women hold a model of men which states that men are brutal, love fighting and drinking, don't care for their

children or responsibility, and cheat women. This view of men affects women's attitudes even to such male relatives as brother and father, whom they regard more cynically and less positively than sisters and mother. There is a strong suggestion that the Mathare woman's model of men and her own women's model are in binary opposition, a feeling reinforced by the social fact that Mathare women (as brewers and purveyors of commercial sex) can be seen to be facing together a hostile world whose instruments of control (police, City Council officials, and judges) are peopled by men. The Women's model includes traits which oppose those attributed to men in the women's model of men. Men do not care for their children, women do. Men are aggressive and cruel, women are kind and merciful and cooperate together.

But also included in the new 'model for women' is an expression of female competence and pride in being independent of men, capable of making money, and holding jobs.

Part of this independence is a right to control one's own sexuality, with pronounced expressions of women's strong need for sex and desire to control their choice of partners and sexual satisfaction. This may or may not have been part of the old model for women held by the Kikuyu, about which nothing is known. In many ways, the new model for women is probably not created whole cloth, but may be a reorganization and distortion of the old model. The only new aspects may be the stress on the desirability of total economic independence, or the lack of subordination to men, and on the right of women to control their own sexuality.

Finally, I attempted to show how Mathare women's model could have repercussions on future social developments in Mathare or urban Kenya. I discussed its role in socialization, both of new members of this particular community and of children of these women. In socializing new members, the women's model stresses the right of women to earn their own living, the right to have a full, self determined sex life, and the need for cooperation among women beer brewers. For children, these models described above have important effects on the development of their adult self images. There is evidence that Mathare women are strongly influencing their children to assume roles and behaviour appropriate to the respective models for both sexes.

One way in which the model for women has not had far reaching effects on future events, at least so far, is in the political sphere. There are many women political leaders with important positions in the local structure of the Kanu Party. These women certainly protect the interests of women in Mathare, in their settling of disputes and in the recent distribution of new resources (the allocation of houses in New Mathare). But women in Mathare still support male candidates for major political positions in the city and national governments. It will be interesting to see if, in the future, women of Mathare become increasingly involved in politics as a status group, in the same way that the market women in Ghana have become a force in national politics.

CHAPTER VIII - FOOTNOTES.

1. This is a change in emphasis, of course, only for those societies which traditionally had patrilineal descent systems. In Lusaka, Schuster argues that the matrilineal systems of many of Zambian cultures makes it logical for women to increase their commitment to their natal kin while remaining unmarried. (1976)
2. Of course, one must also consider the possibility that these very qualities were "traditional" for the Kikuyu model of men. The author, in this case, has made some rather gross assumptions about the psychology of traditional peoples. It is possible that Kikuyu have always valued competitiveness, resourcefulness, leadership, success for men. Whether or not this list of teachings for the male child is a reflection of traditional teachings, or the adjustment to the modern, industrial nation state, it is still revealing to note the difference in the teachings that would be given to girls.
3. In analyzing the answers to the questionnaire, I admittedly used my subjective judgement to categorize the characteristics attributed to men and women as positive, negative, or neutral. In Part B. of Table 10 the reader can see the categorizations that I made.
4. Without a great deal of comparative data, I have made a gross assumption that the model of women held by most Kenyan tribes is similar in most important respects to the model of women of the Kikuyu. I have based this assumption on personal observation and communications with other anthropologists who have done work in East Africa.
5. Asking what a respondent wants for his or her offspring is a common way of trying to establish what values a respondent holds about the major issues of his or her own life. Many people who have made particular choices, especially deviant choices, do not wish to admit to themselves or an inquisitive interviewer negative feelings about these choices. It is significant that studies of homosexuals in the United States reveal that most would not want their sons to be homosexuals though they themselves claimed to be well adjusted and happy in their lives.

CHAPTER IXCONCLUSIONSUMMARY

In this thesis, I have examined a group of Kikuyu women migrants to Nairobi, heads of households in a squatter community called Mathare Valley, who support themselves by a combination of beer brewing, sexual-domestic unions with single men, and low-skilled employment.

I began by describing women in traditional Kikuyu society, where their most important roles were wives and mothers. Though they contributed a great deal to production their lives were controlled largely by male kinsmen and affines. They were limited to the private, or domestic domain, and their access to resources such as land was only through dependency relationships with men. During the colonial period, changes occurred which resulted in an even more uneven access to resources as men were educated and migrated to urban areas to seek employment. Women remained in the private domestic domain of the farm, with an increased work load as many of their men migrated out. Since Independence a number of far-reaching socio-economic changes have created a group of women who have no place in the rural social field, either because they are divorced or widowed without land to farm, or because they are categorized as unmarriagable after they have born a child out of wedlock. For this category of women, the solution to intolerable domestic situations is

to migrate to the urban area. Other women, who come to town to join their husbands, chose to leave them and set up on their own. Many of these women have migrated to areas like Mathare Valley, a squatter community with a well developed petty commodity production sector. As many as 60% of the adult women in Mathare are independent heads of household.

Mathare Valley is a relatively new community, having been rebuilt after the Emergency by Kikuyu migrants. Its brief history is one of conflict with authority, the City Council and police, over its very right to exist and to undertake the type of petty commodity production most commonly found in the community: buzaa brewing. In the building of the community, and the formation of the social institutions necessary to face City Council, women played an important role. More interestingly, they perceive their role as more constructive in many instances than that of the men. Whether or not this was true is immaterial to the present research; what is important is the sense that women are creating their own mythology of their role in the development of Mathare.

Once women come to Mathare they have to support themselves in a number of ways. These include formal wage employment of the most low paid and exploitative kind: working in bars and being house servants. Most women however prefer to engage in petty commodity production, and to enter into a series of sexual-domestic unions varying in length. By a strategy of combining these varying



activities in different ways at different times, a woman in Mathare supports herself.

In order to come to grips with the question of male female relationship, I introduced the concept of the dependency relationship, defining the term to mean a dyadic status set between two people, in which one depends on the other for access to resources. I believe this concept describes the majority of all male-female sexual unions and many other male female relationships as well, though the organizational details, and the degree of dependence will vary with the type of union. Using a transactional approach I described the four dependency relationships that determine a woman's life in rural Kenya (father-daughter, husband-wife, mother-son, sister-brother), showing in each case the asymmetry in resources and the way in which the woman depends on the man. By contrast, I described Mathare women's dependency relationships. Though Mathare women may have increased access to resources, the basic inequality between men and women still exists, and women continue to seek economic support from men in the city as well. The difference here is that the degree of dependence is lessened, and the woman's control over the relationship has increased, so that she can make and break the unions. This kind of manipulation illustrates the extremely instrumental approach women have, or have developed, in Mathare to male-female sexual unions. Women strategize by having commercial sex customers, lovers, Town Bwanas at the same time or at different times, as necessity or desire dictates. The normative structure of these relationships

and the varying dependency (i.e. asymmetry of access to resources) is described.

Mathare women reorganize their relationships with other women, both on a one to one basis and in groups (both formal and informal). This is obviously an important part of a strategy for survival, where a woman finds herself cut off from the kin group or even her family and faced with a difficult, often dangerous urban environment. Relationships with certain female relatives such as mother, daughter, and sister have been reorganized, with more transactions taking place than would have been the case formerly. There is a larger allocation of time, effort, and resources to these kin. Women with their mothers in rural areas foster their children with them to facilitate the task of being mother and father to their own children. Women with mothers in Mathare form cooperative households with them which I have called extended matrifocal family households. Sisters who follow each other in migrating to town may live close to each other there and cooperate in various ways. All this is an effort to provide protection, cooperation, social security, support, assistance and even companionship in the heterogeneous, uncertain, and difficult urban environment.

To further these same ends, women form friendship networks of neighbours and friends to aid them in their daily tasks related to beer brewing and protection from the police, to help with domestic problems, and to provide companionship. As each woman brews alone, these networks are a logical response to need for solidarity in the face of police

harassment. Women, for more specific economic or social ends, join formal groups which allow them to invest in land or houses, or to enjoy a social activity such as dancing. Some women build networks of clients using these associations and networks.

All of the above led me to the presentation of a model urban career strategy of a Mathare woman, whom I see as attempting to leave the rural area where she has been confined to the private domestic domain and to enter the public domain in the urban area. I described the pattern of economic and social activities which characterize the urban careers of many of the women whose urban career histories I collected. Most left rural and/or urban dependency relationship with fathers, brothers, or husbands and entered the urban social field. The most common way that poor, uneducated women have of penetrating the urban economy is to engage in a series of urban-style dependency relationships. Usually the first is that of malaya-customer, from which most women graduate to renting their own houses and taking a combination of visitors, lovers, and husbands. There follows a period in which a woman also engages in petty commodity production, raises her children, maintains her ties with her natal family by gifts, and tries to participate in some capital investment. For most women this is the stage they will eventually die in. Others, more lucky, or more clever, progress to a stage where they have made investments in houses, land or businesses which gives them free access to resources without the mediation of men. These women may have relationships with

men, but they will be on a peer basis. These are the only women in Mathare who can be said to be truly independent of men. The others have only achieved partial independence since they continue to have lovers and Town Bwanas who contribute to their support and attempt to control their sexuality at the very least.

I used Sanday's model of women's increased status in the public domain (1974) to evaluate Mathare women's career strategies. It presents concrete criteria for such evaluation. Too often researchers have stated that women have gained or lost status in African cities without coming to grips with the difficult problem of measuring status. I concluded that, by Sanday's model, most Mathare women can be said to have entered the public domain. They own property outside the household, have a desired product which they distribute without male interference, have solidarity groups and participate effectively in local politics, (though as yet their impact on national politics is negligible). For these reasons Mathare women's career strategy has been successful in achieving the financial independence from men they seek, certainly the successful entrepreneurs I cited have definitely achieved a measure of financial security and affluence acting as role models for other Mathare women.

Finally, in examining this process of Mathare women entering the public domain in the urban social field, I am convinced that I have also witnessed an emerging ideology which differed in some respects from the larger Kikuyu ideology. I did not attempt to go into all aspects of

their ideology, but merely those that I considered relevant to the process of changing sex roles occurring in Mathare. I examined the women's model and model of men held by Mathare women and their attitudes toward sex, marriage and malaya. I consider that these shifts in ideology are correlated with the shifts in sex role behaviour that have taken place. In addition, I feel it important to recognize that these shifts may also have an effect on the socialization of future migrants to Mathare and the children which they will raise. Mathare women, while as yet a relatively small number of the women in Nairobi, may be the vanguard of a new ethic of female sexual-economic-political independence. They are a small but growing group of women who prefer to leave the private domain and enter the public without the control and interference of men. This group of women is growing in Kenya, in Africa, and all over the world. I have attempted to describe and analyse this process for one such group in an urban squatter community.

#### THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Every analyst must make assumptions and choose positions on issues with respect to a particular body of data. It is necessary in conclusion to summarize these assumptions and stances in order to clarify the analysis. The same data when viewed with different spectacles will yield different conclusions. For example a Marxist interested in under-development or centre-periphery exploitation would have handled this data in quite a different way.

### Actor Oriented Analysis

It is obvious from the above chapters that I have favoured an actor-oriented rather than a structural or systems analysis. Like Barth, (1966) I see that social behaviour is the sum total of the choices made by a group of individual actors who operate within a set of socio-economic-technic-environmental constraints. By this definition, social-change is a change in patterns of transactions which are the cumulative efforts of actors to maximize their security, profit, safety, and happiness.

I am drawn to this approach because personally I am drawn to individuals and not abstract systems or constructs. I invariably approach the general through the particular. I have attempted to understand the lives of Mathare women through their own eyes, in terms of the transactions they are involved in from day to day. To this end, I have included as much case study material and the thoughts and ideas of the women themselves as it was possible to do without making the thesis unwieldly or unreadable. This demonstrates the type of data from which I have derived my generalizations. Exploring personal reasons for actions and personal strategies is a valid way to reach generalizations since personal actors' strategies can ultimately be viewed in aggregate.

Wherever possible I have used emic categories. Where I have not I have explained why (e.g. the distinction between lovers and Town Bwanas). I feel that this is important when attempting an actor-oriented analysis. In exploring the emic categories of Mathare women I have also explored

their world view: their models of men and women, their beliefs and values related to marriage, family, sex and male-female relationships. Expressed attitudes taken alone can be questionable material on which to base an analysis of anything other than expressed attitudes. When used in conjunction with observed behaviour and case histories, these attitudes can give insights into the motivations of the actors. An understanding of actors' motivations is necessary for making predictive statements about future social phenomena.

#### Ideology and Social Change

There is an on-going chicken and egg argument relating to ideology and socio-economic factors and their respective roles in social change. Many models of social change, including the Marxian models, have relegated ideology to a position of secondary or no importance in the process of social change. I have chosen to adopt Parson's definition of ideology (1952). Ideology mediates between normative culture and concrete social action, explaining and describing the nature and the goals and values of the collectivity, as well as rationalizing the choices made of social action by members of the group. As Cohen (1974) maintains, this being the case it is logical that ideology would have more than a passive role in social change situations. While not trying to claim primacy of ideology in social change, I feel that in certain situations ideology can have a role in altering the course of social action by motivating members of the

collectivity to choose one set of actions over another. I feel that ideology and society are interrelated in a circular way. Changes within the structures of society will change ideology but there is also feedback from ideological change affecting future social action.

Mathare women are in a situation of rapid social change. They are in the process of reordering their patterns of allocation of resources and time to different categories of people. I described an emerging ideology which stresses the importance, even the necessity of independence and self sufficiency of women, and underplays the importance of the traditional role of women in marriage. At the same time it stresses the need for women's solidarity. While this ideology is emerging in response to new social situations and new demands, it is also true that it is bound to play a role in the future lives of others of Kikuyu independent women. New comers to Mathare can be said to be re-socialized when they enter into Mathare's social field. They enter into the daily dialogue about men and women, expressed in gossip and discussions. Young girls growing up in the families of these urban women are socialized differently from their rural sisters. Mathare women do not pressure their daughters to marry; on the contrary they regard their unmarried daughters' early pregnancies with resignation and acceptance. The role model theory of socialization makes it clear that daughters will model themselves on the adult women whom they see around them. A new generation of Mathare women is growing up accepting as given the fact that



women have the right to order their own economic, domestic and sexual lives. The morality of marriage and obedience to men has been seriously questioned in the emerging ideology of these independent, low income urban Kikuyu women.

### Model of Women and Women's Models

I have used Ardener's concept of a 'model of women' and a 'women's model' to approach the question of changes in ideology among Mathare women. The women's model may not be articulated by the society's women since the model of women held by dominant males will usually predominate. Certainly the Kikuyu 'women's model' has never been articulated in the literature, and this creates a difficulty in discussing changes in the model. The theoretical importance of Ardener's concept is that it poses the possibility of a second hidden ideology parallel to the dominant male ideology. This latter is the one most frequently articulated by members of the society and described by anthropologists in their ethnographies. How the ideological constructs held by Mathare women compare to those held by their rural, more conventional sisters, is at present impossible to know. It is a fascinating possibility that the anomalies in Mathare women's ideology could be more closely correlated to their femaleness rather than the urban social field, or their unmarried state.

### Public and Private Domains

I have used Sanday's concept of women's leaving the

domestic to enter the public domain to gain insights into the urban careers of female migrants to Mathare. There are few models to measure women's status in society. Most works which deal with this topic usually talk about women's status in vague and qualitative terms. Sanday has tried to deal with relative differences in female status cross culturally by distinguishing between the domestic domain and the public domain where resources are controlled and distributed by men and correlating this to a sexual dichotomy. This model gives insight into why the status of women varies in different societies, or within the same society. I believe that the process occurring at the present time in Mathare, is a process of women entering into the public domain and gaining access to resources without the mediation and control of males. The urban area offers economic opportunities that certain women exploit with relative success: becoming important in certain types of production, controlling the distribution of their own produce, participating in political activity and forming solidarity groups. How far reaching is this change in status is still difficult to determine. At the present time Mathare women as a group bear the onus of a negative social image put on them by the larger society. There is however some proof that with sufficient capital formation individual women in similar urban situations have achieved respected social status within their own communities and even in the larger society. Certainly successful Mathare women achieve high social status in the local community as business women, politicians and

patrons.

### Commercial Sex

There are no existent models with which to study commercial sex or prostitution which are not moralistic or regard it as deviant behaviour or a social problem. As Bujra has pointed out Marxist analysts see prostitution as the result of an exploitative society, based on assumption that prostitution degrades women who are victims of male sexual appetites. (Bujra, 1975, p. 215) On the contrary with Bujra I have a different view of prostitution or commercialized sex. Women found they were forced by economic necessity and educational disadvantage to exploit the unbalanced sex ratio to their own advantage. Far from becoming the degraded victims, they have economically held their own with men and have changed from "passive sexual objects to active social actors." (Op. Cit.) If one is talking about exploitation, it is conceivable that women who sell sex for money are less exploited than they would have been as wives or workers in the colonial or post colonial economy. While not wishing to become embroiled in a discussion of relative exploitation, I want to clarify that commercial sex does not necessarily have to be viewed as a form of degrading sexual behaviour.

Partially this is true because all forms of sexual unions have implicit in them some sort of economic exchange. Even the classic western-style date is structured in such a way that the man is expected to provide transportation, food,

drink, and entertainment which the woman accepts as her due. The economic exchange in male-female sexual unions merely varies from direct to generalized. Commercial sex has a direct cash exchange; marriage or other types of consensual unions disguises the exchange of gifts, support, or loans or food. This is an example of emic analysis, since Mathare women view commercial sex in this way. In their world view commercialized sex arrangements are not degrading, but merely a practical way to support oneself.

### Male-Female Sexual Unions

Another theoretical issue I have developed is a morphological continuum of male-female sexual relationships. Because I have taken a transactional view of sexual unions, it is logical to see all types of sexual unions as differing in degree rather than in kind. In my morphological continuum commercial sex relationships, lovers, Town Marriages, and Real Marriages are placed on a continuum rather than in discreet categories. As one moves from one end (commercial sex) to the other (real marriage) the expected duration of the union, the number of functions, and the emotional content increase. This denies the existence of significant analytical distinctions between these various unions, which agrees with the emic world view of the women involved. Such a view of male-female sexual unions also raises interesting questions about the nature of woman's sexuality and its control. As the number of functions, expected duration, and emotional content increases, so does the dependence of

the woman. It seems that the greater the number of ties that bind a man and a woman together, the more dependent that woman is on her partner. Control of woman's sexuality, limiting her mobility and independence, is linked with the need to control the results of procreation, by the family, the clan, or the caste. Why else would societies concern themselves so earnestly with the control of women's sexual lives? Tests for virginity, punishment for adultery (usually more harsh for the woman) and that ultimate sexual control, purdah, are all institutions whose main concern is to control women's sexuality. Likewise the sense of outrage and moral anger to which women who are sexually free give rise, seems out of proportion to the offence, unless it is a reflection of the deep felt need of male dominated institutions to profit from procreation. An unmarried woman who gives birth keeps her child. More than that she is a threat because she is a role model which might tempt other wives and daughters to follow her course.

In coming to grips with marriage and other sexual unions, I introduced the concept of dependency. It is a concept more fashionably used now by Marxists discussing the dependency of developing countries on the metropolis. I have used it to describe a relationship between two people where an asymmetrical access to power and resources is built in. By this definition, all male-female sexual unions are to some degree asymmetrical, Real Marriage being the most so and a commercial sex arrangement being the least. The more asymmetrical is the access to power and resources, the more

dependent a woman is on her partner. As a woman's access to resources increases, so does her ability to form and break relationships and to control her own mobility and sexuality.

### Social Differentiation in Squatter Communities

There is a tendency in much of the literature on squatter communities to look at them as socially and economically homogeneous. Many of the scholars are economists and political scientists who regard the squatters residents as the exploited classes, the lumpen proletariat. A more sophisticated approach makes it obvious that this is not the case. Though aggregate analysis is useful when considering the larger capitalist system, it can obscure and cloud issues when the purpose is to examine internal workings of the squatter community. (see Leeds 1977, Lynch 1977)

An anthropologist must use her specific expertise to understand from within, to approach the macro-structure from an understanding at a micro-level.

It is clear from my data that within Mathare Valley there is developing a category of entrepreneurs (men and women) who have managed to accumulate enough capital to invest in small businesses, urban houses and land. They have become local leaders and are relatively richer than the majority of the inhabitants. There is some evidence that the creation of a new housing estate, New Mathare, with concrete block houses, has siphoned off this local leadership and will create a new community of the more successful operators in the petty commodity sector. Thus the larger capitalist system has

rewarded the most energetic and vocal of the petty capitalists with a substantial urban investment which many will be able to use to advantage. At the same time, these same petty commodity producers continue to run their trades and businesses in Old Mathare.

Though the petty commodity production sector has developed into the interstices of a large-scale capitalist sector tied to the Metropole, there are severe limits placed upon its capacity to expand. The petty commodity sector exists because there are certain goods and services that the larger capitalist system cannot, or will not provide. Once any production becomes a serious economic proposition, the large scale, capital intensive formal sector will take over and the petty commodity producer will be squeezed out. This informal sector (as it is sometimes called) exists therefore on sufferance of the larger capitalist, formal sector. (Moser, 1977, pp. 33-48) There are serious disagreements in the literature on the possibilities of capital formation within the informal sector. (ILO, 1973, Weeks 1975). In the industrializing countries of Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries, petty commodity production did give rise to capital accumulation and further formal economic development. The situation is very different in the petty commodity sector of today's Third World, where multi-national corporations control the national economies. Under these circumstances some scholars feel that the petty commodity sector has built into it an inability to change the conditions of its own existence (Gerry, 1975). I feel

that there is some truth in this. I observed that entrepreneurs in Mathare did not invest their savings in the expansion of their businesses, but invested it outside Mathare in houses, farms, retail outlets and transportation facilities such as taxis and lorries. Thus capital is accumulated in the petty commodity sector, but it is not invested in such a way as to expand productivity there. Entrepreneurs in Mathare have played an important role in increasing Nairobi's housing stock, but not in setting up or expanding small industries.

#### The Role of Female Researchers

Until the 1970's there had been a double male bias in anthropology: most researchers were males, and most of the institutions and activities studied were male dominated. In the last few years, partially as a reaction to the feminist movement in the west, there has been a trend towards studies which focus on women and women's activities in order to redress the balance. Ideally research of the future will be more balanced and cease to concentrate exclusively on men or women, but include adequate data on both sexes. For the moment there is a need for female centred research, especially on women's ideology and women's networks.

I believe that women researchers are probably the ideal people to study women or to carry out studies of sex roles. The reasons for the first are obvious, since there are immense practical difficulties involved when men try to study women. But the reason for the second is not quite so apparent.



Women researchers may be much more sensitive to sex role differences and perceptive about feelings because of their personal adaptations<sup>ta</sup> as female professionals in a male world. The study of sex role differences and the ideology that may accompany these may require a heightened sensitiveness and consciousness more difficult for a male researcher to acquire.

### RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This thesis raises a number of interesting questions that deserve further exploration in future research. Some are particular to Kenya, and others are wider in scope.

#### Kikuyu Women

One fascinating question that needs further examination, is why in Kenya are so many of these independent urban women Kikuyu. A number of possible clues exist in the literature. Many researchers have commented on the "entrepreneurial component" of Kikuyu culture. (McVicar 1968, Marris, 1971) Does this mean that Kikuyu are more inclined to approach the solution to life's problems in a pragmatic fashion? Does this explain the instrumental approach to marriage held by these Kikuyu women? In addition, recent work among modern Kikuyu reveals that there is a trend away from clan control, extended family, and polygamy. There is greater variability in bridewealth payments among the Kikuyu than is found among the Luo (Parkin forthcoming). All of these factors could imply a lessening control of women by centralized kinship systems.

There could also be a revolution of rising expectations occurring among Kikuyu women. Kikuyu women, though less well educated than their men, have had more educational opportunities than any of their counterparts in other parts of Kenya. Also, Kikuyu women have had probably greater opportunities for earning cash (trading food stuffs, picking tea and coffee) than other rural Kenyan women. Is it possible that as their horizons have broadened, some women learn to expect more than the present rural situation can give, and eventually take their lives into their own hands to achieve valued ends.

#### The City and the Status of Women in Africa

There has been a certain amount published in the last few years on the African cities and the status of women. There are two schools of thought which Dinan (1976) has termed the Optimists and the Pessimists; the former are convinced that the city offers opportunities for women to increase their control over their own lives, the latter are convinced that in the urban area women have become exploited and degraded. There are two problems with the literature on this question. Much that has been written has been based on vague and unsubstantiated generalizations. There needs to be more detailed research on urban women of all social strata. Secondly, most of the researchers have not been able to present a convincing model to measure adequately women's status and changes in that status. Sanday's model, though not specifically directed towards an analysis of the

urban social field, is one of few such attempts. If the dialogue on the status of women, whether rural or urban, is to progress beyond the stage of sweeping generalizations, this theoretical puzzle must be solved.

More work must be done on how and why women migrate to the urban area and further, on the process whereby they adapt to and are integrated into the urban social field at different economic levels.

### Women's Structures, Women's Ideology, and Women's Invisibility

Current in the present discussion of women's role in development is the hypothesis that women's roles have been ignored largely because women lead largely 'invisible lives' (Presvelou, 1975) which are easy for a researcher to overlook. Maher (1974) has described in fascinating detail women's informal networks in Moroccan cities through which women carry out economic roles, such as forming patron-client relationships, and redistribute goods and services completely outside of the market economy. Anthropologists have in the past tended to concentrate on formal structures in their analyses. The study of informal networks instituted in the early 60's was an attempt to fill in the interstices between the formal structures, as it were. But again, researchers have concentrated on men's networks, or on dual sex networks. Maher's work, and the theoretical hypotheses of Ardener, give us hints that there may exist in every society with segregated sex roles, a parallel, and invisible world of

women. These networks, like the friendship networks of Mathare women, and the patron-client networks of Moroccan women, can be as instrumental and important in economic life as is the Old Boy Network of London's business world. More research is needed to describe and analyse this possible secret women's world and the ideological models held by women which may differ from those held by the male dominated public world. Greater efforts must be made to penetrate these secret worlds and show how they articulate with the market economy, the political system, and religious institutions. Perhaps part of the problem has been that anthropologists have been less interested in the private or domestic domain, seeing it as of secondary importance to the larger world of men's affairs where political problems are solved, alliances cemented, important resources distributed, power manipulated, and laws made or enforced. For a total understanding of the workings of any social system, it is important that the anthropologist dig deeper into what occurs in the private domain, more specifically the private domain of women.

APPENDIX IBUZAA BEER BREWING AND SELLING: COSTS AND PROFITS

## A. COSTS INVOLVED IN BREWING 1 TANK (4 DEBES)

45 kilos flour . . . . .	Sh	13.00
Renting* frying tin . . . . .		1.00
4 Debes of water . . . . .		.40
Kimera yeast . . . . .		14.00
Hiring a man to strain . . . .		4.00
(optional)		
	Sh	<u>32.40</u>

\* debe - a 4½ gall tin

## B. PATTERNS OF WHOLESALING AND RETAILING BEER

(1)	Buying a debe wholesale - when selling 1 debe retail by ½ litre tins at 50 cents @ in cash or credit - the income is . . . . .	Sh	20.00
	cost of debe wholesale		<u>13.00</u>
	Profit.....		7.00
(2)	Brewing 1 tank of buzaa if she wholesales 3 debes at Sh 13/@ .. . . .	Sh	39.00
	retails 1 debe at Sh 20 @ . . . . .		<u>20.00</u>
			59.00
	cost . .		<u>32.40</u>
	profit .Sh		26.00
(3)	If a woman brews 1 tank if she wholesales 2 debes	Sh	26.00
	retails 2 debes	Sh	<u>40.00</u>
			66.00
	cost . .		<u>32.40</u>
	profit .		33.60
(4)	If a woman brews 1 tank if she retails all 4 debes	Sh	80.00
	cost . .		<u>32.40</u>
	profit .		47.60

## (APPENDIX I (Cont).)

## (5) Comments.

- (a) During the week most women buy wholesale 1 debe, making at the most Sh 7/ a night. Most frequently customers towards the end of the month buy on credit. Sometimes a woman may make only Sh 10/ cash, thus going into debt with her wholesaler and having no immediate money for her efforts.
- (b) Most women brew once a week and follow pattern 2 (page 404). Some brew twice a week, while a few of the most successful brew three times a week on an average.

## C. ESTIMATED NET MONTHLY INCOME

(1)	Once-a-week-Brewers (Pattern 2) . . .	Sh 106.40
	+ Retailing 5 debes weekly bought wholesale (Pattern 1) . . . . .	<u>140.00</u>
		Sh 246.40
(2)	Twice-a-week-Brewer (Pattern 2) . . .	Sh 212.80
	+ Retailing 4 debes bought wholesale (Pattern 1) . . . . .	<u>Sh 112.00</u>
		Sh 324.80
(3)	Thrice-a-week-Brewer	
	2 brewings (Pattern 2) . . . . .	Sh 212.80
	1 brewing (Pattern 3) . . . . .	Sh 134.40
	Retailing 3 debes weekly (Pattern 1) . . . . .	<u>Sh 84.00</u>
		Sh 431.20

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