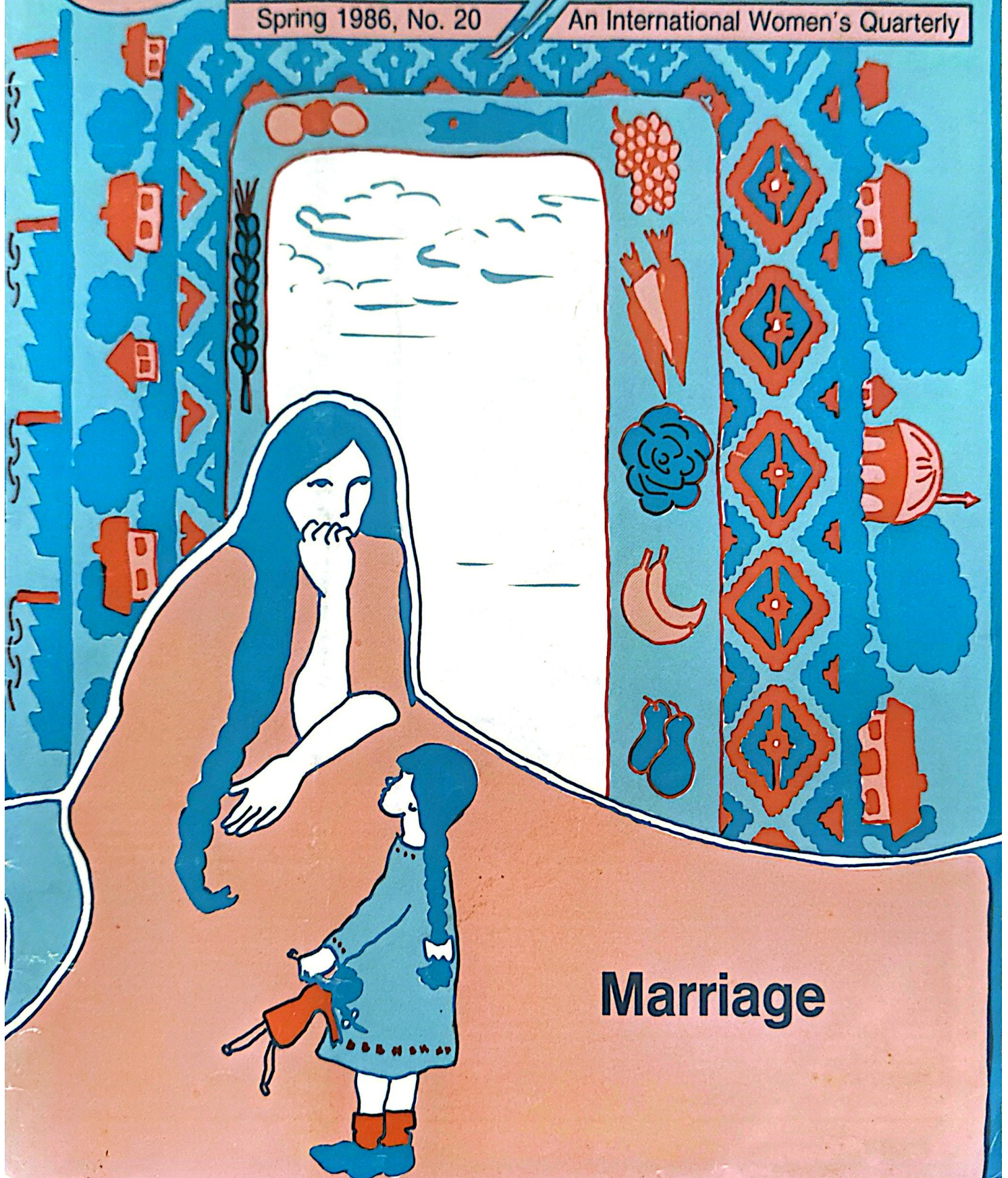


Connections

Spring 1986, No. 20

An International Women's Quarterly



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Office Staff

Dee Elling, Linda Fogel, Teri Gruenwald, Patty Ruppelt, Karen Schiller, Donna Scism, Carole Segall, Jenia Walter, Iris Wesselmann.

For This Issue

Editorial

Mariko Aratani, Linda Fogel (coordinator), Raquel Gomes, Melissa Marks, Roy, Patty Ruppelt (coordinator), Donna Scism, Thea Selby, Beth Stewart.

Production

Dee Elling, Raquel Gomes (coordinators), Kathy Marty, Nora McLoughlin, Donna Scism (typesetting), Beth Stewart, Kathleen Tandy, Iris Wesselmann.

Translation

Mariko Aratani (Japanese), Raquel Gomes (French), Melissa Marks (French), Donna Scism (Spanish), Carole Segall (Spanish).

Proofreaders

Nina Haft, Teri Gruenwald, Carole Segall, Melissa Marks, Jenia Walter, Beth Stewart, Peggy Mead.

Special Thanks To:

Ayse, Alan Droheim, Robin Forrest of OEF, Diane James, Susan Kepner, Meera, Veronique Mistiaen, Gay Seidman, Cherry Walker.

Statement

Connexions is the collective product of feminists of diverse nationalities and political perspectives committed to contributing to an international women's movement.

We want to go beyond merely providing facts and information, and hope that by passing on—as directly as possible—women's writing generally unavailable in the U.S., we will be helping women here to understand and connect with the experiences and viewpoints of women in other parts of the world. We also want to contribute to the growth of a worldwide network connecting women working on similar projects by researching, establishing contacts and exchanging information with other women's organizations.

To a large extent, the economic and political conditions under which we live determine the issues to which we give priority. Women do not live in a vacuum, but in what is still largely a man's world. It is essential for us to understand the working of that world if we are to understand each other. We hope that *Connexions* will be one step toward building an international women's movement.

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Every woman in the world could tell her story and be part of this issue of *Connexions*. Whether a woman marries or not, the institution of marriage effects us all.

There is no society in the world that does not recognize some form of marriage with its purpose being the producing of offspring. The pressure to marry often begins at a early age when children are taught the skills and attitudes they will need for their prescribed roles. In any society, marriage is seen as the norm; women who do not marry are considered misfits.

Love as a prerequisite to marriage is only particular to some cultures. More often marriage is viewed as a contract between families, as the very thread that binds a society together. In the West, marriage is often masked in romance and love and its economic aspects are overlooked. This expectation puts a burden on the couple since their marriage becomes an isolated personal affair in which one expects to find emotional fulfillment.

In other parts of the world, marriage's economic nature is more clearly demonstrated when the bond is contingent upon a payment to be made at the time of marriage. In some societies it is the woman's family that pays, in others it is the man's. Regardless of which family is on the receiving end, this payment generally seems to work against the wife's position in the family and the society at large.

In some societies, in order to insure a daughter a good position in her new family, a sizable dowry is paid to the groom's family. This payment, along with the fact that she will be devoted to her husband's family, makes a daughter a liability. A son, on the other hand, is viewed as being more valuable, since he is the one who will be responsible for providing for the parents in their old age. The offering of a bride price to the woman's family is seen as compensation to her family as well as the purchasing of her labor. This payment gives the husband control of his wife's possessions and their children are considered his.

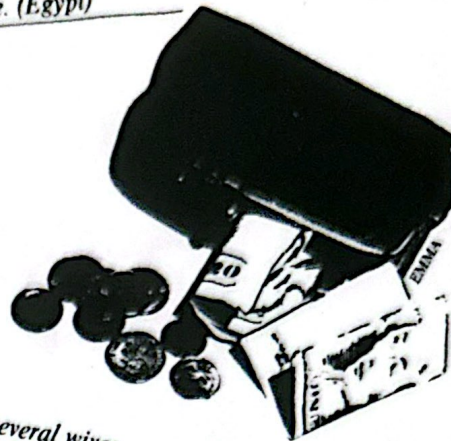
It also appears that both in the case of a dowry and a bride price payment, as the desire for material goods increases, the handicaps that these institutions inflict on women's status also increases. Westernization alters the social basis for these practices so that their material component is grossly exaggerated. An extreme manifestation of this is the burning of brides in India by in-laws when dowry is not considered sufficient. A mock suicide is staged, the bride is killed and the son remarries in order to collect another dowry.

A society can go through revolutions and upheavals, but when all is said and done, the attitudes and laws governing the institution of marriage are often the last to be changed. Economic relations outside the home can be restructured but those within are touted as the very foundations of society, a sacrament not to be tampered with.

When liberalization of marriage laws does occur, newly introduced civil laws often come into conflict with existing religious or customary laws. These civil laws, which can provide women a more egalitarian position in society, are seen as a threat and as a means to undermine traditional ways. A recent example of the volatile nature of these issues is the case of Shah Bano, a divorced Muslim Indian, who successfully sued her husband for maintenance. Since this decision was made by the Supreme Court, the Muslim leaders and community felt this to be an infringement. The verdict has sparked communal tensions causing the Prime Minister to reverse the decision to avoid further controversy.

For those of us living in the West, the institution of marriage is undergoing change due to the fact that women have more options for economic and social independence. The pressure to marry has been minimized as women can

*If you do not have a good family,
marry into one. (Egypt)*



*You can have several wives,
but only one mother. (Haiti)*

*Never marry a woman with
bigger feet than your own.
(Sena, Malawi/Mozambique)*

*Cares and suffering I left at
my father's house, but in my
husband's I found them again. (Morocco)*

*It is a waste to name your
daughter, since you will always
lose her—to death or to a husband.
(Bengal, India)*

live without having a man to support them, be it their father or husband. This is a relatively new phenomenon that expands women's choices and allows for the exploration of alternatives.

Further Reading:

- Of Marriage and the Market, ed. by Kate Young, Carol Wokowitz & Rosalyn McCullagh, CSE Books, London, 1981.
- "Indian Muslim Woman's Legal Victory Jeopardized," *off our backs*, March 1986.
- "Religious Laws—Who Benefits?", *Outwrite*, issue 44, February 1986.

The above proverbs are taken from *Unheard Words*, ed. by Mineke Schipper, Allison & Busby, New York, 1985.



Marriage Incorporated

(The following article was written by Mariko Aratani for *Connexions*. Referenced excerpts are from an article in *Ampo*, a Japan-Asia quarterly review, Vol. 17, No. 3 written by Dogawa Tetsuo and Douglas Lummis.)

There are two kinds of marriages in Japan. One of them is called love marriage in which two people fall in love and get married. The other is *Miai-kekkon* which is an arranged marriage. The ratio between these two kinds of marriage is almost fifty-fifty. This rather high rate of arranged marriage is due to the Japanese traditional idea that a marriage is a connection between two families rather than two individuals. This is indicated on the signs at wedding ceremonies where, for example, the families might announce "the wedding ceremony or reception of the Tanaka family and the Yamada family."

Another traditional attitude toward marriage is that a woman's position is at home and her purpose in life is to become "a good wife and wise mother." To be happy in doing that, a woman should choose a man with a bright future and a good family background. The idea that love and marriage are different is still widely prevalent. There are a lot of women who have lovers or boyfriends, but later choose to have an arranged marriage.

When a son or a daughter reaches an appropriate age (20 to 25 for a woman and 25 to 30 for a man are considered the best ages for arranged marriage), their parents start asking their relatives, friends or acquaintances to look for candidates. They are handed photographs of their formally dressed son or daughter (woman in kimono, man in three-piece suit, etc.), along with what amounts to a resume telling about his or her background: which school he or she graduated from; his or her height and weight; which company he or she is working for; what his salary is (usually a woman doesn't mention her salary); his or her hobbies and family structure; etc. It is especially important for a woman to check if a man is the oldest son or not, because the oldest son usually has to take care of his parents. Therefore, he is not the most desirable candidate.

Parents and the son or the daughter choose a candidate and inform a go-between about their willingness to meet. Then the go-between arranges a meeting, which is usually held at a fancy restaurant or hotel. The candidates, the parents of both sides (sometimes one parent from each side) and the go-between attend.

After the first meeting, both sides tell the go-between whether they are interested in continuing to meet. If both sides agree, they get engaged after a couple of meetings. If one doesn't like the other, he or she can refuse. Thus, some people are repeatedly meeting new candidates.

Before the couple becomes formally engaged, parents of both sides hire a detective agency to check the precise family history of the candidate. The report covers the background of each member of the family for at least three generations. The main purpose of this investigation is to find out if the candidate's family includes criminals, genetic diseases, mental illness, a connection to a "dangerous" political group, or if they are *buraku-min*. (These are people who up until about 100 years ago were an officially designated outcast group. Although they are no longer officially outcast, there is still strong discrimination against them.) This investigation is a very common practice, whether it be a love marriage or an arranged marriage. Usually the couple gets married after two or three months of courtship.

Today, the institution of marriage is seen as a critical element in supporting both a man's position in the corporate structure and Japan's current economic position in the world. As described in a recent article on the political economy of marriage in the Japanese journal *Ampo*, "The intimacy and solidarity of groups is shifting from the family to the company." As one of the authors explains: "I attended a wedding and a reception several years ago in a hotel, and one of the things that impressed me was the speech by the matchmaker.

"The matchmaker began at the level of international economics, and Japan's supreme position. He said he had recently been to England and had seen for himself the social causes of the decline in the British economy, and so had learned the secret of Japan's success in the great war between capitalist countries for economic supremacy. It was, he said, the dedication of each worker to his company. And beneath that, the absolute foundation of all of it was the fact that Japanese wives accept that their husbands belong to their companies, and that they will not interfere with the companies' primary power over their husbands. In other words, Japanese wives will not and must not complain when their husbands come home late, etc. And so his whole speech, beginning with international economics and working down step by step to the family, was in the end addressed to the bride, telling her, ordering her, putting the weight not only of the people gathered there, but of the whole country on her, to be obedient to the company.

"In other words, Japan's economic success is founded ultimately on the sacrifice of women. But the difference between this and classic sexism was that the command to the bride was not to be loyal to her husband, or to her husband's family, but to her husband's company. This was a ceremony not only to tie these two young people together in a bond of matrimony, and not only to tie the families together, but to initiate them into the corporate society. The name of the company that the husband worked for had a very large presence in this wedding ceremony.

"After this, it would not only be difficult for the two to divorce, but also very difficult for him to quit the company, or for her ever to complain about anything the company demanded that he do."

The following is an interview, conducted and translated by *Connexions*, with a Japanese housewife whose husband's company transferred him to San Francisco. She is 36 years old and has three daughters aged ten, six and one-and-a-half.

Q: When did you first think about getting married?

A: I was about 22 years old when I seriously started thinking about marriage. I wanted to become a teacher, so I got an application for an opening. But my parents scolded me severely saying that the school board would send me to a school in a very remote area and I would never get a good arranged marriage. I was a very obedient daughter and thought that they might be right. So I gave up the idea of becoming a teacher and instead stayed at home training to be a bride by learning flower arranging, the tea ceremony, etc. I never worked before I got married.

Q: Do you have any sisters or brothers?

A: I have three sisters. I am the second oldest. The oldest one went to a four-year college in Tokyo and got a boyfriend. She wanted to marry him, but she was very worried since she was the oldest and therefore less desirable. [If a family only has daughters, the oldest daughter's husband is usually adopted by her family in order to continue the family name.] But my other sisters and I encouraged her and her boyfriend to go ahead and get married on their own. So they did. But my mother was really worried about other people's opinion; she thought that they might think that her daughter was a loose woman, and that the other sisters would follow the oldest one's pattern. My mother kept their marriage of love a secret for a long time.

My youngest sister also went to a four-year college in Tokyo and had a love marriage. This really made my mother think that four-year colleges weren't good for women. The second youngest one and I went to a two-year college. The second youngest one had more than 20 arranged meetings for marriage, but none of them were successful. For me, marriage was the only way to get out of the very tiring situation I was in and to put my life in order. My mother used to say that a woman shouldn't have troubles in her life. If a man had troubles, he could become successful, but a woman with troubles would only become miserable and ugly. She also didn't like the idea of a woman working. So when the second youngest became rather reluctant to get married and freed herself at the age of 27 by moving to Tokyo and getting a job, my mother was terribly disgraced. But my sister is enjoying this late independence very much.

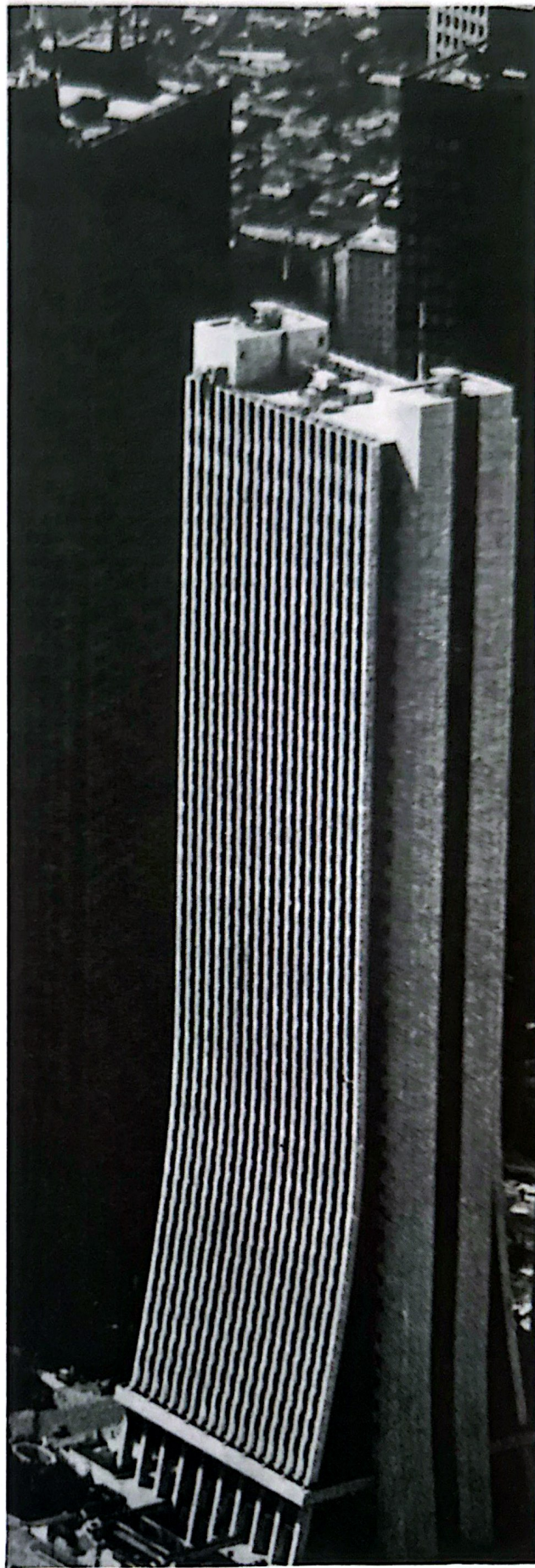
Q: Did you think of alternative ways to live your life?

A: I think it was my parents' influence and my education that made me think I was just a normal, ordinary girl who didn't have any special talent or power to be independent. Consequently, I was very shy and was scared to become part of the world. In a sense, I was underestimating myself a lot. Marriage seemed the only way to keep my life going properly. But I very much want my daughters to develop all of their possibilities and pursue independent lives.

Q: What did you and your husband expect of marriage?

A: For my husband it was also a way to leave home, since he was still living with his parents. Marriage was the only way for him to gain independence. It was the first arranged meeting for him when he met me. He was 26 and I was 23. Unlike other arranged marriages, we dated for one and a half years. So we got to know each other pretty well and I came to love him very much. I looked forward to just being able to be with him all of the time. But after we got married, I discovered that he had to leave every morning before 7:00 and then he would come home very late, sometimes after 11:00. Before we got married, he used to come home much earlier, but then he developed a sense of responsibility toward supporting his family and proving that he had the ability to do so.

He's always been a very serious person, and his seriousness made him more of a workaholic which made him feel very happy thinking he was supporting his wife. For me, it was like a



betrayal. My expectation to be with him was completely ruined. I became a person who was just waiting for him to come home. Sometimes I got very mad at him and wanted to talk with him, but when I saw his face, I just kept crying. During the day I couldn't concentrate on anything. In a sense, I really fell in love with him after marriage, and it was like he was everything to me. I think this attitude of mine was rather a burden to him at the early stage of our marriage. Anyway, I realized how dependent and weak I was. I didn't expect I would become like this when I got married.

Q: How about your life here in the United States?

A: Japanese companies have the same management style here as they do in Japan. They work late every night and work on Saturday or Sunday, too. Fathers hardly have time to see their children. There might be some men who are concerned about this problem, but more of them don't care that much. I'm worried about what my daughters will think about their father rather than what he will think about his daughters. For that reason, my attitude or the way I talk about him is very important because that is the only way my daughters can get to know their father.

Some of the wives of the Japanese businessmen here complain about their husbands' workaholic tendencies and want them to come home early, spend more time with their children, help with the housework, etc. But in my case I know my husband loves his work very much and it is his purpose in life. I don't want to be thought of as a wife who disturbs her husband's work. Rather, I like to let him do whatever he wants as much as possible.

Q: Then, do you feel a connection with him in supporting him in this way?

A: Yes, I think he trusts me very much, and leaves it up to me to raise the children. I don't want to become a wife who is just like air in the house. I want mutual respect with my husband. To get that, I think I shouldn't be so self-assertive. Sometimes I want to complain about things, but if I did, I would lose my value. So, I try not to complain about trivial things. My existence should be a plus for him, never a minus. If I felt that I was merely sacrificing my life to support him, it would mean that my life was meaningless. But I see a meaningfulness in supporting him and allowing him to do what he loves and making him happy. The most valuable thing to me in staying at home is my husband's recognition of me. I think some wives who complain and get angry are probably not valued by their husbands.

Q: What do you think about women working after marriage?

A: I think more women should be working in more fields. Like I said, I want to raise my three daughters in that direction. I never want them to think that marriage is the only way out of the kind of situation that I was in. I get angry when I meet a young woman who says she just wants to have an arranged marriage. I think she is throwing her life away. □

Single Women in Turmoil

(Reprinted from *Feminist Forum*, Japanese English-language newsletter, February 1985. The piece originally appeared in the 1984 book *Japanese Women in Turmoil: Changing Lifestyles in Japan II*, published by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life & Living, a massive volume detailing the statistical life of Japanese women. Although it completely ignores a feminist solution, it provides a wealth of detail about the real lives and feelings of women all over Japan. It can be ordered from HILL, 22 Kanda-Nishikicho, 3-Chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101, Japan for \$150.00!)

Traditionally, marriage was the only path available to single women. Many who worked did so out of necessity. During World War II and the postwar years, the number of single women entering the work force helped to open up a second path. Single women could then work with society's acceptance until they got married.

Today, however, if single women choose to continue working beyond what many Japanese consider the proper age for women to marry, they face social barriers to their acceptance as dependable, long-term employees. Many companies have policies that reflect Japan's pre-war attitudes toward single women and look upon those who opt to continue working as not completely reliable. "They may get married at any time and quit. So it's no use giving them too much responsibility. And certainly, we can't consider them for managerial positions."

Single women acknowledge that they want to get married. But, they argue, society forces them to make either/or decisions. If they want to continue working, they must postpone, or even give up, any plans they might have to get married. They often feel pressure to get married, especially when they pass the "marriageable age."

Single women are in turmoil. If they marry, they will receive society's approval. They will have "status" and won't have to justify themselves as single women do. However, as wives, housewives and mothers, they know that they will lose their economic independence. They will spend more and more of their time in taking care of their husbands and in raising children. They fear that they will lose their identities as women and individuals.

Some wish that they could enjoy their "single womanhood." They often feel that the pressures they have as single women place them on the defensive. They feel uncomfortable not being married and not having children to raise. They also wish that society would simply accept them as individuals who, for the time being prefer not to get married.

Those that do not live with their parents discover that they may not have much in common with their married neighbors. For example, they do not have children that often act as "lines of communication" between mothers. They also do not share common experiences with their married neighbors. Their "worlds" are outside the neighborhood, while those of their neighbors rarely extend beyond it. Instead, their relationships center around former classmates, people from work or others that they meet through socializing. As single women, they realize how important their friends can be when they need their support and advice. They also realize how important they are for broadening their horizons in life.

The reality in Japan today is that more and more women are entering the work force. Among them are a relatively small number of single women who have definite career objectives and plan to work until retirement. Others enter the work force without such clear career objectives thinking they will work for a few years before they get married. However, even among those who lacked career objectives when they first started working, there are some who become committed to working and to their jobs. Some think seriously about working for the rest of their lives.

Still, the pre-war attitudes toward single women linger in the consciousness of many older Japanese. Until these attitudes "catch up" to the reality, single women will have to continue to work hard to prove that they are serious about their work and their careers.

As Noriko, age 27, explains, "It makes me angry. Men can be married and have mistresses and even 'secret families' and still be considered for promotions to responsible positions in a lot of companies. But they treat single women who work, like me, as though there's something odd about us. You know, they become curiosity pieces. And what's worse, they are considered unreliable. Tell me. What is more unreliable than a man who is unfaithful to his wife?" □

Contact:

• *Feminist Forum*, Ohnuma-kata 2-39-3 Zenpukuji Suginami-ku, Tokyo 167, Japan.

Further reading:

• *Working Women in Japan*, by Alice H. Cook, 1980.

What's Love Got To Do With It?

India/The Philippines

The following is an interview with two sisters, Renu and Shobha, conducted by *Connexions*. They were raised in the Philippines as part of the Indian immigrant community. While they have grown up in a society where "love" marriage is the norm, within the Hindu Indian community there is an expectation that their marriages will be arranged by elder family members. It is also assumed that they will marry men whose families originate from the same region of India as theirs—Sindh, now a part of Pakistan.

Sindhis, known for their skills as merchants, can be found living all over the world. Their dispersal was accelerated by the separation of a Muslim state, Pakistan, from India in 1947 which caused many Hindus to flee Pakistan for India and other countries. With families spread out over the globe, marriages are arranged with the help of an informal international network. If a match cannot be found within a local Sindhi community, a prospective bride or groom will be sought out in other countries, especially India, Hong Kong or Singapore where there are large Sindhi populations.

Connexions spoke with Renu and Shobha two weeks before the elections in the Philippines were held.

Q: How old are you?

Shobha: I'm 22.

Renu: I'm 25. I'm not only supposed to be married by now, but I should also have about two children.

Q: What does marriage mean to you? What is the process of getting married and what do you expect out of it?

Renu: I would like to get married and have a home. It would be nice if we could share our lives with each other. It might sound very romantic, but why else should I get married? I think of marriage in terms of companionship. I don't see myself at home doing all of the work as is expected in our culture. I want to have the choice of having a career or not.

Shobha: It's more like you don't want someone to *let* you work. You want to do it out of your own volition. It's your decision, not his.

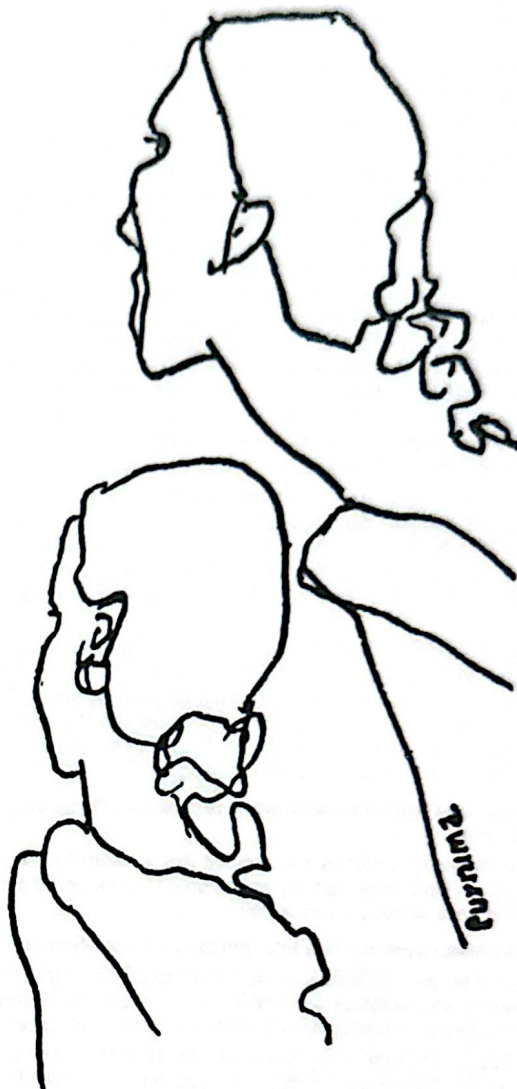
Q: How do you go about finding someone?

Renu: I would just like it to happen, as I work, in my school, as I study. I prefer to be friends with someone. Meeting someone and thinking, "This may be the man I marry," puts too much strain on me. But our culture gives us another way of finding a partner. The boy is presented to you.

Shobha: Or vice-versa. When you are a Sindhi living in Manila, you go to India or Hong Kong or Singapore, where you present yourself to a parade of males.

Renu: For example, when I graduated from college, I thought that I wanted to get married. So I gave the system a shot. I went to India. I attended all these weddings, looked nice for that good first impression. The boys were presented. I thought, "Am I supposed to like this man?" I didn't find these particular men physically attractive. We had nothing in common. They talked about their business prospects. I found it too contrived. I was not ready for all of these expectations. I'm supposed to give the impression that I am a homebody. I'm not.

India was a disaster, a catastrophe. I couldn't see myself saying yes or no to anyone. It's hoped that you hit the target by your second try. Usually the first man you meet you say yes to. The girl just stays quiet. But I couldn't keep quiet! When I went to India I saw all of the restrictions of arranged marriages. I was so ignorant before this.



Manushi

Q: What was your family's reaction to the India experiment?

Shobha: I think our parents were really disappointed. And they took it personally. They thought, "What's wrong with my daughter? Why can't she find someone?" They take it as an affront, that they raised their children incorrectly. They were too liberal.

Renu: There was another time that I had been presented to a man. I decided to be frank with him. I told him that when I get married I'd like to work. He said, "No way am I going to let you work." I asked him why. Was it something that he was against? Do you think if I work it will reflect on you? He said it was just a matter of what people will say—they'd think that he couldn't support a wife.

I appreciated the fact that we were able to exchange in this way. We were having a good argument, which I enjoy. But he came to my dad's office the next day and said he didn't think it would work. Well, this devastated my parents. I was ready to see him a second time, but he had decided that this would not work between us. My mom just freaked because her daughter had been rejected. She took it very hard.

Shobha: I was home when Mom heard the news and she broke down. Every time Renu gets rejected, she has to think, "Oh, poor Mother. How will this affect her, what about her blood pressure." Renu goes through such an ordeal every time. Mom's own pressure is social. She has to contend with her relatives. Every time they call up they want to know what is going on with these girls—they're already mature women.

Renu: My mother was a conformist from the start. She would never break any rule. She told us that she wanted to get married to be a mother. She had this idea that a woman is completed in motherhood. She was willing to take any chance, because a woman just wants to be approved. She was already 23 and to her that was very old to get married. When Papa approved of her, she didn't think twice.

Shobha: Thank god it happened that he was a good man. Pop had gone into this arrangement thinking, "No matter who this girl is, I'm going to agree." This was in consideration to the girl. This is very unusual for a man of his generation. It's very fortunate that they both have such good natures. Compared to others, their marriage is rosy. The example I have at home is fine but it's an exception.

Pop's concern about us getting married is more personal than social. He feels our ultimate happiness would be in a relationship with a man. He says get married first and then get a job. Once we get married, it won't be his responsibility anymore to take care of us and decide our futures. But that is awful. If you're not your father's daughter, then you are your husband's wife; you're always attached to a man. I want to get away from the role of "my father's daughter" before I get married.

Renu: We have an Indian friend who studied in the same college that we did. She had many friends, including a couple of boy-friends, both Sindhi and Filipino. Then suddenly she decided, "This is it. I've lived my life and now I am going to take the step and get married." She went off to Singapore; a week later she was engaged.

Shobha: I couldn't believe that this could happen to my friend. She came back to Manila a traditional wife. It became clear that the conditioning to succumb to this kind of marriage arrangement is thorough. A second cousin of ours just saw the picture of a guy and she agreed to marry him. I couldn't believe that she could base a lifetime decision on a photograph.

Q: What if you wanted to move out of your parents' house and live on your own?

Renu: If we were in Manila and decided that we want to live on our own? I don't think that my mom could take the social pressure. Everyone would be asking why.

Q: What would their reaction be if you married a non-Sindhi?

Shobha: If he were an Indian, it would be okay. If he were a non-Indian, that would be it. My dad has forbidden us. His reasons are cultural and religious—the marriage would not work out.

Renu: And in the back of my mind, I understand his reasoning. When we discuss the issue, I don't respond flippantly that I'll marry whoever I want.

Q: What about a Filipino?

Renu: It's been in our heads that the cultural differences might be too much. I'm not sure if Papa is wrong.

Shobha: I couldn't tell my parents about my relationship with a non-Indian guy. They would have never approved. They would think that nothing solid would come out of it. On the other hand, if I really decided to marry someone non-Indian they would freak out for a period of time. But they wouldn't disown me. Our bond is very strong. They may get very hurt by what we do, but eventually the acceptance will come.

Renu: Some Sindhi families won't let their daughter receive phone calls from boys, especially non-Indian boys. We have much more freedom. We come home late with our friends and it's not a problem. Sometimes Papa thinks he has spoiled his daughters.

Shobha: Papa thinks we are not open-minded enough to this arranged marriage system. We should give it a chance. But we're terrified, we can't make a choice so quickly. Then he thinks, "What have I done. They're overeducated, blah, blah."

Renu: Let me tell you one story about a recent catastrophe in our house regarding this matchmaking. There was this boy who came into my life who was a green card holder [US resident with permission to work], very attractive, and we were going out for some time. This boy would have wanted me to work because, of course, in America you have to work and you can't sit at home and look pretty. But as days progressed, I couldn't imagine myself living my life with him. In the meantime, my family was being pressured, and he was pressuring me because his family was pressuring him and they wanted an immediate answer.

Shobha: What I couldn't believe was that he was a pastor. He wasn't a Hindu, but a fundamentalist Christian. I thought that would be my parents' number one objection. But no, he was Indian, he was Sindhi and his being Christian didn't matter. That was the first argument my dad would give if I were to marry a non-Indian: "What about religion?"

Renu: My papa's objection was that he was poor.

Shobha: They were willing to support him, anything as long as Renu had found her man.

Renu: But the thing is Renu had not found her man. It was another catastrophe. I got a lot of slack. I was considered a cruel manipulator, an abusive bitch. I was labeled a flirt, luring him into my nest, then telling him no. He is married now, which makes my mom feel very bad since I could have been the one to marry him. And I don't think she's forgiven me completely because she liked him very much. The only thing I can say is, "Okay, let's try again."

Q: So Shobha, after seeing all this pressure on your elder sister are you gearing up for your future marriage?

Shobha: Maybe I'm just banking on the fact that since they tried on one daughter, perhaps they'll give up on the other. I don't think the pressure will ever get to me as much as it has gotten to her. Why, I don't know, maybe it's just my own personality. Whatever they have already said hasn't really penetrated. It's not that I don't get the pressure.

There's this guy in Manila whose mother has been after my mother for quite some time to get me to marry him. This guy kind of likes me or at least he used to. My mom tells me to consider him. If I say yes, by next week they would start the arrangements and I could be engaged. He seems okay—he's a vegetarian and a liberal, and he's into alternative therapies. He seems like a nice man, but he doesn't attract me and I can't imagine myself living with someone like that. So I keep resisting it and my mom thinks I'm crazy. Here is the perfect match in Manila, in my own home town and I'm not going after it.

It's not that I don't want to get married. It's just that I don't think I'd like him to be my lifetime partner. If I found someone now, someone I would really like to share my life with, I would get married. I would like to have children, but I wouldn't want to stay at home. I think my parents would have an easier time with me than with Renu because I think I'm more open to marriage. But I'm also very picky.

Q: For people of your class background, how does the dowry system of the Indian community in Manila compare to that of Bombay, for example? Is it emphasized less for Indians living abroad?

Renu: In the Manila dowry system when matches are made, the families are usually discreet enough not to demand things. It's a small community. If the boy's family has a reputation for being demanding, the mother of the girl has to decide whether she can afford the match. If the boy and the girl really like each other, the girl's family is likely to give in to demands. The demands are not as great as they are in Bombay. They demand jewelry and a certain number of saris, etc.

That's what I had to face when I was in India. The first question they asked Mom was: "How much are you willing to give?" The dowry usually consists of a set of jewelry, a necklace, earrings, bangles, some saris, a wardrobe for the groom, and sometimes cash. And the girl's family is expected to pay the wedding expenses.

You are supposed to be economically matched. If the boy enters a higher income family, it's expected that the father of the girl will support them. The pastor was expecting that my dad would pay for everything, which irked me. If I had loved him, I don't know whether it would have bothered me or not. The



Gobri/Nanushi

boy's family usually pays for the wedding invitations and one party.

In places with a larger Indian community much more is expected. Take my cousin who's not very rich; he's the only son and he's supporting his family. The requirement for him to get a wife was that she had to stay with the in-laws. She could not make a separate house because he doesn't have enough money. She also had to be well-off because it's good to be socially mobile. He did get a relatively rich girl, compared to him, from Singapore. It just so happens that they were gyped. He did not get as much as he had hoped from her family, which caused a lot of anxiety. My aunt felt insulted and she returned all the things that had been received.

Shobha: This daughter-in-law has cut off her ties with her family because she couldn't believe they could be so cheap. She felt that they didn't care enough to give substantially. It's all attached to honor, to love. If your father really loves you, he will give a lot. My aunt felt dishonored because she didn't get as much as she expected. Also, considering this is her only son, she expected a lot more because she has given dowries for her daughters. She was hoping for some return when her son got married.

Renu: My aunt is still carrying that resentment, but my cousin, because he loves his wife, wants to forget about it.

Shobha: My mom agrees completely with the aunt in feeling dishonored. What appalls me is that she says that in spite of the fact they didn't get a good dowry, they treat her so well, he loves her so much. My gosh, this is a human being. Her worth is not equal to how much dowry she gave the family. Of course they should treat her well! This is her son's wife after all. It's not a privilege to be treated properly. I think implicitly when you give a good dowry it's to insure your daughter has a happy life. I am paying you so you can take good care of my daughter. It's like an insurance that she's not going to be treated badly by her in-laws.

Renu: The painful part of it is that this even happens when it's a love marriage. Sometimes dowry arrangements can have severe effects on these marriages.

Shobha: Another difficult issue in the marriage game is marginality—being neither in one culture nor the other. The culture imposes a definite limit on how far you can go in a non-platonic relationship with a male.

Renu: For instance, I can't tell Mama and Papa that I have a boyfriend. It's not as if we haven't had boyfriends, because we have, but they have to be under the table...or in the back seat of the car. You can't tell them because they'd be so upset.

Q: Could you talk more about this marginality, of being a community within another community and how that affects you?

Shobha: We were born and raised in Manila. There are certain Sindhis in Manila who have divorced themselves from their cul-

ture and have really integrated themselves into mainstream Filipino life. They have become Catholics, have Filipino friends and Filipino husbands.

And then, of course, there are Sindhis that completely cut themselves off from the culture around them. They don't even allow their children to go to a coed school and their social lives are limited to hanging around with fellow Indians. Any Filipino friend is questioned, male or female. The point is to avoid circulating with the Filipinos because you might get contaminated—be influenced by them—and end up talking and thinking like them. Believing in a god that's not like yours. Eating the same foods. And this is bad, you know, it lowers your [marriage] market value when you're "contaminated" and you're not a pure Indian any more.

But our parents just wanted us to be happy, so they let us have our friends. When you get sufficiently exposed to two lifestyles, though, you begin to wonder who you are. In some ways you're like one, in some ways like the other, and in some ways you're not like either. We experience the best and the worst of both worlds.

I don't have any Indian friends except this one who got married recently in Singapore because I'm not flexible enough to adjust to them. I don't like hanging around Sindhi boys too much because they have such a set way of thinking about how they want their women to be. Then on the other hand there's the Filipino lifestyle which I don't particularly conform to either. There are certain values and ways of thinking which I just can't abide. I just can't be like them.

So, I'm neither a full Sindhi, nor a full Filipino. And that is reflected in all my decisions whether it's to pursue a career or not, whether it's to find the kind of husband I want. Do I want a Filipino husband, an Indian husband, an American husband?

Renu: I've tried to lessen that marginality by relating to people on a personal basis. But when it comes to non-platonic relationships, you cannot just treat them as simply personal because they're not. I am attached to my family, and if I marry someone who isn't Indian, it will upset them. If he is Indian, I have to deal with his family. Even if I fall in love with an Indian who is like me, and we respect each other as individuals, the family ties complicate our relationship.

Shobha: Which leaves us like oysters without shells—very vulnerable. Of course being in both cultures does offer its securities. Manila is still home, it's familiar, the people are nice. It's a despotic regime which we are used to—it's predictable. You can use marginality as an excuse for many things, like indecision.

Q: Do you think that women of your generation will pass on the tradition of arranged marriage to their children?

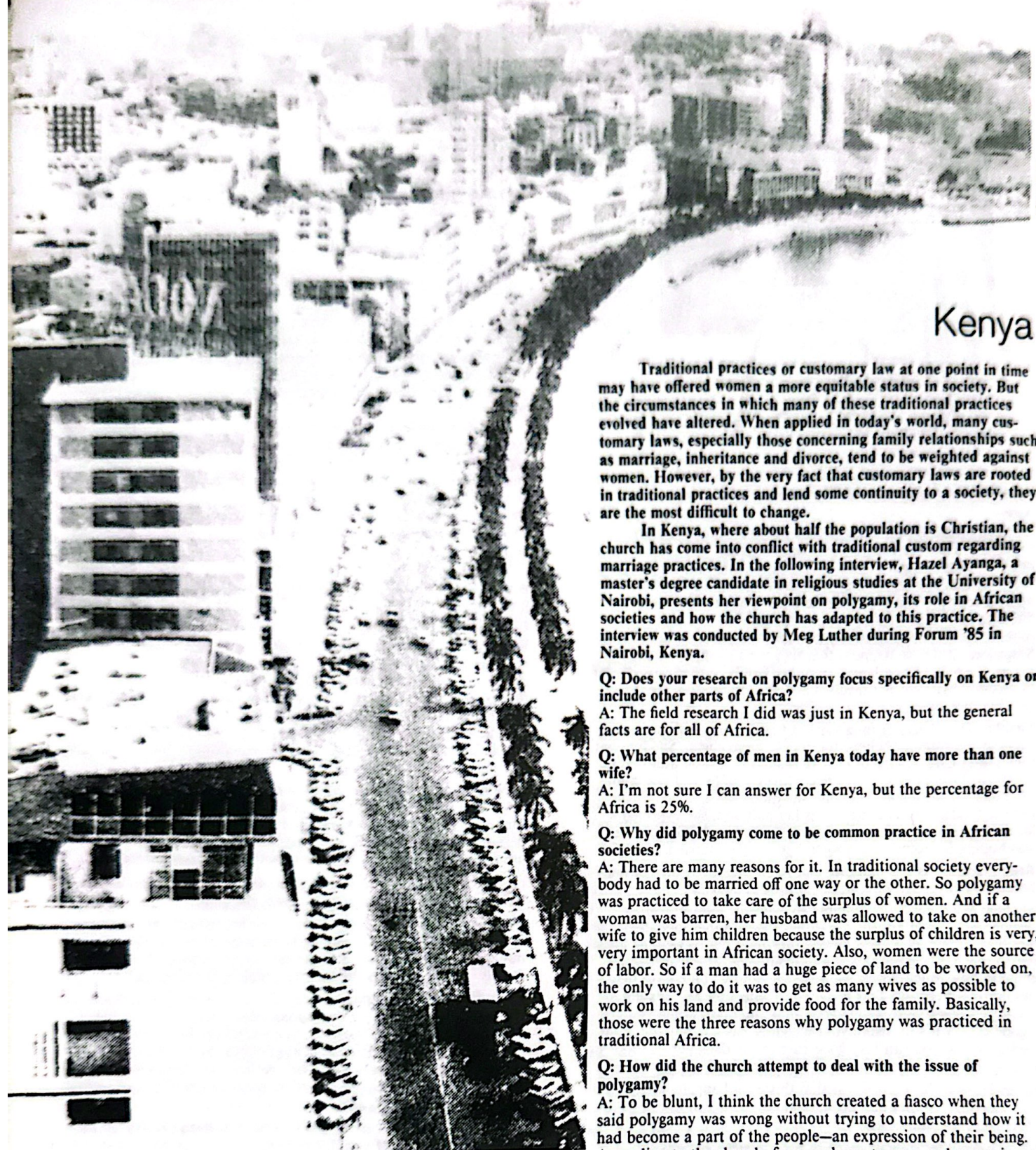
Shobha: Unfortunately, yes. Even if we have been very militant in our group discussions and we have cried about the fact that our potential in-laws are going to be very bad to us, I think ultimately we will. That is the fact that makes me most sad.

Renu: It's the most important way of carrying on our cultural traditions. The friend who we spoke about before lived a hip lifestyle before she got married. She ended up going back to follow traditional ways. She has changed after being married. She never even used to wear a sari before that. She never went to the temple, but now I always see her with her mother-in-law coming to the temple and in a sari.

Shobha: It's more secure to stick to the tradition than to be the fiddler on the roof. If you fall off, that's it. To keep everyone happy you might as well follow the tradition.

Renu: I guess that among our friends, those who have spoken out so brazenly against such arrangements, they might not be so demanding concerning the marriages of their sons. But I think they will definitely pass it on to their daughters.

As for me, let me first get a husband, then I'll have sons or daughters and then we'll see what I do with them. But I don't think I will try to pass on this custom that I am now resisting so strongly. It is very painful because here you are, wanting to get married, thinking it might work, hoping it will work. But there are always these desires and demands in your mind. There are certain things we're not willing to compromise. □



Afrique 2000

Kenya

Traditional practices or customary law at one point in time may have offered women a more equitable status in society. But the circumstances in which many of these traditional practices evolved have altered. When applied in today's world, many customary laws, especially those concerning family relationships such as marriage, inheritance and divorce, tend to be weighted against women. However, by the very fact that customary laws are rooted in traditional practices and lend some continuity to a society, they are the most difficult to change.

In Kenya, where about half the population is Christian, the church has come into conflict with traditional custom regarding marriage practices. In the following interview, Hazel Ayanga, a master's degree candidate in religious studies at the University of Nairobi, presents her viewpoint on polygamy, its role in African societies and how the church has adapted to this practice. The interview was conducted by Meg Luther during Forum '85 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Q: Does your research on polygamy focus specifically on Kenya or include other parts of Africa?

A: The field research I did was just in Kenya, but the general facts are for all of Africa.

Q: What percentage of men in Kenya today have more than one wife?

A: I'm not sure I can answer for Kenya, but the percentage for Africa is 25%.

Q: Why did polygamy come to be common practice in African societies?

A: There are many reasons for it. In traditional society everybody had to be married off one way or the other. So polygamy was practiced to take care of the surplus of women. And if a woman was barren, her husband was allowed to take on another wife to give him children because the surplus of children is very, very important in African society. Also, women were the source of labor. So if a man had a huge piece of land to be worked on, the only way to do it was to get as many wives as possible to work on his land and provide food for the family. Basically, those were the three reasons why polygamy was practiced in traditional Africa.

Q: How did the church attempt to deal with the issue of polygamy?

A: To be blunt, I think the church created a fiasco when they said polygamy was wrong without trying to understand how it had become a part of the people—an expression of their being. According to the church, from early on to now, polygamy is wrong and if you're a polygamist you're not accepted in the church. Either a polygamist is asked to send away his wives except one or he is excluded from even being baptized until the lord has delivered him from his wives—that is, until they die. So the question is, supposing these women don't die, what happens to the man? So the basic stance has been that polygamists have been excluded from the church, although it's changing gradually. Now you'd find that many are being accepted if they become genuine believers. They are being accepted together with their wives and nobody is really insisting that they send them away. They do insist that they don't take on any more wives after that, though.

Luanda, Angola: Although the new Angolan family code is based on a monogamous family unit, polygamy has continued in practice and has even been promoted as "a return to the sources" of Angolan culture.

POLYGAMY *in the '80s*



Q: Why has it been so hard to convert people to monogamy?

A: I think in the beginning the missionaries failed to understand the African society. They saw everything African as wrong without going into the background of why people do these things. The missionaries ignored the reasons for polygamy and pushed the church's teachings, telling people to either follow them or be left out. They also failed to understand the dynamics of African society in that for an African, the individual is not as important as the society. So to try to convert individuals without really going into the way the society as a whole worked meant that they would fail. Polygamy was most of the time not an individual decision, it was a society's decision. So to attack polygamy itself and tell individuals to change wasn't going to work. That's why it hasn't worked up until now, because in one way or another polygamy is still going on.

Q: What are the differences in the motivation for having more than one wife today versus 50 or 100 years ago?

A: What I find in modern society is that the reasons for polygamy in the past don't exist anymore. Now men tell me that they look for a second wife because the first wife has a job and is more concerned with keeping her job than running the house. For that reason, they say, they are going to look for another wife who may not have the same education or is unemployed so she can stay home and look after the house and family. They also talk about the modern woman being unmanageable and rude. There are all sorts of reasons that they give for polygamy. But others think it's just fun or for one reason or another they decide to take another wife. The attitude of the modern educated Kenyan man is to look down on polygamy, but at the same time he gets an urge to practice it.

In the cities today men may be legally married to one wife but keep mistresses in another part of the city. The problem here is that the mistress has no legal attachment to this person so he can walk out on her any time. If she has any children he may decide to disown them, which to me is a worse evil than polygamy. Traditional polygamy was set up so the man knew he was responsible for all his wives.

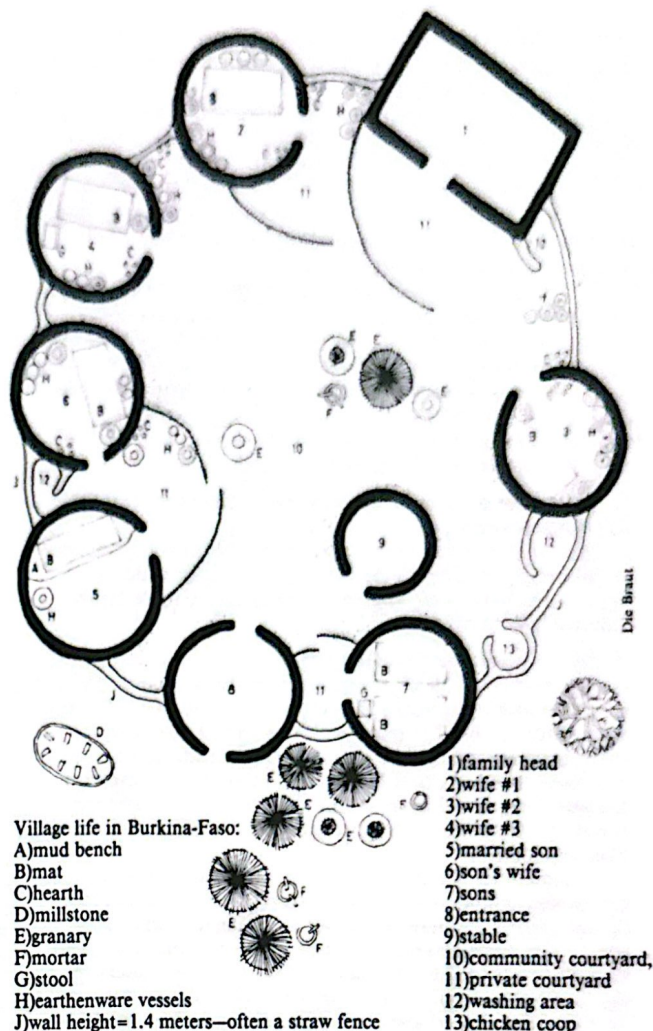
On the women's side, the reasons may be a little different from the men in that there are more women than men. Somehow we have to be satisfied with a man who has a wife already. On the other hand, when a young woman becomes a second wife, it's usually with the understanding that the first wife is going to be sent away. When a man who is already married meets some young lady and they start talking of marriage, if the lady knows that this man is already married, most of the time the man tells her not to worry about his wife. He says he is no longer interested in her and is in fact going to send her away. But most of the time it doesn't happen and you end up being a second wife.

Q: Is this because there is little acceptance of divorce? What is the frequency of divorce in Kenya?

A: I wouldn't say it's much, but it's on the increase. In the African setting, divorce hasn't really existed. Even if there were many problems, the wife would still stay with the man. When she became barren or old, her husband would take on another wife. Even now divorce is frowned upon even though it's on the increase. Mostly, the man just separates from his wife when he wants to take a new one. Very few cases exist where a man in this situation would ask for a divorce.

Q: So a man who separates from his first wife in order to be with a second wife would still feel a responsibility towards providing for the first wife and her children?

A: Some of them do, but not the majority. Usually the poor woman is left to fend for herself and her children. I know of one—I wouldn't mention names because he's a big shot. His first wife just died. They were separated. This woman had just one



Village life in Burkina-Faso:

- A) mud bench
- B) mat
- C) hearth
- D) millstone
- E) granary
- F) mortar
- G) stool
- H) earthenware vessels
- J) wall height = 1.4 meters—often a straw fence

child and the man is still paying for the child's education and housing. But that was as far as it went. Most men don't support their separated wives or families, even though the society expects them to. At this particular woman's funeral, his relatives came and did whatever had to be done. Although he himself never showed up, they still accepted her as his wife. Divorce and even separation are still frowned upon and you find people still insist that men go back to their wives or at least bring them home and build a house for them.

Q: Would the first wife expect help from her husband's family or would she rely on her family for support?

A: Most of the time the man's family would most likely take her in. But this is changing. She would still have a house in the man's home and be taken care of. Now it's changing so that the woman is on her own. In the traditional set-up even if the woman went away with her children, especially if she had sons, she would come back in the long run. As long as there were children, the marriage still stood. You'd find that even if the man died before the woman, they would have to look for his first wife. Wherever she was, she would be expected to come home before that man is buried because she is still the legally recognized wife.

Q: In the past how did society view marriage? How does that differ from today and how does this reflect on a second wife coming into the picture?

A: In traditional Africa, romantic love didn't exist. The man would often meet his wife after the negotiations were made for their marriage. His older brother or sister would see the girl and decide whether she looked like she would make a good wife. There's a period of observation where they would send somebody unknown to the girl to observe the way she carried herself. From that they would report whether she was lazy or not and maybe change their minds about the marriage. They would then

send word to the girl's family, so that that family could in turn send someone to observe how the boy carried himself. When all was agreed, the two would meet.

The people grew in love, rather than fell in love. Now people want to fall in love and decide whether they should get married. So, in a sense, women are looking for different reasons to get married not just because society says so. In traditional society, because the union wasn't really based on romantic love, breaking up was not that common because the reasons why two people got together were different.

Marriage also functions as a means to continue the family. The African believed that his dead mother or his dead father would come back in his child. A marriage without children was not really a marriage. In fact, in some societies it is still believed that a marriage is only accepted after the birth of the first child. Otherwise it's almost a trial marriage. Marriage had that function—you had to get a child to continue your lineage. The man felt responsible that his clan didn't die.

Q: The number of wives he had was also an assurance that the clan would continue?

A: That the clan would continue strongly and the African looked at children as the glory of the marriage. The more children you're surrounded with, the more secure and the more highly esteemed you would be.

Q: Did the wives resent each other?

A: That would be difficult to answer from the traditional point of view because they accepted each other. Whatever they felt, they never voiced it. But I'm told that it was known that women would have quarrels and be jealous if the husband spent more time there than here, or if he provided more for that one than this one. They would never resent the fact they had to be married to the same man, but that there were lots of them to share what was there.

Sometimes it was the older wife who would go out of her way to find another wife for her husband. She would take in a younger person and look at her not as a daughter but as an equal. This came about if the woman only had one or two children. She would tell her husband it was time he got someone else. Some would make a joke and say, "Well, I'm working so hard I'm tired, I need a helper." Also when a woman reached a certain age, she would feel embarrassed that she should still be having sexual relations with her husband when her children were old enough to be doing the same. So the first wife would look for another wife for her husband saying that she was past that age now, so here's someone else.

Q: So his wives would be greatly varied in age?

A: Sometimes yes, especially in these cases. I've known a man who had 10 wives. The youngest wife was almost the same age as his first wife's children. But if he got married to other wives for different reasons, the age may not be that different.

Q: Traditionally the women either lived together or very near each other. Today it seems the wives are spread out over a distance which completely changes the relationship between them.

A: In fact in the traditional set-up all the women lived very close to each other in a cluster of houses. Today you could be living next door to your "co-wife" and not know it. Or she may be living way, far away like the women who are left in the rural areas who may never know their husband has another wife in town. There are very few women today that would say they knew of their husband's other wives' existence unless the man came out in the open and said he has two wives. But if the polygamist insisted he only had one wife, the women wouldn't know about each other unless the gossip spread and you are eventually told that your husband has married again.

The traditional feeling against divorce remains. A woman would choose to stay and keep the husband's name and be happy if he comes home once in a while to see the children so at least they know they have a father. It's a way of asserting herself—that she can make it on her own and what he does doesn't matter. On the other hand, it places quite a few strains on modern women and emotionally many become funny in their minds in the process. You may know your husband is working and getting a good salary, but he may not give you any help because he is concentrating on another woman. Maybe we should identify it as a problem of a society in transition.

Q: And the church is caught in the middle. On one hand, they want more people to join, and on the other, they place restrictions on what they will accept.

A: I do think the church is in a dilemma because their leaders don't want to come out too strongly against polygamy. They realize this is something really ingrained in the social life of the African people and probably will take a long time before it can be completely erased. On the other hand, they want to teach their religion. Most of the church leaders I've talked to admit that they don't know what to do because Africans are polygamists and some of them do want to join the church and become Christians. They can't tell them to go away just because they have six wives. But if you accept them, you have to be ready for the reaction of people feeling that they are endorsing polygamy. They are caught in between and at the moment they don't know which way to go.

Q: Do you sense that the general trend is going to be away from polygamy in the near future?

A: The more we become westernized, the more we become individualistic. Traditionally African society was a communal society and that's one reason polygamy survived. Now, everyone is doing their own thing—nobody is supposed to be involved in your business. You can't look to your extended family to do things for you—you must fend for yourself. We are in a situation now where you can live in a neighborhood and not know the person next door.

Q: If you look at the pros and cons of a more individualistic society, where do you see the advantages for women?

A: The positive trends are reflected in my life because I am unmarried and not living with my family. My family can't force me into a marriage I don't want or am not ready for because I can manage for myself.

Q: Where does polygamy fit in the future?

A: Whatever good polygamy was, it was still against women because it was really suited to satisfy the man's needs and his ego. Polygamy is a problem for the modern woman, but we have to guard against overemphasizing it. I wouldn't promote newly formed polygamous relationships, but for those already in existence, we should help them to work so the first wife is not sent away without support. It's time women got down to practical devices to help one another. As long as we look upon polygamy only as a problem and don't provide answers, we are going around in circles and not solving anything.

In the final analysis, I think polygamy in the traditional sense was much more viable. In the past the woman knew if she had a co-wife. Today you hear women saying that they haven't seen or heard from their husband for two or three weeks, so they imagine he has taken another wife.

Q: It sounds like when a man gets tired of his wife, rather than divorcing her, he just stops feeling a sense of responsibility toward her. Does the wife assume all the responsibility for their children?

A: That situation is getting very bad because the man tends to ignore the wife and her needs in order to concentrate on the other. Women, today, are more insecure because they worry constantly about being sent away. Attitudes toward divorce need to be liberalized, so if it happens, the wife has legal recourse to receive financial help.

Our entire legal system, as far as marriage is concerned, has to be worked on. Presently there are three different marriage acts: the Christian Marriage Act, the Moslem Marriage Act and Customary Law. A man may marry once in the church, the Christian way, and again in the Customary way because there is a provision in the Customary Marriage Law which allows that.

To make matters worse, there is a bill pending which states that every marriage is potentially polygamous. It pretends to look out for the woman by making it a requirement that if her husband wants to marry a second wife, he must seek her consent. Of course, men won't agree to it. Why should they? □

Further Readings:

- African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence by Christine Obbo, Zed Press, 1980.
- Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Church by Eugene Hillman, Orbis Books, 1975.

Zaire

Unaccustomed to Tradition

(Excerpted from *Dix Femmes d'Afrique en Europe* (Ten African Women in Europe), Centre d'Histoire de l'Afrique, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, 1981.)

The following interviews, conducted in 1979, represent portions of a roundtable discussion between ten women from Zaire and Rwanda who at that time were all living in Belgium. Throughout the discussions a constant theme was that of a return to traditionalism. A few years after Zaire gained independence from Belgium, an effort was made to create a sense of national identity by rejecting foreign models and reclaiming traditional ways and practices. However, many traditional practices no longer have a social or economic base, particularly in an urban setting, and they often clash with contemporary values and lifestyles.

Mubedi, age 21, was born in East Kasai, Zaire. Her father worked in the mines of Bakwanga, her mother is a shopkeeper. She got married in 1974 at the age of 16.

The role of women has changed, especially in the cities. The husband no longer keeps his wife company. He goes to work in the morning, comes home in the evening, only to go out again to get a beer and doesn't return until morning. The wife feels deserted.

Also, with the return to traditionalism, men take two to four wives, despite the current economic difficulties. Feeding and clothing four wives isn't easy, especially if there are children. Children don't eat well and that inhibits their growth.

I find that the return to traditionalism has led people astray. What people are doing in the name of traditionalism is not equivalent to what our ancestors did. Our ancestors took several wives for a more or less valid reason. Today there is little charity or social responsibility involved. Often a man takes many wives to spend his money, instead of helping the poor, the handicapped or even to save for other things.

Dikumi was born in East Kasai into a family of nine children. She is 27, married to a student and works as a housekeeper.

I was married in 1968 at the age of 16. The typical age to get married ranges from 14 to 23 years old, depending on the girl. My marriage was like most marriages in my region. I first had contact with my fiancé at a neighbor's house where he often went to see his friend. I agreed to marry him, and he presented himself to my family and paid the bride price. The bride price is paid in cash. The amount varies from one family to another. In addition to the money, it is necessary to give a goat to the bride's mother, provided that the bride is a virgin. In our parents' time, bride price

was paid solely with goats and not money.

I did not live with my husband's family. Instead, I went to live in my husband's house. After we were married for a year, I went to my husband's village to meet the rest of his family. Since his parents were no longer living, I didn't have any reason to go there often or stay very long.

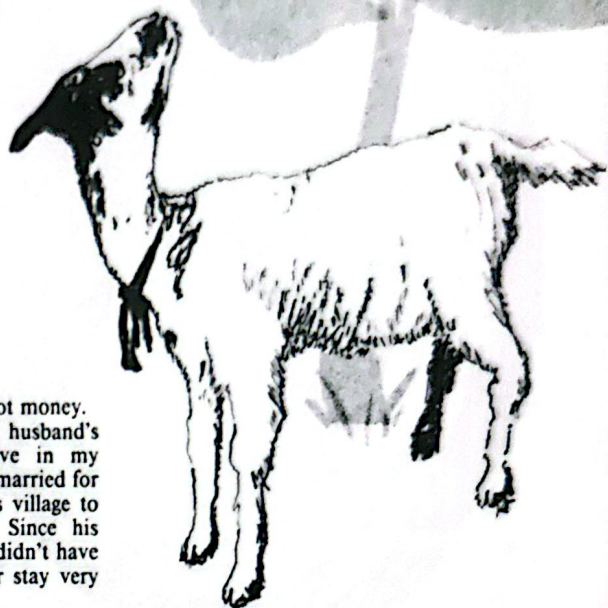
In the past, things were done a bit differently. The boy's parents took a little girl from a family they were friends with. In preparation for marrying their son, she was raised in the boy's family until the age of puberty. She had a right to everything that was given to the other children, like clothes, for example. She was there to familiarize herself with the household and to become accustomed to her new family.

Today, the boy pays a bride price and the girl goes to stay with his family for one or two weeks as a sort of a test. She goes there with a younger sister or a cousin who acts as a chaperone ensuring that her future husband does not bother her.

If she gets along well with her fiancé's family, the marriage is accepted, otherwise the bride price is returned. Sometimes the boy's family refuses the girl after her stay. In such cases, where the girl has a falling-out with her prospective in-laws, her father will force her to marry the man that he chooses.

The girl must not have "known" another man before she marries nor after she marries. If after the first conjugal act, the husband believes that she had known a man before, the boy tells his parents and the girl goes straight home. Her parents immediately give the bride price back to the boy's parents. To avoid this whole situation, the girl is carefully watched by her parents.

In the past, when a girl reached the age of puberty, her parents asked a woman friend to take charge of the girl's sexual education because her mother could not speak to her about these things. If the grandmother lived in the same village, she was designated for the job. On this occasion, she explained many things to the young girl, such as the movement of the



hips at the time of the conjugal act and how to lengthen the inner lips with her fingers. Me, personally, I did not practice all of this because I was living in the city and would have had to go to my grandmother's village. But it wasn't so important. I've never heard of a girl being sent back to her parents because she didn't lengthen the inner lips.

It is necessary to show respect for the family of the husband, more than for the husband himself. Furthermore, a woman can refuse her husband, but if she dares to do this to his family members, she must pay a fine. My husband, too, must show respect for his family.

I don't respect certain rules/customs because a lot of them have no foundation. For example, when a woman has her period, she cannot sleep with her husband or prepare food for him, or else he becomes impotent—I don't practice this custom.

I am Protestant and for me the Christian religion was favorable for some people, but not everyone. For example, it has done away with polygamy and because of this, a lot of young women were not able to get married since there are more single women than single men.

A woman can succeed in Zaire if she studies or if she is in business, but it is absolutely necessary that she marry in order to be respected. A return to traditionalism has benefited women because it has discouraged the tendency to imitate whites. But no one asked women to turn backwards to see what our grandmothers did in the past, to do a study and try to deepen our understanding of their work (for example the making of salt and soap); that's considered trivial now. □



Shorts

Singapore Spinsters Resist Matchmaking

(Reprinted from *Outwrite*, English feminist monthly, November 1983.)

"Get hitched...and don't stop at one" ran a headline reporting Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's plans for a computerized matchmaking service to "help" women university graduates marry and produce better educated and genetically superior children for the good of the country.

The government is dispatching delegates to Japan and Britain to investigate computer dating systems. The Deputy Prime Minister announced: "If we allow events to take their natural course, a large proportion of women graduates will remain unmarried."

The Prime Minister added, "If we continue to reproduce ourselves in this lopsided way, levels of competence will decline, our economy will suffer and society will decline." He is also proposing incentives to encourage better educated women to have more children.

Many women reacted fiercely. As Karen Yip stated in a letter to *The Strait Times*, a major daily newspaper in Singapore: "I feel deeply insulted by the suggestion that some miserable financial incentives will make me jump into bed with the first attractive man I meet and proceed to produce a highly talented child for the sake of Singapore's future...For the present, I would advise all middle-aged spinsters to continue to live in sterile bliss." □

Pages of A Diary

by N. Wafaa

(Translated from *8 Mars*, Moroccan feminist newspaper, November 1985.)

Attacks carried out in broad daylight are fairly common these days. Of course, not against you gentlemen. That would be unacceptable. Only against unescorted young women, preferably pretty ones.

A casual glance at the newspapers reveals front page stories about women being attacked in major cities in Morocco. You can't just pass it off as something that happens to others. Every woman is a potential victim, and no one is safe.

In one widely publicized case, a young woman was waiting for a bus on her way to work at 7:30 in the morning. She was taken aback when a young man she'd never seen before addressed her.

She told him he was mistaken, but he insisted he wasn't, calling her his "wife" and ordering her to come with him or else he would call the police. Embarrassed bystanders thought they were witnessing a family quarrel and uncomfortably looked away. Some gazed at the sky, others looked at their

feet or consulted their watches. Naturally, no one interfered. After all, she was his wife and didn't that mean he could abuse her in front of a crowd of people without anyone lifting a finger?

In this case, however, our early morning victim had internalized the message of women's liberation and equality. So she screamed at the top of



her lungs. When bystanders pretended not to hear her, she resorted to a tried and true method and burst into tears.

Two officials who had been nearby were moved by this display of feminine weakness, and even though

she was the man's "wife," they flagged down a passing police van. While the assembled crowd looked on, the police scrutinized the pair's identification papers and established that the man was an unsavory character who had planned to rape and rob his victim.

The remarkable thing about this story is the unmitigated gall of these rapists who make use of this clever line "This is my wife," which, of course, lets them get away with anything. □

Boat Brides

(Reprinted from *Spare Rib*, English feminist monthly, December 1985, written by Tsehai Berhan-Selassie.)

The British Government in Hong Kong has deprived 13,000 women of the right to live on land—as opposed to living on water—and is forcing them to separate from their husbands and children. The women who originally came from mainland China are married to

Since 1974, 50,000 families and friends of these women have been campaigning in Hong Kong against such unacceptable ruling. The ruling in June 1984 was sparked off when 14 'boat brides' and their supporters openly tried to resist their forced deportation from their boat houses. On August 8 this year 13 of these women were forced to return to mainland China—where they have to reapply for



Leif Gabrielsen/Kvine

fishermen who initially had to live in boats. When the women married, the Chinese government withdrew their citizenship but the British government in Hong Kong never acknowledged them. The women can only go to medical facilities if they are seriously ill or if they are delivering babies. Even then they make sure that they do not stay longer than is absolutely necessary.

These women, who are known as 'boat brides,' cannot participate in the lives of their families. Only the husbands can do shopping and pick up or deliver children from school. Some of the women are bold enough to risk being caught while they collect their children from school; others cannot stand the scrutiny which makes them feel as if they are cheating on the public by their very existence. Trying to engage in paid employment is out of the question. The worst trauma is when the family is offered accommodation on land. For example, if the husbands go from being fishermen to agricultural labourers, they and the children can take up the abode but not the wives/mothers!

their citizenship—and then apply to return to join their husbands and children. The 14th woman had to leave in September after she had delivered her baby. The government has promised to give them 'special treatment' when they apply.

Groups which are campaigning in support of the so-called 'boat brides' rightly claim that the government is punishing the 14 women because they dared to challenge its policies. They are preparing to draw international attention through bodies like Amnesty International and even the Human Rights Court at the Hague. Women who can lobby the British parliament will be in solidarity with them. □

For more information:

• Fr. Franco Mella, c/o Prime House, 315 Clear Water, Bay Road, NT, Hong Kong.

Unmarried In Zanzibar



(Reprinted from *Outwrite*, English feminist monthly, April 1985.)

Zanzibar has recently passed the Spinster Act to protect the interests of unmarried women against predatory males. But this is not a victory for women's rights, as it might seem at first glance. The Act was passed because the earlier 1970 Spinster's Decree, which forced lovers to get married, was believed to have failed.

A spinster is defined in the Act as any unmarried woman under the age of 25, excluding widows and divorcees. Any man responsible for "impregnating a spinster" faces a penalty of a five year jail sentence and obligation to pay maintenance until the child reaches the age of 18. The payment of maintenance does not give the man legal custody to the child. In cases involving widows and divorcees, the father would not be imprisoned and maintenance amounts would be negotiated in a court of law.

The Shihata News Agency of Tanzania hails this as "One Up for Zanzibar Spinster's." However, the pregnant woman will also have to serve a jail term of two years and the father is not expected to maintain the child during his prison sentence. The clause that the man cannot assert his legal right over the child, which initially might be seen as beneficial to mother and child, was actually included to protect the man's property from future inheritance claims.

If paternity is contested by the man, the dispute will be settled by the use of expensive technological methods soon to be imported into Zanzibar. Yet, the Attorney General rules out the possibility of making hard to get contraceptives and pills more widely available. In addition, abortion is against the law. □



Emma

Widows Ripped Off



Women's Problems, Zimbabwean Publishing House

Last year Chiute's husband died. The day after his death his family came to take everything away, even the children. Chiute was left with a hut, a few pots and a blanket. She is very poor and struggles to live on her own. From *Women's Problems*, a book about Zimbabwean women's issues, by Kathy Bond-Stewart, 1984.

Although there has been much heated discussion concerning possible revisions to customary marriage law in Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980, changes have not been forthcoming. Many factors such as urbanization and women's active participation in the independence struggle have led to women's protests against various customary traditions that no longer fit with the realities of their lives. Laws concerning marriage and inheritance are a major focus of this debate.

Traditionally, marriage has been viewed as a transaction between two families as well as between two individuals. An integral part of customary marriage in Zimbabwe is the mandatory payment of a bride price, *lobola*, by the husband's family at the time of the marriage. This economic payment is a formal exchange for the wife and her work, including her reproductive labor. Children as well as the couple's shared property are seen as belonging to the husband and his family. At the time of divorce or death of the husband, women often receive custody only of those children under the age of seven. In many cases, even younger children are taken away from their mothers by the husband or his family.

("The Big Swoop After Death" by Michele Chandler, reprinted from *MOTO*, a Zimbabwean monthly news magazine, December 1985.)

While Gwen was mourning her husband's death, they pried open burglar bars, smashed windows and broke into her house. They carted away dresses and furni-

ture, pots, curtains, the stereo, the refrigerator and the bed.

But the people who broke into Gwen's house in 1982 were not thieves. They were her in-laws.

"Money was more important to them than I was," Gwen explained. "If I see my brother-in-law on the street, we do not greet each other. I just keep away from them."

Gwen's is not an isolated problem. Across the country, unscrupulous relatives descend on the homes of many newly-widowed women, taking the couple's property or children and sometimes throwing the widow out of the house. Usually the husband's family claims that customary law entitles them to the goods. Under customary law, if a man dies and leaves no will, all property is passed to either his eldest son or his brothers. The dead man's wife or wives and children can also be inherited by male relatives.

But what started decades ago as a built-in safeguard to ensure that a woman would be cared for if her husband died has evolved into a modern-day excuse for greed.

In today's urban society, the economic stakes are likely to be high. Whereas a village man might leave behind a walking stick, a few pieces of clothes and a sleeping mat, an urban two-career couple is likely to own expensive furniture, a television set or other items they may have purchased jointly.

"Raiding by relatives is a very common problem, although we can never know for certain how many cases there are," said

a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. "We hear of cases where property is taken even before the body is buried. Although we can certainly sympathise with women, there's absolutely nothing we can do."

The laws of inheritance vary markedly for Blacks and Europeans in Zimbabwe. If a Black man dies leaving no will, customary law will almost always be applied, regardless of the family's lifestyle, economic class or social position. That means all property will be passed on to male relatives, not the widow. Europeans, however, are covered by the Deceased Estate Succession Act which usually leaves the estate to the surviving spouse and the couple's children.

Julie Stewart, a University of Zimbabwe law lecturer who specializes in succession issues, said she believes that among rural Black families the intent of customary law has remained intact.

"Say a man died and his older brothers got the money. They would probably leave his widow on the land where she'd been living because they have little money, and how else could they live up to their responsibility to care for the widow?"

And, she said, wealthy couples with much property are usually aware enough to make wills, documents that legally designate who inherits property.

"So, people at the top and the bottom economically are not abused," Stewart said. "The abuse happens to people in the middle."

The government recognises that this practice exists and, since independence in 1980, has considered making reforms. In September 1985 the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, announced that he would introduce a Succession Bill to the legislature that would clearly define how property should be distributed, thereby preventing avaricious relatives from taking belongings from widows and children.

At *MOTO*'s publication time [December 1985], no law had been introduced in the House of Assembly. According to ministry sources, the main snag needing to be ironed out is the amount of property that each wife and child in a polygamous marriage should receive.

In addition, drawing up one uniform law may not work for urban and rural women. While a professional urban Black woman may adamantly want change in inheritance practices, the current system might be best for Black women in rural areas.

"There are women who want change and can cope with it," Stewart explained. "With someone else, a change could wreck their lives because customary law of succession may be the only practical solution for them." □

Further reading:

"Women in Zimbabwe: Post-independence Struggles" by Gay Seidman, *Feminist Studies*, Fall 1984.

Marriage

("View from Llinge," an interview conducted by Janet Graff in October 1978, reprinted from *South African Outlook*, a South African journal concerned with ecumenical and racial affairs, November 1978)

A migratory labor system and the restricting of movement for Africans effectively separates Black women and men in South Africa. The migratory labor system has been a fact of life for the entire southern African region for nearly a century when, with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1800s, men's labor was required for mining. Although women are employed in certain sectors, the large majority of migrants are men. While men may be away on a work site for months on end, women are forced to live in restricted areas, *bantustans*. The movement of all Blacks is restricted by Pass Laws which require that all Black Africans over the age of 16 carry a pass book containing, among other things, permission to enter "white areas." The Pass Laws are used to restrict women from urban centers and their husbands' work sites.

The breakdown of family life is a consequence of both the migratory labor system and the restriction of movement. The wives of migrants have a particularly difficult time. Since there are few options for employment in the *bantustans*, women are dependent upon what money their husbands send, which on the average is only about 22% of a man's wages. Added to that, women are legally regarded as minors and, therefore, cannot enter into any valid binding agreements without a husband's assistance or consent. The strain of being single yet married has led to the breakdown of many marriages.

The following is excerpted from an interview with an unidentified woman living in Llinge, a resettlement township in Transkei, near Queenstown. Its residents are Blacks who have been evicted from farms claimed by whites. Since local employment is non-existent, most of the men are forced to migrate in search of work. Although this article was written in 1978, the political situation that creates the conditions described in it has not changed.

Marriage is not worthwhile for us Black women. It traps us. Men are having it all right in town with their girlfriends and the money, while we must keep home on empty pockets and empty promises. We feel deserted. We feel lonely in this desolate place where so many of our husbands must leave to find work. They stay away all year, sometimes many years. We have pity for our husbands. We know why they must take town girls—men are men—and we also know why they want us to stay here, to keep home for them and to make a place for their children because we have no rights to live in the cities.

We will tell you what sometimes happens to us. We do not want to hear about it, we do not want to talk about it, because it is wrong, and it is hurtful, very hurtful—how we are forced to give our hus-



Awake from Mourning, a film about South African women, 32 Steele's Road, London NW3 4RE, England.

Peter Chappell/Awake from Mourning

Under Apartheid South Africa

bands to other women, sometimes our very own sisters.

This is how it happens. I do not hear from my husband for many months. The money has stopped coming, even when I cry for it, it does not come. My children are hungry. I am hungry. No food. No money. My neighbours lend me money to go to Cape Town to look for my husband. It is a long way. I am tired and hungry. I am shown the way to the place where my husband lives. It is a men's hostel, a big grey building. Many, many men, but also women and children.

I hold my children close to me. I search for my husband. His brother comes to me. My husband is living elsewhere I am told, but he comes sometimes. His clothes are still there, but his bed is taken by others. I sleep on the floor until my husband arrives. He is not pleased to see me. He is angry, embarrassed. He looks away but eventually he tells me about this other woman. She is a domestic servant who "lives" in. She has a room in her madam's house. She has "rights" in Cape Town.

I can sense that it is this woman who has been eating the money that my husband should have been sending to me and our children. She is now fat and attractive. I am starved and ugly in my husband's eyes. I have become a burden to my very own husband. I am weak and he could pick me up, but he doesn't. He leaves. He goes back to this other woman. This is so painful. So cruel. And I cannot go back home and face everyone. I have nothing. I came

to town because I needed money for my husband's home and now I have no money, no home. His brother and other home-boys must help me. They give me his bed. It is in the same room with them. They lend me money to buy food. But it is very little. Because I need support, I am forced to take boyfriends who will give me a little money now and then.

And so I become the town woman for my husband's brothers. But they are married. I know their wives. I cannot bear to think about what they would say at home. It is all so painful. And so we women in Llinge do not want to hear about what happens with our husbands in the city.

The hostels are always raided at night by the police and government inspectors. Women like myself are arrested—unless we have money at our sides to pay up, or maybe if I have a baby at my breast or in my womb. But when this happens I know I have no more chance with my husband. This is the final break. □

Further reading:

- "Life Without Men," by Debbie Taylor in *New Internationalist*, July 1980.
- *Women Under Apartheid*, IDAF, London, 1981.
- "Guns in Our Backs," a South African woman describes forced relocation, *Connexions* #14, Fall 1984.
- *Women in Resistance in South Africa*, by Cheryl Walker, Onyx Press, 1983.

A Truth Never Before Revealed

May Eros, the formless One, be gracious and give to each one of us two lives. Once upon a time there were two villages situated at a distance of 48 miles from each other. The Seths [wealthy gentlemen] of those villages were famous throughout the country for their stinginess. It happened that two moneylenders of similar age and status lived in those two villages. Though they lived far away from each other, they were close friends. And as luck would have it, the two got married on the same night. Their hands were joined to those of two extremely beautiful brides, and pearls were generated simultaneously in the two oysters. Then, in their joy, the two moneylenders promised each other that regardless of which of them had a daughter and a son, the two offspring would be united in marriage. Thus, while still in the womb, these two children were linked together.

Carried away by their intimacy with each other, and mad in the pride of their wealth, the moneylenders became oblivious to nature's waywardness. In the ninth month, under the influence of the same planet, two girls were born. Intoxicated partly by his pledge and partly by his greed, one Seth announced his daughter's birth by beating a copper plate instead of a winnowing basket. He sent the barber to his friend's village, with the news of a son's birth. Both Seths celebrated the occasion by distributing molasses.

At first, the mother thought this was a private joke between the two friends. When the time came, the facts would be revealed. Until then there was no harm in maintaining the illusion just for fun. After all, in childhood, what is the difference between a boy and a girl? It's only when youth overshadows one that one is forced to recognize this complicated distinction.

But the father made no attempt, conscious or unconscious, to dispel the illusion. He brought up the girl like a boy. Well in advance, the child was equipped from head to toe with turban and *angarkhi* [coat], girdle and *dhoti* [pants-like attire]. At first, the mother treated the whole affair as a cute game, but when even the girl's maturing figure did not cause her father to change his tune, the mother grew perturbed. One day she tried warning her husband. In a tone of tender remonstrance, she said: "How can you shut your eyes to reality like this?"

Bristling up, the Seth retorted: "Who says my eyes are shut? I am alert to every reality throughout the whole universe." Clasp ing her head in her hands, his wife replied: "If you are so alert, how come you can't see your daughter's youth blossoming in a boy's dress?" The Seth told a white lie. "Do you think I have nothing better to do than to waste time on such trifles?"

"What is this madness that has seized hold of you!" cried the Sethani. "Your daughter has reached marriage-

The author of this story, Vijay Dan Detha, is one of the first Rajasthani prose writers. Many of his stories, including this one, are based on Rajasthani oral folk tales. (Excerpted from *Manushi*, Indian feminist bimonthly, Vol. 3, #5, 1983.)





A Madhubani painting of two deities by an anonymous woman folk artist.

able age, and you call it a trifle."

"Well, I am not forbidding the marriage am I? In fact, no one can equal my good sense in such matters. I settled the marriage long ago, before the child was born." Stepping closer to him, the Sethani answered: "What has your settling got to do with it? Have you ever heard of a girl being married to another girl?"

"Why not? What does it take to get married—you decide to do it, and it's done. But a pledge is a pledge—it can't be broken even for fear of death."

The Sethani's eyebrows shot up. This certainly did not seem like a joke. She sat still, bewildered, but soon realized that silence could lead to disaster. So she screwed up her courage and began: "My dear, how do you think your pledges will make up for what will be lacking in bed? Have a little sense, do. All these years I kept quiet only because I thought you were joking."

"Well, you just continue to keep quiet then, and see how well I manage everything. You'll see—we'll get a huge dowry. I'll arrange a grand marriage procession for my son. A man's word, once given, cannot be taken back. And after all, why should I have to lose on account of nature's mistake?"

The Sethani sank into confusion. Either her husband was still pulling her leg or else he really was determined not to break his pledge. But her mind could not be at rest while the matter was undecided. Burning with suppressed anger, she said: "To hell with your profit and loss! What about the loss your poor daughter will have to suffer in bed on account of the doings of her precious father? Have you thought of that at all?"

Not a whit disconcerted, the Seth replied: "Of course I have thought of it. When men go out on business for eight or ten years, their wives, if they are sensible women, wait patiently. When women are married to incapable men, they somehow still the desire of their wombs. After all, a child widow also lives out her life, doesn't she? A girl has to endure whatever is written in her fate. She'll make the best of it one way or another."

When she heard this, the Sethani was convinced that her husband was not willing to untie a single knot in the web he had woven. As though in a mist, her daughter's face swam before her eyes.

Through her tears, she exclaimed: "The girl is our own daughter, born of us. How can we tie her to a stake and burn her like this? You say she will manage. How can she possibly manage, once she is married to a girl? I just cannot consent to such a misdoing."

Irritated, her husband broke in: "When did I ask for your consent? I am quite able to arrange everything on my own. I warn you, if you poke your nose in once more, I'll kill myself. Far better to die than to break one's word. And don't pretend to be such an innocent lamb—as if you don't know how any lack in the bed of a *mahajan* [moneylender] is compensated for. The whole district knows how your dear father's name was saved from dying out. Didn't I swallow that fly, though my eyes were wide open?"

The Sethani had never dreamt that her husband would fling this taunt at her. As soon as she heard it, her lips felt as though they had been sealed. The blood congealed in her veins. Truly, everyone knew how her mother had openly indulged herself with every man in sight. Her unmanly father had stayed buried in his business and his account books, while her mother, as though intoxicated, forgot even the distinction between high and low castes. She had had an open affair with a *chamar* [untouchable caste or *dalit*]. The *chamar* was fair and handsome. The Sethani looked exactly like him—the same features and the same build. When the lid was suddenly



removed from that seething cauldron, she was defeated and stammered: "Do as you please."

Her husband was very pleased at having successfully hit the target with this arrow and settled the matter once and for all. As chance would have it, the very next day, at an auspicious hour, the *sava* was sent to our moneylender's house. He happily accepted it, but his wife felt cut to the heart. Yet she did not open her lips to protest. The girl's own fate would decide.

The girl herself was a naive little innocent. She neither thought about her fate nor paid heed to her blossoming youth. Brought up as a boy from infancy, she considered herself a boy. Though she did not understand the meaning of marriage, she was thrilled by the prospect of this new adventure. She was sure that after marriage her smooth cheeks would sprout a beard. Her fingers itched to stroke and curl a moustache.

One day a girl of her own age had seen her bathing and had realized the truth. Thinking the parents were perhaps performing some magical ritual, she had kept quiet at that time, but when she saw her friend's excitement growing as the wedding preparations were set afoot, she could wait no longer. Taking her aside she said: "Look sister..."

The other interrupted: "Hey, what's this? How come you are calling me sister instead of brother, as you usually do?"

The girl smiled and said: "You are my sister, so why should you mind my calling you sister? You little idiot, you're a woman, and you dream of becoming a bridegroom? How long do you think you can make up for your lack of manliness by this play acting?"

"What do you mean, how long? All my life long. But what do you find lacking in my manliness—in my *dhoti*, my *angarkhi*, and my 16-foot-long turban?"

Suppressing her smiles, her friend replied: "A 16-foot-long turban can't make up for the lack of a man's equipment. You had better flatly refuse to enter into this marriage. My dear, you need a bridegroom, not a bride. What furrow do you think you two girls will plough together? How come you can't understand such simple facts, even though you are so grown up?" The Seth's naive daughter still failed to understand. Frowning, she said: "You're just jealous of my beautiful wife. You can't bear to see me happy."

"What's to be done with you?" cried her friend, embracing her. "You'll come to your senses only after you've taken a hard knock. It will be too late then. Your father is greedy for dowry but how is it your mother didn't explain anything to you? I can't understand how she has brought herself to do this."

"I'll go right away and ask mother!" said the girl impatiently. "She won't hide anything from me."

"She had better not." So saying, her friend went home, while the girl rushed to her mother, and cried: "Mother, today a girl said something very strange. She

said that I only wear a man's clothes but I am not really a man. Of course, I am not such a fool as to believe her! I know you won't hide anything from me. Tell me, isn't she lying? I told her to her face that it was nothing but jealousy—she couldn't bear the idea of my having a beautiful wife."

The mother turned away her face and wiped her eyes. After a while she said tearfully: "If it had been so, wouldn't I have told you long ago? These silly girls have a habit of teasing people."

"Well, I'm not going to be scared by any amount of teasing," cried the girl, filled with enthusiasm. "Even if I had been a woman instead of a man, I would not have refused this marriage. After all, marriage is a union of two hearts. If the hearts of two women unite, why should not they get married?"

"Your father says the same," replied her mother in a low voice. Dancing away, the girl cried: "Of course! My father is very wise."

The next day when she met the neighbour girl, the Seth's daughter berated her soundly. She was no fool to be misled by anyone, not she! Proudly she declared: "Even if I had not been a man, I would still have married a woman and shown you how it is done. We two women would not have had the slightest objection to one another."

The other girl had been married two years but had not yet conceived. She could barely stop herself laughing at this nonsensically innocent declaration. She tried to explain: "Surely there must be some intoxicant instead of water in your family well! You mad creature, you may rub two grinding stones together as much as you please but you won't get anywhere! It's only a man who can perform a man's function."



"Oh come on, what great shakes do you think a man achieves! It's the grinding stones which nourish the whole world. They grind the flour as well as the pulses." At this, the other really couldn't control her laughter. "You'll find out when the time comes," smothering her laughter in her veil.

Truly that innocent daughter of the Seth did not understand anything nor was she able to comprehend what others tried to explain to her. As the appointed hour drew nearer, she felt swept along by waves of impulsive delight. Finally the long awaited moment did arrive. After a whirlwind of feasts given by the relatives and the community, her marriage procession at last set out. What a fine marriage procession it was—seven horses, 11 camels and 20 bullock carts. The groom's father was seated on a brown camel and the groom in a decorated bullock cart.

Announcing its arrival with drumbeats and music, the marriage procession reached the girl's village. After the proper rituals, at dusk the two were seated in the pavilion. Two soft hands were joined in the hand taking ceremony. As their hands touched, a current ran like lightning through their bodies. Two strangers were joined together for life.

In the flickering lamplight, the groom sat on a flower strewn bed, waiting for the bride. At midnight, the tinkle of anklets and the whispers of her girlfriends were heard. Her face veiled, the bride stood on the

threshold of the room. A hundred buds began to bloom in the heart of the bridegroom.

As the bride hesitated, her friends pushed her in and bolted the door. Slowly, very slowly, the bride came and sat down on the bed, close to the groom. The groom lifted the veil and looked at her face. Here was a veritable moon hidden behind the veil! The groom's joy could hardly be contained in the four walls of the room. Stroking the bride's cheeks, the groom said: "I had heard much in praise of your beauty, but I never dreamt of or hoped for such perfection!"



The bride's pink lips opened. In a sweet voice, she said: "You are no less beautiful. My beauty is as nothing before yours."

The two gazed at each others' faces, drinking in beauty through their eyes. The lamp was glowing softly. Stroking the edge of the turban, the bride said: "It's so hot in here, isn't it? Why don't you remove your turban and be comfortable? I'll fan you for a while."

So saying, she picked up a multicoloured fan. The husband said: "The turban is the chief ornament of a man. Manliness pales without it. But if you say so, I'll open my *angarkhi*."

The bride continued to wave her delicate wrist, and the husband, without any hesitation, began to open the *angarkhi*. As it opened, the bride saw her husband's bare chest. A scream escaped her, and she collapsed on the bed. Half swooning, she cried: "You are also a woman! Oh, why have you taken such a revenge on me? For the sins of which birth?"

For the first time, the husband's illusion was shaken, and as it shook, the vision of a whole life spent in men's clothes swam before her eyes. Now she understood what the neighbour girl had been trying to explain. Indeed the demon of illusion is able to render a person blind and deaf. One neither sees nor hears. One sees only that shadow cast on the screen of illusion which one is desirous to see. Truth loses its meaning and purpose.

After so many years, her eyes now began to throb with eagerness to see the naked truth. Mad with anxiety, she tore off her turban and shirt. When she had pulled off all the clothes of her bride, her eyes grew wide at the reality which confronted them. How was it she had not seen this truth all these long years? Both bodies were built in the same way. Like a pink fish, the bride lay unconscious on the bed. And just such another "fully conscious" fish stood beside her. Was such a drama ever enacted since the creation of the universe? Suddenly the conscious fish began to shake the unconscious fish and cry out: "Open your eyes. I am rid of my illusion. I have sinned against you. You can punish me any way you like."

The bride opened her eyes. She looked around. Then with a start, she got to her feet. The two fish, shaped in one mould, gazed at each other. The fish who had been a husband, once again acknowledged her fault, and said she would feel at rest only after undergoing the severest of punishments. She had herself invited this disaster but the bride had unknowingly fallen into the

fire. She had been tricked. No punishment could be too severe for such trickery.

The bride was a good and intelligent girl. She knew that to acknowledge one's fault and to sincerely repent is the greatest possible punishment. She at once understood that all this had happened unknowingly. Then, though she repeatedly said there was no need, the fish who had been a husband related to her the whole story of her childhood. She realized that the father had woven this web, inspired by his false and nonsensical concept of honour and by his greed for dowry.

Lost in thought, the bride listened to the whole story. Then she said: "I have borne the pain of this illusion only for a night, but you have borne it for years. Your pain is greater than mine. The same lightning has struck both of us. Now we must unitedly face this crisis."

"But I was the one who became a bridegroom and took your hand. I am completely to blame. You have been deceived by me." Impatiently, the bride interrupted: "You have been equally punished for the deception."

"No, not even death can free me from the weight of this sin." Then the bride stroked her cheeks, and said in honeyed tones: "Now we two will seek our freedom together."

Weeping copiously, the other replied: "If I had knowingly married you, there would be no obstacle to our freedom, but now I cannot rid myself of the guilt of this deception. Otherwise I would have set up a matchless model of marriage between two women."

"Nothing is lost yet," said the bride encouragingly. "Stop these childish regrets now. We will have to find our own path to freedom. What is so wonderful about marriage between a man and a woman? Everyone knows that the sun rises in the east. If it were to rise in the west, that would be something really special!"

Then the bride opened her trunk and took out a set of her clothes. With her own hands, she dressed the other girl. She decked her with jewels and applied kohl to her eyes. Then she put on her own clothes. Both of them began to sparkle like the flame of the lamp. Dropping her eyes, the bride kissed the other's cheeks, and said lovingly: "From today your name is Beeja and mine is Teeja. How blessed we are that this fortunate chance has brought us together. Now don't you ever say another word of regret in my presence!" Examining her dress with care, Beeja said: "I hope this is not a dream?" Holding her in her arms, Teeja replied: "Silly, this is a truth which has never before been revealed." □

And so ends the first third of this tale. The story continues with Beeja and Teeja running off to the haunted enchanted forest as they are no longer welcome at home or in the village. Their love is accepted by the ghosts who provide them with a beautiful palace where only women are allowed to visit. But soon Beeja desires to become a man and her wish is fulfilled. As a husband, Beeja takes on a new personality exclaiming, "I'll collect unlimited boards of treasure and prepare a huge army. I'll build a mighty fortress, and hundreds of queens like you will wait on me in the harem." Teeja decides to leave him but meets resistance. The husband, however, soon comes to his senses and yearns to become Beeja again. As a result, he is transformed. As in the best of happy endings, the two "fall into each others' arms and that is where they still are today."

For a complete version of this story, order Manushi, vol. 3 #5 from: (If in the US, Latin America or Canada) Manushi Distributors, America, c/o Esther Jantzen, 5008 Erringer Place, Philadelphia, PA 19144 and otherwise from: Manushi, C-1/202 Lajpat Nagar I, 10024 New Delhi, India.

Mercenary



Jiang Jiwei/Women of China

Women of China, China's official women's magazine, offers some of the few glimpses of women's lives, albeit in the context of the current political line. It is one of numerous publications that disappeared during the Cultural Revolution in the late '60s. It resumed publishing in 1978 after being out of print for ten years.

During the Cultural Revolution, one of the major criticisms leveled against *Women of China* was its over-emphasis on "individual problems" such as family, love and marriage. This is still a major focus today. Columns are devoted to problems relating to love and marriage and are dealt with much in the same way as the "problem pages" of mainstream western women's magazines. *Women of China* gives extensive coverage to the revised legal code, including the revised marriage law, and it regularly answers questions about inheritance rights, child maintenance, divorce and maltreatment. Even though the freedom to divorce is presented as vital to the liberation of women, the focus is on harmony and reconciliation.

(Excerpted from "A Heated Discussion" by Zong Shu, *Women of China*, official women's magazine, No. 4, 1979.)

A letter from young peasant Pang Zhixi about his broken marriage engagement was published in the *Chinese Youth Journal* on November 7, 1978. In the letter, the young man tells of his engagement to a young peasant girl in 1974 after fulfilling her demand for a number of gifts which cost 550 yuan. He got along quite well with his fiancée, and scrimped to save 200 yuan to help her get three years' training in a nursing school. After graduating, the girl treated him rather coolly and proposed that he should build a three-room house before their wedding. She also wanted a watch of the latest model, a sewing machine, a wardrobe and two wooden chests.

All this would cost at least 1200 yuan, a sum Pang could not afford, and he suggested they put off the purchases until after their marriage. The girl flared up, saying, "Let's call the whole thing off!" Pang then realized his fiancée's state of mind. She didn't want a peasant for a husband! Bitter and frustrated, he did as she suggested.

The young man's letter had strong repercussions. Letters poured into the journal's office and the editorial board decided to open a forum: "Let's put a brake on bargain-marriages. We'll foster socialist morale." In one month 4000 letters were received, enough evidence to reveal a fairly serious social problem in present-day China.

Marital relations in the feudal and capitalist societies are aptly described in

the old Chinese proverb: "Money and property bind the man and wife, while poverty and bankruptcy split their ties." Marriages were matters of cold-blooded cash bargaining.

Following liberation in 1949, a nationwide campaign publicizing the new Marriage Law as well as a concerted public effort helped somewhat to diminish such malpractices. But when Lin Biao [influential government official during the Cultural Revolution] and the Gang of Four were in power, sabotage of the national economy and lowered social morale led to the revival of mercenary marriages and degradations. Like poisonous germs, these practices began to impair the life of many young people, especially of those dwelling in the countryside.

The question then arose of how such practices could be stopped. Many letter writers said that the young people should take affairs of love and marriage into their own hands. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China states that both men and women have the right to free choice in marriage, so it is up to them to fight the pernicious influences left over by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, and to exercise their rights.

The journal then published a love story contained in a letter from Suxian County. In 1972, Huang Benying fell in love with a young peasant and decided to marry him, but the feudal-minded father was determined that she should marry another man he had arbitrarily chosen for her. He interfered in every way and even

China

went so far as to escort her to the man's home without going through the procedure of marriage registration. Huang managed to escape, and sought redress in the county people's court which, after thorough investigation, supported her right to freedom in marriage. The sweethearts of each other's choice were happily united. The father was punished for interfering with his daughter's right to free choice in marriage.

Many other correspondents said that the Youth League should focus more attention on the young people's problems arising from courtship and marriage. In one province, the Youth League organized a discussion around mercenary marriage. Afterwards, three young women returned their bridal gifts, saying, "We belong to a new era. We do not marry for money and property; it's the man and his qualities that really matter." Many other girls in the brigade decided that they would firmly refuse to be treated like merchandise, and that they would decide the matter for themselves on the basis of mutual love and respect. □

Marriage

Related resources:

- Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China, by Elizabeth Croll, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Patriarchy and Socialism in China, by Judith Stacey, UC Press, 1983.
- A Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China, by Margery Wolf, Stanford University Press, 1985.
- "Small Happiness," a film exploring the changes in rural women's lives including personal interviews with women of different generations, by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon, The Long Bow Co., 4205 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Marry by choice

(Reprinted from *China Daily*, January 29, 1986, by the *Women's News Digest*, issue no. 5, February 1986.)

Fewer than one-third of China's young people marry people entirely of their own choosing, *Peoples Daily* reported.

The paper said 15 per cent marry the choices made by their parents, 55 per cent have some say in the decision and 30 per cent make independent choices. The report quoted a recent survey, indicating that pressures on youth to marry people of whom the family approves remain particularly prevalent in the countryside. The survey results were announced at a conference in Beijing recently when a group of sociologists met in the Peoples University.

Freedom to divorce has been a major area of contention in the formation of China's family law policy since the inception of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The outspoken support for marriage by choice and free divorce by the Party in 1930 was a rallying point for masses of women who previously had no recourse but to stay in marriages that they were forced into from the start. Women living in areas controlled by the CCP enjoyed not only easy access to divorce but also settlement and child custody provisions which favored the wife.

But within a few years, the position of the Party began to shift so that divorce became more difficult to obtain. The more radical divorce legislation had become unpopular with male cadre and was labeled divisive. Women's issues were deemed insignificant compared to the importance of class struggle. This drift from favoring women's position in divorce suits continued and was institutionalized with the first national codification of marriage law in 1950, after the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949.

The most current Marriage Law adopted in 1980 stipulates that divorce will be granted when both husband and wife desire it. In cases where only one party requests divorce, the People's Court must try to bring about a reconciliation. When a divorce is granted, settlement and custody conditions are also determined by the People's Court. While the contemporary divorce legislation is lenient, strong social and economic pressures to sustain marriages result in low divorce rates.

(Excerpted from *Women's News Digest*, issue no. 5, December 1985-February 1986; originally appeared in *China Daily*, a Hong Kong newspaper, January 18, 1986.)

A divorce case, involving a couple who both threatened to commit suicide unless the case was resolved to their satisfaction, has sparked a heated discussion in China's largest legal newspaper.

The *China Legal System*, which pub-

lished the case in detail to solicit readers' opinions, described the case as involving both law and ethics.

Within a week after the publication of the case on December 6, the newspaper, which has a circulation of one million, received more than 400 letters.

The case involves Yang An, the husband, a 50-year-old college teacher and Zhou Jing, the wife, a 39-year-old technician. They had been married for 13 years.

They got married only two months after they had met each other, both believing that they were a good match politically. This was during the cultural revolution when political background was regarded a top consideration, even in marriage.

But not long after the wedding, they found it difficult to adapt to each other's way of living, and their relationship deteriorated when Zhou suffered from a gynecological disease that ended their sex life and shattered their hopes of having a child.

The adoption of a daughter in 1980 failed to revive the marriage. Three years of silence were broken in 1983 when Yang applied for a divorce despite Zhou's strong objection.

Zhou, who contracted hysterical paralysis upon hearing the decision, threatened to kill herself. Later she agreed to divorce but only if her husband would give her a sizable settlement payment (30,000 yuan).

Yang was unable to pay that much money even if he had been willing to do so. The court then withheld its verdict and this sent the husband into despair. He, too, threatened to commit suicide if the court allowed the marriage to continue.

The newspaper has received more than 1000 letters to date. "It is just what we had expected because marriage and family, the legal and ethical concepts involved, have been an issue of social concern for many years," said one of the newspaper's editors. "But the fact that so many of our readers are in favour of the divorce is something I didn't expect."

Most letters shared the view that to

allow a loveless marriage to continue was inhumane. Although many people still consider marriage failure as something disgraceful, divorce in China has been on the rise since 1981, with an average of 500,000 divorces granted each year.

Those who favoured the divorce said that Zhou's "unjustifiable demands" were the root cause of this knotty case and that the court should not yield to her suicide threat. Those against the divorce stressed that women's rights should be protected and condemned Yang for trying to divorce a sick wife who had no relatives to turn to.

A district court official from Beijing said that some people refuse to divorce simply because they want to take revenge on their marital partners. The difficulties of remarriage and consideration for children are also reasons. □

The high cost of marriage

(Reprinted from the *South China Morning Post*, November 27, 1985 by the *Women's News Digest*, a compilation of news clippings, issue no. 4, November 1985.)

Beijing: The rising cost of getting married in China has driven many parents into debt and second jobs, a letter in the official *Workers Daily* said yesterday.

The letter, from a worker in a diesel engine factory in Shanxi province in north China, said the price of a wedding has jumped to 5000 yuan, more than double what it was three years ago.

The money went on furniture, a television, a washing machine, clothes for each season, a banquet and a honeymoon trip, it said.

"Most of the money comes from the parents. If they cannot pay, their son will fight with them, the intended bride will not leave the house and neighbours will mock them," it said.

Many parents had to go to extraordinary lengths to raise the money, including borrowing or taking a second job.

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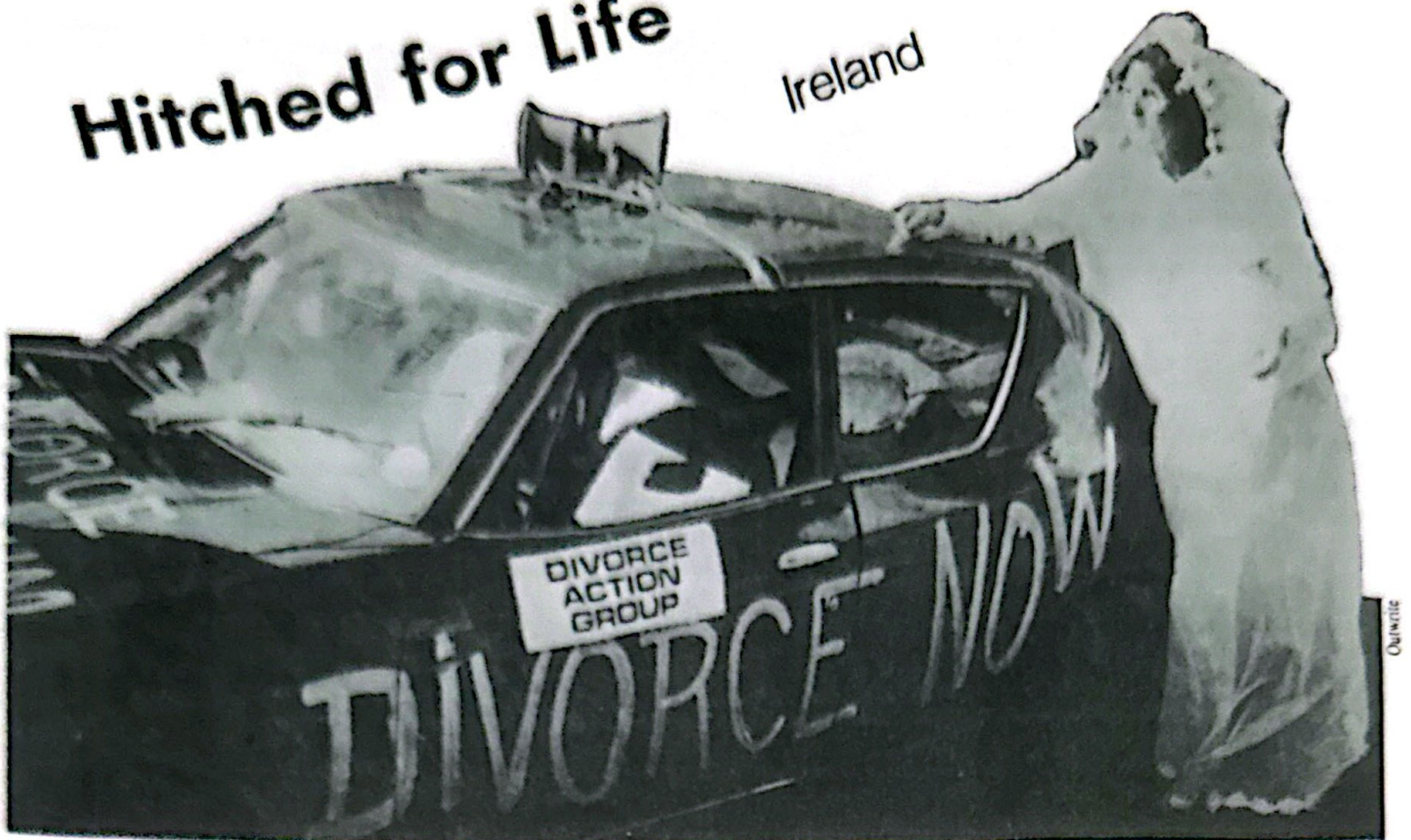
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Hitched for Life Ireland



Divorce Action Group demonstration.

The Republic of Ireland, with the exception of the tiny island of Malta, is the only country in Europe which does not have divorce laws.

(Reprinted from *Outwrite*, English feminist monthly, July/August 1985.)

Marital breakdown is currently a major issue in Ireland. Our country's constitution forbids the passing of any law allowing for divorce, and only a national referendum could change this.

A recent poll on the subject showed that 58% would vote to remove the ban on divorce. Groups working for such a change have become more prominent and are using this poll to persuade the government to hold a referendum. But no Irish government wants to take the initiative, so the present coalition of Fine Gael and Labour will not move without the support of the main opposition party, Fianna Fail.

In an attempt to placate the growing numbers of women who are demanding that something be done, an all-party committee was set up to examine the whole area of marital breakdown and to make recommendations to the Dail [parliament]. They issued their report in April after 21 months, but fell short of making a recommendation to hold a referendum, so the issue is once again in the hands of the government.

Responding to criticism, the leader of the senate last week promised an "unrestricted debate" on the report. The Catholic church, of course, has also entered the debate. A pastoral called "Love is for Life" was issued recently and became the subject of countrywide sermons stressing the indissolubility of marriage and women's duties

as wives and mothers. A captive audience was reminded of its allegiance to the church because it feels a threat to its historic dominance.

The married woman so treasured by church and state has very few rights under the law. Her domicile is that of her husband whether she lives with him or not. Only children and persons of unsound mind share this special status with her. Irish men may go abroad, acquire a foreign residence and divorce their wives. Irish women, of course, cannot. A married woman has no legal right to ownership of the family home, and her role as a wife and mother does not entitle her to a share of her husband's wealth. If a married woman sues for personal damages in court, she won't be compensated for loss of earnings because she is not seen as having any.

A solicitor who deals with family law said recently that far more women than men are leaving marriages. The only legal remedies they can avail of are separation and *divorce et mensa et thoro*. A separation is a legal agreement that both parties enter into voluntarily and covers matters such as maintenance, children and the family house. The parties are released from cohabiting but are not free to remarry. *Divorce et mensa et thoro* is a High Court procedure and applies if the parties fail to agree on the terms of their separation. It means that a woman is only free from looking after the man and from sleeping with him. Only the wealthy can afford it, and then only about five decrees are granted each year.

There is little difference in the effect of either of these remedies. The Catholic church issues annulments which make the

original marriage null and void (the marriage is considered never to have taken place) and any children become "illegitimate." These are only issued on very stringent conditions and it is a very lengthy process, and does not have any legal effect. Since the state does not have the power to dissolve marriages, a woman can be in the odd situation of being married in the eyes of the state but, not in the eyes of the church. This must be seen in the context of the vast majority of marriages taking place in church.

Clodagh Corcoran went to London in the 1950s but is back living in Ireland for the last three years. She got married in England and has two children. She feels divorce was critical for her. "I was 40 that year. I began to think for the first time about who I was. I had never functioned on my own. After the divorce I felt that I had control of my life. I think that divorce does something interesting for you as a woman. I became divorced from that structure. If I was separated, I'd still be seen as part of that unit."

She got involved in the divorce issue when she came back to Ireland. "A lot of the problem is caused by the church and the idea of women as men's property." She feels that the pressure of the huge number of marriage breakdowns is the only thing that will change the situation.

The whole debate around marital breakdown and divorce has just begun. The church had a hollow victory with the abortion referendum, but suffered a blow to their dominance with the recent liberalisation of the contraceptive laws. Divorce is all set to become their next crown of thorns. □

(Reprinted from *Women in Ireland*, a compilation of reports by an ad hoc group of women active in women's issues in Ireland, June 1985.)

The lack of divorce law is now a serious problem because Ireland, like most countries, is experiencing an increased rate of marital breakdown. The Constitution of Ireland specifically prohibits the introduction of divorce. It states: "No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage." That article in the Constitution itself was introduced in 1937. Irish society in 1985 has very different attitudes to what it had in 1937. It is estimated that there are up to 70,000 separated people in Ireland who presently have recourse to the following methods of trying to resolve their marital problems:

State Annulment: The grounds for which are so limited that such applications are rare. The granting of a State annulment means that no marriage ever existed and both parties are free to remarry but the children of the first union will be deemed illegitimate.

Judicial Separation (divorce a mensa et thoro): The High Court can order a separation, the main grounds being cruelty and adultery. The separated couple does not have the right to remarry.

Legal Separation: This is a deed which a couple sign agreeing to live apart in accordance with the indicated terms. This agreement may be enforced by the courts but there is no right to remarry.

Barring Order: A spouse may take an application for custody of children and a barring order to the High Court which can result in either spouse being prohibited from entering the matrimonial home. In a district court a spouse can apply for barring for a period of three months and for maintenance.

Church Annulment: This affects only church law and has no significance with regard to State law.

Living Apart: A couple can agree to live apart without any formal agreement or court proceedings.

Desertion: The worst of all types of

separation—desertion—commonly known as "divorce, Irish style"

Since the introduction of the Deserted Wives Allowance/Benefit in 1970, over 15,000 applications have been received. Children born out of wedlock in Ireland are "illegitimate." This causes many problems for a couple who have children but who are not free to marry because one or both of them have been married before. At present, a child born to a separated woman is deemed to be the child of her marriage. If it is the man in the relationship who has been married before, then the child is deemed to be illegitimate. There is the additional problem that in Irish law a married woman does not have an independent domicile. When a woman marries, she acquires her husband's domicile which means that if a woman's husband leaves her and goes to live in Timbuctoo, her legal domicile is also Timbuctoo even though she may never have been there.

Opinion polls since 1983 show a constant majority in favour of the introduction of divorce legislation. Consecutive governments have been unwilling to grant a national referendum on divorce primarily because of fear of the power of the Roman Catholic church. In all areas of private morality the church has dictated their belief in the evils of divorce. They have a powerful medium through the individual churches as 95% of our population of three and a half million are Roman Catholic.

However, more and more Irish Catholics are deciding on issues for themselves and are not accepting the dictums of the Irish Catholic hierarchy without question. The lack of divorce legislation is a very serious infringement of basic human rights. An organization called the Divorce Action Group has been campaigning for legislative change since 1980. We are now publicly demanding a National Referendum by April 1986.

Contact:

• Divorce Action Group, 44 Nassau Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

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Rosa Finds a Way Out

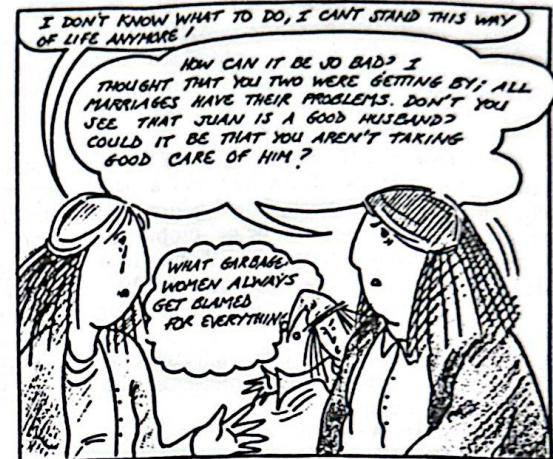
The cartilla, or primer, and the fotonovela, or picture book, are widely used in Latin America to communicate with illiterate and semi-literate people. Serial illustrations are used in place of words or in addition to them. Primers are often used by advocacy groups to inform women of their rights and to promote the idea of organizing for change. For example, a group in the Dominican Republic, Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina (Research Center for Women's Action), has published primers encouraging women to fight the system that promotes violence against them.

The following is excerpted from *Cartilla sobre Derecho de Familia* (Primer on Family Law). It is one in a series of three; the other two address labor law and criminal law. The cartoons are interspersed with direct citations of the various laws that they illustrate. This series was published in 1985 by Casa de la Mujer, a women's research and action group, in Bogotá, Colombia.

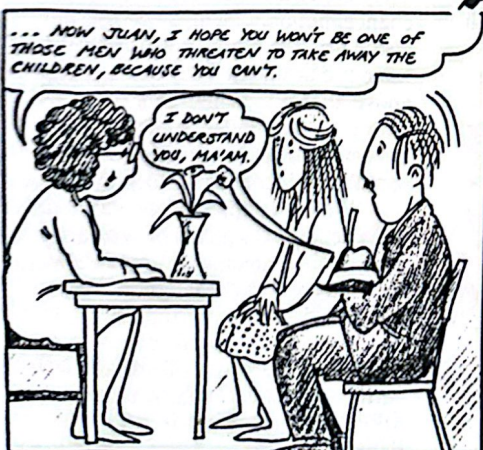
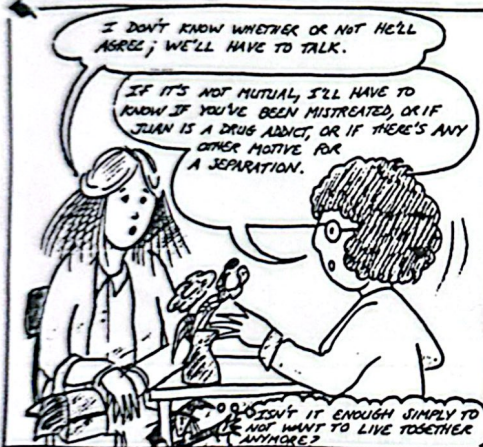
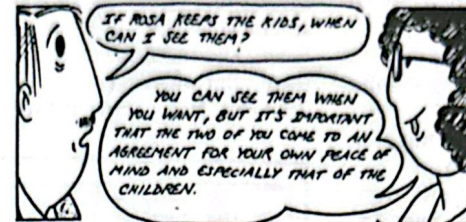
Ignorance of the law affects our daily lives as women, laborers and family members. For this reason, these primers attempt to contribute to women's knowledge about the law and to bring women closer together with a united purpose. These primers are the result of the collective work of women who, through their different perspectives, knowledge and experience, have made this book a reality.

Rosa an 18-year-old woman, seeks advice about marriage from an older friend. Her friend details the serious side of marriage, but Rosa ignores this and takes the plunge. Three years and two kids later, her marriage with Juan, a drunken and abusive husband, is not a happy one. One day her mother comes by and finds her in despair.

Rosa rejects her mother's questionable advice and seeks legal counseling on her own initiative.



A lawyer named Judith discusses with Rosa how she may separate from Juan.



Women are encouraged to use the primer as a resource guide.

Contact:
• Casa de la Mujer,
Carrera 18, No. 59-60,
Bogotá, Colombia,
Tele. 2482469.

• CIPAF,
Benigno F., De Rojas 307,
AP 1744, Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic.

Further Reading:
• "Script for Change,"
Connexions #16,
Spring, 1985.



Toronto Lesbian Wins

(Excerpted from *Herizons*, Canadian women's monthly, Vol 4, No. 2, March 1986.)

After almost nine months of lobbying, Toronto Library Board employee Karen Andrews recently won the right to dental and health insurance benefits for her female lover and her lover's two children. Andrews' union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, filed a grievance against her employer stating that benefits should be extended to her household as they would be to any heterosexual family.

Although the present Family Law Reform does not consider cohabiting lesbian or gay couples and their children to be families, the publicity surrounding Andrews' case influenced Ontario's second largest benefits carrier to move beyond present legislation and provide equal benefits. Local President Mary Cook says that many gay employees have come forward and applied for benefits since Andrews' success.

As women get recognition for the validity of households without men in them, social benefits can correspond to a more realistic assessment of women's lives. Say Andrews, "It's very important for people to get sexual orientation into their contracts, and for those who have it, to keep it." □



Divorced Mothers Fight For Custody

(Reprinted from a letter sent to *Connexions* in August 1985.)

Dear sisters, we need your help. We have a big problem in France. It is about divorced couples from different countries and their children. There are about 2000 children kidnapped by their fathers and taken back to their father's country, mostly to Algeria. Very often the mothers cannot see or visit their children any more, even if they have the legal right to keep them.

Negotiations have been settled successfully between France and several countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and the situation is much better there. But with Algeria, we are at a dead end. Negotiations between the

the Collective that negotiations would get on again very soon.

Since then practically nothing has happened and the mothers are desperate. Some of them can visit their children in Algeria in the father's family. Some of them cannot even see them. But none of the children has been allowed to leave Algeria to visit the mother's family.

Five mothers decided to act by staging a sit-in at the French Embassy in Algiers on June 17. Since then, they are occupying the French Embassy where they are tolerated. Two mediators (one French, one Algerian) were designated in July by the governments and negotiations are on again, but are going very slowly.



Ann Christine Eck, MIRA/Vincent

two governments were halted one year ago. We tried to force them to renegotiate with an operation called "a boat to Algiers" in July 1984. Thirty mothers (French, Belgian, German and Scottish) were going to sail to Algiers with journalists, radios, and so on, with some of our Collective to support them. It was a great project. Unfortunately, the French government succeeded in putting a stop to it, assuring

We know that the five mothers will not give up until they are satisfied. They are aware that this is their only chance, not only for themselves, but also for all the mothers who are in the same predicament. They are fighting, above all, for the children's rights to have a mother and a father, and to have normal relations with both parents, both countries, both cultures.

We need support. You can help us by sending telegrams of solidarity to the two governments: Laurent Fabius, 1er Ministre, Hôtel Matignon, Paris and President Chadli, Algiers.

You can also send money to support the mothers to: Collectif de Solidarité aux mères d'enfants enlevés, MFPE, 4 Square Saint Irénée, 75011 Paris. □

Shorts



Marriage Bureaux Go Up in Smoke

(Reprinted from *Outwrite*, English feminist monthly, October 1983.)

Red Zora, the women's section of a left wing group called Revolutionary Cells, has claimed responsibility for the bombing of three West German "marriage bureaux" which advertise "wives" from third world countries.

Advertisements like "Hundreds of pretty, young Thai girls are waiting for the right husband...combine a holiday with a honeymoon" appear in West German newspapers every day, and the bureaux are making money from this trade in women's lives.

The usual charge is about 2,600 pounds. One agent told reporters that he "introduced" about 400 German men each year to wives from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Another agent said the men who use his "service" soon recoup their outlay as the women from the Far East "don't smoke or drink." He advertises: "A pair of gloves, a pair of boots and a coat will get them through the winter."

The Federal Interior Ministry claims the bureaux are acting legally. Even when the women end up in forced prostitution, there is supposedly no evidence that the agency is involved.

Red Zora says that since the government will do nothing, women are forced to act themselves. During the past few months, they have attacked three marriage bureaux and the Philippine Embassy in Bonn for "complicity" in "a business which shows contempt for women." □

Further Reading:

- "Louder than Words," a communiqué from Red Zora, *Connexions* #19, Winter 1986.



Joanna Lovelace

Marriage Age Lowered

(Reprinted from *Muvman Liberasyon Fam*, Mauritian feminist newsletter, December 1985.)

The Women's Liberation Movement [of Mauritius] has protested strongly at the unanimous vote in Par-

liament to once again allow parents to "marry off" their daughters before they have the legal right to say "no." Both the government and opposition voted in this scandalous law. The Women's Movement is fighting for its repeal. □



Voice of Women

Swedish Immigration Meets Lesbian Marriages

(Excerpted from a letter sent to *Connexions*, January 1986.)

Unfortunately, Sweden cannot be used as an example of a country where legal recognition of lesbian marriage is possible. However, in some situations, such as for immigration purposes, lesbian and gay relationships are recognized in the same manner as heterosexual relationships.

Several foreign women have been granted permanent residency permits on the grounds of their established relationships with Swedish women. In this way, the government does recognize lesbian relationships.

Legal recognition comparable to marriage has been discussed in the government report, "The Status of Homosexuals in Society." The proposal has met with opposition and is not to be approved. □



Women in Southeastern Anatolia.

Fathers, Imams and Atatürk

Turkey

A typical story, one might say, of a rural culture where Islam and many feudal structures have a stronghold. How far have the rules governing marriage and women's position vis à vis the constitution changed? Or have they changed? We would like to attempt a very short description of wedlock in Turkey, emphasising certain changes that came into being with the advent of the "nuclear family," but also tracking the traditional practices that continue.

The Islamic *sharia* (religious law) outlines the rules of conjugal life. These include the absolute dominance of the man over family members and property and his right to divorce a woman with the simple utterance of the words *boş ol* which means "you are divorced", the isolation of the woman in the household, her subordination to the man's will legally and socially, and the restriction of her functions to that of childbearer and servant. The *sharia* was first questioned during the 19th century under Ottoman rule by those who favoured "westernization."

The 1800s saw the beginning of the transformation of many feudal structures which reached its peak with the founding of the nation-state of Turkey in 1923. With its integration into the world capitalist system, the economic base of Turkish society shifted. Rural migration to the cities increased dramatically, creating slum areas and causing major transitions in the traditional family structure.

Under the rule of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk [the founder of the Republic of Turkey], women were granted certain rights, such as the right to vote, the right to primary education and the shedding of *çarşaf* (Moslem women's outdoor garment that covers a woman's entire body except for her eyes). Along with the legal transformations which aimed to bring Turkish women's standard of living to that of western women, came the break up of the traditional large family. Large numbers of women began moving to the cities to work, leaving behind their parents, grandparents and cousins in the villages. This also meant that men could no longer afford more than one wife and household.

The marriage age was raised. Girls could be promised to prospective grooms in childhood, but the new civil law passed in 1926 set the age of adulthood at 18. Women began participating in political activities and even became members of parliament. From this period until now, the family and the matrimonial institution may be analysed with categories generally applied to the capitalist family structure. Hence, the situation of the Turkish woman is similar to that of her sisters all over the

world where the capitalist mode of production exists.

However, despite these legal and economic changes, the cult of virginity is still as evident as it was in the past, and a man's honour is still measured by the chastity of his women—his mother, his wife and his daughters. Sexual and social violence aimed at women, in the family and in society, continues as before. Even though contraception has been adopted as state policy, women are still regarded primarily as childbearers and it is only recently that abortion, to a limited extent, has been legalised.

Although schools have been opened in all towns and most villages, families, especially in rural areas, send only their boys or limit the girls' schooling to primary education. It is interesting and rather terrifying to observe that even in big cities like Istanbul, where women have entered the labour force in great numbers, girls are trained to become obedient and hard-working housewives.

Marriage customs such as *görücü* where the man, after having seen a girl, decides if she is fit to be his wife, are still prevalent. To be fit is determined by her family's position, her knowledge of household management and her beauty. Although working women tend to choose their husbands rather than be forced to accept their fathers' wishes, women's passive position has not changed very much.

The changes that have come into being within the framework of the Republic, such as granting women certain rights, have held an important place in the government's rhetoric of democracy. Women who have gained their economic independence and have participated in political activities have begun to question the dominant male ideology, the existing family structure and the extent to which these granted rights can be exercised.

Women are forming groups, such as ours called the Women's Circle (Kadin Çevresi), in which women of different backgrounds with different notions of how to gain liberation have come together. We publish books, have a reader's club and organise weekly meetings and seminars. □

Contact:

• Kadin Çevresi Yayinlari, Klod Farer Cad. 45/36, Servet Han, Cağaloğlu, Istanbul, Turkey.

Further Reading:

• Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey, edited by Cizdem Kızıtcıbaşı, Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1982.

(This article was written for *Connexions* in February 1986 by Sedat Öztürk and Füsün Yaras, two members of Kadin Çevresi [Women's Circle], a women's group based in Istanbul, Turkey.)

When Aisha was born, her father barely hid his disappointment. Having a female child is like having no child at all. She grew up serving her family, especially her brothers, who had as much right over her as her father. She was 14 when her father started looking around for acceptable suitors. The man who had the means to raise enough money to buy her chastity would get her. When a prospective bridegroom was found, Aisha was seen and approved by him. She, however, was allowed only one glimpse of him.

The imam (religious officer) married them and that night she lost her well-protected virginity. Bedsheets stained with drops of blood were sent to the groom's parents the next day. Had she not been a virgin a fight may have ensued. She left her family and entered her father-in-law's household. She bore seven children in 12 years. Her husband would say he had three children because only boys were worthy of that title.

Aisha and her husband toiled hard to keep the family alive. The work aged them quickly. And then came the day when her husband brought home a younger woman, a second wife. Aisha gave her consent, resentfully perhaps, but she gave it. (Hadh't the prophet allowed for four wives to each man?) She lived as her mother had done and saw to it, in her turn, that her daughters kept their virginity intact for their husbands. And when Zeynep, her eldest daughter, was 14...

(reprinted from *Spare Rib*, English feminist monthly, March 1985.)

(This story was written by Alifa Rifaat, an Egyptian author, and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies.)

Through half-closed eyes she looked at her husband. Lying on his right side, his body was intertwined with hers and his head bent over her right shoulder. As usual at such times she felt that he inhabited a world utterly different from hers, a world from which she had been excluded. Only half aware of the movements of his body, she turned her head to one side and stared up at the ceiling, where she noticed a spider's web. She told herself she'd have to get out the long broom and brush it down.

When they were first married, she had tried to will her husband into sensing the desire that burned within her and so continue the act longer. She had been too shy and conscious of the conventions to express such wishes openly. Later on, feeling herself sometimes to be on the brink of the experience some of her married women friends talked of in hushed terms, she had found the courage to be explicit about what she wanted. At such moments it had seemed to her that all she needed was just one more movement and her body and soul would be quenched, that once achieved they would between them know how to repeat the experience. But on each occasion, when breathlessly imploring him to continue, he would—as though purposely to deprive her—quicken his movements and bring the act to an abrupt end. Sometimes she had tried in vain to maintain the rhythmic movements a little longer, but always he would stop her. The last time she had made such an attempt, so desperate was she at this critical moment, that she had dug her fingernails into his back, compelling him to remain inside her. He had given a shout as he pushed her away and slipped from her.

"Are you mad, woman? Do you want to kill me?"

It was as though he had made an indelible tattoo mark of shame deep inside her, so that whenever she thought of the incident she felt a flush coming to her face. Thenceforth she had submitted to her passive role, sometimes asking herself: "Perhaps it's me who's at fault. Perhaps I'm unreasonable in my demands and don't know how to react to him properly."

There had been occasions when he had indicated that he had had relationships with other women, and sometimes she had suspicions that maybe he still had affairs, and she was surprised that the idea no longer upset her.

She was suddenly aroused from her thoughts by his more urgent movements. She turned to him and watched his struggling in the world he occupied on his own. His eyes were tightly closed, his lips drawn down in an ugly contortion, and the veins in his neck stood out. She felt his hand on her leg, seizing it above the knee and thrusting it sideways as his movements became more frenzied. She stared up at her foot that now pointed towards the spider's web and noted her toenails needed cutting.

As often happened at this moment she heard the call to afternoon prayers filtering through the shutters of the closed window and bringing her back to reality. With a groan he let go of her thigh and immediately withdrew. He took a small towel from under the pillow, wrapped it round himself, turned his back to her and went to sleep.

She rose and hobbled to the bathroom where she seated herself on the bidet and washed herself. No longer did she feel any desire to complete the act with herself as she used to do in the first years of marriage. Under the shower she gave her right side to the warm water, then her left, repeating the formula of faith as the water coursed down her body. [Islam demands that after intercourse the whole body be washed.] She wrapped her soaking hair in a towel and wound a large second one under her armpits. Returning to the bedroom, she put on a long house-gown, then took the prayer carpet from on top of the wardrobe

Egypt

Distant View of a Minaret



Spare Rib



and shut the door behind her.

As she passed through the living room, the sounds of pop music came to her from the room of her son Mahmoud. She smiled as she imagined him stretched out on his bed, a school book held in front of him; she was amazed at his ability to concentrate in the face of such noise. She closed the living room door, spread the rug and began her prayers. When she had performed the

four *rak'at* [the various movements of bending and prostration that make up the set prayer in Islam. The number of *rak'at* differ according to which of the five daily prayers is being performed.] she seated herself on the edge of the prayer carpet and counted off her glorifications of the Almighty, three at a time on the joints of each finger. It was late autumn and the time for the sunset prayer would soon come and she enjoyed the thought that she would soon be praying again. Her five daily prayers were like punctuation marks that divided up and gave meaning to her life. Each prayer had for her a distinct quality, just as different foods had their own flavours. She folded up the carpet and went out onto the small balcony.

Dusting off the cane chair that stood there, she seated herself and looked down at the street from the sixth floor. She was assailed by the din of buses, the hooting of cars, the cries of street vendors and the raucous noise of competing radios from nearby flats. Clouds of smoke rose up from the outpourings of car exhausts veiling the view of the tall solitary minaret that could be seen between two towering blocks of flats. This single minaret, one of the twin minarets of the Mosque of Sultan Hasan, above it a thin slice of the Citadel, was all that was now left of the panoramic view she had once had of old Cairo, with its countless mosques and minarets against a background of the Kokattam Hills and Mohammed Ali's Citadel.

Before marriage she had dreamed of having a house with a small garden in a quiet suburb such as Maadi or Helwan. On finding that it would be a long journey for her husband to his work in the centre of the city, she had settled for this flat because of its view. But with the passing of the years, buildings had risen on all sides, gradually narrowing the view. In time this single minaret would also be obscured by some new building.

Aware of the approach of the call to sunset prayers, she left the balcony and went to the kitchen to prepare her husband's coffee. She filled the brass *kanaka* [coffeepot] with water and added a spoonful of coffee and a spoonful of sugar. Just as it was about to boil over she removed it from the stove and placed it on the tray with the coffee cup, for he liked to have the coffee poured out in front of him. She expected to find him sitting up in bed smoking a cigarette. The strange way his body was twisted immediately told her that something was wrong. She approached the bed and looked into the eyes that stared into space and suddenly she was aware of the odour of death in the room. She left and placed the tray in the living room before passing through to her son's room. He looked up as she entered and immediately switched off the radio and stood up:

"What's wrong, Mother?"

"It's your father..."

"He had another attack?"

She nodded. "Go downstairs to the neighbours and ring Dr. Ramzi. Ask him to come right away."

She returned to the living room and poured out the coffee for herself. She was surprised at how calm she was. □

Further reading:

- *Distant View of a Minaret & Other Stories* by Alifa Rifaat, Quartet Books, New York, 1984.
- *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change* ed. by Elizabeth Fernea, Univ. of Texas Press, 1985.

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Letters

Dear *Connexions*,

Thank you very much for your coverage of the Nairobi conference, the best I have seen in any publication. Thank you especially for your coverage of some of the discussion around the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was scarcely reported on at all, even in Middle East publications. I was impressed with Debby Lerman's resolve to pursue an important workshop in spite of the nonparticipation of the invited speakers, and regret that no interview with a Palestinian woman was obtained during or after the conference.

However, I hope that *Connexions* will not abandon the topic now, but pursue the search for Israeli and Palestinian women interested in speaking with one another. So often these talks don't come about because one or another of the participants feels that things are stacked against her, but I feel that *Connexions* has the potential of becoming a place where women can make their viewpoints heard on the Middle East without fear. It would be well worth the effort to become such a forum although this decision might entail some soul searching into questions of anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism which are very difficult. Yet a place for women to dialogue is sorely needed.

In the Middle East, women traditionally have taken the lead in all peaceful paths that benefit their societies; Israelis and Palestinians are no exception. Why should not *Connexions* support them in this regard by providing much needed space and encouragement to speak?

Best wishes,

Kathy Piselli (Program Coordinator)
Middle East Peace Education
American Friends Service Committee

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure and relief that we announce the release of Lu Hsiu-lien, an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience. Ms. Lu was arrested in 1979 and sentenced in 1980 to 12 years in prison for attempted sedition. [Ed. note: See *Connexions* #14 for more information on Lu Hsiu-lien's arrest and imprisonment.] Officials in Taiwan granted medical release to Ms. Lu who is now receiving treatment.

Lu Hsiu-Lien's cellmate, Ch'en Chu, is still in prison. Please continue your good work by writing a brief, polite letter expressing concern to:

President Chiang Ching-kuo
Chiehshou Hall
Chungking S. Road
Taipei, Taiwan-Republic of China

Thank you for your support,
Members of Amnesty International/USA
Group #101

Dear *Connexions*,

You wanted to know about marriage in Yugoslavia? Well, I think it is much the same as in the US. I remember that back in grammar school both the boys and girls were against marriage and family and they wanted to be free to lead their own lives. But nowadays it's a different story. Most of my schoolmates have gotten married.

There is pressure from one's parents to get married. They buy them apartments, etc. as inducements.

There are many traps for those of us who remain single. For instance, since in my province there is a problem that the birth rate is falling, there is social pressure to have children. No matter what education we have or what we possess, our work and life aren't valued unless we have a family and children. The children are the important factor.

I don't believe there is such a thing as "modern" marriage. Most of the work in the house and caring for the children is still on women's shoulders. A woman loses a lot of her choices for her own development by getting married. Also, people talk about the crisis of the family, but I think it's not changing a lot in any way.

I always get upset when I talk about this problem. I feel that the influence of tradition is still very strong. Older people often tell me that it's useless for a woman to go into higher education. I should be busy catching a good husband and be dreaming of a house, money and a car. Some people are aggressive, pushing me to think about a family; others are more subtle and make allusions to the joy of family life. It's just bourgeois dirt.

So this is my opinion of marriage. I usually just keep it to myself nowadays because I find it useless. Eventually most people get caught up in this trap for economic or social reasons.

Love,
Suzana

Dear *Connexions*,

I have been reading your special double issue on the UN Conference in Nairobi and it is really excellent. I have been reading and learning a lot from your publication for quite a while now, but this issue is really outstanding. I have been searching for specific information about the conference for my work in Women's Studies and personal interest, and there has been so little direct information.

I have never written to a publication before to applaud an issue as I am doing now, but I felt compelled to express to you my admiration and appreciation for your efforts.

Thanks,
Kristine A. Komada

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Resources

agence femmes information (French), weekly international women's news service, 21, rue de Jouffroy, 75002 Paris, France.

Agora (Japanese), semi-annual fem. journal, c/o BNC Publishing, 1-8-6 Shogaku, Shinjuku, Tokyo 160, Japan.

Ashd Journal (English), scholarly semi-annual journal, University College for Women, PO Box 167, Cherduman, Sudan.

Asian Women's Liberation (English & Japanese editions), fem. quarterly, Shibuya Coop, Shinjuku, Tokyo 150, Japan.

Asian Women's Research and Action Network/AWRAN (English), newsletter of abstracts of research and articles on Asian women, PO Box 208, Davao City, Philippines.

Aut (German), fem. bimonthly, Postfach 817, A-1011 Vienna, Austria.

Bolita Internacional de AMES (Spanish), bimonthly of the Women's Association of El Salvador promoting the role of women in national liberation, A.P. 20134, Mexico D.F.

Brajas (Spanish), fem. quarterly, Calle Venezuela 1286, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Brejas (Spanish), fem. monthly, Apdo. Aéreo, 49105 Medellín, Colombia.

La Cacerola (Spanish), fem. bimonthly, Juan Paulin 1174, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Les Cahiers du GRIF (French), fem. monthly, 29 rue Blanche, 1050 Brussels, Belgium.

Canadian Women Studies/Les cahiers de la femme (English & French), fem. academic quarterly, 204 Founders College, York Univ., 4700 Keele St., Downsview, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada.

Chama com Chama (Portuguese), lesbian newsletter, GALE, Caixa Postal 62.618, Cep 01.000, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

Chronique (French), fem. bimonthly, Université des Femmes, Place Quetelet, 1030 Brussels, Belgium.

CTM (Portuguese), fem. bulletin, Caixa Postal 11.399, 054099 São Paulo, Brazil.

GRIF (French), fem. quarterly, 1, rue des Fosses St. Jacques, 75005 Paris, France.

Depthnews Women's Features (English), weekly fem. news service focusing on Asian women, Box 1843, Manila, Philippines.

DIVA (Dutch), lesbian bimonthly, Postbus 10642, 1001 EP Amsterdam, Holland.

Emme (German), fem. monthly, Kolpingplatz 1a, 5000 Köln 1, West Germany.

fem (Spanish), fem. bimonthly, Av. Universidad 1855, 4o. piso, Col. Oxtopulco Universidad, C.P. 04310, México, D.F., México.

Feminist Forum (English), monthly newsletter by Japanese and foreign women, CPO Box 1780, Tokyo 100, Japan.

Femmes & Sociétés (French), women's networking magazine, Villa 811, Sicap Baobabs, Dakar, Senegal.

The Filipina (English), bimonthly, 222-D Ibarra St., Makati, Manila, Philippines.

Fireweed (English), fem. quarterly, PO Box 279, Station B, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2W2, Canada.

Friends of Women (Thai), fem. bimonthly, 2/3 Soi Wang-Lang, Arunamarin Rd., Bangkok 10700, Thailand.

ILIS (English & French), newsletter of the International Lesbian Information Service, Centre Femmes, 5, Blvd. St. Georges, CH-1205 Geneva, Switzerland.

IRIS, The Republican Magazine (English), monthly with emphasis on women, 51/53 Falls Rd., Belfast 12, Ireland.

The Irish Feminist Review (English), annual, 48 Fleet St., Dublin 2, Ireland.

ISIS WICCE Women's World (English), thematic international fem. quarterly, PO Box 2471, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

ISIS International Women's Journal (English & Spanish editions), international fem. networking quarterly, via Santa Maria dell'Anima 30, Rome, Italy or Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, Chile.

Kjerriograd (Norwegian), fem. quarterly, Radhuset 2, 0151 Oslo 1, Norway.

Kvinder (Danish), fem. bimonthly, Gøttersgade 37, IV, 1123 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

Kvinnejournalen (Norwegian), fem. quarterly, Postboks 53 Buyn, Oslo 6, Norway.

Kvinnobulletinen (Swedish), fem. bimonthly, Kvinnohuset, Snickarbacken 10, 111 39 Stockholm, Sweden.

Lesbisch Archivaria (Dutch), lesbian fem. quarterly of the Lesbian Archive, Postbus 4062, Leeuwarden, Holland.

Lacchiola (Italian), bimonthly on prostitutes' rights, Piazza della Libertà, 13/A, 00193 Rome, Italy.

Manushi (English & Hindi editions), fem. bimonthly, C-1/202 Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi 110024, India.

Maria, Liberación del Pueblo (Spanish), fem. monthly by and for working class and peasant women, Apdo. 158-B, Ave. Morelos 714, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico.

Mars & (Arabic), fem. monthly newspaper, B.P. 13217, Poste Centrale, Casablanca 01, Morocco.

Mujer, Especiales Mujer and Colección Comunicación Alternativa de la Mujer (Spanish), 3 fem. publications of the Union of Women's Alternative Communication. The first two are newsclipping services, the third is an occasional publication focusing on a specific women's alternative media group, Casilla 16-637, Correo 9, Santiago, Chile.

Mujer Celestina (Spanish), fem. monthly, Apdo. 949, San José, Costa Rica.

Mujer Feminista (Spanish), fem. monthly, Apdo. de Correos, 311, Madrid, Spain.

Mukti (Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi & Punjabi editions), quarterly focusing on racism & sexism from an Asian/Black perspective, 213 Eversholt St., London NW1, England.

Mulherio (Portuguese), bimonthly fem. newspaper, Rua Amalia de Noronha 268, Pinheiros, 05410 São Paulo, Brazil.

New Internationalist (English), thematic monthly focusing on the Third World, 175 Carlton St., Toronto, Ontario M5A 2K3, Canada.

NOGA (Hebrew), fem. quarterly, PO Box 21376, Tel Aviv 61213, Israel.

Navel Fan (Creole Fatois), newsletter of the Muvman Liberasyon Fam, 5 Ste. Therese St. Curepipe, Mauritius.

OFIS BLONG OL MERI Newsletter (English), quarterly on South Pacific women, Box 1327, Lae, Papua New Guinea.

Outwrite (English), fem. monthly newspaper focusing on women of color, Oxford House, Derbyshire St., London E2, England.

Paris Feministe (French), fem. monthly, 8, Cité Prost, 75011 Paris, France.

Quehaceres (Spanish), bimonthly fem. newspaper, Benigno Filomeno de Rojas 305, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Pacific and Asian Women's Network (English), newsletter covering women's action and research groups, 4 Bhagwandas Rd., New Delhi 110 001, India.

Race and Class (English), quarterly theoretical journal, 2-6 Leek St., King's Cross Rd., London WC1X 8HS, England.

Resources for Feminist Research (English & French), international quarterly of abstracts and research on women, 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6, Canada.

Rites for Lesbian and Gay Liberation (English), monthly newspaper, Box 65, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2L4, Canada.

Saheli Newsletter (English), quarterly, Office above 105-108, Shopping Centre, Under Defence Colony Flyover (South Side), New Delhi 110024, India.

Sangharsh (English), fem. newspaper, Post Box 4605, Bangalore, 560 046, India.

Somos (Spanish), bimonthly bulletin of AMNLAE (Nicaraguan Women's Association), Rep. San Juan, 2.1/2 cuadras al S.O., Managua, Nicaragua.

Spare Rib (English), fem. monthly, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC 1, England.

Spinnboden (German), publication of the Lesbian Archive, Postfach 30 41 49, 1000 Berlin, West Germany.

Torajya (Finnish), lesbian quarterly, Akaat PL 55, 00511 Helsinki 51, Finland.

La Tortuga (Spanish), fem. monthly, Huancavelica 470, Oficina 408, Lima, Peru.

Trouble and Strife (English), tri-annual fem. journal, c/o Women's Centre, 50 Bethel St., Norwich, Norfolk, England.

TW-MAE-W (English), publication of the Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, PO Box 1434, Manila 2800, Philippines.

Vamos Mujer (Spanish), occasional publication of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Women (CODEM), Casilla 5216, Correo 3, Santiago, Chile.

La Vie En Rose (French), fem. monthly, 3963 St. Denis, Montreal, Quebec H2W 9Z9, Canada.

Vi Mänskor (Swedish), fem. quarterly, Barnsgaatan 23, 11641 Stockholm, Sweden.

Voice of Women (English), publication of the Women's Section of the African National Congress, PO Box 31791, Lusaka, Zambia or ANC, 801 2nd Ave., Ste. 405, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Voice of Women (English, Sinhalese & Tamil editions), journal for women's emancipation, 18/9, Chitra Lane, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

WAF (English), fem. bi-annual, Box 3287, Gulberg, Lahore, Pakistan.

Woman Speak (English), quarterly, University of West Indies, Women and Development Unit, Pinelands St. Michael, Barbados.

Women and Environments (English), fem. tri-annual, c/o Urban and Community Studies, 455 Spadina Ave., Toronto, Ontario M5S 2G8, Canada.

Women of China (English), monthly, 50 Deng Shi Kou, Beijing, China.

Women's News Digest (English), quarterly fem. newsclipping service focusing on Chinese women, Room 1202 Yam Tze Commercial Building, 17-23 Thomson Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong.

This is not a complete list of alternative international publications. For a more complete listing, write to Connexions.

Books Received

- *Cultures in Contention*, international essays on culture, art and politics, edited by Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, The Real Comet Press, 1985.
- *State of the World: 1986*, A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society, Norton Press.
- *The Alternative Press Annual, 1984*, edited by Patricia J. Case, Temple University Press, 1985.
- *Bringing the Global Home: Feminism in the 80s*, by Charlotte Bunch, Antelope Publications, 1985.
- *Black Feminist Criticism—Perspectives on Black Women Writers*, by Barbara Christian, Pergamon Press, 1985.
- *Most Dangerous Women*, feminist peace campaigners of the great war, by Anne Wiltsher, Pandora, 1985.
- *Fundraising for Social Change*, by Kim Klein, CRG Press, 1985.
- *Going Solo: Single Mothers by Choice*, by Jean Renvoize, Routledge and Kegan Paul Inc., 1985.
- *Cora Sandel: Selected Short Stories*, translated by Barbara Wilson, The Seal Press, 1985.
- *Sex and Germs*, the politics of AIDS, by Cindy Patton, South End Press, 1985.
- *For Alma Mater—Theory and Practice in Feminist Scholarship*, edited by P. Treichler, C. Kramarae and B. Stafford, University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- *Stepping Out of Line*, a workbook on lesbianism and feminism, by Hughes, Johnson and Perreault, Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, BC, 1984.
- *Sexism and the War System*, by Betty A. Reardon, Teachers College Press, 1985.
- *The Sun is not Merciful*, by Anna Lee Walters, Firebrand Books, 1985.
- *The Land of Look Behind*, by Michelle Cliff, Firebrand Books, 1985.
- *Coming to Terms*, by Roberta Israeloff, Penguin Books, 1984.
- *Women & Self-Esteem*, by L.T. Stanford and M.E. Donovan, Penguin Books, 1984.

Classified *Connexions*

Classes

Spanish Education for Women is a language course designed by and for women committed to social justice. Learn Spanish through readings which focus on the lives of Latin American women, through small group and individualized instruction in a simple neighborhood on the outskirts of Guadalajara, Mexico. For more information, contact Spanish Education for Women, P.O. Box 29338, Washington, DC 20017, USA.

Study Theater and Mask Making in Mexico: Teatro Jirones, a Mexican theater group, offers a two week intensive course in theater and mask making and will include short field trips around the Guadalajara area. Groups limited to 10. Spanish not necessary, only the desire to communicate. The cost is \$100 which does not include travel expenses or lodging, but accommodations will be pre-arranged. Plan your summer vacation now! For more information write: Teatro Jirones, PO Box 20221, Oakland, CA 94620 or call (415) 845-0654.

Conferences

Woman To Woman/Mujer A Mujer invites you to participate in a 10-day exchange of experiences with Latin American women in Mexico. A knowledge of Spanish is not necessary. \$300 covers all expenses except roundtrip transportation. Full and partial scholarships are available for community based, grassroots women. Dates: June 12-22, July 3-13, August 29-September 7, November 20-30. For more information, write: Woman to Woman/Mujer a Mujer, 1524 Summit, Little Rock, Arkansas 72202.

Research

The 1986 Florence Howe Award: The Women's Caucus of the Philological Association of the Pacific Coast is soliciting essay manuscripts for the 1986 Florence Howe Award in feminist scholarship. Unpublished essays or essays published in 1985-86 are eligible for submission. For more information, write Anita Westbrod Robinson, Florence Howe Award/PAPC, Balch Hall, Scripps College, Claremont, CA 91711.

Lynn Scott and Pam White are seeking essays for an anthology relating to lesbians' coupling experience. We are asking for writing that expresses the important aspects of the love relationship. Please query with SASE if you are interested and we will send you our letter explaining the project. Write: Lynn Scott and Pam White, 315 Garfield Rd., Concord, MA 01742.

We are lesbians collecting stories of how womyn come out to their mothers. Please send stories and/or inquiries to Carr/Jones/Yates, PO Box 6031, Minneapolis, MN 55406.



Personals

Looking for a penpal? Selling a poster? Organizing a conference? Then your classified belongs here! *Connexions* classifieds reach over 15,000 women for only 30 cents a word. Write *Connexions*, 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609 for more information or send in your ad with payment. Display ad rates also available.

Products

In conjunction with International Women's Day celebrations around the world, the Syracuse Cultural Workers has published a series of six beautiful full color notecards with photographs by Jan Phillips. Order from Syracuse Cultural Workers, Box 6367, Syracuse, NY 13217. Ph: (315) 474-1132. Send 50 cents for our full color catalog of 40 posters, cards and calendars. Wholesale rates available for women's centers, stores and groups.

"Nosotras Trabajamos En La Costura"—Puerto Rican Women in the Garment Industry, a 30-minute radio documentary, is based on the life histories of garment workers currently living in New York City. English and Spanish versions available. Price per copy: \$10 monolingual, \$15 bilingual. Cassette copies available from Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, 695 Park Ave., NY, NY 10021. Order reel-to-reel copies from: National Federation of Community Broadcasters, 1314 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

The Women's Radio Tape Exchange: Want to be part of an international network? Share programs and create new ones for other internationally minded women broadcasters. For more information write or call: WRTE, c/o Jennifer Abod, 159 Pearl St., Cambridge, MA 02139 USA. Ph: (617) 491-6851.

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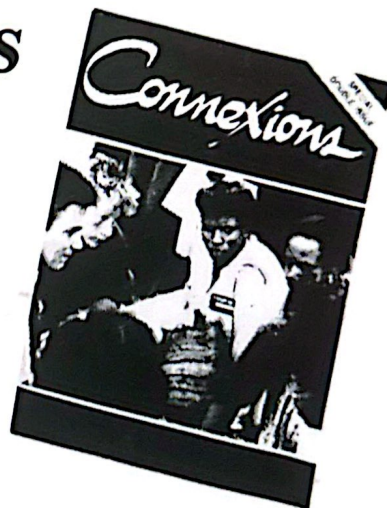
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