Male bias in models of assymmetric kinship terminologies [1]

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If kinship is the relationship obtaining between kin, and if kin consists of approximately equal numbers of male and female persons, then we should expect kinship analysis to give attention to both men and women. However, the fact that most anthropologists doing fieldwork were men dealing with informants who in their majority again were men, induced a certain tendency to concentrate on the male view of kinship, to see kinship systems as managed by male actors with women delegated to the sphere of objects or just "connecting links." Part of the picture thus drawn may be true to the facts, but part of the picture may also represent nothing but poor ethnography, flawed by what feminist anthropologists have called the "male bias." A simple case in point is the recording of kinship terms in systems where men and women use different terms for some of their relatives, but where the author gives a chart for male Ego only. In consequence any asymmetry perhaps appearing in that chart is explained from male Ego's point of view, even though the very view resulting from this explanation would not sound very convincing in case Ego would be female. We are then left to guess whether women have a different and possibly conflicting view of the matter and how men and women deal with this conflict, whether the women's view is perhaps muted by their male dominated culture, or whether questions like these are nothing but the consequence of the researcher's male bias.

An alternative possibility is to adapt to this bias and build models of higher order which include it in their premises. A case in point is Lévi-Strauss' structuralist view according to which vertical columns of male symbols in kinship charts connected horizontally via female symbols are interpreted as male dominated descent groups exchanging women, thereby repeating the mythical act of the founding fathers of humanity, viz. using their sisters as primary objects of exchange. To be sure, men trafficking their sisters is one thing and a society where young people fall in love with each other and eventually marry with the consent of their relatives (provided only the marriage is in conformity with the rules of exogamy and not violating any incest taboo) is quite another. Nevertheless Lévi-Strauss maintained that the former was the truth behind the latter. A male dominated world of social anthropologists

applauded him when he presented the "atom of kinship" made up of a man and a brother-in-law, a father and a son, and (by implication) an uncle and a nephew, engaged in positive and negative interaction, connected by a single inactive and mute female taking the place of a sister, a wife, or a mother, according to the perspective of the male actors.

Not only women, but also history lost its active role in structuralism, yet Lévi-Strauss' timeless male dominated world had already seen its birth in Radcliffe-Brown's structural functionalism. It was already here that time was reduced to cyclical repetition, while historical explanations were declared (at least for the time being) unscientific. Thus, kinship systems had a structure but no history. Any ongoing process had no other function than to reproduce the structure. A case in point is the African system of patrilineages which, despite all the people dying and being born, all the women moving in and out, and all processes of fission and fusion, reproduced itself as the very system of patrilineages. Although Brenda Z. Seligman as early as 1928 had drawn the attention of her male colleagues to a phenomenon which she called asymmetric (or submerged) descent, it still took them quite some time to realise that women in these systems were not really moving in and out but stayed members of their lineages, transmitting additional lines of descent to their children, thereby providing them with differentiating affiliations, subverting the "unity of lineage" principle and even causing the splitting of lineages. Thus, behind the outer surface of a male dominated immutable lineage structure there appeared a real world where women could influence the ongoing processes of ever-changing relations mediated by marriages. Moreover it became clear that power relations could not be deduced from patri- or matrilineality, even though these formal principles did have an impact on gender relations in general and marriage relations in particular.

Against this subversive reintroduction of women as actors in marriage and family politics, Lévi-Strauss posited his alliance system where marriage no longer constitutes an individual political act, but is prescribed by the structure, a structure made up of male dominated descent lines bound together by unchanging rules for the exchange of women, for giving and taking them. As a consequence of this construct, in case of patrilineality, the mother no longer is to be regarded as a consanguinal relative, but is just one of the women hired by Ego's descent group from their "wife-givers," to whom Ego and his male descent group members relate as "wife-takers." (Suppose such a hired woman murders Orestes' father, he might fearlessly revenge him by killing her. This private affair will not change the relationship between the descent groups.) In case of matrilineality, however, it is the person whom we would consider a father, who now is but an affine. One might call him a member of Ego's "husband-givers," but as this would violate Lévi-Strauss' world view, this man is still

to be called a wife-taker, even though he cannot become a father in our sense. Implausible as this might sound; there is a very famous ethnographic case which can serve to illustrate the consequences, viz. the Trobrianders as described by Malinowski.

Testcase Trobriand

Men do take wives in the sense that residence tends to be virilocal, but a man does not produce offspring, he only helps his wife in producing hers. This time Oedipus need not worry that, when killing his mother's lover, he might kill his father. As a matter of fact, whenever a married man dies, it is his wife and her [his] children who are supposed to have killed him and who, in order to disprove these allegations, have to undergo several sufferings in their mourning. As Malinowski describes the death ritual for men only, his report may be seen to reflect a certain male bias. Still, it was not Malinowski who interpreted the Trobriand kinship system in male centred terms; this was done by Leach who disliked Malinowski's kind of analysis anyhow. Despite all denial of physical fatherhood by Trobriand men, Malinowski insisted on the emotional bond of Trobriand fathers with their children, prompting these fathers to prefer their own children to their legal successors in the matrilineage, viz. their sisters' sons. The Trobriand term used for the husband of a child's mother, *tama,* for Malinowski primarily meant "father," even though it also applied to the father's brothers and other males of his matrilineage, especially his sister's male descendants. Malinowski explained this usage as an extension of the primary meaning.

Leach, not fond of this type of extensionist view, preferred to treat what we regard as kinship terms as "social categories" reflecting a kind of legal relationship. Since another male anthropologist, Powell, a generation after Malinowski had found that *tama* could also be used for fathers mother's brother (another male of father's matrilineage), Leach reinterpreted *tama* to mean "domiciled male of my father's sub-clan hamlet" (1958: 123), that is the matrilineally related men who, if they all followed the ideal of avunculocality, would reside together in the same place as Ego's father's mother's brother. As a matter of fact, Leach's talk about "domicile" unnecessarily complicates the matter, since the constituting principle is nothing but membership in the matrilineage (or, for that matter, the matrilineal subclan). Hence it would have been sufficient to maintain that *tama* designates the male members of father's matrilineage. But this would have prompted the question how the female members of this lineage are called. Even though these are designated by a common term as well, viz. *tabu,* there exist many more relatives called *tabu* and hence this category in Leach's view must be defined otherwise.

Before we turn to it, let us note that Leach's identification of *tama* is marred by the fact that also mother's sisters' husbands are called *tama* even though they need not be domiciled members of Ego's father's subclan hamlet – they may not be related to Ego's father at all. About this fact Leach remains dead silent, otherwise this relation mediated via two females would have prompted him into the difficulty either to maintain that also these applications extend to all lineages (creating the question by what special relation Ego would be connected with all these men or places) or to accept the fact that the only common element which connects these *tama* is their relationship as husbands of some *ina,* viz. Ego's mother and her sisters. As a matter of fact, the other kind of *tama,* which is father's male matrilineage members, are married to *ina* as well, but neither is it possible to define these *ina* otherwise than by their marriage to the *tama* nor need these *tama* all be married. If we are not going to accept homonymous categories of *tama* overlapping in the person of Ego's father (Leach ridicules Malinowski for inventing two homonymous categories of *tabu),* we cannot but conclude that the Trobrianders make the same mistake as Malinowski, viz. assume *tama* to mean primarily the very father whom, according to Leach, they should be able to distinguish as a person with a personal name, but for whom they have no kinship term.

Leach's argument becomes even more illogic when he tries to define the term *tabu* which in his solitary view also means "taboo" and in this sense approximates Radcliffe-Brown's use of the concept. "In Radcliffe-Brown's terms, the relationship which Malinowski describes as existing between the givers and the takers of *urigubu* is one of taboo. Consistent [!] with this we find that a man's child is taught to class as *tabu* all the recipients of his father's *urigubu"* (Leach 1958: 129). Sorry, consistency would require that the givers and takers of *urigubu* call each other *tabu.* But they do not. To be sure, the term *tabu* is used reciprocally. But Leach (loc. cit.) introduces it quite differently: "The category *tabu* includes:

(a) Ego's father's mother
(b) her husband and the other males of his sub-clan
(c) Ego's father's sister
(d) her husband and the other males of her [read: his] sub-clan
(e) the daughters of (a) [read (b)] and (d)."

Even with my corrections, Leach's definition misses the female descendants of Ego's father's subclan, as it misses a number of other relatives as well. Switching from taboo to joking relationship and ritual friendship and finally to playful friendliness, Leach concludes wryly that the "young male Ego's *tabu* category is not confined to the recipients of his father's *urigubu.* It also extends to a number of

relatives distinguished by their age seniority and their social remoteness from Ego. Thus *tabu* includes Ego's mother's parents" (Leach 1958: 129-30). It would have been more appropriate to admit that *tabu* designates all relatives two (and more) generations above and below Ego, whatever his or her age, as well as all women and their husbands in the matrilineages of Ego's father, father's father, and mother's father, and their reciprocals. They neither exhaust nor include all of Ego's father's *urigubu* partners. In Ego's social life they may play no special role at all, but at least one of them does, viz. father's sister, and this quite apart from the fact that one of her sons (a *tama)* will become Ego's father's legal successor. However, Leach does not consider it necessary to pay special attention to the father's sister's important role – he contends himself with having her subsumed under the recipients of Ego's father's *urigubu,* the main recipient of which should be her husband at any rate. His importance in Leach's view may have led to the wrong inference, cited above, that it is he and the males of his matrilineage who engender the female *tabu* members of Ego's father's matrilineage.

The tendency to define female relatives by male relatives becomes even more apparent when Leach defines *ina* "which in Malinowski's analysis has the fundamental meaning 'mother' and here becomes 'the wife of any senior male of either of my two home hamlets'," while *"luta* is not simply 'sister' but 'alien girls resident in my father's hamlet'" (Leach 1958: 132). That *luta* also refers to mother's sister's daughter is silenced over by Leach. He acknowledges that according to Malinowski *luta* are "clan sisters" and hence women to whom "rules of exogamy and incest alike apply," but does not hesitate to contradict Malinowski: "... here he was surely either mistaken or misleading" (Leach 1958: 133). According to Malinowski sexual relations (but not marriage) with distant *luta* are, though formally prohibited, frequently practised. Leach (1958: 132) now argues that these *luta* are the "alien girls resident in my father's hamlet," and this probably by virtue of being the daughters of all the men whom Ego calls *tama.* But did not Leach tell us that these *tama* were only domiciled, that is only ideally residing, in male Ego's natal village? Thus, obviously not all "alien girls" of Ego's natal hamlet are his *luta,* nor are all of his *luta* (e.g. mother's sister's daughters) residing in his place. Moreover his *luta* remain his *luta* whether they are girls or married women.

Leach (1958: 132) goes on to define *latu* as "alien children resident in my own sub-clan hamlet," while Malinowski thought that *latu,* a term used by speakers of both sexes, primarily designated one's own children. As Leach could not reasonably maintain that a woman mistakes her own children for those in her mother's brother's hamlet, he admitted that his analysis "is pursued solely from the viewpoint of a male Ego. A separate though comparable analysis would be necessary to explain the

system of kinship categories used by a girl" (Leach 1958: 126). However, he did not bother to furnish us with such an analysis, and I have good reason to believe that he was paying nothing but lip service to a "comparable analysis." In 1969 I met Leach in a conference on Kinship and Locality and I asked him to explain me the curious fact that, as in the case of the Trobrianders, women used kinship categories the male definition of which really could not make sense to them. Leach replied that in his view kinship categories were defined by men, and women just had to comply.

In the same year, Powell (1969), even though criticising Leach's endeavours to connect kinship categories with localities, makes more or less the same point when he maintains that social adults "are divided into two social sexes: that of the agents who are normally biological males and that of the links, who are normally biological females ... As in many other human, and non-human, societies the biological females do not normally participate directly in the hierarchical interactions of the structural units, which are conducted in the activities of the males (cf. Tiger and Fox 1969, especially on sex differences). Although they exhibit a limited form of hierarchical interaction among themselves, the kinship categories for female ego may for present purposes be held to be modeled on those for males and will be treated as such here" (Powell 1969: 596-97). One may wonder to whom the "they" in the last sentence refers; the phrasing leaves it open whether "they" are the kinship categories of a female Ego, or biological females in general which Powell has reduced to links. However that may be, for "present purposes" (that is, for the sake of the male anthropologist's analysis) they are both treated alike.

The resultant logic is as follows: "Because [sic!] structurally their role in interrelating subclans is that of links rather than of agents, *ivata* [reciprocal between sisters-in-law] tend to interact as such only on ceremonial or ritual occasions [...] when they exchange the special goods of women [...] in ways analogous with the men's exchange of garden produce" (Powell 1969: 599). In other words, the anthropologist cannot admit that women do interact even if (or just because) they interact in a similar way as male actors do, since women are structurally designed to link males. In the relationship between siblings, Powell even forgets to mention that women call their sisters by the same terms by which men refer to their brothers, and we may infer that here again they just imitate the male order.

But when Powell comes to discuss the terms for cross-sex siblings, he deviates from his own principle and suggests that "the self-reciprocal use of the term may be held to denote the identification of the two sexes in their complimentary roles in the interlinking of subclans as structural units" (Powell 1969: 598), and in a similar vein he suggests that husband's and wife's "common use of the term *latu* may reflect the

special relationship between spouses in relation to their children" (Powell 1969: 599). However, *latu* are not just a couple's children but also a woman's husband's sister's children as well as the children of a man's (and a woman's husbands) subclan males. Here indeed the woman owes most of her "children" *(latu)* to her husband, and we may call him the connecting link. The situation changes once we take the view of the *latu* themselves: it is now their *tama* (fathers) who perform the role of a connecting link to their *ina* (mothers). Yet this linkage is a personal link, not one between sub-clans. On the other hand, we may surmise that not only *tama* who are not Ego's own father, but also *ina* who are not Ego's own mother can perform a similar role, since *tama* in the sense of a mother's sister's husband may apply to this person only, instead of comprising all his coeval subclan mates.

Powell could have enlightened us about this question, but he did not do so, as he allowed his ethnographic knowledge to be superseded by a sexist structural model which confuses kin categories with groups of living human beings, their rivalries and politics. No wonder then that he does not lose a word on the role of an Ego's father's sister, subsumed under the category of *tabu*. Powell completely contradicts Leach's interpretation of *tabu* as a category of "hostile" outsiders and maintains that its usage "may express social solidarity in the absence of involvement of *tabu* in ritualised rivalries which affect each other" (Powell 1969: 600) – still, he nevertheless follows Leach's guidelines of a sexist analysis.

The opposition to this biased type of analysis did not arise from feminist quarters (for instance Weiner 1976) but from another male anthropologist, F. Lounsbury, who became famous for his seminal formal analysis of asymmetric kinship systems. Admittedly, the anti-sexist quality of formal analysis is not due to a special intention; it is just a by-product. Mere symbols, to whomever they may relate, and the rules stating how to connect them do not lend themselves to confusion with anything like living political actors. According to Lounsbury, it is these rules which first have to be discovered and stated before a sociological analysis can be undertaken, while all that is necessary to explain the structure of a kinship system is to explain these rules (Lounsbury 1965: 175). This, I must add, does definitely not imply that these rules for the term system are all that has to be explained in order to understand a kinship system. The term system is but one element of a complicated whole and, despite its prominence in kinship analysis, surely not its most important one. Despite the moral power attributed to it in Western ideology, in general it definitely is no chart for social behaviour, political hierarchies, economic competitions, ritual status, or marriage preferences – it may, however, reflect some of these aspects.

Against Leach's and Powell's social categories, Lounsbury in some way defended Malinowski's "extensionist" view according to which kinship terms have primary references (as for instance one's own father and mother) and are used to designate other relatives only in a more general (extended) sense. On closer inspection, however, it will appear that Lounsbury followed Malinowski's extensionist thesis only in a limited sense. While Malinowski saw the extension grounded in a child's social experience inducing an identification process, Lounsbury, on the contrary, states reduction rules, with no psychological content whatsoever, demanding for instance nothing but "Let a relative's sibling be called like that relative himself," or, for that matter, "Let mother's brother's wife be called like mother." The reason why, in certain societies, similar rules are valid, cannot be known beforehand.

Some of these rules have far-reaching consequences for the structure of the whole term system, consequences which follow from nothing but mere logic whenever the rule is to be applied without restrictions. Thus, all the asymmetries in the Trobriand use of *tabu* and *tama* (and by implication also part of *ina* and *latu)* hinge on the rule: "Let a father's sister be equated with father's mother". If this is done, father's sister's children will be raised to the position of father's mother's children, and as long as mother's children are to be regarded as siblings, father's mother's children are to be regarded as father's siblings. Amongst them the father's sisters will again have to be equated with father's mother, and so on, so that in the end all matrilineal female descendants of father's mother will be equated with her and hence called *tabu,* and their brothers will be equated with father's brothers and hence called *tama,* all their wives will be *ina,* and all husbands of these female *tabu* line will again be *tabu.* As all these terms will have their reciprocals, male Ego will call the children of the males of his matriline (including his own children) *latu,* while for a female Ego all these *latu* of her brother will be her *tabu,* while those of her husband will again be her *latu.* But this is not all: there are also father's father's sisters, mother's father's sisters, husband's father's sisters and wife's father's sisters, and in all these instances dozens of kin types will change their designation.

Let us recall: at the basis of all these "extensions" there is nothing but the simple rule "Let a father's sister be terminologically equated with father's mother," applicable unrestrictedly by both male and female Ego. The forefathers of the Trobrianders could probably not foresee the landslide in kin terms they were going to produce by introducing this simple rule, and it seems that it is not only the anthropologists who muse about the result without appreciating the cause, but also the Trobrianders themselves. My reason for suggesting this is that they now tend to correct one of the logical consequences of this rule, which may be regarded as an inconsistency when the result is reinterpreted as a means of classifying whole

matrilineages of men and women under one or two terms. In father's matriline, the rule leaves one kin type unaffected, namely father's mother's brother. He remains a *tabu,* while all other males of his line become *tama.* Reinterpreting the rule FZ => FM as lineage kin categories, this exclusion of father's mother's brother from the *tama* category can be corrected by a new rule, viz. "Let a parent's mother's brother be equated with that parent's brother." As recorded by Powell, this rule is still optional, father's mother's brother is both *tabu* and *tama* (FMB => FB => F) while mother's mother's brother is both *tabu* and *kada* (MMB => MB).

Though these options were already published by Leach (1958) Lounsbury preferred to disregard them and thereby missed to add another element to his analysis, viz. the ordering of his rules. As further studies (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971, Helmig 1979, etc.) have revealed in the meantime, Lounsbury's rules sometimes will yield the correct result only if they are ordered, that is, applied in a fixed sequence. The only reasonable way to interpret this fact is, in my view, to accept that they were introduced at different times in history. As it would require a lot of formal argumentation, I shall not go into any details here, but just summarise my results.

1) Lounsbury's rule which excludes the recognition of a father's children and which is meant to account for Malinowski's non-acceptance of father's brother's children as a kin type, is untenable on grounds of formal logic: If a man can have no children, then these children can have no father. To replace a father by a mother's husband proves no way out, as Lounsbury's rules would become inapplicable in several instances and hence produce the wrong result. So we have to accept FBS => B and FBD => Z at least for the time when Lounsbury's rules were introduced into the Trobriand system.

2) The rule FZ => FM could not have been introduced without restrictions unless the rule equating a relative's same sex siblings with this relative himself had not preceded it in time.

3) Under the aspects of a diachronic ordering Lounsbury's somewhat artificial rule reducing a mother's brother's wife to mother (besides another rule reducing a father's brother's wife to mother) will have to be rewritten to fill the slot left vacant for father's sister in the system prior to the introduction of the FZ => FM rule. Phrased a little bit loosely, we might posit: "Let any sister or brother's wife of parents be equated with mother."

4) It is really not necessary to phrase Lounsbury's rules as reductions. They lose nothing of their impact if we rephrase them (as I have done above in most instances) as equation rules. Thus, there is really nothing in Lounsbury's rules to prove that, for

instance, the term for mother was extended to all female collateral and same generation affinal relatives of the parents. It has exactly the same effect when, for the females in the first ascending generation, we start with the rules for a "Hawaiian" type of terminology.

On a strictly formal basis we might even deny any "extension" in case father's sister is equated with father's mother. Historically seen, however, this would be untenable. In a historical perspective, we shall not only have to answer the question why father's sister was terminologically raised into the position of a father's mother, but why this process was also extended to her daughters and so on. From Malinowski we know that father's sisters and their daughters are the women with whom young men should have sexual relations and that it is considered desirable to marry a father's sister's daughter. By a similar marriage, however, the whole terminological structure will be thrown into disorder. Hence this "preference" cannot have been the reason for establishing the equation. Moreover, the terminological rising in status of the paternally related females is valid for both male and female Ego. So we should look for a kind of superiority which these females exercise on both sons and daughters of their subclan men.

According to Malinowski (1932: 180-192, 295-304) these paternally related females perform a kind of beauty magic, using even the same spells for both their "nephews" and "nieces," for the former in preparation of dancing, for the latter in case of the first pregnancy. Beautiful young dancing men and pregnant women must fear to be killed by malignant black magic. Their paternal females' spells serve as a protection against this magic. The aunts are rewarded for their services by gifts from the young people's own matrilineal relatives. We may also mention the fact that with the common people the woman has to give birth not in her husband's, but in her father's house and hence potentially in a place under the protection of his matrilineal spirits, and that it is again one of the patrilateral kinswomen who kneads off the remainder of the umbilical cord of the new-born child (Malinowski 1932: 196). Provided these paternal kinswomen were thought able to protect (male or female) Ego's life (or, in a singular statement of one woman, even to ensure their fertility; Malinowski 1932: 191), it may not be too far-fetched to assume that they might also be able to withdraw their protection, thereby exposing Ego to all kinds of dangers in case he deviates from the moral norms. (On Yap, where the social organisation shows several similarities with Trobriand, the father's sisters and their children are able to punish a male Ego by ousting him from his land, cf. Schneider 1969: 5-6. The spiritual predominance of the father's sister in other parts of Oceania was pointed out by Mabuchi 1960 and 1964.)

In short, I am inclined to suppose that formerly a Trobriand father's sister was expected to wield a considerable, mainly benevolent spiritual power over her brother's children, a power which she inherited from her mother and passed on to her daughters, or which was due to the common subclan spirit embodied in these women, strong enough to induce those dependent on them to reclassify and address them like their ancestors, viz. as *tabu.* Admittedly, this explanation is nothing but a learned guess, and anthropologists with a male supremacist complex may ward it off as just another disgusting piece of conjectural history. But this possible judgment should not distract us from the fact that the whole asymmetry of the Trobriand kinship terminology hinges on the unrestricted equation of father's sister with her mother, a rule introduced into a set of kinship terms which were structured exactly like those of the Minangkabau, to cite but one possible example, which in turn can be derived via matrilineality from a bilateral system of the Hawaiian type. That women did not play any other role than that of structural links in the process of these transformations is, at best, wishful thinking. The typological sequence, on the other hand, is based on nothing but the sequential order which a formal analysis of the Trobriand system requires in order to yield the correct result once Lounsbury's rules are reduced to the necessary minimum.

Testcase Mru

To get things straight, I am not advocating the reintroduction of conjectural history. I am denouncing the malignant consequences of the theories blinded by a male bias. As I already indicated, Lévi-Strauss' whole construct (or, as he prefers to call it, model) of asymmetric alliance systems is drenched with this bias. He himself admits that his model "may not coincide [...] and even perhaps contradict the actual working of a kinship system" (Lévi-Strauss 1965: 16). Yet he not only feels sure that it is but his model which would enable us to understand the working of asymmetric systems, but also that this model "is present in the minds of the people themselves when they state that they permit marriage with the mother's brother's daughter, but not with the father's sister's daughter, or that it is a good thing to marry a matrilateral cross-cousin" (Lévi-Strauss 1965: 17). When expressing these preferences, people are bound to confirm Lévi-Strauss' model since "even a preferential system is prescriptive at the level of the model, while even a prescriptive system cannot but be preferential at the level of reality" (Lévi-Strauss 1965: 17). I happened to do fieldwork in a society which defines its marriage rules less "in terms of kinship, but rather in terms of social groups which may or may not give wives to or receive wives from one another" (Lévi-Strauss 1965: 17) and which hence represents the rare ideal

type of a matrilateral alliance system. However, defying Lévi-Strauss' prediction, men did not express any preference to marry their mother's brother's daughters (cf. Löffler 1966).

The society is that of the Mru in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh). Their kinship system awkwardly contradicts Lévi-Strauss by being at the same time prescriptive and non-preferential in reality. But no Mru feels this to be a contradiction. Whomever a man marries, he cannot but classify his wife and the relatives of her patrilineal descent group the same way as he classifies the relatives of his mother's brother's daughter. A man's wife's father is equated with his mother's brother, his wife's father's sisters with his mother's sisters, etc. If the marriage with an unrelated girl proves successful, a man in this way has acquired another "mother's brother", if it breaks up, this will not bring him into qualms with his own mother's brother. How could such a common-sense policy be regarded a contradiction?

The application of kinship terms is prescribed; descent groups from which Ego's own descent group receives women are *tutma* (wife-givers), those which receive women from his own group are *pen* (wife-takers). Wherever you go, you can ask and people themselves do ask "Who gives?" and "Who takes?" Provided only the other person belongs to a *tutma* or *pen* group, you immediately know by which kinship term to address him and in some way also how to behave towards him. *Tutma* (wife-givers) have to be treated with a certain amount of respect by their *pen* (wife-takers). Old men, when traveling, prefer to stay over night in the house of a member of their *pen* (where they can hope to be treated respectfully), while young men may prefer the house of a *tutma,* since the daughters there qualify as their potential wives.

Still, a man when asked to recount me his *pen,* might tell me he had none. I had made the mistake implicit in Lévi-Strauss' analysis. I had to correct myself and ask the man to tell me his descent group's *pen.* He now might reproach me for asking too much, as there were so many *pen.* But he himself had no *pen* for the simple reason that he had no married daughter. Thus, the concepts of *pen* and *tutma* have two semantic levels: those who give and take are abstract descent groups; those to whom you are related are the descent groups of your son-in-law in case of *pen,* and of your mother's brother in case of *tutma.* There is an apparent lack of correspondence: Couldn't it be that your personal *tutma* were the people of your wife's descent group? Maybe, if you are a married man and identify with your sons, but in first instance the *tutma* are your maternal relatives.

For the Mru, Lévi-Strauss' model is reality, but on the level of descent groups only. And it is the men only who do all the work necessary to keep this model intact, especially in case lovers insist on violating its rules. It is here where fathers may be

forced by their descent group to remain stubborn and where loving couples may be driven to the utmost by committing suicide for not being allowed to marry. In the view of the people, it is not the men who are to decide about these rules, the model is given, men only have to bear responsibility for the possible evil consequences when they allow these rules to be broken. This model is not human, it is prescriptive and its rules have to be kept – for those who are strict believers even at the risk of losing their children.

But let us return to the contradiction in the conceptualisation of the *tutma*. On the level of the prescriptive model, they are wife-givers. Why do men not bear the consequences and accept that their personal *tutma* are their wife-givers as well? Why do they think of them as their relatives on their mother's side? The riddle can be solved quite easily once we change from male Ego to female Ego. For a woman her *pen* class (wife-takers) comprises her husband and by virtue of the patrilineal descent rule it comprises her children too. More than that a woman's proper *pen* <u>are</u> her children: *pen* literally means "those engendered (given birth to)". These are, to be sure, not the people you marry, whatever structuralists may tell you. Those with whom you may engender your children are your *ca-pen-ma* ("child-engender-er," the term is reciprocal), a woman's *capenma* belong, to be sure, to her descent group's wife-takers *(pen),* a man's *capenma* to his descent groups' wife-givers *(tutma). Tutma,* on the other hand, can be translated as "those at the base." With the Khumi, a neighbouring tribe with a kinship system very similar to that of the Mru but with a different language, the *pen* are called *theo'* (Chin **chua')* "bring forth, issue," the *tutma* are *pakiüng (*pakung)* "those back." We may come close to the primary meaning in both instances when we translate the terms as "descendants" *(pen, theo')* and "ascendants" *(tutma, pakiüng).* As such they are completely consistent with a woman's ("matrilineal") view of her kin, since for a female Ego the male model class of "wife-givers" contains her nearest ascendants, the male model class of "wife-takers" her nearest descendants.

Divided into kin categories, her ascendants are her *u* (mother) and her *pu* and *pi* (grandparents, also used for mother's brother and mother's brother's wife), her descendants are her *ca* (children) and *cu* (grandchildren). Male Ego uses the same kinship terms, but his *ca* (children) do belong to his own descent group. Still, under his *cu* (grandchildren) he also includes his sisters' children. It is only they, but not his own descendants, who belong to his model class *pen* and for them the original connotation of the word by now does not make sense any longer, so he has to redefine *pen* as a kin category in a composite way, making it denote his daughter's husband's descent group. Here it's not the women who had to adjust their terminology to the male model system, but the men themselves. For them *pen* now

means two quite different things, "those born" on the one hand, and "wife-takers" on the other.

From the above it will be clear that the structure of the Mru terminology conforms to what is commonly called an Omaha type. Lévi-Strauss, however, insists on separating Omaha and asymmetrical terminologies. According to him, "an asymmetric terminology makes one cross-cousin into a 'father-in-law' and the other into a 'son-in-law,' that is, into people belonging to the line I can marry into or who can marry into mine, while the Crow-Omaha systems (if I may use an oversimplified formula) make them into 'father' and 'son,' in other words, into people into whose line it is impossible to marry. Thus, an asymmetrical system endeavours to turn kinsmen into affines, whereas a Crow-Omaha system takes the opposite stand by turning affines into kinsmen" (1965 19).

Lévi-Strauss' latter case may be exemplified by the Crow terminology of the Trobrianders: there a man's father's sister's son is equated with *tama* (father), and correspondingly his mother's brother's son is his *latu* (child). But this equation, contrary to Lévi-Strauss' expectations, cannot bar a man from marrying his father's sister's daughter. And there is no way to ascertain that, as Lévi-Strauss would have it, a father's sister's son had been an affine before he was turned into a *tama,* a "father," at the same time a category which in itself could be interpreted as affinal (since it comprises husbands of Ego's matrilineage).

Returning to what Lévi-Strauss calls an asymmetric terminology, it is equally pure fancy that by the equation of a mother's brother's son with a mother's brother this kinsman is turned into an affine on the mere ground that the same term is also used for a wife's father. On the same basis it could be argued that, in case the same term is also used for father's and mother's father, both grandfathers are turned into affines. For the Mru, the term *pu* is used for both grandfathers, mother's brother and wife's father – so we might argue that this terminology (though belonging to an asymmetrical system) really does the job of an Omaha terminology in the Lévi-Straussian sense and turns an affine (wife's father) into a consanguine (parents' father). The term used to reciprocate *pu* is *cu. Cu* comprises grandchildren and a man's sister's children, and in principle also the son-in-law. The latter, however, is normally singled out by a special term. Nothing like this is available to distinguish a man's parents-in-law from the category of grandparents and the mother's brother and his wife. The terminology so to speak insists on including Ego's wife's relatives under the consanguines, no matter what kind of girl a man marries; in fact she may even be a member of a different tribe. Moreover, *pu* and *pi* are also used to address

any elderly foreigner and as such are considered the equivalents of the English "Sir" and "Madam."

The whole quibble about an affinal or consanguinal character of some terms seems to imply the preconceived idea that men should not marry consanguinal relatives, and if they do, at least not on the level of the model. The Mru system seems to reverse this assumption. In reality they have no preference for marrying a consanguinal relative; on the level of the model they just have to marry a "cross-cousin." (In fact Ego may address any foreigner of similar age as "cross-cousin.") But even our biological conceptions do not justify the assumption that the child of a close consanguine, with whom marriage is forbidden, must again be unmarriageable. If I marry a cross-cousin, his relatives are both my affines and consanguines at the same time. That both have to be kept apart at the level of the model is an unwarranted idea, resulting from Lévi-Strauss' sexist conception that humanity is based on males becoming affinally related by exchanging females.

If however we follow the logic of nature that heterosexual beings just have to marry out in order to preserve the benefits of genetic diversity, any cultural interpretation and social organisation under this precondition should include first of all some rules stating which relatives should not be eligible for mating. Although sexual intercourse as such should be included, under the aspects of possibilities of public control and duration of sexual partnership, it is marriage which really counts. Hence the most important rules are those which state with whom marriage is prohibited. Rules prescribing a certain partner are not warranted at all. As a matter of fact, the Mru model, though prescriptive in Lévi-Straussian terms, tells nobody whom to marry, but clearly defines all those who are not to be considered possible marriage partners. Hence it is a "prescriptive" model, but its prescriptions are not concerned with marriage, but with the classification of newly acquired affines as kin. To subsume both marriage and classification under the concept of alliance cannot but lead to confusion (cf. Löffler 1964). Lévi-Strauss might as well have referred to his own models when he wrote: "As a matter of fact, many 'primitive' cultures have built models of their marriage regulations which are much more to the point than models built by professional anthropologists" (Lévi-Strauss 1965: 527).

Against all Lévi-Straussian logic in the affinal interpretation of the asymmetric model, a man is never allowed to marry that certain type of his descent group's "wife-givers" which in normal parlance would be his mother. But why, one may ask, can a man marry his mother's brother's daughter, while, on the contrary, his sister is not allowed to marry her mother's brother's son? The answer given by structural functionalists and structuralists alike, viz. "for the sake of the model, as otherwise it

would not work, since wife-givers and wife-takers could not be kept apart," is equivalent to the argument that the sky is above the earth, because otherwise there would be neither sky nor earth. And to maintain that – even though today it is descent groups which exchange women on the level of the model, while men act only as caretakers of these rules – it may have been otherwise in the past, when men really had the power to trade their daughters and sisters, is again nothing but conjectural history, which may compete with the Freudian fancy on the origin of the taboo, but which really does not help us any further, because it does not explain at all why men decided to align themselves as wife-givers and wife-takers.

A much simpler and more convincing native theory has been unearthed, though not evaluated for its consequences, by Leach (1951: 31) from a source on South China. This theory posits that a son inherits his father's blood while the daughter inherits her mother's blood. This remarkably egalitarian rule seems to work: a man and his father's sister's daughters (or a woman and her mother's brother's sons) are related as brother and sister and hence cannot marry, while a man and his mother's brother's daughters (or a woman and her father's sister's sons) are unrelated and hence can marry. One may however object that in its simple form the rule does not establish any relationship within the nuclear family itself. The son remains unrelated to his mother and sister, and the daughter remains unrelated to her brother and father. Since marriages here are forbidden too, the native theory seems to have been reported in a rather simplified way. We need a second assumption, stating that both children "inherit" some elements from both their parents which allow no cross-mating within the family.

The "blood" must be translated into something like a father's female element and a mother's male element in such a way that the son becomes a member of his father's patriline as well as of both his parents' matrilines, while a daughter becomes a member of her mother's matriline as well as of both her parents' patrilines. In other words, the son does not become a member of his mother's patriline, while a daughter does not become a member of her father's matriline, and these are the very lines into which they can marry if they want to marry a cross-cousin.

Many years ago, I sent a paper expounding this principle (Löffler 1960) for publication to the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. The editor (a lady!) rejected it on the argument that the ethnic groups I referred to had systems of patrilineal descent for which no matrilines were recorded. From a structuralist point of view, however, this argument is really beside the point as long as there are people who do follow such a model, even though they themselves do not phrase it in terms of "lines" but in terms of "blood inherited." More than this: this model generates the

very conditions which under patrilineal descent can be interpreted in terms of wife-givers and wife-takers. But neither it is dependent on patrilineal descent groups nor does it generate them. Socio-political groups defined in kin terms are really not the same thing as kinship systems.

Still, since I do not share the magnanimity of Lévi-Strauss who does not mind the facts contradicting his model (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1965: 16), I have to admit that my reading of the South Chinese egalitarian model of unilateral exogamy still falls short of the Mru system. As it stands now, the model just explains whom of your relatives you may marry since he or she is no longer to be regarded as related by "blood." Mru marriage rules, however, extend far beyond this realm of personal relatives. In order to reach all classificatory relatives, we have to transform the asymmetric exogamy model from one of personal kinship into one of social groups. To achieve this, we have, as a first step, to identify the patrilines of the model with the patrilineal descent groups of the Mru. But even if we do so, there remain quite a few classificatory father's sister's daughters whom Ego is not allowed to marry even though their mothers' fathers' descent groups are not identical with Ego's descent group. The problem to be solved is the transformation of the matrilines. The Mru achieve this in a way open to all systems of patrilineal descent groups, not by admitting matrilineal descent groups, but by expanding the category of individual mothers as a connecting link to all wives of Ego's patrilineal descent group. Due to this transformation rule a woman now is not only barred from marrying into her mother's patriline, but also into all of her descent groups' mothers' descent groups. For a man, this transformation extends the category of barred females to all women in the descent groups into which daughters of his descent group have married.

As a result, Mru society uses the model in a twofold way, first on the personal level (still discernible by excluding, for instance, mother and mother's sisters as marriage partners for a man), second on a social level by redefining the patrilines as patrilineal descent groups, and the matrilines as the patrilineal descent groups of the mothers of such a descent group. But, one may ask, couldn't we replace the word "mothers" by "wives"? Indeed, we could, since all mothers in a male Ego's generation are wives in his father's generation.

The argument can be expressed in a formalised way. Let [] be any patrilineal descent group, m a male Ego and f a female Ego, P a parent and C a child in such a way that, for instance, mPf stands for a man's mother, and the inverted form fCm for a woman's son. Let moreover E stand for spouse (mEf = wife, fEm = husband) and : for the inversion. The forbidden marriage partners can then be defined as:

m[]f : f[]m   (own descent group) and
m[]fCm[]f : f[]mPf[]m   (men's female *pen* inverse to women's male *tutma*)

If we expand the second formula by leaving away its restriction to male and female references, []fC[] stands for the *pen* class, []Pf[] for the *tutma* class. The contents of these classes will remain exactly the same when we replace C and P by E, that is

(pen =) []fC[] = []fE[] : []Ef[] = []Pf[] *(= tutma)*

In other words, when we transcend the individual level and relate classes of descent groups instead of persons, *tutma* and *pen* can be equivalently defined both via a consanguinal (P,C) or an affinal (E) bond. Viewing the *tutma* as mother's people and the *pen* as daughter's people is as justified as viewing them as "wife-givers" and "wife-takers." The whole discussion whether they are to be treated as affines or as consanguines is, by the evidence of formal logic, pure nonsense. They are in fact both at the same time. To insist on one interpretation only, betrays a clearly biased view. Not unexpectedly the Mru example tells us that the affinal version represents the male bias.

If we take the affinal part of the formula and restrict its contents again by re-introducing male and female references, f[]fEm[]m : m[]mEf[]f represents the "positively" defined marriage partners of the model in the Lévi-Straussian sense. If we reintroduce P and C, the formula tells us that the woman has her potential spouses in the descent groups of her own descent group's females' sons, while a man has his potential spouses in the descent groups of his own descent group's mothers. Against the "negative" reading, that is the determination of prohibited spouses, the "positive" reading has one drawback: It does not take care of the matrilines of the original model, it wrongly predicts that a man could marry his mother or her sisters or, for that matter, their daughters. As a consequence, the Lévi-Straussian male biased alliance model, based on the "positive" reading, has to introduce an additional rule to explain these "irregularities". But there are none. The basis is, as has been shown, a model of asymmetric cross-cousin marriage granting equal rights to both sexes, fathers transferring their blood to their sons, mothers to their daughters. This model can (but need not) be adjusted to a system of patrilineal descent groups, and it is only by this second step that it is transformed into an asymmetric "alliance" system allowing to transfer the focus from "mothers" to "wives". Still, the Mru men are reluctant to do so: they may still tell you that they have no *pen* when their daughters are not married, and young men, courting their sweet-hearts, in their love songs don't address them as "wives" but as "mothers" *(u)!*

This is the more remarkable as otherwise the Mru have gone rather far in reducing the importance of the matriline. As there are no socially recognised matrilineages in the Mru system, all we can do to identify the matrilines is to follow them up in the rules of exogamy and in the structure of the kinship terminology. With the Khumi (culturally closely related to the Mru), mother's sister's children are still equated with siblings, and marriage is forbidden. Since neither Ego's nor his father's sister's daughter's daughters are given any special kinship status, we may infer that the matrilines comprise just a grandmother (MM), her children (M, MZ, MB), and her daughters' children (MC, MZC). With the Mru, however, the patrilineal principle has gained in vigour. We have seen that in the matrilineal Trobriand system the question whether father's brother's children were still to be counted as siblings could be disputed. The Mru have decided the question in favour of the dominant lineality. Whether mother's sisters' children (or even Ego's half-siblings from a different father) are to be treated as siblings, *tutma,* or *pen,* depends on the affiliation of their father. If he belongs to the *tutma* class, they are *tutma* too, etc., and their marriageability is regulated accordingly. Mother's sisters, however, still are not to be married.

It may be noted that there is no real difference in the tendency when the Mru still use to focus the mother instead of the wife and at the same time reduce the mother's line. Both tendencies put the emphasis on patrilineal descent, not on alliance. The above formula has shown that the embittered fight between protagonists of alliance theory and those of descent theory could not concern different models (the basic model as shown above is identical), but merely the question of deciding in favour of one or the other of two possible focuses: the women giving birth to the members of the patrilineal descent group being either "mothers" or "wives". As they must be both at the same time, the preference for a certain focus is not a question of structural models to be decided by anthropologists, but by the people organising their social structure on the basis of this model themselves. The Mru, in this context, are in favour of the "descent theory", and I am quite sure that, on closer inspection, most asymmetric alliance systems will reveal the same tendency. The reason is that the model is primarily one of "parallel descent" in the realm of personal "blood" relationship, and to whatever amount the model may become "patrilinealised," it cannot wipe out the fact that anyone growing up in such a system must first of all have a mother who will remain a mother to whatever extent all other mothers of the descent group may be redefined as wives on a general social level.

Let us return to the kinship term system. As to be expected, the submission under the new order of patrilineal descent groups went without problem for male speakers, but it caused some disturbance in the terminology of female speakers who, after their

marriage, have to adjust their terminology to that of their husbands as otherwise a mother would have to call her own children with the terms used for them by their brothers, equivalent to our nephews and nieces. But mothers still call their children sons and daughters, who, at the same time, are her (and her brothers') *pen.* It is here that I could concur with Leach's dictum that the women had to comply. The question however is, why? Because of male dominance? With the Mru of today, personal male dominance is a rather weak and shackle thing, but both men and women have to comply with the rules of the system, and they normally do. Since however women are not favoured by the system, they tend to defy the rules whenever they find them really bothering. They are not even held responsible for these violations, but it is the men who have to bear blame whenever the rules are violated. It is they who have to pay, for instance, in any case of adultery. But it is also they who on a general level benefit from these rules and it is therefore in their own interest to keep them working.

The kinship system of the Kachin, as analysed by Leach (1954), forms another instance of an "asymmetric alliance system" based on patrilineal descent groups with wife-givers and wife-takers, here called *mayu* and *dama.* When I asked Leach what *mayu* and *dama* actually meant, he became quite upset. Hadn't he stated it clearly again and again: wife-takers and wife-givers. Was I going to doubt his ethnographic authority? I had not intended to do so.[2] I just wanted to know whether these terms also had (as with Mru and Khumi) yet another connotation, especially when interpreted in the women's perspective. A woman marries a man of her *dama,* but are they, in her conception her "wife-takers"? Are her children, belonging to her husband's group, her *dama* as well? Or are her *dama* those who marry her daughters, that is, her sons-in-law? With whose view do women comply, with that of their husbands and sons or that of their fathers and brothers? The charts published by Leach suggest the latter situation, making *dama* the equivalent of the Mru *pen.* If this were the case, a woman's *dama* would include her sons, and hence in the woman's view might connote something else than just "wife-givers". To Leach this was really nothing to worry about.

The Bawm, also neighbours of the Mru, form another example of a patrilineal organisation forbidding patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Even though their rules do not relate whole descent groups into a continuing alliance system, they fall under the asymmetric system in the Lévi-Straussian sense. When I asked my Bawm informants how they called wife-givers and wife-takers, they gave me a perfect translation of

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[2]   However, with the instrument of his formal analysis Lounsbury came to the conclusion that Leach's charts of Kachin kin terms did contain some errors, a fact later confirmed by a Kachin who had become a professor of linguistics in the US (see Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971).

these English concepts. Leach opined that this was bad ethnography. But the Bawm do not have any other terms, while the Mru could have furnished me with the equivalent translations as well. They are quite used to think in these categories and do ask, who gives wives and who takes them. This view is not the deeper truth of a model devised by an anthropologist, but daily practice. Nevertheless it is not men who give and take, but *tutma* and *pen* represented by men. This does not mean that I am going to exclude the possibility that in some societies it is indeed men who exchange women. But this is not what the model "prescribes," it is a fact of male political dominance for which the model is not to be held responsible, at least not as long as it is nothing but a construct of anthropologists.

The Mru, however, have adopted such a model as their own cultural construct, and it is their men (and never their women) who do take responsibility for keeping it up. Their power to enforce its rules is insignificant, but as everyone (including the women) regards these rules as the standard of moral respectability, the men fare quite well in taking care of their upkeep. The contradiction is really not experienced in the actual situation, but is implied in the fact that the actual situation yields no explanation for its history, that is, the coming into existence of these rules of patrilineality. What is at stake here is why the egalitarian model of exogamy on the basis of personal kinship became transformed into a model of patrilineal kin classes linked to each other as wife-givers and wife-takers. To introduce the transformation rules into the primary model poses no problems at all – to explain why these transformation rules were enacted is, however, beyond the capacity of our actual knowledge.

Let me sum up: It is not useful to profess either a historical or a social structural or a structuralist viewpoint. All have their merits and their flaws, but they will come nearer to the facts only insofar as they concur or support or compliment each other. Our task should be

1) to try our best to get rid of any preconceived bias whatsoever. In order to do this it is necessary

2) to make sure that our models do not contradict the facts, and

3) to take into account both the male and the female view of the matter. To evade biases, it will be useful

4) to have recourse to a formal analysis, and while establishing the rules

5) to keep in mind that transformation rules may need to be ordered in such a way, that it becomes possible

6) to interpret them as historical sequences which are not to be explained by having recourse to our models themselves, but which require that we try

7) to explain them as historical processes on their own account.

Postscript

After having presented this paper at a conference on "Kinship in Asia" (Moscow 1992), I was told that, for the sake of publication, it would be useful to give 1) some additional information on the principles of the formal analysis which I used, but – with one exception – did not make explicit, and 2) venture some guesses on the development of kinship structures in general. In doing so, I'll have to leave and transcend the topic of my original paper.

One may even ask whether it is possible to maintain that "kinship" is something on which general statements can be made. Needham, "rethinking kinship and marriage," concluded that the phenomena lumped under the concept of "kinship" need not have anything in common. "The trouble, however, is that we are inclined by our conceptual habits to assume that there must be something in common to all the phenomena that we class together as 'kinship' and the rest" (Needham 1971: 30), the "rest" comprising for instance marriage, descent, relationship terminology, or incest. Despite this seemingly radical stance, Needham admitted that there might be something in common to relationship terminologies, viz. "the exploitation of certain formal possibilities in the classification of sexual statuses," while "common to incest prohibitions is merely the fact of prohibition" (Needham 1971: 31). To make sense, however, these prohibitions will have to apply to someone. Likewise, sexual statuses need references, and the same holds true for descent. What is involved in any case are individuals or groups of individuals regarded as "relatives" or treated as "kin."

The resurgent question, after all, is how to define kin relations. Schneider asking "What is kinship all about?" concluded that kinship "is a non-subject. It exists in the minds of anthropologists but not in the cultures they study" (1972: 51). For him anthropological theories of kinship are based on a concept of genealogy which rests on "sexual relations, conception, and parturition, or whatever the natives like to think about these" (Schneider 1972: 55), while even in the United States beliefs and premises about human reproduction are basically nothing but symbols which "mean or stand for diffuse, enduring solidarity" (op. cit. 47). No doubt, kinship can be loaded with something like solidarity, but so may friendship. No doubt either that marriage and kinship may be conceived in biological terms, but other symbols and cultural constructs may perform the same function. What frustrated Needham and

Schneider was the search for universal functions and meanings of kinship. What they missed to perceive was the common feature beyond all this diversity, that something which allowed even naive observers of foreign cultures to identify a certain kind of relationship terms not as mere categories defining members of religious congregations, groups of land holders, statuses in political associations and so on, but as kin relations.

This educated blindness of Needham and Schneider is the more amusing as both were heavily influenced by Lévi-Strauss who (like anybody before him who dealt with foreign cultures) professed no difficulty in identifying kinship relations. But he also surmised, and that is his lasting merit, one thing which made the identification as "kinship" so easy: a special structure which in its basic elements remains the same in all cultures. Due to his male bias, however, Lévi-Strauss made some fundamental errors in identifying these basic elements. Needham and Schneider were critical enough not to follow him in this identification, but in doing so again lost view of the structure and therefore had to declare kinship as a mere fiction of anthropologists. But it is, there can be no doubt, more than that, since it seems to exist to the naive observer in any culture we know. Its concepts can be inter-culturally communicated. It may appear as a cultural construct, but it appears so constantly that it must be trans-culturally conditioned by a common basis, easily to be identified as the basis on which human existence is bound to rely. This biological basis helps to explain its (near) universality, but it will not do when it comes to explain its variations. Kinship would not be human, if it had not gained a rather independent existence.

What distinguishes kinship from all the other forms of associations and statuses mentioned above is the structure of its relationship system, a structure which cannot only be interpreted and functionally loaded in different ways, but which also can be subject to a (considerable but limited) number of formal transformations within the limits of its basic characteristics. This structure needs no reference to any substance (physiological theory, economic or political status, any religious ideas or behavioural norms). It consists of nothing but relations between two sets of elements. As I cannot go into the details here, let me just state that it is sufficient to assume 2 x 2 elements which I call f, m, e, y (implying the meaning of female, male, elder, and younger, naturally given, but subject to cultural interpretation). Using "v" as a sign for "either-or or both" we may define the basic relation as {f v m}{e v y}P{f v m}. I could "translate" this formula as "female or male parent(s) of [one or more] younger or elder female(s) or male(s)," but then I should have to add definitions of what I understand by "female", "male" etc. on an intercultural level. Let me assert that in any case cultures are bound to define them, though they need not concur in how they do it. So let me restrict myself to my procedure of formal analysis.

Unless the terms in braces will be reduced to one element only, they need not be written. The inversion of P may be called C, that is $P^{-1} = C$. Connecting both and subtracting the inherent identity relation, for which I write "I", we receive $PC^{-1} = G$ and $CP^{-1} = E$. Interpreting P as parents, C as children, G as siblings and E as spouses, we can now, for instance, define PGC as cousins, PmGmC as patrilateral parallel cousins, etc. Mark that we need not add any spouse to the parents' siblings in order to reach a cousin: the structure defined so far already at this basic stage is not identical with that of human reproduction any longer. It comes rather close, however, to our own kinship terminology which therefore can be called primitive in comparison with other terminologies which can only be reached from our basis by certain transformations of the structure just formalised. If for instance we demand PPC = P, then parents' siblings will become indistinguishable from parents, and (provided the new P value is not just an "extension," but qualifies as the new basic relation) all of their children (minus Ego = I) will become siblings. Still, whatever transformation rules we introduce in the basic structure we will never get rid of the identity relation which we call Ego, even though the structure contains no restriction on the number of individuals which might be subsumed under this identity relation. More important: the structure allows to define any lineal or bilateral descendants of any grandparent of any degree in relation to Ego, but it does not allow to define a "clan". Although clans and other "socio-centred" groups may function as equivalents of relations, they have to be brought into the structure on their own account. The kinship structure as defined above is and stubbornly remains ego-centred.

If then by "kinship" I understand any set of relations which comply with a special algebraic structure and its possible transformations, some sets of relationship terms can be identified as kinship terms, others cannot. But I have to admit that I still face a problem, since kinship terms may be used in cases when no "real" kinship (as we understand it) is implied: the priest whom I call "father" may have others whom he calls "father" or "brother," but I can realise quickly that here something is out of order: they are not my grandfathers or uncles. Still, this example is a questionable choice, since I know that even the term structure of Catholic congregations can be derived from our basic structure by a simple set of transformation rules. As long as I cannot offer any inter-culturally valid reason why this transformation should transcend the limits of kinship, the exclusion may be called arbitrary. On the other hand this cultural possibility to transcend the limits of structurally acceptable rules of transformation may help to explain why expressions like "den mother" or "father of the nation" still make sense, even though in their case our basic structure is completely mutilated.

In order to show how a kinship terminology can be derived from the basic structure, let me return to the Mru system. All we need is an ordered series of transformation rules. Listing only the major ones (i. e., leaving away the special rules necessary for adjusting the women's terminology to the patrilineal descent group system) and treating any possible inversion as implied, we have:

0) Basic structure

1) Equate parents' siblings' spouses with parents' siblings (result: a kind of Eskimo structure)

2) Equate a relative's same sex siblings with that relative (result: a kind of pre-"Dravidian" structure)

3) Treat the resulting new P value as the basis of the whole term system (result, amongst others, the reduction of grandparental terms in case there were more than two)

4) Equate siblings' spouses' siblings with cross-cousins (result: a Dravidian structure)

5) Disconnect husband's relatives from mother's brother's relatives and wife's relatives from father's sister's relatives (reflects unilateral marriage). Instead of rule 5 partially revoking rule 4, we could also directly introduce 4'): Equate husband's siblings with father's sister's children and wife's siblings with mother's brother's children – but since there are no vestiges of special terms for siblings-in-law, I cannot assert this shortcut.

6) Equate mother's brother and his wife with grandparents (result: a kind of Omaha structure).

7) Equate patrilineal relatives with patriclan members.

8) Equate father's father's sister and her husband with father's sister and her husband.

9) Adjust any relationship mediated by a woman to that resulting from the clan membership of her husband (revokes rule 1).

As a matter of fact, the sequence between 8 and 9, 6 and 7, 3 and 4, as well as 1 and 2 is not strictly necessary, but could be reversed without changing the final result. The sequence 1+2, 3+4, 5, 6+7, and 8+9, however, cannot be changed as long as we stipulate that the effects of any subsequent rule presuppose those of the preceding rules. From what I know there is nothing to prove that the historical sequence should have been different. There is a simple reason for this correspondence: the former stages do not by themselves require the transformation

into the later stages and hence must be introduced by outer (historical) circumstances.

Even though, until now, I did not find any kinship structure which could not be derived from the basic structure in a way analogous to that of the Mru example, this does not preclude that some outer circumstances lead to a fundamental reshufflement of a terminology, creating a new structure from which the antecedent structure can no longer be directly inferred. As a consequence there can be no guaranty that the rules derived from the inherent logic of the system reflect the actual sequence of historical development in any case. On the other hand, events that lead to a complete break-down of the system most probably were of rare occurrence. From Australia we know of situations where the system due to heavy population depletion could not work any longer, but did revive once population numbers grew again.

Let me add a note regarding rule 2. Those to whom my basic structure (which comes close to our own system) looks too ethnocentric may prefer to postulate that the structure based on the P value which I introduced as step 3 in the Mru system, that is a P value formed by an "extension" of the basic value, should be regarded as primary, while any "Eskimo" type structure should be interpreted as a "reduction" of this primary model. Indeed, the kinship grid based on this new P value is nearly isomorphic with the basic structure except for the fact that parents' parallel siblings and their spouses can no longer form separate kin categories. Those who want to treat it as primary will face two logical problems: 1) to define the domain and range of this new P value without having recourse to "parallel siblings" and "spouses," that is without reintroducing my basic relations by the backdoor (I see no way to do it), and 2) to explain (without falling back on Morgan's group marriages) how people might be able to split up this allegedly basic P value into lineal and parallel relatives and thereby to "reduce" the P value to what I consider the basic relation, without having had any prior concept of this distinction. If they had it (using it in Ego's own generation), we are already back to my start. This argument *a fortiori* applies to any genealogically defined marriage class system. These systems are, once we allow our supremacist ethnocentrism to give way to logic, not primitive at all, but represent kinship systems of a most highly developed kind. The primitivity is ours – even though most probably secondarily and not inherited from primeval times.

The last suggestion implies the possibility that new rules need not add ever more complexity, but may also simplify the system. This possibility is my main argument against maintaining that the formal analysis reveals the full history of the system. In the Mru case above, every new rule produced a new stage in the development, making it more "complicated". Rule 9 revoking rule 1 came so late that it could not

efface all prior consequences of rule 1. If, however, the rules were revoked (or supplanted by other rules with the effect of fully revoking the effects of prior rules) we may well reach "simpler" stages which by themselves are unable to tell us what happened before. The simpler the structure, the less information it provides on its history. The transformation rules provide only a rough outline for the research which, in my view, must equally rely on comparisons with the kinship terminologies of the neighbouring societies. Structural analysis will yield no substantial (against merely formal) reasons for the transformations, it cannot identify the historical (economic, political, ideational) factors inducing the development, but it may point the way to them.

It is here where the real problem begins. We know that, due to Christian teaching ("all men are brothers"), people can be persuaded to undo an Omaha structure by partly revoking the basic tilting rule so that they stop calling their matrilateral cross-cousins "grandfather" and their patrilateral cross-cousins "grandson" in order to call them, like any other man of their generation, "brother" instead. This change need not have any immediate consequences for the marriage rules. Still, we cannot have recourse to Christian teaching every time a generational term structure in one's own generation contrasts with a bifurcate merging term structure in the first ascending and descending generations. The "normal" way to produce this effect may be just the opposite sequence: forbid marriage with cross-cousins first and adjust the terminology afterwards. I'll return to this possibility later. At present the example may suffice to illustrate the fact that there may be lots of different causes inducing or forcing people to change their kinship structure by introducing new rules. Until now we know very little about them. In some cases rather fundamental changes took place within the last hundred years and examples of the successive stages may still exist side by side, yet we still have no idea why these transformations took place. An example (the Burmese system) will be given below.

Different stages of a kinship structure may even exist contemporaneously in one and the same culture. This is possible since the kinship structure may not be reflected in the terminology alone, but can also be used to define the range of persons whom one may not marry – provided they belong to one's kin. In case they do, the rules which forbid the marriage can be called "kinship" rules, otherwise not.

Moreover, if (and only if) there are social groups the recruitment of which is defined by rules making use of the relationships defined by the kinship structure, they can be called kinship groups. Still, the existence of these groups (like that of marriage rules) is not due to kinship by itself, since there is, as I have stated above, no way to derive them from the kinship structure. Forming groups, whatever their

recruitment principles, is a political act based on some common interest, which may, after institutionalisation, be enforced on its members. These groups therefore do not represent a kinship but a political structure, even though this structure may be expressed in terms of kinship and the recruitment to the group may be based on kinship relations. Any attempt to make kinship evolve from the structure of these groups is futile, since these groups, whether they "exchange women" or not, presuppose the structure of kinship, but not vice versa. This is not to say that these groups only reflect a kinship structure, on the contrary (as has been shown for the Mru) they are liable also to favour the introduction of new rules.

By itself the algebraic structure contains no preferences for the introduction of any transformation rule. If we call all PGC "cousins," this is a cultural decision, not an inherent property of the structure. This decision implies that parents form a special category not to be confounded with their siblings of any sex. But in case the cultural concepts insist on a basic distinction between siblings of same and opposite sex, parents and their siblings may be divided accordingly, viz. parents and their siblings of same sex on the one hand, those of opposite sex on the other. As far as I know, all what has been proposed to explain these basic decisions hinges on descent groups, but this will not do, since this classification also exists without them. It apparently implies some ideas concerning the relevance of gender. When projected on descent constructs, the structural consequences become apparent. While the undivided G relation will produce bilateral kinship structures of the Eskimo or Hawaiian type, the same sex / opposite sex division will produce (bi)lineal kinship structures of the Dravidian type. This lineal projection of the same sex / opposite sex distinction, however, is not a "logical consequence" of the basic structure, but just another cultural decision which ought to be explained. In its simplest form it produces nothing but a division of siblings and cousins into siblings plus parallel cousins on the one side and cross-cousins on the other. In case this principle is applied throughout the relationship system, it results in a kind of bilineal arrangement, though not necessarily in the appearance of patri- and/or matrilineal groups. Without social groups to help identification, the matri- and patrilines will remain of rather shallow depth; those excluded from these lines (the "cross-relatives") form an even less structured grouping quickly fading into the field of all those who stand in no special kin relationship to Ego.

The basic structure developed so far, whether oriented towards a bilateral or a (bi)lineal principle, contains no rules of marriage or any indication on how to classify one's spouse's relatives and relatives' spouses (EP, EG, GE, CE, etc.). As the affines represent kin types of their own, a kinship terminology may allot them special terms. Elaborate affinal terminologies, however, are extremely rare. English and French

terminologies, for instance, solve the problem by the simple device that spouses take over each other's terminology qualified by the addition of "in-law" or "beaux- / belle-." This usage backs an "illogical" tendency, namely to think of one's in-laws as close relatives with whom sexual relations are illicit – to the exclusion of one's proper spouse who, though mediating the relationship, is a sexual partner and hence "non-kin."

A more "logical" solution is provided by a kinship structure of the "Dravidian" type. Here the relatives not to be married are not determined by the bilateral but by the bilineal principle, dividing Ego's kin into parallel and cross-relatives. "Parallel" are all those in the paternal patriline and the maternal matriline, "cross" are those in the paternal matriline and the maternal patriline who are not at the same time members of the parallel lines. In fact, "cross" is a residual category, having in common with non-relatives the quality of containing marriageable persons. Hence the easiest way to classify affinal relatives will be to subsume spouses' siblings and siblings' spouses under the "cross" category, which in turn will have the effect of subsuming their parents under one's own parents' siblings of opposite sex.

Due to these equations, Dravidian type terminologies look as if everyone was marrying his or her cross-cousin. But to infer from this that people actually do marry their cross-cousins is as mistaken as was Morgan's inference that Hawaiian type terminologies indicate that people do marry their siblings. On the same basis one might infer brother-sister marriage from the English terminology, since spouses are expected to call each other's parents "mother" and "father."

Some Australian tribes have managed to put all their cross-relatives into one class which can roughly be interpreted as the "section" of potential spouses. Still not all members of this class need really be marriageable – very often one's proper cross-cousins are amongst those excluded, even though not only the class structure but also the terminology lumps them together with the rest. How can a class of so-called "prescribed" marriage partners contain cross-sex partners with whom marriage is forbidden? By this argument against reading a kind of "prescriptive" marriage system from the terminology, I am not going to exclude the possibility that in some instances people do in fact favour the marriage with an actual cross-cousin. But this preference or (as in the case of the Austabs) prohibition has to be established independently and can in no way be inferred from the terminology (or the structural transformation rule PmGfC v PfGmC = GE v EG).

Like our own terminology, many "Dravidian" terminologies equate all PEGE with PG, but "Dravidian" terminologies may generalise this rule to EGE = G and thereby equate spouse's siblings' spouses with siblings. On the formal level this

transformation produces a kind of dual system with the "parallel" relatives on the one side and the "cross" relatives on the other, a structure very dear to all those who like to put categories in boxes and to mistake them for social groups. Taken together with the first rule which equates cross-cousins and spouses, the latter rule implies that spouses' cross-cousins should be equated with siblings, spouses' cross-cousins' spouses with cross-cousins and so on. Unless backed by some moiety organisation, the real life consequences of these rules may produce nothing but a terminological option left to Ego's discretion. A social moiety organisation, on the other hand, may go well with such a kinship structure, but its existence will have to be established independently, the more so as there are instances where moiety system and terminology are not congruent at all (to mention just the case of the Iroquois).

The two "Dravidian" transformation rules by which all affines can be subsumed under consanguinal terms do produce a "closed" system, but on the formal level only; in actual application it must become even more fuzzy at the ends than our own system which provides for an indefinite number of cousins. An organisation of social groups in such a way that their structure is compatible with the "Dravidian" terminology is difficult to achieve, since the terminology gives equal value to both matri- and patrilines, an equivalence which is not inherent in the structure of social groups. It is therefore to be expected that this type of terminology will become deformed once it is adjusted to descent groups (see again the example of the Mru system, given above).

Other adjustments may prove even more devastating on the formal level. As we have seen, the "Dravidian" terminology presupposes the possibility (though not the necessity) of cross-cousin marriages. But what happens in case cross-cousins, for whatever reason, come to be regarded as non-marriageable? In the Australian case cited above, where the terminology is backed by the section system, nothing may happen at all; without such a backing, however, the terminology may become adjusted in such a way that also cross-cousins are subsumed under the category connoting marriage prohibitions, that is, the category of siblings (and parallel cousins). As a consequence a generational term structure in one's own generation will contrast with a bifurcate merging term structure in the first ascending and descending generations. Judging from the sample used by Murdock (1949), this combination seems rather common. Unfortunately Murdock preferred to combine cousin terminology and social groups to form "types of social organization" instead of taking the terminology of the first ascending generation as a starting point. In this way he produced a "transitional" Yuman type which, reinterpreted as "Dravidian," may indeed be more basic than the "Hawaiian" type preferred by Murdock.

Still, bifurcate merging terminologies, even if they equate mother's brother and father's sister's husband on the one side and father's sister and mother's brother's wife on the other, do not by themselves allow to infer former cross-cousin marriage. Moreover it cannot be excluded that a "Dravidian" terminology changes into a generational ("Hawaiian") type of cousin terms with a lineal ("Eskimo") type of terms in the first ascending and descending generation. Those who like to explain the structure of the kin terminology by marriage rules may surmise that the reason for this development is to be found in the extension of marriage restrictions to first and perhaps even second cross-cousins – but they are mistaken. The transformations appear even without any changes in the marriageability of cross-cousins, so that in the end sibling terms have to be used also for potential marriage partners. An example is provided by the Burmese system (see Löffler 1968). Here at first parents-in-law and children-in-law become separated from uncles / aunts and nieces / nephews. In the next step cross-cousins are disconnected from siblings-in-law and subsumed under siblings. Then the terms for parents' siblings of opposite and same sex are merged and set apart from those for the parents. Finally same sex siblings' children are classed together with those of siblings of the opposite sex. The categories in the second ascending and descending generations remain unaffected as grandparents and grandchildren were undifferentiated from the start. Due to these changes the structure of the modern Burmese system as used in Rangoon has become similar to that of the neighbouring Mon and Thai, quite distinct from that of other Tibeto-Burmese speaking people. We may assume some cultural influence from these neighbours, but we really do not know what prompted the Burmese to change from a bilineal to a bilateral principle of classification, even though most of these changes happened within the last hundred years only and the original system is still used in remote country sides. After all, a growing importance of the nuclear family may have played some role – we then might expect a last transformation to happen in the near future: the distinction of siblings and cousins.

Still, those who are fond of identifying alternate generations may suggest that the Burmese system modeled Ego's own generation after that for the second ascending and descending generations. Such an explanation, however, has really nothing to prove it and, by the way, would be unable to explain the prior appearance of special affinal terms. Parallels in the structure of alternating generations can be found in any terminology in so far as the terms used for the first descending generation are by the very structure of the kinship grid definable as the inversion of those for the first ascending generation: ideally the terms should mirror each other, but the differentiation found appropriate for the senior generation need not be held necessary for the junior generation as well. The same is true for the second descending and

ascending generations which, however, are divided by Ego's own generation, the terminological structure of which has little reason to mirror that of the second ascending and descending generations. The latter, however, may be structured in a way similar to Ego's own generation in case the terminology is remodeled to fit the structure of a system of exogamous moieties, producing four categories of grandparental relatives, viz. MM = FFZ and FF = MMB as equivalents of the "parallel" relatives Z and B on the one side, and FM = MFZ and MF = FMB as equivalents of the "cross" relatives W and H on the other side. The moiety system however overrides the cross / parallel distinction in the first ascending generation and in last consequence assigns a woman's and a man's children to different categories, a fact really incompatible with and unexplainable by the structure of a normal "Dravidian" terminology.

There is, however, still another way to make the term set of Ego's generation resemble that of the second ascending and descending generations. Although we had to discard this solution for the Burmese system, it still seems plausible that the terms in Ego's own generation may become generational and hence resemble that in the second ascending and descending generations of a normal "Dravidian" system by adjusting them to a rule which forbids cross-cousin marriage. In case there are institutionalised groups who intermarry, this rule will cause the interruption of this exchange in the next generation, but allow its resumption in the next but one, that is, in alternate generations. As a result, generations with a bifurcate merging terminology will have partners for marriage exchange different from those with a generational terminology. This, however, is only a superficial appearance, since when we take a closer look at the "generational" terms there appears a fundamental difference: those of the ascending and descending generations include affinals, those of Ego's own generation however exclude them. So let us not be blinded by superficial similarities and thereby lump together systems which show quite different histories once we apply a formal analysis.

Let me sum up the relationship of Ego-centred term structures, socio-centred kin groups, and marriage rules which are primarily Ego-centred but, like kin terms, may be extended to social groups as well. From Morgan to Lévi-Strauss group marriages and marriage groups proved a fascinating item of anthropological mythology. However, in the same year when Lévi-Strauss published his elementary structures of kinship, Murdock told us: "In the various forms of the family, sib, clan, and community, interpersonal relationships are structured in such a manner as to aggregate individuals into social groups. A kinship system, however, is not a social group nor does it ever correspond to an organised aggregation of individuals" (Murdock 1949: 91). In this respect I fully concur with Murdock, though I tend to

deny any lasting value to his "types of social organisation" since his analysis of kinship terminologies remained superficial and led him to wrong identifications.

Kinship may be biased towards a bilineal or bilateral principle, but unless tilted by "skewing rules" (cf. Lounsbury 1964) it normally appears unbiased towards either male or female sex. It is in social groups that men may assert their political dominance. While the kinship structure finds expression in the structure of kinship terminologies as well as in the structure of marriage prohibitions, both of them may (but need not!) be subject to the influence of the socio-political organisation. Whenever social groups usurp the place of personal relations they may cause deformations in the kin term structure (as could be shown for the women's terminology with the Mru). But even if this is not the case, kinship terminologies and marriage prohibitions are not necessarily phenomena of equal strength. Although the terminology may influence ideas about marriageability (as in our system regarding affinals), a change in the realm of marriageable persons seems more likely to lead to an adjustment of the terminology than vice versa (see not only the modern cases of reclassifying cross-cousins in an Omaha system as "siblings" while – like in the Burmese case – keeping the old marriage rules, but most of the traditional "Hawaiian" systems as well).

Therefore care should be taken not to read positive marriage rules from terminologies. To infer from a "Hawaiian" terminology that people marry their siblings is not less faulty than to infer from a "Dravidian" terminology that people marry their cross-cousins. The fact that people are more likely to marry cross-cousins than to marry siblings is no proof to the contrary, but at best an excuse when it comes to explain why an error committed in 1869 could be committed anew in 1949 – and still find adherents today. Marriage preferences are political options and as such may follow from the political structure. They do not follow from the kinship structure and they never, even if attributed to groups, produce the kinship structure, even though they may influence it.

Kin term systems, on the other hand, are not a very useful instrument for propagating one's interests, even though they can be used in expressing reverence as well as in abusing people. They are the weakest element in the chain, can by themselves produce no social groups and normally exert no influence on marriage rules. More than often they have to submit to and thereby to reflect the demands of a social organisation including preferences and restrictions derived from it (as for instance residence rules). At the same time, they are much more elaborate and differentiated than descent groups, marriage rules or residence options, and therefore may preserve the vestiges or traces of the influence of these forces the better the

more elaborate they are. By the means of formal analysis and the (at first very reluctantly accepted) necessity to order the rules generating the system into a sequence these vestiges can be made visible. However, until now we still are far from being well equipped with the means to identify the forces which left all these traces – and this even in the rare cases where, even without formal reconstructions at hand, one might assume that we can avail ourselves with all necessary historical data.

We know, for instance, that the German kinship terminology after the middle age underwent changes, implying the import of French terms in the 1st ascending and (at a later time) also in Ego's generation to reach its present lineal ("Eskimo") structure. Historical sources do not tell us all about the preceding structure, and formal analysis in this case (for the reasons mentioned above) cannot be of help either. Still, the process is easily to be identified. What is missing is an identification of the forces producing it. Whatever we assume, it will have to be corroborated by comparative research. The Burmese system, mentioned above, is another case in point. Here, formal analysis as well as historical data exclude a possible reversion of the process for which the starting system is still alive in some remote areas (as for instance with the peasants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts). The life-style in these areas is, there can be no doubt, remarkably different from that of the urban centre, but this is really no valid detailed argument when it comes to explain all the subsequent changes as outlined above. All the factors which I mentioned above (socio-centred groups, marriage or residence rules) may be of no (or very little) importance in this case. And yet a rather fundamental and prolonged change in the term system did occur. Why? We do not know.

One may conclude from these two examples that changes in the kin terminology are (at least sometimes) due to forces which otherwise do not matter. But in this conclusion we may fall prey to another prejudice, namely that we need not bother about historical forces beyond those already identified, especially when they express themselves only in such an unimportant field as kin terminologies. However, we use them more or less daily and do not hesitate to draw our conclusion on a certain change of attitude when kids start (and are taught to) to call their parents by their personal name instead of using the traditional terms. This is a very minimal change, however. It does not really change the principles of the established system. Everyone still has the resulting grid in his mind. But in case the whole system is changed, shouldn't we assume that something much more fundamental has happened? It may be more important than what our inherited conceptions allow us to identify.

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