African Urban Chiefs: Agents of Stability or Change in African Urban Life?

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RÉSUMÉ

On possède peu de renseignements sur les chefs africains en milieu urbain. Dans le passé, les chefs servaient d'intermédiaires entre les administrateurs et les africains urbanisés. Aujourd'hui l'administration urbaine passe aux mains du gouvernement local. C'est pourquoi la chefferie en milieu urbain est en déclin. La cause en est précisément au rejet de leur *leadership* par les Africains urbanisés. En somme, il ne reste qu'un petit nombre de prérogatives aux chefs traditionnels.

In some of the literature on urban Africa, which has appeared during the last fifteen years, the traditional and modern functions of tribal chiefs or headmen, in both the older or newer urban areas in Africa, have been given some attention. Most of this data is in relation to urban administration, i.e. local government, and, in particular, the administration of justice through specially constituted, official or unofficial, urban African courts. This judicial function has engaged these chiefs in relatively structured activities usually defined under the terms of various ordinances. Less attention has been paid to their less formalized activities which are, nevertheless, of considerable importance. Generally we know little about urban chiefs, a reflection, perhaps, of the declining importance of chieftainship generally (Mair 1958) and in particular of the difficulties of its operation in urban Africa. Nevertheless some observers are agreed that the newly arrived migrant, in particular, as well as some urbanites who have lived in towns for a considerable time, turn to the chiefs for help. (Banton 1957:160), for example, points out that "the tribal immigrant has been conditioned to a way of life largely dependent

upon the institution of chiefship..." Likewise Skinner, writing about Mossi migrants in Ghana, points to the important functions of expatriate Mossi chiefs although his discussion does not deal explicitly with urban chiefs:

> The Mossi chiefs in the Gold Coast played an important mediating role between the migrants and the local population. Very often they functioned as labor recruiters for Ashanti chiefs and cacao farmers, since many migrants sought them out in order to find food, lodging, jobs, protection, and companionship. Even when most Mossi migrants found jobs on their own, they established relationships with Mossi chiefs so that they might have someone to protect them and look after their welfare in the event of trouble, sickness or death. The migrants visited the chiefs whenever they could, giving them a few shillings and occasional help if the chiefs had cacao farms. The Mossi chiefs in turn were expected to — and did — come to the aid of migrants who had disputes over wages with their employers. (Skinner 1965:76)

To understand the operation of urban chieftainship it is important to recognize the varied contexts in which it operates. A major distinction exists between urban chieftaincy in the south and central African towns and such west African towns as Ibadan (Comhaire 1953:14-21). In the former the role and activities of headmen or chiefs are closely regulated by ordinances drawn up by non-African authorities exercising control "felt to be much more direct" than over the rural areas (Mayer 1961:51). In west African towns chieftainships have operated for a considerable time in an indigenous context. Yet another distinction is to be found between the pre- and post-independence situations in which urban chiefs have found themselves. In the pre-independence period the colonial administrations delegated special authority to chiefs who functioned in urban areas (or created chieftaincies were none existed before — Gutkind 1963 — with the result that the basis of their power was rejected by Africans) and used them as a link with the African population while often refusing to give them official recognition (Banton 1954b; Mathews 1940). Urban chiefs frequently represented major tribal groups in town while in some areas no particular provisions were (or are) made for tribally based representation.[1]

[1] The "use" of tribal elders as the basis for the organization of a council of industrial workers (miners) has been well described by Spearpoint (1937).

Contemporary urban administration based on the authority of tribal representation and leadership continues in some areas such as Monrovia (Fraenkel 1964:70-109) and in Ghana among the Mossi migrants (Skinner 1965). The same situation has been described by Acquah for Accra (1958:92:107) and by Busia (1950:74) who wrote about Sekondi-Takoradi (on the basis of a 1948 study): "...old tribal loyalties persist in the new situation of urban life, and put a brake on the development of municipal government along Western lines". (All the members of the Sekondi-Takoradi Council were, then, members of the indigenous Ahanta tribe.) Thus, Acquah writes (1958:97):

> The staff of the [Accra] Council is inter-tribal in composition. In theory, when posts are advertised, the applicant most qualified, irrespective of tribal considerations, is appointed, but whenever there is a sufficiently qualified Ga, the non-Ga does not stand a good chance of being selected. Whenever an important post in the Accra municipality is given to a qualified non-Ga there is regret expressed on the part of Gas that no member of their tribe had the qualifications required.

In the immediate pre-independence, and certainly in the post-independence era, urban populations have come increasingly under modernized township, municipal and city administrations with the objective of unifying and centralizing urban administration (Acquah 1958:98-101). Hence tribal aspirations and pressures have generally found new expression in a large number of political, economic and social associations which are viewed as "adaptational devices" (Little 1965; Morrill 1963). Urban administration based on tribal authority and representation certainly has its supporters — not only among urban chiefs and headmen but also among educated young men (Banton 1957:159). Although today political office is often contested on party lines, few leaders would dare ignore the need to give adequate representation to the major urban tribal groups and those in the immediate hinterland (Acquah 1958:94).

Within the formal structure of local government, councillors, nominated or elected, are replacing urban tribal chiefs and headmen with the result that the status of chiefs is much reduced. This change is favoured by the new African governments, firstly because the forces of African nationalism seek more radical changes than those supported by chiefs, and, secondly, because

the complexity of urban life cannot readily fit into the kind of authority which is rooted in chieftainship which draws its strength from particular (tribal) segments of the urban population (Banton 1957:159, 161). Nevertheless, the system of authority, the enforcement of law and order, the resolution of conflict and all manner of assistance needed by the African urbanite still rests heavily on the shoulders of traditional, and modified traditional, authority. In this sense African urban chieftainship provides an anchorage for social stability and adjustment to urban conditions while at the same time the chief's withdrawal from many traditional functions prepares the urbanite to develop and accept new types of authority. This function is brought out clearly by Banton (1957:160):

> ...it would appear that the indirect contribution they [tribal headmen] make to good order is greater. The existence of recognized Tribal Headmen and their many officials undoubtedly helps the native immigrant to orientate himself to life in Freetown and prevents his being exploited; it gives him a certain security and preserves that informal control of public opinion which is often drowned in the re-adjustment to unfamiliar surroundings.

Most observers are agreed that the functions of urban-based tribal chiefs extend beyond the judicial. Thus, Banton (1957: 143), writing about Freetown, notes:

> ...it soon became apparent that the position of Tribal Headmen had a social importance far exceeding the judicial power of the incumbent. The political structure of each tribe centered round the headman because he was the only recognized tribal official having any authority to represent the tribe, and because the immigrants expectations of the chief's role were largely transferred to him.

The fact that urban chiefs deal with a large number of disputes, most of them of a minor nature, not only relieves the courts of what otherwise would be a very heavy load but without their "controlling influence... social disorder [would be] greater". (Banton 1957:150)

The activities of the *muluka* (parish) chief and his *batongole* (stewards, assistants) in the peri-urban area of Mulago (one of a number of parishes surrounding the town of Kampala) have been described in detail by Southall and Gutkind (1957:183-214). In this study it was pointed out that the parish chiefs "draw upon

an undefined reserve of traditional powers" which do not fit easily into the more formal mechanisms of authority and control required under urban conditions. The problem of social control was analysed as follows:

> There are two major facets to this problem. In what may be called the primitive situation there are always well organised small scale groups based on the family, descent groups, neighbourhood units and associations of a very localised type. All of these groups have a large stable core, the personnel of which changes comparatively slowly and mainly in accordance with the natural cycle of birth, mating and death, the cultural interpretation of which is closely integrated with the structure of the social groups and their recruitment. Hostilities and tensions engendered within these small groups are usually projected with considerable success outside them. This creates a high degree of internal cohesion. It is difficult for the average individual to commit what are considered as major wrongs on fellow members of his own group, and such outbreaks as may occur are provided for by generally accepted formal procedures of restitution and reconciliation, which are easily enforced by the weight of opinion of those on whom the individual relies for his own security. The projection of hostilities outside the small groups increases the frequency of breaches between them, but here too, there is in such systems some recognition of mutual bounds and responsibilities, and breaches are healed by methods which have the sanction of familiar and jointly accepted custom and tradition. Although this type of system is inadequate for the maintenance of order over wide areas, it evidently provides individuals with the minimum security considered necessary for the leading of a normal life in a very small-scale society. But it is a system that inhibits change, and is in fact destroyed by it.
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> In more complex societies the mechanisms continue to operate, but are supplemented by more specialised means of enforcement. Chiefs, nobles and other persons with some degree of concentrated power are able to maintain order over much wider areas. This wider order is accepted by the community as a whole because both the institutions and the persons through which the order is enforced and maintained are recognised as belonging to the same social and beliefs and general values there is a community of sentiment which renders this enforcement of order acceptable to the majority as a morally right and desirable supplement to the traditional small group system which continues to operate within the wider framework. (Southall & Gutkind 1957:211-12)

While this analysis appeared to be particularly appropriate in the context of Ganda society, the literature on urban Africa gives this particular theoretical formulation wider applicability. Everywhere urban local governments are forced to work within

the "primitive situation" — the social cohesion of the tradition-oriented small scale groups — while at the same time the African urbanite, urban administrator and African urban associations create institutional arrangements more appropriate to the particular conditions now characteristic of town life. For urban chiefs and headmen these circumstances produce a complex and ambigous situation. On the one hand they must continue to exercise their duties within the context of tradition — itself no longer always clearly understood — while at the same time they are faced with wholly non-traditional urban conditions. These conditions are well known and by far the most significant are the considerable ethnic heterogeneity, the instability brought about by constant mobility in and out of the town and the difficulties facing marriage and the family. A central problem is therefore how people socialized in a traditional context adjust to and manipulate urban conditions over which they have little or no control.

During a period of eleven months, from June 1957 to April 1958, while I was engaged in research in the peri-urban parish of Mulago, the chief of this parish kept — most conscientiously — a diary of his daily activities. In studying the events in which he was engaged, it became quite evident that as a chief he sought to act as a source of traditional stability while at the same time acting as an agent of change and modernization. The most obvious demonstration of this is a rather remarkable entry in his diary in which he describes his difficulties in being "both a good chief and a chief able to help his people in modern times". (Luganda: *unaku zino ebiro*).

> I think that it is no good being a chief now. My father was a *muluka* (parish) chief before me and he had less trouble. He did not have to take orders from so many people. He was respected and I am not. Town people abuse their chiefs and do not listen to them because chiefs know better than ordinary people (*abakope* = peasants). Chiefs can help people to understand modern times but in modern times everybody wants to do what is best for them and they think that chiefs want to keep them always in the past so that the chiefs are always powerful. But I do not want to do this. Our Government [the Buganda Government] has told us that we must all get an education because we need money. I always tell all the people in this parish that if they want to live in the past they will harm their children because everybody needs an education.

Mr. H. and Mr. P. came to see me last week and they asked me to settle a problem between them because Mr. H. had accused Mr. P. of stealing his wife which he had not married according to the rules of the Ganda — I knew that. So I said to them that if they were educated they would not fight and quarrel like this and told them to come back to me when they had decided to live like educated men *[okugunjuka abantu]*.

I always read in the newspapers about people in other countries and I learn that they have become big and powerful because they have set apart *[okutereka]* their traditions from the new life they now have. I think that that too is our duty as chiefs of the people. (September 19th, 1957)

On another occasion he wrote about his advice to the people of Mulago to impress upon them the need to get smallpox vaccinations:

Today I and my *batongole* (headmen) visited many houses in Mulago. I was told to tell the people that if they did not wish to get smallpox then they should all go to the Mulago Hospital to get vaccinated *[okusala emikono]* against this terrible disease. Some people listened to me and I gave them a piece of paper to take to the Medical Officer in Charge. But many other people were very ignorant and stupid *[esirusiru]* and I know that they won't go.

So I told them that they can keep their old ideas but they should then not come to me for any help when they are in trouble. This shows what a difficult time I am having in doing my job. I have told the *omukulu we kibuga* (chief of the town) how very stupid many people are in my parish. He asked me whether they were Ganda or other people and I told him that Ganda are always more educated than the visitors *[omigenyi]* i.e. non-Ganda.

I have a great deal of trouble with people who are not Ganda. They do not have the same customs as we do. They do not know how to live in towns because they have always lived in the wilderness *[eddungu]*. But I think that the chief must also tell them how to live in the town because now that they are here they are the cause of a great deal of trouble. If they do not respect a Ganda chief they must leave and build their own town somewhere else. (January 27th, 1958)

On another occasion the chief writes vividly about how difficult it is for him to be a chief in the town.

To be a chief in the *kibuga* (town) is very difficult. It is not the same as in the village. There are many people who live in the town and I do not know all of them. I do not think that I will ever

know them all but my father once told me that he knew everybody in his village. I can go from door to door in Mulago and see new people I have never seen before. Many of them do not come to see me when they first come to Mulago. If they respect the chief they should come. There are some people who do not speak Luganda so they do not understand what I tell them. I must then go to another person of his tribe who does understand Luganda. All this takes time and I do not get paid well enough for all this trouble.

There are many people living in Mulago who do not have a marriage and they just pick up women whenever they can find one who wants food and nice clothing. These young men abuse women but there are also some bad women who abuse the men. I have much trouble in the *lukiko* (council) every week about men and women who fight each other.

I think if we had better conditions in our parish our troubles will be over. We have little water and it is far away and our shopkeepers do not serve us well. Many people do not buy in Mulago but they go to Kampala to the European shops. You can only buy matches and bananas in our shops and some of the shopkeepers are rude and they swindle the people.

I have been in Mulago now for two years and so many people have come and so many have gone. I hear my cases every Saturday, unless I am on other official duties, but the people are not getting better. They always fight and they steal and they often abuse each other. (February 7th, 1958)

These extracts will, I think, suffice to make the point that African urban chiefs are tied into a complex system which they find immensely difficult to handle. The tensions which arise are not easily resolved within the structure of traditional authority as the events and circumstances which give rise to these tensions spring from conditions which have no referant in traditional methods of resolving conflicts and maintaining unity. As a consequence urban chiefs devise their own informal means of handling complex situations — means which are not acceptable to many urbanites as the following comments made by an association of Ganda shopkeepers in Mulago clearly indicate:

We, the Ganda shopkeepers in Mulago, wish to protest at the way the chief is enforcing his authority over us. He abuses us and tells us that we must do what he tells us. He has told us that he will withdraw our permits [to sell] unless we keep our shops clean and give honest trade. This is no business of the chief. He does not give us our permit. We get these from the *omugulu we kibuga*

and he has more authority than the parish chief. We know how to do our business and the previous chief never interfered in our work that is why the people of Mulago come to our shops. But now all the people are going to shops of the Europeans in Kampala and that is because he has told the people of this village that our shops are bad and dirty. He has also told us that we are stupid and don't know anything about commercial subjects.

We are sending a copy of this letter to the *omukulu we kibuga* and to the *saza* (county) chief so that they may know of our complaints. We do not object to paying taxes, which the chief must collect, but we do object that Mr. S. [the parish chief] always lectures to us and tells us what to do.

Mr. S. is a Muganda and he should know what our customs are. He always talks badly about us. We think that a good chief will be liked by the people because he is like a teacher. But Mr. S. is not a good teacher because he does not understand us.

These conflicts arise largely because urban chiefs in particular are tied to two types of social systems — the modern and the modified traditional. Furthermore, in heterogeneous urban situations their authority must be acceptable to a large number of tribal groups and as this is often unacceptable, tribally-based authority develops. In addition, the chief's authority, whether it be over a tribally mixed group or over his tribal group alone, rests largely on the amount of support he can muster — a fact which is recognized in the various ordinances designed to legitimize his authority. A chief who is helpful in formal and informal situations is no doubt more popular than a chief who simply defines his duty as enforcement of the law even though he attempts to strike a careful balance between his prerogatives and the expectations of the ruled.[2] The difficulties which arise stem largely from the fact that boundaries between traditional and

[2] Fallers (1955:302) has pointed to the "high casualty rate among chiefs" as they are expected to be both civil servants and kinsmen. The urban chief appears to be particularly exposed to this dilemma as he is constantly called upon to add new administrative functions on top of traditional ones. In this sense Fallers is right when he says: "Institutions are constantly getting in each others' way, and individuals are constantly being institutionally required to do conflicting things". (p. 292) In the racially more complex situation in southern Africa the position of African chiefs has been characterised as "intercalary" i.e. "those positions occupied by persons who link two opposed parts in an authoritarian system" (Mitchell 1959:16). See also: Gluckman 1949:93-94 and Wilson and Mafeje 1963:143-152.

non-traditional situations are nowadays most unclear. When a chief is asked for help and advice in the context of what could be defined as a traditional situation, his authority is generally accepted largely because the traditional relationship between a chief and his people has been maintained. However, as urban Africans are drawn into commercial and industrial activities tribal authority is no longer relevant. Mair (1958:198-199) has pointed out that:

> The chief has ceased to be the ultimate source of protection to the humble, aid to the needy and advancement to the ambitious. It is not simply that the superior government has taken his place, but that the new world offers opportunities which depend on the creation of relationships right outside the traditional system. People can attain success in commerce, or eminence in the professions, without being beholden in any way to their political superiors, and in these fields the chiefs often could not compete with them. In these circumstances, resentment against the rule of chiefs is something more than a protest against injustice, even though it may express itself in that form. It is part of a wider demand: the demand for full participation in the institutions which control the destinies of Africans.

Epstein (1958) has shown clearly where the authority of the Tribal Elders on the Copperbelt ended and where that of the trade union leaders, for example, began. A primary school teacher living in Mulago brought out this distinction very clearly in an interview:

> To me, and lots of other people who have had some education, a chief is still an important person. I will go to the chief when other authorities cannot help me. When I wanted to send some money to a friend of mine who lived close to the village in which the chief had lived I went to him and asked whether he knew of anyone going that way. I did this because I knew that I could trust a person recommended by the chief to be honest and to deliver the money safely. But there are not many occasions like that. When recently there was a bad fight in our area and people were knifing each other, I ran to the local police station for help because I knew that the chief's actions would be useless.
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> I am more educated than the chief and the work I do is not understood by him. He cannot help me in my profession or to get me a better job. The political leaders are more important. Modern government is not always understood by small chiefs who will never become important. When I have a disagreement with a neighbour who accuses me of terrible things I don't go to the chief for help. I just

ignore my attacker or try to solve it in the best way I can myself. If the chief gives me some instructions what to do, such as clearing up my courtyard or not playing my radio too loudly, I try to obey his instructions but I do this only because I know myself that I ought to do these things.

Even less educated residents of the parish draw a clear distinction between traditional and contemporary functions of the urban chief. Thus a Ganda woman with only four years of primary education, who came about once a month to visit her husband, a carpenter, put it this way:

> In my village we all accept that the chief is there to help us. It would be very foolish to fight the chief because he has prestige and power. He knows us and we know him. When we have trouble we go to him and he helps us. He knows what everyone is doing all the time *because we all do the same things all the time* (my italics).
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> But in the town it is different. Many people come to the town because they want to do what they really like. The town chief cannot allow that. In the town you do not ask a chief to protect you or to solve your fights with other people. The police are here to help you. My husband is a carpenter and this is a big and important work but the chief only knows about cultivators. He does not know about skilled work.
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> There are now some political parties in Kampala and I think they are more important than the chiefs because chiefs cannot get us more money but the political leaders can.

Thus the chief is caught in a difficult situation. Mair (1958: 199) sums it up as follows:

> In this situation the chief can be looked at in two ways. He is an individual doing his best to retain the advantages which his status used to bring him, and sometimes coming into conflict with the new leaders in the process, but he is also a symbol, a rallying point for likeminded persons. At different times the chiefs have been found to symbolize different aspects of the complex modern situation. This is the reason why the same chiefs may be objects of hostility at one moment and of vociferous loyalty at the next, and also why the same persons may appear to be successively, or even simultaneously, opponents and supporters of the recognition of hereditary authority.

Non-Ganda are in quite a different position in Mulago. Being treated as rather unwelcome visitors they have to submit to the authority of the Ganda parish chief who treats them with stern

authority which invariably causes considerable difficulties (Gutkind 1962). To them urban chiefs appear all powerful as is indicated in these comments by a Toro office messenger who lived in Mulago for fourteen months:

> I am far away from my country and have not been home for a long time. I live here among my other Toro friends and we look after each other. When we have trouble among us we first decide what to do and if we are still fighting then we go to Mr. S. [the parish chief]. He does not speak our language but we understand him because we can speak Luganda. He is very sharp with us but he tries to help us. He first tells us that as foreigners we should not cause so much trouble and stop abusing and fighting each other. Mr. S. often threatens us with the police and says that he will ask the *omukulu we kibuga* to send us home. We know that he cannot do that against us, but he says he can.
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> The other day I had to go to him because a thief had broken into my house. I reported it to him but he kept me waiting all Sunday afternoon before he spoke to me. He then told me that he could not give me a letter to the *omukulu we kibuga* because I had no witnesses. He just told me to find someone to prove that I had owned the things which were stolen.
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> My [Toro] friend met a Ganda woman in a bar last week and she agreed to come to live with him. She stayed one night and in the morning asked for Shs. 10/—. But this was not the agreement my friend made. He wanted her to cook for him. The lady went to the chief and reported that my friend had beaten her. Mr. S. came to his house in the evening and asked him for an explanation. He told my friend that he had no business beating a Ganda woman and that if this happened again he would be reported to the [then] Protectorate Police.

Some of the non-Ganda groups have their own tribal associations, notably the Luo and the Rwanda. Non-Ganda often lodge complaints with their associations about the treatment they receive from their Ganda hosts. Thus in December 1957 the Rwanda Association wrote to the parish chief of Mulago about the complaint of one of their members who claimed that he had been refused a hearing by him. The Rwanda wanted to lodge a complaint against a Ganda shopkeeper who had given him short weight. The letter concluded as follows:

> We ask that you treat us fairly and that you show us the same respect that you show the Baganda men and women. Our people

> respect the law as well as others. If you visit our country you will be welcome. We shall not hate or despise you. (Gutkind 1957, field-notes)

All this perhaps says no more than to note the fact that the functions of chiefs are changing and that urban chiefs in particular are called upon to carry out their duties knowing that a large section of the population pay scant attention to them while some are outright antagonistic. As the African urbanite generally obtains his living in a different manner from the rural dweller and hence must seek different solutions to the problems he faces, he progressively turns to those authorities and leaders who hold before him the prospect of social, economic and political advancement. Unless the chief uses his formal and informal authority to aid the urbanite to advance within the urban system, his position will increasingly be relegated to a ceremonial role.

But even this position is no longer respected by many urban Africans. Mafeje (1963), in a particularly insightful documentation, has shown how the visit of a Tembu chief to Cape Town aroused violent opposition by many migrants who felt "that chieftainship is an anachronism". Some said that "they had no time to waste on chiefs... [and] are no longer prepared to receive a chief". Chieftaincy in urban areas has to battle with the forces of westernization which have —

> completely undermined the position of the chief and other tribal dignitaries. In the urban areas, the breeding place of African nationalism, this process is so advanced that it cannot be reversed. In town in his daily life, the African is in contact with modern civilization, and shows great readiness to accept it. So, the African society is following a path of development that is very similar to that of most of the European societies. (p. 96)

The inability of chiefs, as chiefs, to understand the difficulties urban Africans face was brought out clearly by one agitated speaker at the meeting called to welcome the chief: "It is a good thing that you have come to town so that you may see for yourself what is happening; go home and tell them that we are still surviving, though between the flesh and the nail (i.e. in a tight corner)." (p. 93) Another speaker appeared to challenge the view that chiefs exist in their own right:

> The people are convinced that there are no more chiefs. I want to ask you, as a chief, do we exist? I would like to remind you that, traditionally, it is not the people who are made for the chief, but it is the chief who is made for them. In fact, the chief is a chief by the grace of the people. I want to be frank with you. You should not listen to all the flattery you have been subjected to this afternoon. Take it from me, the Thembu are not at all happy about your presence here. Do you think that if they were pleased, there would be so few of them here today? Please, let us not fool ourselves, we are not children. (p. 93)

Pauw (1963:26), on the other hand, reports a case of a rural chieftainness who was cordially received in East London.

These attitudes, and divisions, in African urban society help to explain the present position of the urban chief. Theoretically a number of recent studies have drawn a sharp distinction between those who are committed to urban life and see their future in salaried or wage employment, and those who reject change and modern ways of the town either out of choice or because they are unable to reach above the lowest levels of employment and earning power (Mayer 1961; Pauw 1963; Powdermaker 1962:291-305). Powdermaker (1962:292), for example, has suggested the following hypothesis:

> Individuals committed to the new moral order have faith in eventual rewards from it and an ego sufficiently strong to accept the risks and anxieties which always accompany change; they have a desire for the more personal autonomy inherent in the new order and do not always think in terms of opposing polarities. Conversely, the intransigents do not have the same characteristics or possess them to a much smaller degree.

It might be possible to apply a typological analysis to various types of urban chieftainship. In a forthcoming article I set out some of the main educational and attitudinal differences of fourteen parish chiefs in the peri-urban area which surrounds Kampala. It is clear from this data that at least nine of these chiefs interpreted their functions in a traditional or neo-traditional manner. The remainder saw their functions rather like the parish chief of Mulago referred to earlier in this paper. Preliminary study of the data also showed that residents in those parishes furthest from the centre of Kampala, i.e. within a three to four mile radius, looked to the chief in much the same manner as in rural Buganda. This

is so because the political and economic basis of chieftainship prevailing in these parishes is not basically different from that of the rural areas (Richards 1960; Southwold 1961). In contrast, in those parishes contiguous with or within a one to two miles radius of the centre of Kampala, the chiefs viewed their duties in a more modernist manner simply because typical urban conditions prevailed. The view the residents had of what a chief should be and do also varied considerably. However, simply because they took a more modern approach to their duties did not necessarily make them more popular or better chiefs.

Thus the future of African urban chiefs appears to be primarily determined by two important sets of variables: 1) their ability to meet the needs (both in traditional and modern terms) of an increasingly heterogeneous, and increasingly stratified, urban African population and 2) the attitudes of the latter towards the urban chiefs. To the traditionalist, or as Mayer has characterised such people — the incapsulated —, the urban chief will continue to provide a major social and political anchorage. This is likely to be particularly so in such urban areas dominated by one or two major tribal groups which have captured economic, political and social power at the expense of smaller tribal groups. Among them occupational mobility is generally low and their comittment to urban life is less certain. Such groups comprise a far larger percentage of highly mobile migrants. Under such conditions, as among the Mossi, the urban chiefs can, and usually do, offer the migrant the kind of help he wants and needs. Banton (1954b:141-142) states quite explicitly:

> In most of the tribes represented in Freetown the institution of chiefship plays a central role. The natives look to their chief or headman for a variety of services and it will be a long time before other institutions can take over all his functions.

This is so because "the indirect contribution they [headmen] make to good order is the greater, for the infrastructure of tribal institutions is better adapted to the needs of the people than office-made rules can ever be".

Whether or not the migrant turns away from acceptance of the authority of the chief seems to depend not only on situational factors and on the economic, social and educational niche the

migrant is in (Acquah 1958: 103-104), but also on the "determinants that lie behind the choices" he makes as to whether or not to be an urbanite.[3] Thus Mayer (1962:591) writes:

> It seems sometimes to have been implied that prolonged residence in the "atmosphere" of town will automatically tend to "change" people and make them "urbanized". East London does not bear this out. There, while some are born "urban", and others achieve urbanization, none can be said to have urbanization thrust upon them. There is a power of choice; some of the migrants begin to change; but others voluntarily incapsulate themselves in something as nearly as possible like the tribal relations from which their migration could have liberated them. The study of urbanization of migrants... is a study of such choices and of the determinants that lie behind the choices.

The position of urban chiefs, as agents of stability or change must therefore be analysed closely within the total context and the specific patterns of urban life. Chiefs, rural or urban, represent an important feature of African society (or their counterparts in non-chiefly societies) whose functions are embedded in the basic rules of obedience and authority, social control and administrative action and ritual and ceremonial activities. To many urban Africans, chiefs and headmen continue to give expression to these functions but progressively the former live and work in an institutional complex which compels them to look to the type of leadership and authority able to deal effectively with the wholly non-traditional conditions characteristic of most of the newer African towns. Thus, in 1958 Acquah observed:

> Today, in Accra, the chiefs' functions are mainly ceremonial. They play a major role in tribal festivals. In some measure they assist in the maintenance of law and order through their position as arbitrators. In spite of the fact that the municipal council in now the sole authority, many Gas and non-Gas in Accra take their troubles and grievances to the chiefs for them to settle. ...Whether they have as deep an influence on the lives of their subjects today as they had before... is a wide field for study... (p. 101)

Likewise, Mayer (1961:54) reporting on the position of headmen in the urban locations in East London, writes:

[3] A good deal of the above discussion is, of course, closely related to the functions of tribalism in urban social organization and social interaction. The significance of tribalism as a particular kind of social interaction is perceptively analysed in a number of publications by Mitchell (1959, 1960), Gluckman (1960a, 1960b, 1961) and Mercier (1961).

> Lacking confidence in the effectiveness of the official "intercalary" authorities [of location headmen], the migrants in town are tempted to turn to others who act the part unofficially or even illegally. In the seats of White power... a number of Xhosa are employed in subsidiary capacities as clerks, constables and so forth. Because of their nearness to the source of power, these are regarded by many location people as key figures. Most migrants appear to be firmly convinced that the good will of the man who actually wields the rubber stamp is vital...

At the same time Mayer (1961:72) also reports that migrants are frequently at odds with the established urbanite because the latter completely reject the authority of the chiefs. Extensive case studies should now be carried out to determine the conditions under which the functions and authority of urban chiefs are rejected and those conditions under which they are acceptable to urban Africans.

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