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Why Do Societies Abandon Cross-Cousin Marriage?

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Professor Harold Scheffler's prominence in the anthropology of kinship is well established by virtue of his enormous corpus of written work on the subject, the logical rigour and scholarly care he evinced in his arguments and his influence over American anthropology in particular in promoting semantic analyses of kinship terms and terminologies. His studies of the latter were no doubt in part stimulated by his fruitful association with Floyd Lounsbury, but his independent work was nonetheless strikingly consistent in all these respects, and his other main claim to fame in kinship studies, his rethinking of the topic of descent, seems to have been entirely his own. There have, of course, been controversies and debates, some of them quite pointed, especially with various kinds of structuralists, who see things pretty much in a diametrically opposed fashion, though occasionally also with scholars who in general terms can be located within the Scheffler-Lounsbury 'camp' itself (see Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 73ff.).

At this point I should admit that for the most part my own training and longstanding views oppose me intellectually to that camp. I was trained at Oxford in the heyday of structuralism—with which Oxford anthropology at the time was widely associated elsewhere—and I was supervised for my doctorate on Austroasiatic kinship by N.J. (Nick) Allen, who once identified himself to me in conversation as an 'evolutionary structuralist'.

He had been a student of one of Scheffler's main adversaries, Rodney Needham, whom I knew personally and under whose influence I also fell, and who at the time counted as a leading British structuralist—less explicitly evolutionist than Allen, but still nonetheless interested in how both kinship terminologies and marriage practices change.¹ Given the structuralist aspect, there was also an explicit tendency to see kinship more as a matter of category words than of genealogy. Although genealogy was not dismissed entirely, it was not ordinarily seen as having much to do with how various indigenous peoples saw kinship; a position I adopted too at the time. More recently, however, I have moved away from this structuralist orthodoxy sufficiently to appreciate more how peoples the world over do think genealogically some of the time and that they are not as ignorant of the biological aspects of reproduction and parenthood as they are sometimes made out to be.² This has still not made me an extensionist, as I made clear in an article published in 1996 on the contextual uses of genealogy and category (Parkin 1996). Among other things, that article compared Scheffler's considerations of Tamil kinship with Louis Dumont's more ethnographically grounded studies, to the definite advantage of the latter. I suggested that genealogy and category are not mutually exclusive ways of interpreting kinship terminologies but rather two different forms of knowledge entirely, the latter being a form of classification, the former involving step-wise calculation to specify the details of a relationship more precisely; their difference is therefore ultimately a matter of the different contexts in which they are likely to be used.³

As I still adhere to this position, I do not want to return to this particular debate here, but instead will focus on the applicability of Scheffler's ideas to questions of change in kinship terminology and affinal alliance that have concerned Needham, Allen and myself for a number of years. That applicability is called into question, first by Scheffler's downplaying of the

1 I may therefore be said to represent the 'Needhamite' tendency in this volume; many of the other contributions are closer to the honourand's intellectual concerns. While I acknowledge Professor Scheffler's recent sad loss, in the remainder of this paper I will use the present tense to discuss his work and its impact.

2 For example, Parkin (2013a). I realise the importance of distinguishing between biology and genealogy in making this statement. The claim that genealogy does not matter to many peoples in the world and that it simply reflects western thinking is ironically the one major feature shared by both structuralist approaches to kinship and the Schneiderian cultural approaches that both rejected and replaced them.

3 For example, an English speaker may mention that someone is his cousin in ordinary conversation as a category, but resort to genealogy in order to spell out the exact route of the relationship for his interlocutor. I have briefly returned to these issues more recently (Parkin 2009).

importance of affinity in kinship terminologies associated with prescriptive alliance in favour of his focus on consanguinity; and second, by his scepticism, amounting in effect to a denial, that kinship terminologies reflect social morphology in any significant sense. These positions were largely established in Scheffler's debates with the structuralists, but among other things they minimise the potential significance of the most convincing starting point for theories of change, namely the existence of some form of cross-cousin marriage.⁴ More generally, Scheffler's fundamentally synchronic approach cannot satisfactorily account for change almost by definition. I shall therefore return to essentially structuralist arguments in favour of both the existence of cross-cousin marriage (or 'prescriptive alliance' in Needham's early terminology) and systemic change by asking: first: Why do societies drift away from cross-cousin marriage?; and second, What changes when they do so—only 'the system' of cross-cousin marriage, or rather how key relatives are classified (especially, how they cease to be classified as cross-cousins)?

First, however, I will briefly review Scheffler's main arguments and targets, and also indicate my main sources, before setting out my own understandings of Scheffler's two positions just outlined above. Section II will discuss the central matter in this article, with examples, namely the circumstances in which a society may abandon cross-cousin marriage. Section III will examine the proposition that kinship terminologies also have a role to play here through the different ways in which they classify key relatives in systems of cross-cousin marriage and the practices that immediately evolve from them. Section IV provides a brief conclusion.

Section I

Throughout his career, Scheffler has rejected the structuralist position that kin terms should be seen as category words that do not primarily have genealogical referents. Instead he has consistently advocated the semantic theory of kin terms he worked out with the anthropological linguist, Floyd Lounsbury. For Scheffler, kin terms are precisely genealogical denotata

4 This has long been a controversial term for what is recognised to be a form of marriage into a category of kin with a wide range of possible genealogical referents, and not only first cross-cousin—assuming they can even be traced genealogically, or indeed will be, neither of which is necessarily the case. Nonetheless I choose it here for reasons of standardisation, and also because some of the data and arguments I am using assume a genealogically defined referent of this type. I will occasionally refer to alternatives (especially Needham's 'prescriptive alliance') where relevant.

focused on a single kin type of a sort found within the nuclear family. This focus on genealogy is tied to Scheffler's doctrine linking polysemy by sense generalisation to the extension of meaning of some terms outwards from such foci, as well as his rejection of structuralist and structural-functional assumptions that kinship terminologies reflect certain aspects of social morphology. For the Lévi-Straussian structuralist, the latter typically means cross-cousin marriage or prescriptive alliance in its various forms, which are seen precisely as a reflection of such category words and the systems they form. While Scheffler certainly recognises the facts of affinal alliance, his focus on genealogy also has the result that it renders affinity secondary to genealogy, whereas the structuralists do the reverse in making affinity primary in their models of prescriptive alliance. Thus, as I shall argue, the disjuncture that Scheffler tends to see between terminology and social morphology must be severely qualified in relation to prescriptive alliance, although it becomes more evident the more a society moves away from prescriptive alliance as the basis for its regulation of marriage.

Although Scheffler does deal with other structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach on occasion, his key targets would seem to be Dumont and Needham.⁵ His attack on Needham is particularly associated with a single book, *A Study in Structural Semantics: The Siriono Kinship System*, written with Floyd Lounsbury and published in 1971.⁶ I have relied on it greatly here in setting out Scheffler's views as I see them, though I have also used other sources (Scheffler 1972, 1977, 1984) without (re-)reading the whole of Scheffler's vast corpus.

5 Needham mainly used other people's work, not his own, to provide the evidence for this view. However, Robert Barnes, one of his students, did provide an example from his own ethnography on the east Indonesian domain of Kédang (Barnes 1974), which is a structuralist ethnography in every way. He also contributed articles on prescriptive alliance based on his own ethnography (e.g. 1973, 1977), a path followed later by one of his own students, Penelope Graham (1987). Other students of Needham's included Peter Rivière (1969) on the Trio of Guyana, David Hicks, who wrote many works on Timor (see especially Hicks 1978, 1990), and Gregory Forth (e.g. 1985, 1988, 1990). Later Needham himself was to catch up with a book on the Sumban domain of Mamboru, based on fieldwork carried out some years before (1987).

6 The fact of coauthorship means we can never really know who wrote what in this book, but that still should not detract from its use here in a chapter dedicated to Scheffler specifically. The book appears under Scheffler's name as well as Lounsbury's, so one can assume that he agreed with its contents. Also, he and Lounsbury were obviously close intellectual allies in general, even though Scheffler (1971) did seek to reestablish the identity between Dravidian and Iroquois that Lounsbury (1964) had previously been at such pains to refute. See also Thomas Trautmann (1981: 85–88), who follows Lounsbury in respect of this disagreement; though otherwise he is critical of semantic analysis. Above all, the book on the Siriono handily brings together key Schefflerian perspectives on the categorical dimension of kinship.

I now return to the two main aspects of Scheffler's work, mentioned above, that I am dealing with in this chapter. I shall then address the key topic of this chapter, namely the circumstances in which a population may abandon cross-cousin marriage for a nonprescriptive form of affinal alliance that is no longer reflected in the kinship terminology and can therefore no longer be considered prescriptive. The overall arguments are first, that Scheffler's theories make more sense in respect of societies that do not pursue cross-cousin marriage than those that do; and second, that even so they cannot adequately account for systemic change between what are very definitely two different situations or stages.

Consanguinity and affinity

For Scheffler, kinship terms and terminologies are just that: they are predicated on local cultural views of procreation and its concomitant forms of consanguineal relatedness based on primary links of the sort one finds in the nuclear family (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 63). These are generally considered 'focal' for Scheffler, and other consanguineal relationships and their denotata are treated as 'extensions' outwards from these foci. This is usually demonstrated in his analyses by a variety of 'extension' or 'equivalence' rules (they are apparently the same; see Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 51), expressed through a chain of genealogical symbols starting with a focal kin type (say, F) and leading to those kin types at a further genealogical distance from ego (e.g. FB, FFBS, etc.) with which the focal one is equated in the terminology. This is in effect the 'classificatory' idea, which, of course, has a long history of use in the anthropology of kinship. Scheffler also invokes the notion of polysemy a great deal; one of his criticisms of other schools of the anthropology of kinship being that they ignore it and assume that any kin term only has one intrinsic meaning; that is monosemic. For him this is connected, *inter alia*, with the structuralist doctrine that category is prior to genealogical position and that categories do not have a focal meaning (do not mean F, therefore, in our example), but an intrinsic, monosemic meaning along the lines of 'male patrikin of the previous generation' (i.e. F, FB, FFBS etc.). For Scheffler, when structuralists break down categories genealogically, they are relying on polysemy by sense specialisation, while at the same time denying the possibility of polysemy by sense generalisation, that is, the extensionism described above from F to FB, FFBS etc. Formally speaking both are possibilities, but it is clear that for Scheffler the latter is more important because he thinks that this

is the way most kinship terminologies are structured, as well as accounting for—and making manageable, for both the anthropologist and the native informant⁷—all the denotata of an individual term. It is, in short, the way most people think most of the time: ‘polysemy within the domain of kin classification is really what it is “all about”’ (1972: 325).⁸

Three other points ought to be made here for purposes of clarification. First, while Scheffler certainly recognises change and history, he sees his analyses as basically synchronic in kind (1972: 313–14). This is another way in which he departs from the structuralists, especially perhaps Needham, who regularly invoked terminological change to explain internal inconsistencies in patterning between terminology and alliance (e.g. Needham 1966, 1967, 1974), without making that central to their work. Second, Scheffler is quite clear that his extensionism is not intended to explain how children learn kin-term use. However, they learn, they end up learning the adult classification, and that is what the analyst must focus on (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 62). Third, Scheffler is clear that polysemy does not necessarily introduce metaphor (e.g. 1972: 318ff.). Kin terms certainly have metaphorical uses, but Scheffler conducts his semantic analyses on the basis that polysemy by sense generalisation is a matter of relating the genealogical denotata of kin terms to ordered sets of rules. The possible metaphorical aspects of kin-term use should, in his scheme, be subject to a separate study.

Since Scheffler sees kin terms as having primarily consanguineal significance, he is apt to view affinal denotata as secondary. It is not clear whether he thinks that affinal denotata can ever be focal denotata, though he appears to make an exception for H and W. However, extensions from H or W as focal kin types would not work in the same way as F > FB > FFBS links in the normal classificatory sense: one can get from H to HB, but then what? Logically, HBFBS etc., but these are not specifications the kinship analyst is ever likely to have to deal with. Thomas Trautmann was later to identify another problem in deciding, for example, the focal specification in equations like FZD = HZ, since neither is obviously prior, and positing such equations leads to a circularity in which each specification implies the other (1981: 59–60). In the case of prescriptive

7 Predictability is an aspect of this process that, by following the rules, both the anthropologist and the indigenous ego can predict what term will be used to or of a particular alter.

8 The words ‘all about’ were originally Needham’s and are clearly being used ironically by Scheffler here. Unfortunately I have not been able to find the original reference in Needham’s copious writings.

terminologies, which may well lack terms that are solely affinal, Scheffler chooses to view terms denoting affinal relatives as basically consanguineal. For a structuralist like Dumont, by contrast, they, like the terminology as a whole, may primarily express affinity, as he found was the case for ethnographically Dravidian terminologies like Tamil (Dumont 1953). For Scheffler, probably, the very invention of affinal specifications to attach to such terms is merely a function of the way the western analyst interprets and analyses nonwestern classifications; consanguinity and affinity are analytical concepts, but the former has more relevance than the latter because it is linked to genealogical ties connected with locally valid but still very general cultural ideas of conception and birth. While accepting the social uses of kinship terms and categories, Scheffler rejects the structuralist notion that kin terms must be considered primarily as 'social' categories both because of the potentially affinal denotations of some of them and because of their infinite extension from a specific genealogical base through the classificatory idea. That is, he disputes the idea that they are anything more than expressions purely of kinship in the narrow genealogical sense that he has always been keen to stress as primary. Thus, 'The spouse relationship is essential to any system of consanguinity and affinity ... but not to systems of consanguinity, i.e. systems of *kin* classification *per se* [emphasis in original]' (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 81 n11). And further, 'Relations of genealogical connection, or kinship proper, are fundamentally different from and are logically and temporally prior to any social relations of kinship' (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 38)—of a jural kind, more especially (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 39).

Do systems of prescriptive alliance exist?

While Scheffler does sometimes discuss the potential social morphology correlates of specific terminologies (see Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 151–228), his analyses of the latter do not require this and can be and normally are conducted in a sociological vacuum. In general, he is sceptical of views that particular types of terminology 'reflect' aspects of the social structure. One of his targets here is A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's suggestion (1952: 55–88) that Crow and Omaha terminologies reflect the principle of descent-group unity—matrilineal and patrilineal respectively—on the basis that some of their internal equations map this out to some extent (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 15–18; also 63–64). Because they only do this 'to some extent', and because of the considerable variety of Omaha terminologies especially, Scheffler denies that this is a significant

correlation; in addition, he has also deconstructed the idea of descent totally, clearly preferring the notion of filiation, that is, parent–child ties, as being more significant.⁹ Another target of Scheffler's is the argument that cross-cousin marriage in Australia is invariably linked to section systems, which he dismisses because of the variation in both cross-cousin marriage and section systems that populations there exhibit (Scheffler 1977). One general principle invoked here (e.g. Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 152–53) is the well-known fact that similarly classified kin are not necessarily treated alike jurally; in particular, our obligations to a closely related individual in a particular kin class may be followed more diligently than in respect of someone in the same kin class who is more distantly related to us. To an extent, then, this is also a matter of behaviour as well as rural rights and obligations.

More important here, however, is Scheffler's dismissal of the notion of prescriptive alliance as a system reflected in particular forms of terminology. Scheffler does not deny that ego may have a claim in marriage on an alter who is usually going to be a cross-cousin of some description, but he also notes that such claims are rarely enforced across the whole society, that they may be evaded without detriment to the way the society defines itself, and that as a result the statistical count of such marriages may be very low indeed. In addition, societies united in their possession of a prescriptive terminology are scarcely similar in any other respect. For Scheffler, therefore, attempts by Needham and his followers to treat such societies as holistic in the Maussian sense, typically correlating prestations and dual symbolic classification to the principles of affinal alliance, are ultimately hollow.¹⁰ While we may have a marriage rule predicated on cross-cousin marriage and the expected terminological equivalences, *systems* of asymmetric affinal alliance—or any other form of affinal alliance, for that matter—do not exist for Scheffler: 'the most distinctive feature of those [terminological] systems which do employ the MBD-FZS spouse

9 One might suggest that, as with extensionism related to the study of kinship terminologies, the focus on filiation reflects a preference for stepwise thinking, as well as, here, a recognition of the shallowness of genealogical memory that is frequently encountered and an appreciation that descent groups rarely act together, whence 'descent category' may be more useful. Scheffler's deconstructions of the notion of descent (e.g. 1966, 1985, 2001) are ultimately more cogent than, say, Adam Kuper's exaggerated dismissal (1982) of the whole idea of descent as an academic myth that has had to be deconstructed not just once but twice in anthropology's intellectual history.

10 Good examples are Needham's analyses of the Purum (Needham 1958) and Lamet (Needham 1960). Needham did in fact recognise that societies united by prescriptive alliance could vary in other ways. For him, principles of organisation—symmetry, asymmetry, transitivity—were more important than typologies of societies. See, for example, Needham (1971).

equation rule is that rule itself' (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 220). Further, the reciprocal rights associated with affinal alliance exist between individuals, not social groups (*ibid.*: 223). In Scheffler's view it is therefore not correct of Needham to view prescriptive alliance as the cement of society, or as holistic in the sense that the whole of society is ordered by a simple relation of either symmetry or asymmetry between spouse-exchanging groups, expressed in symbolic values, as well as in actual exchanges of spouses and wedding prestations.¹¹ Also, for Scheffler the failure of all egos to marry, say, MBD/FZS, despite a rule enjoining them to do so, is to be seen as intrinsic to the way such rights and obligations are pursued, not interpreted as breaches of the rules requiring redefinitions of the relatives involved (*ibid.*: 223–24)—the latter being a key property of prescription for Needham (see further below).

Scheffler also evidently feels that Needham himself has caused confusion by first positing prescriptive alliance between groups (especially descent groups), then being forced to deny, in the face of contrary evidence, that groups of any sort were necessary for prescriptive alliance to be pursued. Scheffler and Lounsbury make much of this in relation to the Siriono of northeast Bolivia, where a rule of asymmetric cross-cousin marriage apparently occurs in the absence of any social groups like descent groups regularly exchanging alliance partners. As a result, 'it is not necessary to posit a system of affinal alliance between descent groups to give a reasonable and satisfactory account of the matrilineal cross-cousin marriage prescription of the Siriono' (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 178). There is also a clear tendency in their discussions of some of the structuralist 'classics' for Scheffler and Lounsbury to stress the Crow–Omaha-type equations some of their terminologies make and to underplay the alliance aspects. Thus the Kachin are described as 'just an Omaha-type system with an overlaid MBD-FZS-spouse equation rule' (*ibid.*: 199), which itself merely 'has the status of a corollary of a more fundamental rule' (in this case an Omaha skewing rule; *ibid.*: 178).

Elsewhere (1971), Scheffler also denies that 'Dravidian' terminological patterns reflect the practice of bilateral cross-cousin marriage of which they are a logical expression. Indeed, he claims that there is no fundamental difference between Dravidian and Seneca–Iroquois terminologies,

11 Needham was following Lévi-Strauss here, but also seeking to go beyond him by listing key oppositions that expressed the structure (usually asymmetric). Examples of such 'total structural analysis' include Needham (1958) on the Purum and Needham (1960) on the Lamet.

despite his close collaborator Lounsbury (1964) already having shown that they were not identical. However, treating them as identical is precisely what Scheffler does on the basis of their focal kin specifications being identical, and despite Seneca–Iroquois terminologies not being considered prescriptive (unlike Dravidian terminologies), partly because Seneca–Iroquois terminologies typically have separate affinal terms, and partly because they are less consistent in how they treat the cross-parallel distinction; for Scheffler, these differences are secondary to what unites them, namely their focal kin types. As in the case of asymmetric alliance, Scheffler also pointed out that, even in the south Indian region that gave them their name, Dravidian terminologies can co-exist with a preference for marriage to MBD but not FZD, or vice versa, or no declared preference at all, as well as one for the bilateral cross-cousin that the terminology expresses (1971). His position here was rejected by Trautmann (1981: 60–62), after the latter had spent a dozen or so pages of his monumental study of Dravidian kinship submitting a logically consistent Dravidian-type terminology to semantic analysis in the manner of Scheffler and Lounsbury and then deciding that it was essentially a circular procedure: for instance (and as noted above), it could not handle consanguineal–affinal equations of the type $FZD=HZ$, as there was no way of deciding which of these kin types was the focal one (if any, as neither occurs within ego's nuclear family; see *ibid.*: 48–62).

As for the lack of fit between terminology and marriage patterns, Trautmann sought to deal with this by bringing in history and the probability that the situation has changed over time: 'I hypothesize that bilateral cross-cousin marriage is *ancestral* to all particular cognate Dravidian systems we find in the ethnographic present [emphasis in original]' (*ibid.*: 62), regardless of whether such systems have that form of marriage at the present day. This recalls a similar *démarche* made on a number of occasions by Needham in relation to asymmetric alliance. Thus in one double article (1966, 1967) Needham shows that MBD marriage can occur in three societies with a symmetric prescriptive, an asymmetric prescriptive and a nonprescriptive terminology respectively and postulates historical change to account for this. Another makes a similar historical argument in the case of the Warao of Venezuela (Needham 1974), who have moved away from bilateral cross-cousin marriage while retaining much of the terminology that hypothetically originally went with it. The same idea of change also underpins Allen's theory of the earliest human kinship system as tetradic, which he has put

forward as a starting point for change of this type, involving a form of bilateral cross-cousin marriage closest to the Kariera system, though it is not attested ethnographically.¹²

Nonetheless, it is still possible to find societies with prescriptive terminologies where classificatory cross-cousin marriage clearly takes place on a regular basis, nullifying Scheffler's and others' objections to their existence on the basis of low rates of actual cross-cousin marriage and inconvenient unilateral preferences accompanying bilateral terminologies. Nevertheless, the argument that there is frequently a lack of fit between the patterns respectively of terminology and alliance has long been realised. Here Scheffler converges just slightly with his antagonists: the question is really what to do about it. Needham's answer (1973) was eventually to decide that, despite the word 'prescribe' logically being applied to the marriage rules, the notion of prescription was really to be located in the pattern of the terminology, not in that of alliances themselves. As a categorical system any kinship terminology defines how people, or rather the categories they belong to, are related, but a prescriptive terminology also *redefines* the kin involved in a marriage that breaks the rules; further, a terminology cannot be broken in the way that rules can. Moreover, one expects rules to be broken as a normal part of the operation of social life anywhere, therefore to expect anything approaching 100 per cent observance of them is simply unrealistic, just as it is equally naïve not to accept that, even while being observed, rules may well be manipulated to satisfy particular interests or simply to accommodate what is possible for particular egos.¹³ As a result, one needs a third level of analysis, namely actual behaviour; that is, the extent to which people obey the rules.¹⁴

12 The original statement is Allen (1986, republished with revisions 2004). More recent versions include 1989 (written particularly with linguists in mind), 1998 and 2008. In the 2008 publication, Allen reviews and answers critiques of his theory (pp. 108–09). I return to his theory briefly below.

13 Prescriptive systems in particular, though not exclusively, often make it possible to trace ties with another relative down more than one pathway, for example, enabling one to find a reason for marrying alter, as well as for not doing so.

14 See Needham (1973). One example where this three-level analytical model is adopted in full for a particular ethnographic case is in Good's description (1981) of Tamilnad in south India, where there is a logically very consistent and 'pure' terminology of symmetric prescriptive type and where 95 per cent of the population marry someone in the prescribed category, though only 25 per cent of spouses are first cross-cousins, with a slight preference for FZDy/MBSe.

At this point, therefore, we can see that the positions Scheffler has adopted form a wide gulf from those of his structuralist opposite numbers, me included. In what follows, I will seek to take the matter forward both ethnographically and theoretically. Section II is more concerned with rules and behaviour, Section III with terminology or the level of classification. Section II is also much more rooted in ethnography, whereas the arguments in Section III are more general. This means that, apart from the occasional stray remark, I am not linking the data in Section II with an examination of any associated terminology. Rather, to repeat, my aim is to show that having cross-cousin marriage and not having it should be seen as two separate situations, possibly linked as stages; and that, despite Scheffler's argument to the contrary, they are not invariably to be interpreted simply in terms of a failure to observe marriage rules 100 per cent. If that were routinely the case, why have the rules and the associated terminology in the first place? Nonetheless, in Section III we return to the terminology as a possible explanation for, or at least associated feature of, such changes. Discussion here revolves around the insight—drawn partly from how prescriptive terminologies work in redefining kin who have married 'wrongly'—that classifications do not just reflect the world but determine in large measure how the world will be perceived. This insight can, in principle, be applied to kinship terminologies as much as anything else.

Section II

In pursuing such lines of enquiry myself, I have adopted structuralist paradigms in their essentials, as well as preferring to focus on cases where it is feasible, even necessary, to bring in a diachronic perspective to explain the synchronic analysis. Synchronic analysis itself often reveals inconsistencies in the logical patterning of the terminology,¹⁵ which also involves relating actual kinship terminologies to a set of types against which ethnographic data can be measured. One can then test the basic hypothesis that change has taken place in order to account for the logical inconsistencies, possible redundancies, in the terminology, etc. There is sometimes resistance to such methods. For Ellen Basso (1970), in her debate with Gertrude Dole (1969), one needs to seek the reasons for a terminology having the pattern it does in present-day social practice,

15 North India has a number of examples, for example the Himalayan district of Kumaon (Krengel 1989) and the Malpahariya of Bihar (Parkin 1998).

not—as she alleged Dole was doing—rely on either theories of social change or alleged deviations from neat typologies to explain that pattern.¹⁶ However, this does not always lead us very far, and when, for example, one finds evidence of prescription in the terminology but not the actual alliances or marriage rules that would logically correspond with it, then it is reasonable to posit that change has taken place in the latter but has not started or not been completed in the former.

One factor to be taken into account here is the persistence of theories that cross-cousin marriage, especially in its symmetric form, represents the original form of marriage in human history and that all other forms have derived historically from it. This was the underlying assumption of much of Needham's comparative work on kinship, but in the present day it is more usually associated with Allen's tetradic theory, already mentioned in passing in the previous section. This theory postulates a particular variant of bilateral cross-cousin marriage as the starting point for human kinship. It has become increasingly influential in recent years, though also controversial in the sense that its argument that it accounts for early human kinship has been questioned by others on ethnographic grounds (e.g. Barnard 2008; Layton 2008). Nonetheless, it forms a reasonable starting point for theories of the evolution of kinship systems.

Next, therefore, I consider what steps may lead from a system of cross-cousin marriage (Situation 1 below) to the 'open' arrangements of semi-complex and complex societies (Lévi-Strauss 1949), which lack them:

1. Cross-cousin marriage, with a sociocentric terminology to match, whether tetradic, that is with only four terms (Allen 1986) or not, and with everyone following the prescription generation after generation.
2. Possible evolution from symmetric to asymmetric prescriptive, or to an eight-section system assuming marriage consistently (and symmetrically) between genealogical second cross-cousins, or to some other system that can be described as prescriptive. These options may well be mutually exclusive.
3. Only one member of a group of siblings is required to follow the prescription; other siblings may or must marry into other families or kin groups (this is more often noted of asymmetric prescription

16 In the article Basso was criticising, Dole was suggesting yet another terminological 'type', namely bifurcate generational, that is Hawaiian in ego's level and bifurcate merging or bifurcate collateral in +1 and -1.

than symmetric) (see e.g. Hicks (1985: 77–78) on Mbae (Manggarai); and Lindell, Samuelsson and Tayanin (1979: 64, 66), on Kammu (Khmu)). Around this point, a class of nonrelatives might emerge that is not covered by the terminology. I am treating this as a separate stage from that in which everyone marries a classificatory cross-cousin.

4. Abandonment of cross-cousin marriage seen as a repeated practice of exchange between kin groups, but still a tendency, even a rule, for groups of siblings to marry exclusively and sometimes intensively with one another, for example through direct exchange within that generation. Such marriages may be expressed as taking place between siblings-in-law, and they are often associated with a ban on repeating alliances between any two groups in the immediately following generation(s). Some Munda peoples of central India provide examples (see Parkin 1992: 144–87). Terminological change of some sort (for example towards Iroquois or Hawaiian, or at least the emergence of specifically affinal terms) is likely as a result.
5. Though there are no longer any marriage prescriptions, marriage prohibitions continue to be framed in part by referring to kin categories and/or social groups, such as clans related in specific ways to ego. Often associated with Crow–Omaha terminologies (especially by Lévi-Strauss), but not only or necessarily.
6. Even social groups like clans cease to be relevant or even to exist and only certain categories named as unmarriageable are left of previous situations in which kin categories governed marriage options. Inter alia, the situation in most western societies, where for many people marriage partners are not supposed to be related prior to the marriage at all.

There is a certain tendency for later stages of this sequence to be associated with first, a greater dispersal of marriages between groups, and second, greater individual freedom of choice unrestricted by social obligations to marry in particular ways. Both assumptions have to be qualified. Cross-cousin marriage may appear excessively restrictive of choice to the western mind, but in fact first cross-cousin marriage could not work for simple demographic reasons, as not every ego will have a referent in that category. As a result, anthropologists soon realised that a wider range of equivalent kin is involved, such as second and remoter cross-cousins, or persons placed in the same categories but without traceable genealogical links to ego, and they developed the notion of the classificatory cross-cousin to cope with this. Later, especially after the structuralist revolution in kinship

studies, it began to be recognised that suitable spouses need not be defined genealogically at all, but should rather be treated as members of a category that may be based, for example, on long-term inter-group relations: that is, ego seeks a spouse where other members of his or her group have done so already in the recent past, without needing to determine exact links genealogically with that spouse. In other words, choice is still possible with cross-cousin marriage, as 'cross-cousin' may actually be quite a large category in the indigenous view. Classificatory cross-cousin marriage also makes possible the dispersal of alliances between groups, though this may be ruled out or restricted where there is a set number of marriage classes (e.g. four or eight) or just two moieties. Situation 2 above involves such dispersal by definition, and within the same generation. Situation 3 enjoins dispersal in subsequent generations, by virtue of the ban on repeat alliances. Situation 4 ensures it by banning, for example, male ego from marrying into his mother's clan, which is where his father had sought a spouse, thus preventing the inter-generational repetition associated with cross-cousin marriage. With Situation 5 we arrive at the abandonment of any influence of category over marriage apart from the incest taboo. Even with cross-cousin marriage (Situation 1), but also more generally, the relevant categories may frequently be manipulated to justify technically 'wrong' marriages. Even if that is not the case, there may be more than one genealogical path linking ego to a desired spouse, which may provide a way of justifying an otherwise questionable match, or rejecting a perfectly sound one.

There is, nonetheless, the possibility that cross-cousin marriage still restricts alliances in ways that come to be seen as unacceptable and that this induces change. Why should this be? Despite Scheffler's scepticism, it has long been recognised that in most societies marriages are not just a matter of individual choice but are attached to social obligations between groups—indeed, individual choice may mean nothing, as in the very many societies where children are betrothed or bestowed on their spouses and the latter's social groups by their parents or other senior relatives (Needham 1986). These social obligations may be a matter of politics, especially as they may be manipulated to suit a particular political strategy—this is the concept of alliance, linked to marriage especially by French writers such as Lévi-Strauss (French *allié* = affine). To pursue political strategies effectively one needs flexibility, that is, the ability to choose from among several partners, whether the chosen partner is a spouse or a bestower of spouses. As already indicated, a system of strict cross-cousin marriage does not necessarily

rule out choice, and the categories even of these systems are perfectly capable of manipulation in the interests of pursuing a political strategy; though the choice may not be ego's and alter's. However, as already noted too, choice may be limited if the number of social groups (classes or moieties) associated with cross-cousin marriage is also restricted. This may lead initially to such groups being abandoned but cross-cousin marriage continuing (also to the abandonment of tetradic society). However, even this situation will have restrictions that may eventually be seen as irksome, and the resulting tensions in the system may then set in train the sorts of changes listed above.

Political strategies will, of course, tend to be pursued by the leaders of society. However, ordinary members of society may also be led to pursue them in their own private interests or those of their immediate family. The interests involved may be relatable to notions of romantic love, as ideally in most western societies, but more usually they will be connected to considerations of one's future economic survival or appropriate social positioning—in some societies, ego may have closer relationships with siblings-in-law, who may also be cross-cousins, than with siblings (e.g. Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Leach 1960). There is also a gender aspect here. Given that most societies have distinct regimes of male dominance, women are more likely overall to be the pawns in male games of marriage politics than vice versa. Age is yet another factor. Even males, as boys, may become pawns in the same game, while in societies where older men tend to monopolise marriages through polygyny, as among the Tiwi in Australia (Hart and Pilling 1979), younger men may be at the mercy of their elders' political arrangements well into middle life. The individual's desire for a perfect partner, often interpreted as a matter of romantic love, is certainly a factor demanding a degree of choice, but it is clearly more relevant in the west and societies that have been significantly influenced by it. Worldwide it is of less salience than the importance given to marriage, and to the use of women in marriage, as a mode of political alliance between social groups.¹⁷

17 It is not that notions of romance are absent elsewhere, but they may well be placed in a different category than marriage, which is seen politically and socially as a more serious matter. The difference between the two domains may relate to stages in the life cycle, as with the Muria *ghotul* or youth dormitory in central India, where relationships between the genders formed in the youth dormitory are broken off when it comes to marriages, which should proceed in different directions (Elwin 1947). Other examples may relate rather to the different contexts of changing social events. For example, among the Miao of southwest China courting is placed in a different category than marriage, and even married men may take part in ritual events focused on courting (Chien Mei-ling 2013).

Missionary influence may also have an impact in drawing many societies away from cross-cousin marriage, as with at least some Lamaholot villages in eastern Indonesia (Barnes 1977: 137, after Raymond Kennedy's unpublished field notes). However, this is not always the case, despite the presence of missionaries (e.g. Désveaux and Selz (1998) deny this happened among the Cree and Ojibwa of Ontario and eastern Manitoba, Canada); similarly, cross-cousin marriage apparently survives among south Indian Christians, despite the Catholic Church not approving of it (Kapadia 1993: 46).

The Americas

Many sources on the Americas explain the retreat from cross-cousin marriage in terms of the physical expansion of hitherto small communities and/or their greater contact with neighbouring groups etc. One example is Paul Henley, in a brief but wide-ranging comparative study of Amerindian kinship in the Amazon (1996).¹⁸ He points out that, where different populations are scattered along river systems, it tends to be those living up the headwaters that pursue cross-cousin marriage, while those downstream do not do so. The latter are more in contact with other groups, partly because of trade or political conflicts or alliances with such groups. However, Henley doubts that the usually suggested trajectory from cross-cousin marriage to its absence works in the Amazon, and indeed he seeks to reverse it, seeing his 'Amazonian type' as being more fundamental. This type:

is similar to the canonical dravidianate insofar as the general distribution of terminological categories in the three medial generations is concerned, but it is very different in three other crucial and related respects: the absence of a positive rule of marriage, the absence of a category of cross-relative in Ego's own generation and the presence of a set of exclusively affinal terms (*ibid.*: 62).

It is also evident that both the intensification of sibling exchanges within a generation without cross-cousin marriage and the repetition of alliances after the elapse of a number of generations also occur in the Amazon, though Henley does not list these as features of his type (see Parkin 2013b). He does argue that the cross-cousin marriage of groups up the headwaters is an adaptation of his Amazonian type to cope with the consequences of

18 See also the excellent discussion of Henley's views in Harry Walker 2009: 65–66.

population decline and/or small populations, which have fewer options than those downstream. He also identifies groups on middle stretches of water that have Iroquois crossness, not Dravidian. The geographical transitions thus correlate with the typological ones. In particular, the upstream groups may be remoter, more peripheral, being those that went furthest into the interior, assuming, as is likely, that these river systems were the main means of access and movement to and in these areas.

More specific examples include the Urarina of lowland Peru (Walker 2009) and the various Jivaroan groups by Taylor (1998), also discussed in this context by Walker (2009: 65). Other anthropologists too have tried to connect geographical isolation of any sort with cross-cousin marriage. Needham noted that the Warao, who do not have or no longer have cross-cousin marriage, have been exposed to outside influences and contacts for centuries through their occupation of part of the Orinoco delta, whereas the Yanomamo, although perhaps closely connected with them in prehistory, have been much more isolated until recent times up the headwaters of the Orinoco and other rivers (1974: 27–29). Needham only notes that they also have a symmetric prescriptive terminology (*ibid.*: 28). His point would have been strengthened had he consulted their main ethnographer at the time, Napoleon Chagnon, who makes it clear that, unlike the Warao, they also have bilateral cross-cousin marriage (Chagnon 1968: 125ff.).

In the literature on North America, the explicit focus tends to be more on notions of endogamy and exogamy (e.g. Ives 1998; Smith 1974 on the Ojibwa), though arguments for their significance tend to resemble those made for the South American examples. While the type of group or unit to which the endogamy and exogamy apply is not always specified, a local residential community composed largely or entirely of recognised kin usually seems to be intended. The usual argument appears to be that cross-cousin marriage is pursued in such communities as a system of close-kin marriage. Conversely, in areas where both population and food resources are thinly distributed, cross-cousin marriage may be less viable as a basis for cooperation between widely dispersed groups. Also, the system becomes less and less attractive as individual communities expand demographically and/or geographically, for example, by moving into new hunting and foraging territories, whether in the plains or in forests, or by expanding trade relations. Under these circumstances a greater range of political and trading alliances with other groups becomes necessary, and

as these are partly pursued through affinal alliance, close-kin marriage becomes a constraint, as cross-cousins tend not to be found in these other groups. Cross-cousin marriage is therefore progressively abandoned, although there may nonetheless be a tendency to marry known kin or affines from previous alliances in a more general sense. The terminologies are also modified, perhaps in only one or two levels to begin with, such as the Hawaiianisation of ego's level, but also a shift from Dravidian to Iroquois crossness, though this is difficult to document. For the Ojibwa (Smith 1974), one imperative historically may have been to use affinal alliance more widely than cross-cousin marriage to unite all Ojibwa groups in a single federation. However, contrary to Hickerson (1962), who saw cross-cousin marriage dying out among the Ojibwa in the late-seventeenth century for reasons that apparently had little to do with contact with Whites, Smith argues that the abandonment of this form of affinal alliance came much later, in the nineteenth century. It also had reasons very much associated with contact: a decline in hunting possibilities, itself a consequence of the excessive demands to supply the fur trade, which drove out food sources; the United States government's reservations policy and the consequent sedentarisation of Ojibwa and their dependence on government handouts; a population explosion; and the rise of individual trading and other forms of employment, with less sharing across kin groups and the dropping of traditional obligations to kin and affines. However, Smith is more inclined to accept the possibility that it was cross-cousin marriage itself that linked bands in the precontact period. He also argues that, in modern conditions, groups became more endogamous, as relations between groups became less important. However, he does not suggest that cross-cousin marriage was reverted to because of this.

Cross-cousin marriage may be linked to endogamy in this theory, but the indications are that, once this form of marriage has been abandoned there is no way back, whatever the circumstances. Similar models of small, isolated or dispersed populations practising cross-cousin marriage, larger, more consolidated ones abandoning it, can be found in John Ives's extensive comparative studies of Native American populations (e.g. 1998 on Athapaskan, Algonquian and Numan populations). Ives makes much of the modalities of what he calls 'sibling cores' and their residence patterns. In the case of bilateral cross-cousin marriage, where men exchange their sisters, it is claimed that they will live together and that their children may then marry in the same fashion. However, where the rule is that

two brothers marry two sisters, it is linked in this theory with residential exogamy. And this seems to reflect deliberate decisions.¹⁹ Writing of the Wrigley Slavey (after Asch 1998), Ives says that they:

deliberately fashioned same-sex sibling cores that enforced local-group exogamy in the first descending generation. The entire logic of this framework is to keep potential affines outside the local group ... Asch found a distinct tendency to call even cross-cousins by sibling terms, widening the field for marriages (Ives 1998: 100).

Yet there is no intrinsic link between residence rules and marriage rules. Ives's theory may reflect local conditions (and his reconstructions are meticulous and detailed), but it cannot apply universally.²⁰

The more general theory that cross-cousin marriage disappears with increases in group size and consolidation may have something to it, but it does rely on a notion of cross-cousin marriage as necessarily close-kin marriage, which, as argued above, it may not be. One countervailing theory, generally dismissed as unlikely by other anthropologists,²¹ was put forward by Gertrude Dole (1969). She saw endogamy caused by population decline among the Kuikuru as forcing a change away from cross-cousin marriage, as cross-cousins would live in the same residential cluster and ultimately see each other as nonmarriageable kin. The terminology reflects this in its

19 This itself is not unusual, that is populations thinking about how they marry and asking themselves whether they could do it differently (see Layton 2008: 122). Theories of change in kinship sometimes forget this point and are often presented as if everything happens without those who are affected being aware of it.

20 Nonetheless, similar arguments are occasionally made in relation to other parts of the world. Thus R.H. Barnes doubts that change took place from symmetric to asymmetric prescription on Alor and Pantar in eastern Indonesia, where both forms occur:

The symmetric systems of Alor and Pantar are found amongst trading populations situated along the coast and culturally distinct from the more anciently indigenous groups of the interior. They give the impression of being less permanently settled, and for a shorter time, than most Lamaholot communities. It would obviously demand a rather difficult historical argument to explain how they managed to retain the original form of social organisation, while the agricultural communities to the west of them shifted to asymmetric alliance (1977: 153).

The implication is that change, if change there was, proceeded in the opposite direction (this from a student of Needham's otherwise generally under the latter's influence at that time!). The theories of Ives, etc., for North America may also find resonance in the distinction in India between the Dravidian south, with bilateral cross-cousin marriage and village endogamy, and the Indo-European north, with no cousin marriage and village exogamy, the latter area also featuring dispersal of alliances and thus a greater distance between spouses, both genealogically and geographically.

21 One exception is Warren Shapiro, who uses Dole's theory to support an argument that the Siriono may have changed from a lineal (Lowie 1928: 266) or cognatic (Needham 1974: 18) terminology to a prescriptive one (Shapiro 1968: 52).

Hawaiianisation of ego's level, but not as yet the adjacent levels, a pattern Gertrude Dole called 'bifurcate generation'. This was immediately rejected by Basso (1970), from her work on the nearby Kalapalo, where she noted that, although here too cross-cousins could live in the same cluster, they still married one another. However, they also glossed over the fact so as not to draw attention to the reality of affinity (as elsewhere in this region, the Kalapalo seek to define affines as consanguines wherever possible).²²

Another possible cause is hinted at very briefly by William Elmendorf (1961) in his comparison of interior and coastal Salish. While the former retains a bifurcate collateral terminology reminiscent of cross-cousin marriage, the coastal areas have a 'lineal' (or 'cognatic', to use Needham's more exact term) terminology and no cross-cousin marriage. The coastal areas also have more social and political stratification, with a stratum of chiefs. Elmendorf does not elaborate further on the implications of this, but he may well have in mind an idea that the constraints of cross-cousin marriage were found to restrict the sorts of political alliances in which the chiefs presumably indulged. However, South India is replete with stratified polities pursuing cross-cousin marriage; in any such society, people in lower social strata will refer to and address each other in kin-related ways, even if they do not do so when looking above them in the social scale.

South India

This has long been recognised as an area of extensive cross-cousin marriage, basically bilateral or symmetric prescriptive, but often with a preference for one or other cross-cousin without that upsetting the symmetric prescriptive terminology.²³ It has also given the name 'Dravidian' to this type of affinal alliance, as this is also an area of Dravidian speech communities, and there is indeed a high, though by no means invariable, association between language and type of affinal alliance here (see Trautmann 1981). However, some more recent ethnography (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008; Kapadia 1993) indicates clearly that cross-

22 Ellen Basso clearly prefers an explanation in terms of synchronic analysis and rejects the evolutionary implications of Dole's account. Both papers are summarised by Needham (1974: 32–35). See also Dole's (1984) reply to Basso.

23 To find asymmetric systems in South Asia, one has to look at the Himalayas, stretching from the Indo-Burmese borderlands, with groups such as the Purum and Garo (the latter a mixed system, however; see Needham 1958, 1966), to as far west as the Kham Magar in Nepal (Oppitz 1988).

cousin marriage is no longer being followed as consistently as in the past, for reasons ultimately connected to changes in attitudes to arranged marriages.

Before discussing these cases, we should turn briefly to the Nayar, historically a strongly matrilineal group of subcastes in Kerala with a very attenuated system of marriage not involving cross-cousins per se. In this system, Nayar women first attained marital status through a ritual involving a man from another lineage—a ritual marriage that is not necessarily consummated²⁴—before being impregnated through sexual relations with a series of other, so-called *sambandham* partners in a relationship that is perhaps most suitably described as concubinage. The usual explanation for the emergence of this system is that while some Nayar were rulers others formed a military caste, and it was a way of protecting the *taravad* or matrilineal extended family from outside interference when Nayar men were absent on military service. Indeed, it had the effect of doing this more generally; being a matrilineal unit, the *taravad* was based on brother–sister ties, not husband–wife ties, the role of the *sambandham* partners merely being to impregnate Nayar women and nothing more.²⁵ Despite the peculiarities of this system, which has been treated as a test of the proposition that marriage is universal, both Dumont (1983) and Trautmann (1981: 208–14, 417–25) manage convincingly to show that it can be fitted into pan- or south-Indian norms respectively. Other reasons for thinking that it may represent a shift away from a more original system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage are its existence within an area that is strongly associated with the latter—the Nayar are also Dravidian speakers, after all—and the possibility that the Nayar only became matrilineal in historical times, perhaps in the tenth century AD (Moore 1985: 526).²⁶ Under legal changes introduced originally by the British, most *taravads* have been dissolved, and kinship now basically consists of bilateral nuclear

24 At the heart of the ritual was the tying of a *tali* or silver or gold token around the neck of the bride by a man of a different lineage (or even caste in some cases, for example Nambudiri Brahmans), as is done in ordinary marriages across south India as well. These rituals linked so-called *enangar* relations between different matrilineages, likened by Dumont to the sort of inherited affinal relationships that one also finds with the regular relations of cross-cousin marriage, despite the latter's absence here (see Dumont 1983: 117ff.).

25 Often conjugal visits were very brief, not even sleepovers being necessary. At this extreme, matrilineal systems do seem to go along with a devaluation of marriage, let alone affinity; another example is the Mosuo of southwest China.

26 Moore prefers to see the *taravad* as a purely residential unit and downplays the matrilineal aspects accordingly, but she cannot deny them entirely. More conventional accounts of the Nayar system include Kathleen Gough (several works, but especially 1959) and Fuller (1976).

families. Chie Nakane, in a study carried out in the mid-1950s (1963: 24–25), indicated that some cross-cousin marriage was briefly being revived among the Nayar as the *taravads* broke up, since it was a way of keeping property together that might otherwise have been dispersed between competing kin groups. However, she adds that ‘the present younger generation strongly avoid cross-cousin marriage, as they think it is not good biologically’ (ibid.: 25), perhaps a reference to folk theories of inbreeding emerging under western influence.

I turn at this point to more recent material on this region. C.J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan (2008) discuss the case of another high-status Brahman subcaste, the Vattima of Tamilnadu, a state neighbouring Kerala. Here, the prevailing influences leading away from cross-cousin marriage appear to be exclusively modern, especially the intrusion of class values into caste practice. More specifically, these are middle-class values that are construed locally somewhat differently from their supposed Euro-American models, for example, in that they insist on withdrawing women from nondomestic labour.

The Vattima are influenced by north-Indian values—in their case by the *kanya dan* ideology of giving a virgin daughter to a family of higher status within the subcaste as a supreme gift to one’s superiors—but they have traditionally pursued cross-cousin marriage as well.²⁷ However, there has recently been a shift in the ideal criteria adopted in seeking spouses, with traditional emphases on the importance of a suitable alliance, regardless of one’s daughter’s wishes, tending to be replaced by a greater stress on the personal characteristics and compatibility of prospective spouses. Added to this is a focus on education and employment prospects in India’s modern economy, as well as the use of global networks, global forms of advertising, etc. to find the right match. Fuller and Narasimhan are careful to point out that these are not love marriages and that there is no conflict with the concept of arranged marriages; it is simply that those actually getting married are more likely to be involved in the arrangements themselves. The authors accordingly call these ‘companionate marriages’, to stress this new focus on the compatibility of spouses. There are now also more marriages to non-Vattima Brahmans, though much more rarely to non-Brahmans. There seems to have been a greater stress traditionally on patrilineal descent,

27 As Kapadia points out in an earlier article ‘by consistently emphasising a “patrilateral” preference (with FZS as ideal spouse) [Tamilnad] Brahmins have made the cross-kin system hypergamous’ (1993: 28).

as a bride would stay in her natal home until the birth of at least one child, though children were also fostered long-term to MB later. Now conjugal nuclear families are established immediately after marriage. The authors also state that there are now fewer close-kin marriages, only 10 per cent of their sample being with a cross-cousin or sister's daughter.²⁸ 'The last close-kin marriage in our genealogies occurred in 2002; we know of only two others since 1990' (Fuller and Narasimhan 1980: 742). This is said to reflect modern concerns about inbreeding and the greater concern for the compatibility of partners, but the imperative of keeping land together through cross-cousin marriage is no longer so strong now that so much land has been sold outside the community. Furthermore, it is said that a daughter-in-law now comes under less pressure from her natal family to knuckle under to her new affines if the two families are not already related through previous affinal ties. Conversely, north-Indian influence may be reflected in the circumstance that the groom's family is now expected to pay less of the wedding expenses. This entails a shift away from the rough balance of marriage prestations associated with cross-cousin marriage in the direction of an absolute imbalance between the bride's side giving everything as a dowry, while the groom's side gives nothing, as in classic north-Indian practice of *kanya dan* (lit. 'the gift of a virgin' in marriage).

An earlier article by Karen Kapadia (1993) on non-Brahman castes in Tamilnad also notes a decline in close-kin marriages, including between cross-cousins. As with the previous case, this is felt to reduce the influence of the bride's natal family over that of the groom, and it also means that women are left much more to their own devices in disputes with their husbands' families. Indeed, marriages not with close kin are advocated, even by women, as a way of reducing marital conflicts, as an aggrieved wife finds it less easy to get her natal family to support her if that family does not have an existing relationship with the husband's family. Again there is a shift away from a rough balance in marriage prestations to a north-India-style dowry, aggravated by the large-scale out-migration of men and concomitant shortage of husbands. Kapadia is much more concerned with the consequences of these changes for women, and she stresses in particular the greater seclusion of women, under the apparently mistaken

28 Sister's daughter's marriage is a widespread practice accompanying bilateral cross-cousin marriage in many communities in South India. It can be construed as male ego taking his sister's daughter as a wife for himself, not for his son, as with cross-cousin marriage. A useful account is Good (1980).

local assumption that withdrawing them from their traditional labour activities reflects western middle-class values—as if this were upper-class Victorian Britain rather than contemporary British society.

As with the previous case, Kapadia mentions education and employment prospects as more important considerations than the traditional emphasis on kin as marriage partners. The claims of such kin on one another are now being ignored in the pursuit of other, more modern, interests. One of these is certainly prospective husbands seeking the largest dowry, concomitant with their own rise of status in the labour market, as they abandon traditional agricultural labour for more comfortable jobs in the government service. However, Kapadia's statistics (1993: 44 ff.) indicate that it is the lower castes that are most likely to practice nonkin marriage, though still with considerable percentages marrying a close or classificatory cross-cousin or sister's daughter, and despite the latter being regarded as the ideal forms of marriage. However, this is not a new situation. As she explains, 'Right through the three generations considered ... [i]t ... is clear that there has been a striking discrepancy between marriage preference and marriage practice in the non-Brahman lower castes for at least five decades' (ibid.: 46). Only the wealthier Vellan Chettiar caste of landowners lived up to this preference, with over 97 per cent of marriages with cross kin. Despite the changes in lower-caste practices, however, there has been no change in the pattern of terminology (ibid.: 48–49), which is probably the case for the previous example also. This is hardly surprising in itself, given received wisdom that changes in terminology lag behind changes in alliance practice, though in Kapadia's case the changes in practice were evidently already in train around the time of World War II, 50 years before she wrote. In both these cases, modern changes are obviously having an impact. Among these are the development of the modern Indian economy; the sale of land; the out-migration of men especially; urbanisation and modern lifestyles generally; and the influence of ideas of class drawn ultimately, if in modified form, from the west. However, the spread of north-Indian values relating to kinship specifically, especially dowry marriage and marriage to cousins and other close kin, can also be detected.

A book by Isabelle Clark-Decès (2014) confirms the sudden and rapid move away from close-kin marriages currently among Tevar castes in Tamil Nadu. Like Anthony Good (1980), she sees elder sister's daughter marriage as traditionally more important than cross-cousin marriage generally in this area, but in respect of both forms she also rejects the

alliance perspective deriving from Dumont (especially Dumont 1953), seeing Tamil attitudes to marriage much more as a matter of like marrying like, of marriage between status equals, not of structured oppositions between consanguines and affines who, potentially at least, are status unequals. This is especially true of elder sister's daughter marriage, which, she argues, represents a closed marriage within the kin group formed of opposite-sex siblings and their descendants, whereas cross-cousin marriage has at least the potential for extending links through marriage and negotiating status in the usual Indian fashion.

Clark-Decès also offers three explanations for the decline in all close-kin marriages in these castes (2014: 123–28). First, improved living conditions, public health campaigns and presumably (though not mentioned by Clark-Decès) 'modern'-style aspirations for education and steady employment have combined to lower family size and increase age differences between the generations, thus reducing the number of close kin one may marry, while at the same time making it less likely that a mother's brother and an elder sister's daughter will be of roughly the same age at marriage, despite the difference in genealogical level. Second, attitudes have been changed by the somewhat distorted ideas of the genetic damage caused by close-kin marriages that now circulate freely across India, whether in the media or through official public health campaigns. Third, considerations of the financial standing and educational levels of both bride and groom are replacing the generally very strong claims (Tamil *urimai*) that close kin formerly had on one another as spouses. Contra Kapadia (1995), however, Clark-Decès does not attribute this change solely to the growing practice of dowry payments, which, unlike Kapadia, she does not see as a solely modern innovation, any more than are the negotiations over status with which the practice is intimately connected. Rather, it seems Clark-Decès is arguing that young women are catching up with young men in the educational stakes, making them a more valuable asset in the marriage market and thus contributing to changes in traditional marriage attitudes and practices generally.

I should mention one other case, or series of cases, here, namely the Munda speech communities further north in India, which were the subject of part of my doctoral thesis. I have discussed them on many occasions before in this context (see especially Parkin 1992: 144–87) and will only repeat here that, insofar as they have abandoned cross-cousin marriage, the impetus has almost certainly been the influence of the surrounding caste society, which typically marries in north-Indian fashion (that is no cousin

marriage at all). It is, in short, an attempt to rise in the local hierarchy by imitating elite practice in what is a very status-conscious society, even in remote areas.²⁹

Section III

In accounting for change in kinship systems, these examples indicate that we can only think in terms of local ethnographic reasons, not global or universal ones, for the abandonment of cross-cousin marriage. However, because many such changes are accompanied by changes in terminology, we may find that the more general explanations may lie in theories of classification, rather than of marriage per se. This conclusion is supported by the observation that categorical patterns are limited in number in a way that the details of actual marriage practices do not seem to be. To quote Needham, from his examination of the Warao case, 'very unlike social factors can produce like forms of classification' (Needham 1974: 40). In other words, while potential changes in social morphology and attitudes and the reasons for these changes are many, the logical possibilities in which a kinship terminology can be constructed are few,³⁰ meaning that exact correlations between these levels of analysis, though possible, are not inevitable (Good 1981). Needham continues, 'The decisive factors, I suggest, have been, not particular empirical circumstances or legislative motives, but general possibilities and constraints of a purely formal nature' (1974: 40).

Methodologically the restricted range of terminological possibilities makes it easier to control for variation, as well as to trace possible changes themselves, the future direction of which can, to some extent, be predicted. One possible approach is that of the lexical universalists, who might also be called lexical evolutionists. An early such work was Brent Berlin and Paul Kay's famous and influential study of colour terms (1969), which set out a predictive model of change in respect to the order in which some colour terms appear in evolutionary time. This methodology was followed in other work by, for example, Cecil Brown on life-form terms (1984) and Stanley Witowski on kin terms (1971, 1972). The latter

29 One should therefore add this to, for example, changing bride price for dowry, and burial for cremation, as well as giving up alcohol, youth dormitories and mixed-sex dancing, etc.

30 For example, for +1 male consanguines, only the following four patterns are attested: $F = FB \neq MB$, $F \neq FB \neq MB$, $F = FB = MB$ and $F \neq FB = MB$. A fifth logical possibility, $F = MB \neq FB$, is not.

in particular applied Berlin and Kay's insights to kinship terminologies regarding the predictability and order with which certain features disappear in circumstances of change. For example, prescriptive equations generally disappear before classificatory ones. Yet kinship terminologies are different from the sorts of classification studied by Berlin and Kay, and by Brown. The latter grow in number of categories over time, each category shrinking in its semantic range as other more specific categories emerge, as in the Linnaean classification of the natural world. This reflects the growth in knowledge about that world, or, for example, the range of colours recognised by a colour terminology.³¹ Kinship, conversely, is not subject to such growth in knowledge—at a basic level, relationships and alters (relatives) have always been the same, though classified differently—so that change can only be effected in the form of how this finite knowledge is expressed by each emerging set of categories.³²

Another possibly significant factor is the way in which categories and classifications can assume a very real concreteness in people's minds, despite their variations in form over both time and space. Edwin Ardener pointed out that 'worlds set up by categories bear all the signs of materiality to the untutored human being' (1982: 12).³³ Earlier in the same paper he suggests, 'Once the classification exists ... it is part of the total experience of unreflecting individuals' (ibid.: 6). Finally, as Needham remarks, 'In a prescriptive system especially there is an absolute categorical determination which is hard to evade or change [and] which tends towards conservatism' (1974: 41; also 1973). In other words, rules and behaviour are more labile than classifications: as already noted, rules can be broken, behaviour manipulated, but a classification is fixed, at least synchronically, and also diachronically within certain limits. When one adds to this the consideration, already noted, that because rules can be broken and behaviour manipulated complete uniformity between these

31 Sometimes traceable: for example, orange, lilac, and purple have known origins as loans into English.

32 One of the characteristics of prescriptive terminologies is that they are closed systems of classification, meaning that one can give any alter within them a term through a recursive process, however long the chain of genealogical symbols. With nonprescriptive systems this recursive process does not apply, but one can still locate any alter by using the chains of symbols themselves, however long. This has always conditioned knowledge of kin ties and it always will: it is not to be compared to the biologist continually finding new species in, say, the Amazon forests or the Mariana trench to add to Linnaeus's classification.

33 In Ardener's mind, this potentially objectionable word (untutored) probably meant little more than that in ordinary social practice ordinary human beings take their classifications for granted and are unaware both of this fact and of possible alternatives.

three levels is not to be expected and is rare in practice, then there is almost bound to be a time lag between changes in rules and practices and changes in terminology. But, as Needham also says:

Yet prescriptive systems do change, and the problem is how precisely they do so. The crucial issue is the extent to which individuals make conscious alterations and adjustments; for the more deliberately they are supposed to act the more striking it is that their cumulative decisions should result in a common type of transformation (1974: 41).

This reference, to the possible impact of 'cumulative decisions', is itself striking in a paper by such a committed structuralist. However, it suggests that the cumulative impact of what are basically the same decisions being taken because individuals in a society are repeatedly faced with essentially the same circumstances may eventually make the lack of fit between terminology, on the one hand, and alliance rules and practice, on the other, intolerable. At this point the terminology may begin to change.

It is grasping these circumstances that is difficult. The necessary evidence for change is often circumstantial—the very fact of a mismatch between the respective patterns of terminology and alliance—while evidence for what may have caused it is even more often nonexistent or irrecoverable. However, there are exceptions, as in Europe and much of Asia, where there are written records. While there is no evidence that historical or prehistorical Indo-European speech communities had cross-cousin marriage,³⁴ it is a reasonable hypothesis, based on Han-yi Feng's careful study of kin terms (1937) that China had bilateral cross-cousin marriage into the early historical period. Historical records helped Trautmann immensely in fixing the limits of Dravidian kinship in South Asia (1981). In the Americas, finally, we do have some, often rather patchy written sources on Native American kinship patterns—dictionaries and word lists, travellers' and missionaries' accounts etc.—going back in some cases to the sixteenth century, of which anthropologists have made quite extensive use.³⁵

34 There are exceptions in South Asia, most prominently Sinhalese (see Trautmann 1981: 153–55), but these are most probably due to a population retaining its kinship system on changing its language, with terms in the new language being invented or modified to suit. Indeed, this is strongly indicated in the Sinhalese by the circumstance that most of its kinship vocabulary is Dravidian, even though the Sinhalese language itself is Indo-European. See Edward Bruner (1955) on a lexically English but structurally Crow–Omaha terminology in North America.

35 This can be compared to Africa, Australia or Oceania, where contact has been much more recent on the whole and the time depth of such sources (if they exist at all) is far shallower. M.V. Kryukov (1998: 298–99) lists other techniques to which the analyst may have recourse in reconstructing the past.

However, the importance of classification ultimately lies in how kinship terminologies are articulated with marriage choices. While there has been a tendency since Morgan to see change in the former lagging behind change in the latter, we have also seen that, where they are congruent, the terminology will guide 'wrong marriages' (e.g. with a parallel cousin instead of a cross-cousin) into the right classificatory channels. Similarly, the terminology can be used to rule out all cousin marriage by the simple device of classifying cousins as siblings, as in north-Indian terminologies such as Hindi, Bengali or Gujarati. This can also have a knock-on effect on other parts of the terminology, in which the cross-parallel distinction may be modified or abandoned. Certainly the terminology may well be reacting to change elsewhere in the system, of the sort discussed in Section II. Nonetheless, we are justified in asking just what is meant by 'abandoning cross-cousin marriage' and whether it might not take the form of how genealogical cross-cousins are reclassified as kin prohibited in marriage, typically as siblings. Genealogically (i.e. analytically), therefore, cross-cousins do not disappear, but in the classificatory sense they are taken into other categories.

It is also in circumstances of flux and uncertainty that genealogy might become more important, since more exact calculations might have to be made regarding the suitability of potential spouses, for example, excluding genealogical cross-cousins but allowing classificatory ones. Both the terminology itself and genealogical reckoning by virtue of it have their own dynamics, not just the rules or practices of marriage; and this may even be reinforced by the limited number of patterns the terminology can assume, as well as by the propensity of any classification to appear concrete and 'natural', when in fact it is subject to cultural variation.

Section IV

To conclude, Scheffler's disinclination to see in cross-cousin marriage a 'system' is based on the inevitable failure of any society to reach a 100 per cent observance of the marriage rule and to that extent is understandable. However, although his approach is rooted in analysis of the terminology, it fails to recognise the extent to which classifications may be articulated in changes in how people marry, as well as in marriage practices at a particular point in time. In this respect his approach is quite different from the position that Needham eventually adopted

(i.e. in Needham 1973), namely that the classification or terminology was where prescription should be identified, not the pattern or rule of marriages. Coupled with the synchronic bias in Scheffler's approach, which did not permit effective consideration of change, it can readily be seen how his debates with the structuralists could become largely a matter of the two sides talking past each other, with little hope of reconciliation.

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