

human skills and technology by 20,000 B.C., a gradual movement toward the exploitation of smaller units of terrain with longer periods of occupancy (including fishing spots in some areas), and the intensification of exchange of different products (with a concomitant production of some 'surplus for exchange)' (p. 6). Few would disagree with Polgar that these were important "mechanisms" of evolutionary change, but why do groups begin to exploit "smaller units of terrain with longer periods of occupancy in certain locales"? Scarcity and competition over resources, where coupled with rising population, may yet be the most productive answer we have to an exceedingly complex question.

As noted, a few works contribute little to the overall goal of this collection, and others fall equally short on methodological grounds. Terms such as "static agrarian," "dynamic extensive," or "static reactive" need clear and precise definition to be meaningful. Similarly, some of the diagrams or flowcharts are overly mechanistic and lacking in needed interpretation. Writing style, too, is at times cumbersome. The collection would have benefited greatly from the inclusion of articles dealing with different types of evolutionary change or the status of evolutionary theory in the history of anthropology. These and other shortcomings, however, are far overshadowed by the many positive points seen in Polgar's collection. This volume, along with its companion volume edited by Moni Nag (*Population and Social Organization*, 1975), is an extremely useful contribution to our understanding of evolutionary process, population dynamics, and cultural change.

Sexual Relationships and Birth Control in Ghana: A Case Study of a Rural Town. *Wolf Bleek*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Anthropological-Sociological Center, University of Amsterdam, 1976. Pp. 352. Dfl. 15 (paperback, postpaid):

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To "describe and . . . analyze the situations and human relationships which are crucial to the emergence of population growth and the application of population control in a Ghanaian town," is Wolf Bleek's purpose in this dissertation. Appropriately, he points out that little has been written about the sexual life of Africans; the meager work done to date has been superficial, impressionistic, folklorist, or subsidiary to such other topics as incest, marriage, and family relationships. Secondarily, Bleek believes that "demographers and economists [have] toyed with figures and statistics the meaning of which they hardly understood," and challenges social anthropologists to contribute more vigorously to population studies.

Bleek has served his purpose well. Employing a variety of methods (including participant-observation, structured interviews, questionnaires, essays, and sentence completion tests), he has gathered data from a lineage consisting of 121 living and dead people, as well as from 100 men, 197 women, 1,000 schoolchildren, and a variety of health providers. Using these data, he provides the reader with a well-written, finely documented, and extremely thoughtful study of cultural, social and psychological aspects of the sexual life of the people of the Kwahu region of Ghana. In keeping

with his second objective, he has beautifully demonstrated how traditional anthropological methods can enrich and clarify quantitative data.

The book is divided into two parts, entitled "The Sexual Relationship" and "Birth Control," respectively, and is encyclopedic in its coverage, including such issues as sexual beliefs and attitudes; childhood and adolescent sex practices; theories about procreation; relationships among education, marital status, and sexual behavior; issues of jointness, segregation, closure, and openness of conjugal units; birth control methods, including abortifacients; homosexuality; monogamy; polygyny; and, most interesting of all, the familiar power problems that plague matrilineal and conjugal relationships, lover relationships, male-female relationships, and choice of residence.

It is natural to expect that Bleek's good relationships with the people insure his correct evaluations of the information he received. Yet, unlike many researchers, he is to be commended for constantly providing the reader with his estimation of the reliability of the data he collected. For example, he informs us that the reliability of the interview data gathered from the lineage members, with whom he had close relationships, was of the highest quality, while the data gathered from the separate female sample were less reliable. The presentation is also meticulously detailed, providing the reader with exact numbers of students submitting essays, by school, by grade, and by ethnic background; with 106 tables liberally inserted throughout the text; and with 26 case examples.

Most of Bleek's findings are interesting, some even startling. Only a few can be summarized here. Of particular importance is the role of teachers in sex education and introducing children to sexual relationships. "As [teachers] are not usually native to the place, they feel less checked in their ways by social controls." Rumors that teachers have sexual affairs with schoolchildren "are common and frequently confirmed." Sixty-seven percent of pupils claim to have had sex, with the average age of first intercourse at 12.4 years (males 12.1 years and females 14.2 years). Sex is considered a fundamental and normal activity, "neither sacred nor sinful. . . . If sex weren't good, God would not have created different sexes." Lineal relationships are strong, conjugal relationships weaker; and in the power struggle between the sexes, the direction is increasingly toward egalitarianism. The people know little about fertile and infertile periods, and induced abortion appears to be the "chief method" of birth control. Participation in the abortion of an unwanted pregnancy creates few negative attitudes, although abortion is considered sinful. Vasectomy and tubectomy are culturally ill-advised, because marriages are unstable and subsequent marriages may be contracted. Contraceptives are purchased mainly from drug stores, and "official family planning agencies play almost no role at all in providing contraceptives."

Bleek's study informs us that among the Kwahu, birth control and marriage are two different areas of life. "Birth control is predominantly practiced outside marriage, between lovers and partners in secret liaisons. It does not belong to the world of public morality and lawfulness, but rather to a stealthy sphere of life."

Considering the richness of the data and its excellent presentation, it is quibbling to state that Bleek could have

offered more information about economic differences between husbands and wives. More serious, however, was an unfortunate paucity of child-rearing information which would have provided a much needed context for his startling discussion of Kwahu childhood sexuality.

Nevertheless, the overriding consideration is that this study goes beyond the usual focus of cross-cultural sex studies on sexual attitudes and knowledge. Bleek has also studied behavior. In doing so, he has confirmed what many have suspected. The concept of "family planning" is problematic in situations where the nuclear family is subordinated to the lineage, divorce and separation rates are high, and marriage does not imply exclusive sexual rights.

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