The Urban African and his World
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By millions, Africans have been moving from rural areas into cities. The rate of urbanization has been increasing, and there is no sign of a decline. Leaving their homes and traditional way of life, they face a new setting in an urban environment.

In South Africa, cities founded by white settlers are being swelled by Bantu from the reserves, despite the policy of apartheid and to the increasing discomfiture of its proponents. Johannesburg, the largest city south of the Sahara, is over a million, Cape Town over 700,000, Durban over 600,000, Pretoria over 400,000, and Port Elizabeth over 200,000. Benoni, Bloemfontein, East London, Germiston, Springs, and Vereeniging-Vanderbiljpark in the Union of South Africa, Lourenço-Marques in Mozambique, and Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia have passed 100,000, and Salisbury is over 200,000. Before the Europeans arrived, the Africans of this region lived in scattered homesteads. There were regimental camps and tribal capitals whose populations numbered in the thousands, or perhaps tens of thousands, but which lacked the permanency of cities. Capitals were moved to new sites each time a new ruler was installed, and men left the regimental camps to marry and establish their own homes when their military service was completed.

Three centuries ago the population of San Salvador, Angola, the capital of the Bakongo empire, was estimated at 70,000 but soon afterwards it declined in size and importance. Luanda, which was founded by the Portuguese in 1573, now exceeds 200,000.

Leopoldville, now approaching 500,000, had passed 300,000 by 1954, increasing six fold in less than twenty years; only 50,000 of the 300,000 inhabitants were born in the city, most of whom were children. Nairobi in Kenya and Khartoum-Omdurman in the Sudan are over 200,000, and the 100,000 mark has been passed by Elizabethville, Luluaburg, Stanleyville, and Brazzaville in the two Congos, Dar-es-
Salaam in Tanganyika, Mombasa in Kenya, and Douala in the Cameroun. Throughout most of this part of Africa also there had been no cities before the arrival of white settlers, miners, traders, missionaries, and colonial officials, due in large part to the practice of shifting agriculture. African villages were moved as the soil became exhausted or for other reasons, precluding large, stable settlements.

In West Africa, Dakar expanded from 54,000 in 1931 to 300,000 in 1960, only a century after it was founded by the French in 1857. The 100,000 mark has been passed by Bamako in Mali, Conakry in Guinée, Freetown in Sierra Leone, Abidjan in the Ivory Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi in Ghana, while Accra is approaching 500,000. In Nigeria, Ibadan probably exceeds 500,000 today and Lagos 300,000, while four other Yoruba cities and Kano had passed 100,000 by 1952.

Some of these cities are also new, but West Africa had cities before the advent of Europeans, some dating back at least a thousand years. In the Western Sudan, inland from the Guinea Coast, there were Kumbi and Kangaba, capitals of the ancient empires of Ghana and Mali. The latter is a small village today, and the former extinct; but other ancient cities still exist: Kano, Sokoto, Wagadugu, Gao, Segu, Jenne, and Timbuctoo. And along the Guinea Coast there were Kumasi in the Ghana of today, and Benin and the Yoruba cities in Nigeria.

Africa had its cities before the outside forces from Europe impinged upon it, south of the Sahara as well as in Egypt and North Africa. These outside forces caused the decline of some ancient cities, the expansion of others, and the development of what I call here the new or modern cities. Some of the new cities are several centuries old, but they were founded by Europeans since the period of exploration.

These new cities, and many smaller ones that have not been mentioned, have developed as important ports, as in the case of Cape Town and Dakar, as governmental headquarters like Leopoldville, Pretoria, Salisbury, and Nairobi, and as mining centers like Johannesburg and Elizabethville. Railroads have contributed to the development of smaller cities, and to the growth of the larger ones, but none of the largest new cities has developed solely as the result of either railroads or trade. Similarly industrialization, in the sense of manufacturing as distinguished from mining and shipping, does not in itself explain the development of any city over 100,000 in Africa south of the Sahara. It has been important in South Africa and the Congo, and it will become increasingly important in other parts of Africa, but it is both a recent and a localized cause of urban growth.

There are, then, two kinds of African cities, the old and the new, both of which are rapidly expanding. And there are two kinds of urban Africans, those who have moved to the cities from rural areas,
and those who were born and raised in the city, who have married and raised their families in the city, who will live their lives, and will die and be buried there with their ancestors. The "urban worlds" of these two kinds of urban Africans are quite different. We will discuss first the recent migrants to the urban environment.

All over the continent and in increasing numbers, Africans have been moving into the cities from farms and villages. Some come voluntarily, in hopes of a better standard of living and in search of novel goods and new experiences which are not provided in the rural "tribal" setting in which they were born and raised. Some come out of desperation, when their land becomes too poor or too crowded to support them, and they see nowhere else to turn. Many come only temporarily to earn money to pay taxes, or to buy imported goods for their own satisfaction. Some spend a considerable part of their life in the city, but return to their rural homes to spend their old age and be buried.

What they find in the city, and what happens to them, depends in part on the city they go to and the country in which they live. The tragic picture of urban life in Johannesburg, South Africa, under apartheid, has been tellingly portrayed by Ellen Hellman, a sociologist, in her study of Rooiyard. A Sociological Survey of an Urban Native Slum Yard, Wulf Sachs, a psychoanalyst, in Black Hamlet, Alan Paton, a novelist, in Cry the Beloved Country, and Trevor Huddleston, a priest, in Naught for Your Comfort. The frustrations of Africans to whom the attractions of European life were denied, particularly in Nairobi, made themselves known through the Mau-Mau uprisings in Kenya, and may well have added fuel to the recent conflict in the Congo. The gayety, bustle, and the temptations of Lagos, as well as the disillusionment and cynicism of those who move there are being described by Nigerian writers themselves.

The cities also attract the educated Africans, students from universities and schools who do not wish to return to their fathers' farms. And children are sent to the cities of West Africa to attend school or to learn a trade. They were focal points for nationalist movements for independence, and, after independence, have remained more concerned with national problems than the rural areas, where traditional rivalries between ethnic groups and sub-groups persist. The cities are a hope for a national unity that transcends the traditional boundaries of language and culture.

The process of urbanization has created new problems, and urban life for Africans has its seamy side. Many men who go to the cities leave their wives and children on the farms, some hoping to bring them to the cities eventually. But high rents and the scarcity of housing for Africans, aggravated in some areas by segregated patterns
of residence, may make it difficult for their families to join them. The more rapid the process of urbanization and the more restrictive the policies of segregation, the more difficult this problem is. In the rural areas, the wives, the children, and the aged who are left behind must take care of the farms and do the work that is normally performed by young men. This creates hardship on individuals and often leads to shortages of food.

Unmarried men also go to the cities in search of work, so that many cities have a preponderance of young men, but few women, children, or elderly people. On the mining camps, there may be no quarters for wives and children, to say nothing of polygynous wives and their children, and there may be regulations which prohibit wives and children from accompanying their husbands. On the gold fields of Witwatersrand, in the Union of South Africa, Phillips found that less than one percent of all Africans had their wives with them.

In cities and in mining camps a common result is prostitution, or at least extra-marital relations which are condemned by the codes of both African and European society. The disproportion of males and females, in both urban and in rural areas, has undermined and weakened the family and, particularly in urban areas, extra-marital relations result in children born out of wedlock by mothers who cannot or do not give them proper attention.

Juvenile delinquency, which was practically unknown on the farms and villages and even in the traditional African cities with little immigration, is becoming a problem in the new and rapidly growing African cities. Statistics from Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia for a five year period (1939-43) showed no general upward trend in the number of juveniles charged, but an increasing number of these charged with more serious offenses. Juvenile delinquency, as distinct from petty crimes by first offenders, was increasing. Charges of theft and house-breaking were responsible for more than half of the prosecutions, and a number of African juveniles were developing into habitual thieves. This study cited unsatisfactory home control as the main factor contributing to juvenile delinquency, due to the breakdown of family life, and lack of parental control, loose living by one or both parents, unsatisfactory care of orphans, or crowded and unsatisfactory living conditions. In this study poverty was considered as a cause of many cases of theft, but not the sole factor, and the lack of adequate leisure activities and of schooling and educational discipline were considered only as contributing factors.

A study of juvenile delinquency in West Africa, in what is now Ghana, showed a ten percent increase in juvenile offenders over a period of ten years (1936-45). This increase, and in fact eighty percent of the total offenses for this period, were accounted for by offenses
against property by boys in five large cities. The same proportion was found in the sample of delinquents selected for intensive study, with most of the offenses being petty thefts by individuals, or less frequently by gangs. Again, there was no evidence that poverty alone was a cause of delinquency, although it played a secondary role, while boys from better-class homes were more prone to become recidivists. More than half the boys in the sample had attended school at some time, though very few had risen above junior schools. More important, children whose parents were dead or separated were significantly more frequent among delinquents; delinquents came from families which were significantly smaller than the control group; and the majority of offenses in the large towns were committed by boys who had come from rural areas, that is whose families had recently moved to the city. Rates of juvenile delinquency and other social disorders are useful measures of change; although increasing in Africa, they are still far below the rates in European and American cities.

The new cities of Africa usually bring Africans into contact, not only with European culture, but with other African cultures as well. In Poto-Poto, the main African town of Brazzaville with 55,000 inhabitants, less than ten percent of whom were born in that city, Balandier found over 60 ethnic groups from other parts of French Africa, plus immigrants from other African territories. And Busia found representatives of more than 60 different ethnic groups in Takoradi-Sekondi in 1950 in what is now Ghana. The new city provides an opportunity for acculturation to other African traditions, as well as to Western forms.

Western observers, living in or visiting Africa’s new cities, have often spoken of the detribalization that accompanies urbanization, and at one time detribalization was considered as a natural consequence of urbanization. Seeing Africans going to work as bookkeepers, stenographers, and clerks in European shops and offices, seeing them dressed in European clothes and engaged in European leisure-time activities, may give the impression that urban Africans have cut their ties with the past, that they have left both the society and the culture of their parents, and that they are without either in the new context of the city.

In her early and important work on urban Africans in “Rooiyyard”, which was evacuated for a furniture factory before the study was published, Ellen Hellman concluded that “the rapidity and completeness of the process of detribalisation has been exaggerated.” She writes:

“Much is heard nowadays of the detribalised Native and the great increase in detribalisation. In every discussion dealing with the Native, the cry is raised: ‘But what of the detribalised Native?’ So much so that there is a
widespread impression that the majority of urban and many rural Natives are
detribalised. The growth of this concept, dangerous because the term 'detribal-
isation' is not defined and is not used to convey any definite meaning, but rather
a host of vague impressions, is gradually tending to merge the meanings of the
terms 'detribalisation' and 'Europeanisation.' That the process of detribal-
isation and of assimilation to Western civilisation are not one and the same is
shown by a more careful analysis of a sample of urban population such as the
Natives of Rooiyard.

"The average European would unhesitatingly classify these Natives as
detribalised. And in doing so he would advance as proof the numerous mani-
festations of the adoption of European material culture which he would perceive
in Rooiyard. But what is detribalisation? I have taken as my standard the
following three criteria: permanent residence in an area other than that of the
chief to whom a man would normally pay allegiance; complete severance of the
relationship to the chief; and independence of rural relatives both for support
during periods of unemployment and ill-health or for performance of ceremonies
connected with the major crises of life."

According to her definition, Hellman found few detribalized
Africans in this slum yard of Johannesburg. Most were only tempo-
rary urban residents who had come to the city to earn money to pay
taxes or to buy goods, and hoped to spend their old age in their rural
homes. Of 100 families, 13 had lived in Rooiyard for more than four
years, 27 for periods of one to four years, and 60 for less than one year
with an average residence of only five months. Of these 100 families,
74 maintained direct connections with rural families, either through
having their children reared by relatives at home or by sending a
part or the whole of their families to their rural homes. The doctor-
diviner of the city also served as a link with the rural areas by stressing
the ties of kinship with both the living relatives and the dead ancestors.

Yet the effects of acculturation can hardly be exaggerated. Euro-
pean material culture was being rapidly and sometimes indiscriminately
absorbed. The disintegrating effects of urban conditions were
nowhere more apparent than in the change in family relationship,
with an undermining of the permanence of marriage, the exclusiveness
of the sexual bond, kinship obligations, and parental control. Ille-
gitimacy was accepted, but not condoned. In religion, the inhabitants
of Rooiyard hesitated between two worlds, their own and that of the
European, secure in neither. Magic, which gave them a sense of
security and power, retained its force. All Rooiyard families were
technically criminals, because the brewing of beer, which was a
traditional duty of a wife for her husband and an economic necessity
in the city, was illegal.

Traditional African culture had not disappeared in Rooiyard.
Native custom still flourished despite the unfavorable circumstances
in which its inhabitants lived, yet a new feeling of unity with other
Bantu speaking peoples was developing. Tribal loyalties and rivalries
had not been forgotten, which is not surprising considering the short residence in the city, but a broader sense of loyalty was beginning as the result of intermarriage and common disillusionment, suffering, and persecution.

When Africans first move to the city, they are isolated from their relatives, even if they maintain contact with them. They are separated from the lineage, which is the most important kinship group in African societies. Yet when others follow them to the city, they try to settle near a lineage member, and it is in terms of lineages that relatives are invited to the city and that they try to find housing. In the course of time it is possible for the lineage to be reestablished in the new urban setting, if only on a skeletal basis, and as this happens it is possible to reestablish control over marriage and childcare, and to find a decline in extra-marital relations and in juvenile delinquency. From what is known of the traditional African cities, it is not unreasonable to expect that this may happen in the newer cities in time.

When Africans move to the city, and have no relatives there, they at least try to settle near someone who speaks their own language, and if possible the same dialect, or someone who comes from their own village. In many new cities, ethnic groupings develop which bring together people of similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, although scarcity of housing may make this impossible or cause established groupings of this kind to break down. Even where ethnic or linguistic groupings cannot live together, they usually maintain contact. In the unfamiliar and often unfriendly settings of the city, traditional rivalries and antagonisms between peoples who are basically similar in language and culture are diminished at least temporarily, and a feeling of solidarity may develop which is far stronger than in the rural situations.

As ethnic groups grow larger, new types of voluntary associations may be established, based on ties of ethnic origin, occupation, or common interests, and devoted to mutual benefit, entertainment and recreation, or other interests. Some of these, particularly the “tribal unions” or “improvement societies undertake to advise and guide local politics back home, democratizing traditional councils, urging better roads and other amenities, and giving the chief the benefit of the wisdom and broader experience of the select few who are more familiar with city life and European ways. If relations with the chief have been severed, they are reestablished, but in a new, advisory role.

The literature on these tribal unions or improvement societies implies that they have developed as a means of aiding recent immigrants to adjust to life in the new urban setting, and they clearly fulfill this function as Little has pointed out. However, they are not restricted to the new cities of Africa nor to Africans who have recently
moved into them. In the ancient Yoruba city of Ife in Nigeria, an improvement society of this type was established prior to 1920, not to improve conditions in the areas from which its members had come, but to influence politics in Ife itself, where its members had been born and raised. This type of voluntary associations is new, and has probably resulted from education in schools of the European type, but at least one type of mutual aid society, the credit institution of the Yoruba, Ibo, Ibibio, Efik and other West African peoples, often known as the savings or contribution club, dates back to the period before European penetration in the villages. Nevertheless, recent urbanization has produced a wider range of friendly societies and other voluntary associations, church groups, associations of students from the same school, athletic, musical, and social clubs than was ever known in the traditional cities. These voluntary associations have an adaptive function for new urban immigrants, even when some have as their main raison d’être the “fostering and keeping alive an interest in tribal song, history, language, and moral beliefs, and thus maintaining a person’s attachment to his native town or village and to his lineage there.”

In an important article on Africa, Mitchell has pointed out the danger of confusing the demographic sense of urbanization with its sociological sense. The demographic sense has to do with residence in a large city, and the sociological sense has to do with its effect on the individual’s behavior, as for example, the anomie, or sense of loneliness and isolation associated with life in the large cities of Europe and America, which urban sociologists, following Durkheim, have stressed. Mitchell emphasizes the danger of assuming that if a man is urbanized in a demographic sense, he is also urbanized in the sociological sense. It is all too easy to assume that the longer a man has been in town, the more severe is his state of anomie.

In fact, as Mitchell has pointed out, there is some evidence that anomie is most severe among those who have only recently come to the city, and that those who have lived there for longer periods accept certain standards of behavior and conform to them. Anomie seems to be not the product of urban conditions of life in Africa, per se, but rather a form of “cultural shock” such as even anthropologists experience when first moving into a different culture, with a new set of rules and standards.

Mitchell’s conclusion is born out by research among the traditional cities of the Yoruba in the Western Region of Nigeria, but before turning to them let us look more closely at a demographic and a sociological definition of the city. For this we will take a study which, though recent, is already a classic, because of the influence it has had on urban studies in Africa and elsewhere. This is Urban-
ism as a Way of Life by Louis Wirth, a sociologist who was a contemporary of Robert Redfield at the University of Chicago, and whose definition of the city relates to Redfield's folk-urban continuum. Wirth's description of the sociological aspects of the urban way of life was based mainly on his studies of American cities, but it provides a useful background against which to compare life in both the newer cities of Africa and the traditional Yoruba cities.

Wirth defines a city for sociological purposes as "a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals." The first three criteria are clearly demographic; and are qualified by the word "relative". Different countries take populations of over 2,000, 2,500, or 5,000 as a basis for classifying communities as cities for census purposes, and densities of 1,000 and 10,000 per mile have been proposed by Wilcox and by Jefferson as a criterion of urban settlement. But as Wirth points out, whatever figure is taken for size or density it must be an arbitrary one, and the same is true for the number of years which constitute permanence.

Wirth's definition has been widely accepted, but it has proved difficult to apply cross-culturally because of the factor of "social heterogeneity". Because this factor was not clearly defined it has proved difficult, in Africa for example, to distinguish between social heterogeneity and homogeneity. Probably the difficulty also lies in the fact that however it is defined, social heterogeneity is a sociological result of urbanization under certain circumstances, rather than a feature essential or even pertinent to a demographic definition of the city.

The shortcomings of the criterion of social heterogeneity are suggested by the equivocal positions taken by those who have attempted to apply it to traditional African communities. In his study of a Yoruba city in Nigeria, William Schwab concludes that "if Oshogbo was viewed on the level of form, it was an urban community; if viewed in terms of social organization and process, it was folk." In an earlier study, Horace Miner described Timbuctoo as "a primitive city" and its inhabitants as a "city-folk". Yet he concluded that "Timbuctoo is a city. It has a stable population of over six thousand persons, living in a community roughly a square mile in area, and patterning their lives after three distinct cultural heritages. The size, density and heterogeneity of the city are all evident." Timbuctoo, of course, was known as an important center of trade and learning long before European contact.

Miner, who studied at the University of Chicago at the time of Wirth and Redfield, commented on "the lack of any concise benchmark from which to appraise the degree of homogeneity." He admittedly rests his case for heterogeneity on the cultural diversity
of the three distinct ethnic groups which inhabit Timbuctoo, the Songhai people, the Tuareg, and the Arabs. Yet neither he nor Wirth suggests that ethnic diversity is essential to a definition of the city. American and European cities, and many of the new cities of Africa, include peoples of different racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, but this can be regarded as a secondary feature of urbanization, and a basis for distinguishing two types of cities, which I have called cosmopolitan and non-cosmopolitan.

Compared to Timbuctoo's 6,000 inhabitants, over half of the 5,000,000 Yoruba in Nigeria live in cities over 5,000. Over thirty percent live in cities of over 40,000, of which six are larger than 100,000, including Ibadan, the largest Negro city in Africa, with a population today of over half a million.

**Table I**

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In 1952 the Yoruba had an index of urbanization (as developed by Davis and Casis) of 39.3. This falls below Great Britain with 65.9, Germany with 46.1, and only slightly below the United States with 42.3; but it exceeds that of Canada with 34.3, France with 31.2, Sweden with 28.7, Greece with 25.2, and Poland with 17.4. The
Yoruba are the most urban of all African people of any considerable size, and their urban way of life is traditional.

Official figures on population density of Yoruba cities are lacking except for Lagos, where they are given as 25,000 per square mile in 1901, 50,000 in 1921, 58,000 in 1931, and 87,000 in 1950. In 1950 the three wards of Lagos Island had densities of 67,000, 111,000, and 141,000 per square mile. Grant gives an area of nine square miles for Ibadan with an estimated 500,000 inhabitants in 1960, or 55,555 per square mile. It has been possible to calculate approximate densities for three other cities as of 1931, giving 5,720 for Abeokuta, 13,914 for Oyo, and 43,372 for Ogbomosho. These figures compare with 24,697 per square mile for New York City, 15,850 and 15,743 for Chicago and Philadelphia, and 5,451 for Los Angeles in 1960, the four largest cities in the United States.

Because of the high ratio of inhabitants per room and per square foot and the compactness of the traditional housing, the size of older Yoruba cities is easily underestimated by visitors. Abeokuta, for example, appears much larger than Ogbomosho, which is actually eight times as dense and half again as large.

Yoruba cities are large, and even the traditional ones are dense. Their permanence over the past 100 years is documented by the estimates of Bowen of about 1856, of Delany and Campbell in 1960, of Moloney in 1890, and in the census reports of 1911, 1921, 1931, and 1952 (Table I). Bowen gave no estimates of the population of Ife, Ilesha, or Oshogbo, but he mentions that the countries of Ife, Ilesha, Igbomina, and Efon-Alaiye had not yet been visited by missionaries, adding “we are assured that there are many large towns in that region.”

Yoruba territory was first penetrated in 1825 by the expedition of Clapperton and Lander, who travelled inland west of the large cities of today. They estimated the size of some of the cities they visited, including eight to ten thousand for Ijana, five to six thousand for Assula, upwards of 10,000 for Assoudo, ten to fifteen thousand for Duffo, and upwards of 7,000 for Chiado. No estimate is given for the “large and populous town” of Shaki, although they were told that its chief had two thousand wives. Beyond Shaki lay Kooso which “at least contains twenty thousand people.” At this point Lander wrote, “the further we penetrated into the country, the more dense we found the population to be, and civilization became at every

1. For historical references on Yoruba cities see Bascom, “Urbanization among the Yoruba” and “Les premiers fondements historiques de l’urbanisme yoruba”. For full references, and for other sources, see bibliography. This paper was originally prepared for a series on “The African Character” given at the University of Minnesota in March 1961.
step more apparent. Large towns at the distance of only a few miles from each other, we were informed lay on all sides of us.” Yet of the remaining Yoruba towns visited, estimates are given only for Adja with four thousand, Ateepa with six thousand, Leobadda with six or seven thousand, and Tshow with four thousand.

Of all these towns, only Ijana and Shaki can be identified today. Presumably all the rest were destroyed or abandoned during the wars of the last century. Bowen, the first American missionary in Nigeria, who travelled through much of Yoruba country in 1849-56, wrote:

“...I have counted the sites of eighteen desolated towns within a distance of sixty miles between Badagry and Abbeokuta—the legitimate result of the slave trade. The whole of Yoruba country is full of depopulated towns, some of which were even larger than Abbeokuta is at present. Of all the places visited by the Landers, only Ishakki (Shaki), Igboho, Ikishi (Kishi) and a few villages remain. Ijenna (Ijana) was destroyed only a few weeks after my arrival in the country. Other and still larger towns in the same region have lately fallen. At one of these Oke-Oddan, the Dahomy army killed and captured 20,000 people, on which occasion the king presented Domingo, the Brazilian slaver, with 600 slaves. The whole number of people destroyed in this section of the country, within the last fifty years, can be not less than five hundred thousand.”

Clapperton and Lander went on to visit Old Oyo, and by comparing their statements about it and other Nigerian cities like Kano, we can judge that it was at least 20,000 and perhaps 40,000. One can also judge that they felt that Ilorin, Igboho and perhaps Kishi, which still exist today, exceeded 20,000. Clapperton described Old Oyo as surrounded by a dry moat and a mud wall about twenty feet high. The wall was oval in shape, “about four miles in diameter one way and six miles the other”, fifteen miles in circumference, and entered by ten gates. Following another visit by Richard Lander and his brother John in 1830, Old Oyo was evacuated about 1839, after a defeat by Ilorin, and was reestablished farther south at the present site of Oyo, today a city of 72,000 and traditional in character. Recent archaeological investigations at the site of Old Oyo suggest that it was inhabited by a large, dense population.

From reports from Dahomey to the west, which was explored earlier, we know that Old Oyo intervened in the affairs of this powerful state at least since 1724. For a century, from about 1729 Old Oyo received gifts and tribute from Dahomey until about 1827, when Oyo was deeply involved with the wars with Ilorin, and King Gezo of Dahomey seized his opportunity to end the payment of annual tribute.

Ijebu-Ode near the coast, which had a population of 28,000 in 1952, appears on a Portuguese map of about 1500 and is described as “a very large city called Geebu, surrounded by a moat” by Pacheco
Pereira, writing in 1507-1508. From 1500 onwards, Ijebu-Ode or 'Jebu is mentioned repeatedly in the literature or shown on maps, at least six times in the seventeenth century, four times in the eighteenth century, and four times in the nineteenth century before it was visited by Hinderer and Irving in 1854. Recent investigations at Ijebu-Ode have discovered an enormous earth rempart, 80 miles long, enclosing an area of 400 square miles, which surrounds the city at distances from about 5 to 15 miles. It is formed by a bank which is still 15 to 20 feet high and 50 feet wide at the base, and a ditch 20 to 25 feet deep and 40 feet wide, which together create a wall 40 feet high.

Even earlier, before the discovery of America when Portuguese explorers of Nigeria first reached Benin in 1485, they brought back in 1486 to the King of Portugal an ambassador from the King of Benin, which was itself an important city of considerable size. From him they learned of Ogané, "the most powerful monarch in these parts." Spurred on to their exploration of the African coast by the belief that Ogané was Prester John, they passed the cape of Good Hope in 1487 and reached India by sea in 1498. Recent studies in Benin make it almost certain that Ogané was the Oni or King of the Yoruba city of Ife, whose successor became the first Governor of the Western Region of independent Nigeria. Yoruba and Benin traditions agree that the ruling dynasty of Benin originally came from Ife, and archaeological discoveries at Ife, today a city of over 110,000, indicate that it was far more important as a center of elaborate ritual and art in earlier times.

The evidence is incomplete, because Yoruba territory remained terra incognita for centuries after Benin to the east and Dahomey to the west had been explored. Nevertheless it is clear that the Yoruba have cities which are relatively large, dense, and permanent, and that urbanism as a traditional feature of the Yoruba way of life cannot be explained in terms of industrialization, acculturation, or the development of colonial administrative headquarters, ports, and mining centers.

Acculturative factors have affected the traditional Yoruba cities in the past century, but urbanism as a way of life clearly antedated the earliest European contact, and is clearly not an outgrowth of European acculturation. Urbanization is related to acculturation, as Ralph Beals has said. Urbanization is a process which involves an adjustment to the new urban setting, and the adoption of new standards and forms of life; but urbanism as a way of life is distinct from acculturation, and it existed among the Yoruba before the first penetration of their area by Europeans.

Ibadan and Abeokuta are not old cities, having been founded in the first half of the last century by refugees from the wars with Ilorin,
and Ilorin was only a small village before these wars began. Ibadan and Abeokuta differ from the ancient Yoruba cities in house types and other features but, clearly, neither they nor Ilorin are in the category of the new cities of Africa. Oyo is far more traditional, even though it moved to a new site in the same period. Of all the large Yoruba cities, only Lagos, which is the capital of Nigeria and its principal port and railhead, is a new African city. The site of Lagos had long been known as the entrance to the lagoon from which it is named, and as a small village which numbered only 5,000 at the end of the eighteenth century.

Of all major Yoruba cities, only Lagos is ethnically heterogeneous and in this sense cosmopolitan, yet in 1950 its population was still seventy three percent Yoruba. Ilorin, which is neither ancient nor one of Africa's modern cities, is eighty four percent Yoruba although it has been ruled by Fulani from the north for more than a century and is now included in the Northern Region of Nigeria. All other major cities range from over ninety four to over ninety nine percent Yoruba according to the census, though in many cases the only published official figures include outlying rural areas.

With the end of the slave wars of the last century, Hausa from the North, Ibo and Jekri from the East, and other peoples have settled in Yoruba cities, but in relatively small numbers except for Lagos. Even in the present century the European population of the twelve largest Yoruba cities was negligible compared with South, East, and North Africa. In 1931 the non-native population, which includes Europeans, numbered only 1,443 for Lagos, the capital, 226 for Ibadan, and 159 for the remaining ten major cities combined. The wars of the last century flooded some cities with refugees from others which were evacuated or destroyed, including those from different Yoruba kingdoms and subcultures; but even on this level of subcultural variation we may assume that in earlier times Yoruba cities were ethnically homogenous, and that non-Yoruba probably consisted mainly of slaves and transient traders.

How did these traditional cities exist without industrialization, which caused the development of urban life in Europe and America? The real base of the Yoruba economy was, and still is, farming; but farming is not an exclusively rural occupation. Many farmers are city dwellers who would regard American suburbia as a curious inversion of their way of life. They are commuters, not from the suburbs to their places of work in the city, but from their city homes to the belt of farms which surrounds each city.

Nearly all Yoruba engage in farming, but the production of many other goods is specialized. Weaving, dyeing, ironworking, brass-casting, woodcarving, ivory-carving, calabash-carving, beadworking,
leatherworking, and pottery, as well as drumming, divining, the compounding of charms and medicines, and certain other activities are crafts whose techniques are known only to a small group of specialists, and often protected as trade secrets through supernatural sanctions. These specialists, who are organized into guilds, may engage in farming, but they supply all other members of the community with their goods and services.

Farming, specialization and trade were the three cornerstones on which the Yoruba economy rested. Intercommunity and intertribal trade was in the hands of specialists in earlier times, either the King's wives or male traders, though this was ended when British control was established and they were replaced by European trading firms. Local retail trade has remained primarily in the hands of women, who tend to specialize in yams, corn, chickens, cloth or other commodities, and who, like the craftsmen, are organized into guilds.

The size and importance of Yoruba markets, visited by many tens of thousands in the large cities, impress the visitor today as they did the early explorers. Trade does not involve a simple exchange of goods between the producer and consumer, as in the Pacific for example, but was carried on by middlemen whose role and motivations are similar to those in our own society. In the simplest case a trader buys from a producer and sells at a higher price for a monetary profit; but in some cases the goods are sold and resold through a chain of middlemen with so many links that it becomes difficult to distinguish wholesaler from retailer. Before European contact the Yoruba had money in the form of cowrie shells, a pecuniary society, large markets, and true middlemen.

Yoruba cities were of course nonindustrial, and lacked the degree of specialization based upon the machine. Yet Wirth himself specifically excludes industrialism as an essential feature of urbanism, although it accounted for the development of cities in Europe and America.

"It is particularly important to call attention to the danger of confusing urbanism with industrialism and modern capitalism. The rise of cities in the modern world is undoubtedly not independent of the emergence of modern power-driven machine technology, mass production, and capitalistic enterprise. But different as the cities of earlier epochs may have been by virtue of their development in a preindustrial and precapitalistic order from the great cities of today, they were, nevertheless, cities."

Yet among the Yoruba the craft form of specialization made each individual economically dependent upon the society as a whole. The weaver depended upon the blacksmith for tools and upon the farmer, the hunter, and the trader for food. The blacksmith depended upon others for food and upon the weaver for clothes. The farmer depended upon the hunter for his meat, the smith for his hoe and cutlass, and
the weaver for his clothing. Each of these, moreover, had to rely upon the herbalist, the priest, the chief, the drummer, the potter, the woodcarver, and other specialists for goods and services which they could not provide for themselves. Specialization, even on this level, resulted in an economic interdependence of all members of the city, a factor which I consider as extremely significant.

In Yoruba cities today one can buy a can of food, a machette, or a piece of cloth from Europe, Japan, or India, but food from the local farms is still for sale and the craftsmen are still producing at their looms and smithies, and competing effectively with imported goods from the factories of the world.

Wirth emphasizes economic interdependence as a result of the size of cities.

"The specialization of individuals, particularly in their occupations, can proceed only, as Adam Smith pointed out, upon the basis of enlarged market, which in turn accentuates the division of labor. This enlarged market is only in part supplied by the city's hinterland; in large measure it is found among the large numbers that the city itself contains. The dominance of the city over the surrounding hinterland becomes explicable in terms of the division of labor which urban life occasions and promotes. The extreme degree of interdependence and instability is increased by the tendency of each city to specialize in those functions in which it has the greatest advantage."

This statement fits Yoruba cities which produce primarily for their own inhabitants, while Oyo and Iseyin, for example, export weaving and iron goods to other Yoruba cities. Yet local or regional specialization is the basis of inter-tribal trade in many parts of the world where cities are lacking. To cite only one example, it is found in the islands of the Pacific where the people of the interior specialize in the production of agricultural foods which they export to the coast in exchange for fish and other products of the sea, but where cities, money, and true middlemen are lacking. The important feature here is that a city, even though nonindustrial as among the Yoruba, finds its market mainly within its own boundaries. The degree of specialization, even though limited to the craft level, makes individuals economically interdependent and provides a basis for the development of larger, denser, and more stable communities. One might also postulate that these results may give rise to the need for some broader forms of political control, which formally unite neighboring kinship groupings into larger communities, but this remains an unsupported hypothesis.

Yoruba cities were heterogeneous only in terms of craft specialization, social stratification, and socio-political segmentation. The city is divided into clearly defined "quarters" or wards, sub-quarters or political precincts, and lineages. In Ife the heads of each patrilineage constituted the precinct council, with one of their number serv-
ing as precinct chief. Precinct chiefs formed the ward council, which again was headed by one of its members. The five ward chiefs and three other city chiefs whose titles were “owned” by certain lineages represented the interests of the townspeople, and with eight palace chiefs from the King’s retinue, served as the King’s council and chief tribunal of the capital of the kingdom. The King, or Oba, whose position was hereditary within the related lineages of the royal clan, was responsible for the affairs of the capital city and of the outlying towns and villages within his kingdom.

Wirth cites the delegation of individual interests to representatives as another feature of urban life which derives from its size:

“In a community composed of a larger number of individuals than can know one another intimately and can be assembled in one spot, it becomes necessary to communicate through indirect mediums and to articulate individual interests by a process of delegation. Typically, in the city, interests are made effective through representation. The individual counts for little, but the voice of the representative is heard with a deference roughly proportional to the numbers for whom he speaks.”

This clearly is the case in Yoruba cities, where an individual makes his interests known to the head of his family, and through him to the head of his lineage, the head of his precinct, the head of his ward, the town chiefs, the King’s council, and ultimately to the King. However deference is based on the social status of his lineage, as well as its size. Within the lineage, individual relationships were dependent on such factors as seniority, sex, wealth, personal qualities and status as slave, pawn, or free, but between lineages individual relationships were defined by the relative status of the lineages. The individual counted for little, except as a member of the lineage. In Ife social stratification involves nine social strata of which five, comprising perhaps ninety five percent of the population, were ascribed or attributed on the basis of lineage affiliation. The four highest strata were primarily achieved, but often within specific lineages or clans.

Wirth says “the contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental.” All these characteristics are exemplified in Yoruba market transactions, where the principle of caveat emptor is as well established as in Timbuctoo. As in our own urban centers, one may have regular customers with whom relations are not transitory or superficial, but one must also deal with casual customers of whom one must always beware in either buying or selling.

Wirth emphasizes that urbanism refers to a distinctive mode of life, and this is evident among the Yoruba in clothing, food, habits, manners and attitudes. City dwellers ridicule the unsophisticated
“bush” people, and their attitudes toward the non-urban Yoruba, as expressed in conversation and proverbs, closely parallel our concepts of the “rube” or the “hick.” The attitudes of the rural Yoruba toward the city dweller also seem to resemble those in our society.

Yoruba cities are secondary in the sociological sense, as Wirth says, while the lineages are primary. Wirth dismisses the factor of political organization as an unsatisfactory criterion of urbanism. Yet it is the presence of a formalized government which exercises authority over neighboring primary groups, such as lineages, and incorporates them into larger secondary grouping like the city, town, or village. And it is this factor which distinguishes the Yoruba, who are urban, from the Ibo of Nigeria’s Eastern Region, who had no cities until recently, despite their larger numbers and higher population densities.

Some Yoruba cities, such as Oyo, Ife, Ilesha, Ijebu-Ode, Ondo and Ketu served as capitals and centers of whole kingdoms and in this sense can be considered as metropolitan. They maintained regular communications with the outlying cities, towns, and villages through representatives stationed in them, collected taxes through them, and tried serious crimes which were reserved to the court of the King. Other large cities such as Iseyin, Ogbomosho, and more recently Ibadan, had formalized city governments but were ruled by a town Chief (Bale) under the authority of the King (Oba). These cities were not capitals, but they served as centers of trade and warfare. From them the goods and services of specialists reached the smaller towns and villages. This was also true of the capitals, which served not only as centers of warfare and trade, but also of political authority, religion, and arts and crafts.

Here, however, the parallels end. Anomie is not apparent, except among those who have recently come to the cities from rural areas. Since the residential unit is the lineage, which involves reciprocal social and economic obligations, the city dweller need not feel lonely and insecure. Yoruba society is pecuniary and highly competitive, and economic failure can lead to frustration, aggression, or suicide, but not to starvation because one can count on the support of his lineage. And one can count on it for social as well as economic support. Lineages were differentiated in status, but these statuses were stable. Wirth says:

“The bonds of kinship, of neighborliness, and sentiments arising out of living together for generations under a common folk tradition are likely to be absent or, at best, relatively weak in an aggregate the members of which have such diverse origins and backgrounds. Under such circumstances competition and formal control mechanisms furnish the substitutes for the bonds of solidarity that are relied upon to hold a folk society together.”
In Yoruba cities, formal control mechanisms were not developed as substitutes for those of kinship, but rather as mechanisms of political control on a secondary, supra-kinship level, transcending the primary groups such as lineages. Yoruba cities clearly lack the diversity of origins and backgrounds of other cities, and kinship bonds were not weakened either by urban life or political control on a higher level by city governments. The lineage, rather, was the basis of Yoruba political structure, both urban and rural. A small village might contain only one or a few lineages, but the social and political structure of Yoruba cities were founded on the lineage. The many lineages of the cities were united as a community by the superior authority of city government. To the extent that lineage and other kinship bonds have been weakened among the Yoruba, this has been the result of acculturation, rather than of urbanism as a way of life. And more recent studies of American cities have revealed a greater strength of ties of kinship and neighborhood than were realized by sociologists at the time when Wirth wrote.

In earlier publications on this subject, I suggested that either economic interdependence or centralized political organization, or both, might be substituted for the criterion of social heterogeneity, as a basis for a definition of cities which might be more meaningful cross-culturally. I still regard these factors as important and as less subjective and no more arbitrary than the factor of social heterogeneity and as less likely to be the results of urbanization in certain cases, than prerequisites for the development of cities.

Now, however, I am inclined to go even farther than Mitchell suggested, and to recommend that cities should be defined strictly in terms of demographic factors: relative size, density, and permanence. There will still be room for argument about how large, how dense, and how permanent communities must be to be accepted as cities, but the range of disagreement does not seem large, and should eventually be narrowed. There can be little question that the Yoruba had cities as defined in demographic terms, and once this definition is accepted we can proceed to examine the social, economic, political and other cultural features of urban life in the hope of being able to distinguish its consequences from causes of its development.

Defined demographically, urbanism as a way of life and urbanization as the process of urban growth may have a cause-or-effect relationship with cultural and social factors, such as acculturation, Europeanization, detribalization, cosmopolitanism, and other types of social heterogeneity, with the economic or technological factors of specialization and industrialization, and with political factors such as city government. All of these factors should be considered separately to determine whether they are necessary to city
growth or are the results of urban life, and whether they pertain to all cities.

Wirth explicitly distinguished urbanism from industrialism; Hellman's study shows that both urbanization and Europeanization are distinct from detribalization; and while Beals maintains that acculturation is related to urbanization as a process, I have tried to show that it differs from urbanism as a way of life. The Yoruba, who were urban before their country was even explored by Europeans, show that urbanism as a way of life differs from urbanization, Europeanization, acculturation, detribalization, industrialization, and ethnic heterogeneity, though there was social heterogeneity in terms of craft specialization, social stratification, and socio-political segmentation.

A comparison of the ancient cities of Africa, as illustrated by the traditional Yoruba cities, with the more modern cities which have developed as a result of direct European contact, reveals some significant differences which may shed some light on the future of the urban Africans.

In the traditional cities most of the inhabitants are born and raised, marry and raise their children, live with their families throughout most of their lives, and die and are buried within the city and their own lineage. Statistical data are lacking, but my guess would be that this held for over ninety percent of the population of the major traditional Yoruba cities until only twenty years ago, and that it is probably not much different even today. This is in very marked contrast to the newer cities of South and East Africa where a high proportion of the African inhabitants have come to the city only very recently, where they are only temporary urban residents, and where they hope to return to their homes before they die.

In Africa's traditional cities, husbands lived together with their wives, their children, and their lineages most of their lives in an urban environment. Ties with the family and lineage were not broken by urban life, nor even temporarily suspended. The authority of the family, lineage, and the chieftdom were maintained according to traditional standards. Traditional forms of discipline were maintained in the cities through the family and lineage, and through the town chiefs and the Kings of the independent Yoruba states. As a result illegitimacy, juvenile delinquency, and crime were surprisingly low, in comparison with the newer African cities and with cities of America and Western Europe.

In newer African cities urbanization involves separation from the lineage and family and has resulted in the weakening of the family as an institution, with the increase of extra-marital relations, and of illegitimate children raised in poor home surroundings with inadequate care and discipline, and the development of juvenile delinquency.
As families and lineages are reestablished in the new cities and populations stabilize, one may expect illegitimacy, juvenile delinquency and crime to decline, if one can judge from the pattern or urbanism in the traditional African cities.

Yet even the traditional Yoruba cities are being affected by the outside influences which have changed Africa so rapidly during the present century. Newcomers from the farms and villages face problems similar in many ways to those of the new cities, and both the new and old urban residents must adapt to the changes resulting from European acculturation.

The strength of Yoruba religion, and its sanctions of behavior have also been undermined by missions, both Christian and Moslem, and by schools and government. Old beliefs have been destroyed for some, without having been replaced by new sanctions or internalized controls, though the number of such individuals is probably smaller than is to be found in Europe and America. The authority of Yoruba chiefs and Kings was weakened during the period of colonial administration, but they have retained the respect of the large majority of the people. The major question here is where they will fit in the political structure of Nigeria as an independent nation.

Western concepts of individual salvation and individual responsibility, which have been taught by the missions and by the schools, have been undermining the traditional respect for the elders, lineage responsibilities, and the strength of lineage controls. The Yoruba are eager for schooling, and grateful to the missions for their role in providing it. Schooling has been a major source of social change, and has added to mobility, as those who leave school often seek suitable employment in other towns and cities where they are separated from their lineages. Industrialization, which has been taking place at a surprising rate in Nigeria since 1956, will further contribute to mobility from the farms and villages to the towns and cities, and to urban growth.

It is easy to predict that urbanization will continue at a rapid rate in Africa for some time, but it is difficult to go much farther. I would suggest that although African cultural features will be retained, probably to a greater degree than many are willing to admit, the new and old cities of Africa will tend to approximate each other and the cities of Europe and America in their sociological characteristics. The evidence from New York, Detroit, Chicago, Havana, and other cities in the Americas indicates the adaptability of descendants of Africans to Westernized urban life, and their preference for it.
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