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HAMBERGER'S COMMENT ON D. READ "GENERATIVE CROW-OMAHA TERMINOLOGIES"

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This is the latest of a series of papers on the generative deep structures of kinship terminologies (Read 1984, 2007, 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Read and Behrens 1990; Bennardo and Read 2005, 2007; Leaf and Read 2012), which considerably widens the spectrum of methods and concepts employed hitherto. I will therefore discuss it in the context of Read's more general project to develop a theory and typology of kinship terminologies based on the process of their generation, by concentrating on three main arguments: (1) the newly introduced difference between symmetric and asymmetric deep structures; (2) the use of cross-sex kin terms as gender-switch operators; and (3) the interpretation of generational skewing as an effect of generative asymmetry.

Symmetric and asymmetric kin term generation

Read's method starts from the premise that kinship terminologies are generated from a core structure that does not contain cross-sex terms. This core structure is generated in a first step from the iterative computation of the kin term products (starting with a given, sex-marked self) with one or two generator terms (a same-sex parent term and sometimes also a same-sex sibling term) and their inverses. In a second step, cross-sex kin terms are generated by one of two alternative methods, which one may call respectively the symmetric (or bilineal) and the asymmetric (or unilineal) method. The former has been used in all of Read's previous papers and may be illustrated by the example of the Proto-Polynesian terminology (Bennardo and Read 2005, 2007, Read 2007, 2013a); the second is presented in this paper for the first time, using the Thonga-Ronga terminology as example. The kin term maps of the two example terminologies are shown in Figures 1 and 2, where the same-sex core structures are marked by blue (male) and red (female) nodes, completed by the green (neutral) nodes in which both structures overlap[1].

The symmetric method starts from two isomorphic same-sex structures, generated in a parallel manner for male self (blue + green) and female self (red + green), and then links them together by a gender-switch operator that changes the sex of *speaker*, thus transforming all same-sex terms into cross-sex terms. The asymmetric method starts from a single same-sex structure (blue

[1] Kin term maps have been produced with the software Puck (www.kintip.net), visualized with the software Pajek (http://mrvar.fdv.uni-lj.si/pajek) and partly manually reworked. Coding of the terminologies for Puck has been based on the cited original sources and thus may diverge from Read's representations in some details. Male terms are blue, female terms red, neutral terms green, male cross-sex terms (and neutral terms for female speaker) light blue, female cross-sex terms (and neutral terms for male speaker) light rose, and unique cross-sex terms yellow. Black arcs correspond to the parent generator, red edges to the sibling generator, and blue edges to the spouse generator.

Fig. 1. Proto-Polynesian kin term map (based on Marck 1996)

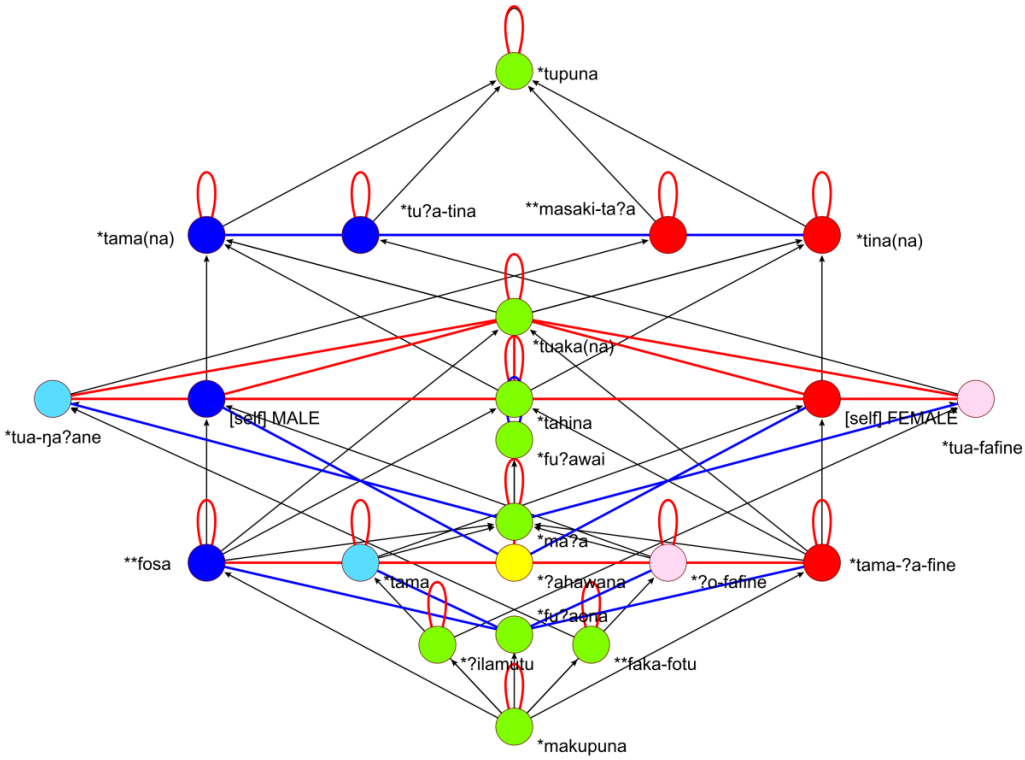
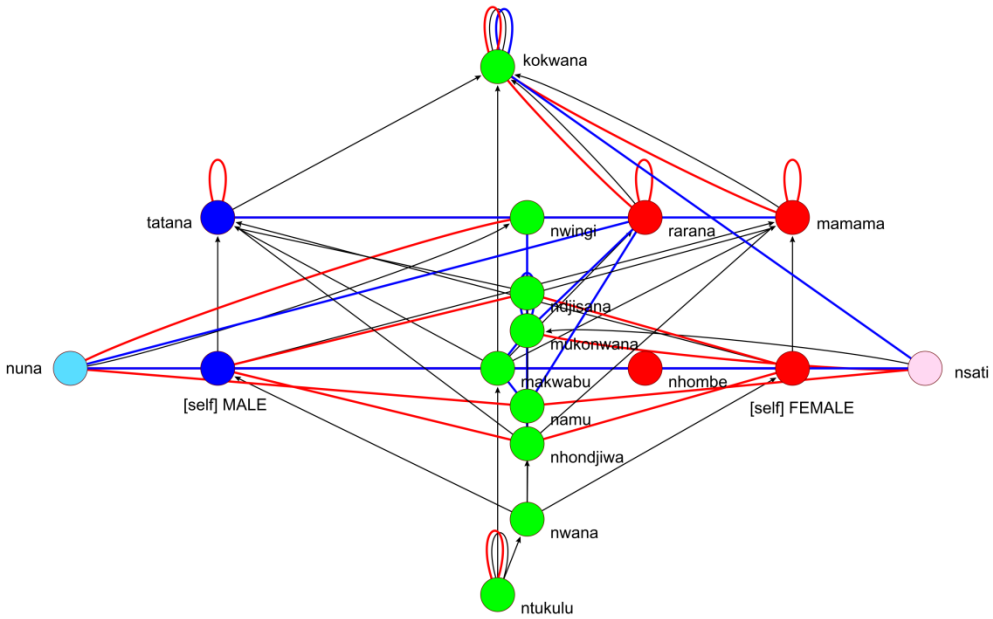


Fig. 2. Thonga-Ronga kin term map (based on Junod 1912)



+ green in the Thonga case), and then generates the terms of the opposite gender (red in the Thonga case) as cross-sex terms for the original (here: male) self, using a gender-switch operator that changes the sex of *alter*. Though Read's paper does not state this explicitly, this latter method needs to be completed by a third step in which the entire structure (including same-sex and cross-sex terms) is transferred to the opposite-sex speaker (in the same way as the symmetric method accomplishes it for the cross-sex terms only). The main difference between the two methods, as I read them, is that the symmetric method generates male and female terms independently by applying the *same* generators, whereas the asymmetric methods generates the female terms from the male terms (or vice versa), thus using *different* generators for the male and the female sides.

Before considering the application of these generative methods in detail, I would like to raise some broader questions concerning their epistemological status. I do not doubt their usefulness as analytical instruments when investigating the structure of kinship terminologies. For example, isolating the same-sex cores within a more complex network of kin terms enables us to distinguish the generational and collateral structures of kinship terminologies, and to identify structural traits that make no reference to gender (including boundary conditions such as *kokwana*'s *tatana* = *kokwana*, or bifurcate-merging conditions such as *tatana*'s *nhondiwa* = *tatana*, where *tatana* and *nhondiwa* are the parent and sibling generators of the ascending male structure of the Thonga terminology). Similarly, reconstructing kin term maps by means of parallel (symmetric) or consecutive (asymmetric) procedures may facilitate the diagnosis of their broader symmetric or asymmetric traits. The connection hypothesized by Read between the asymmetric generation of the Thonga kin term map and what appears at first sight as a form of Omaha-type generational skewing is an example in case.

However, for Read the different methods of generating kin term maps are not just heuristic devices but correspond to real differences in the deep structure of these terminologies, which are in turn linked to the social morphologies of the respective societies. Thus, in his view, the symmetric (bilineal) generation method is associated with societies with a symmetric (bilineal, cognatic or moiety) organization, while the asymmetric (unilineal) generation method best fits societies with multiple unilineal lineages. It is this correspondence with actual social organization that makes generative structures culturally salient. How should we interpret, in the light of this principle of cultural saliency, Read's claim that all kinship terminologies are generated from a core structure without cross-sex terms? If this were indeed a culturally salient trait, it would amount to claiming a universal primacy of same-sex over cross-sex relations. It would mean, for example, that the link to the mother is more fundamental for women than for men, who either have to "import" the mother term by adopting a female perspective (switching the gender of speaker), or to "derive" it from corresponding male terms (switching the gender of alter). There may be theoretical or empirical arguments to be made for such an extraordinarily strong claim (similar ideas can be found for example in the work of Françoise Héritier), but Read has not explicitly addressed them in his publications to date.

Cross-sex kin terms as gender-switch operators

I now turn to the operations of switching the gender of speaker or alter in the process of transforming same-sex into cross-sex kin terms. This operation is a special case of gender-marking, which Read conceives of as just another form of kin term product, with the particularity that one of the terms is a gendered self term. Thus, if K is a neutral kin term (for example "sibling"), ♀K is the same term for a female speaker (for example "sibling f. s."), and K♀ is the same term marked as female (for example "sister"), then Read understands the two latter terms as products of the term K with the term ♀ ("female self"), which enters into the product from the left or from the right, according to whether the sex of speaker or of alter is marked[2]:

♀K = ♀K	e.g. female self's sibling = sibling f.s.
K♀ = K♀	e.g. sibling's female self = sister

Now if K is already gendered from the outset, then the gendered self term that enters into the product becomes either equivalent to identity (leaving the original term unchanged), or to a gender-switch operator (designated in the following by the "cross" symbol X) which changes the gender of the original term:

♀♂K = X♂K = ♀K	e.g. female self's (sibling m.s.) = sibling f.s.
K♂♀ = K♂X = K♀	e.g. brother's female self = sister

Gender-switching thus can be represented as the kin term product of a gendered term with the gender-switch operator, either from the left (to change the gender of speaker) or from the right (to change the gender of alter). The first method is mobilized for the symmetric method of generating cross-sex kin terms (by "transferring" same-sex terms to the opposite-sex speaker), the second for the asymmetric method of generating them (by "converting" same-sex terms into corresponding opposite-sex terms).

The interest of this technique of representing gender-switching as a kin term product lies in the possibility of representing the gender-switch operator by an existing labeled kin term. Since the gender-switch is not supposed to change generational or genealogical distance, the natural candidates for this role are the closest same-generation cross-sex kin terms, that is, the (heterosexual) spouse term ($Sp_{\#}$) and the cross-sex sibling term ($Sb_{\#}$). In the following table I give some examples for the equivalences that result from forming left-side or right-side kin term products with these gender-switch operators:

[2] I shall consistently use kin term product notation (like "MB") and genitive "'s" (like "Mother's Brother") and not use the algebraic composition symbol ° (like "B°M" in Read's convention) and the term "of" (like "Brother of Mother") in order to avoid the (potentially confusing) inversion of order.

Operator	Speaker-gender switch: $X_{♂}K = {}_{♀}K$	Alter-gender switch: $K_{♂}X = K_{♀}$
$X = Sp_{\#}$	♀(♂Pa) = ♀HPa ♀(♂Sb) = ♀HSb ♀(♂Ch) = ♀HCh ~ ♀Ch	$F_{♀}$ = FW ~ M $B_{♀}$ = BW $S_{♀}$ = SW
$X = Sb_{\#}$	♀(♂Pa) = ♀BPa ~ ♀Pa ♀(♂Sb) = ♀BSb = ♀Sb ♀(♂Ch) = ♀BCh	$F_{♀}$ = FZ $B_{♀}$ = BZ = Z $S_{♀}$ = SZ = D

According to Read, in the Proto-Polynesian and the Thonga case, the gender-switch operator is given by the cross-sex sibling terms (**tua-ŋa?ane* and **tua-fafine* in Proto-Polynesian, *makwabu* in Thonga[3]). Thus, for example, the Proto-Polynesian all-male term ***fosa* (S m.s.) is transformed into the corresponding term for female speaker, ***faka-fotu* (BS f.s.) by forming its left-hand product with **tua-ŋa?ane* (B f.s.); and the Thonga all-male term *tanana* (F) is transformed into the corresponding female term *rarara* (FZ), actually considered as a "female father", by forming its right-hand product with *makwabu* (Z m.s.).

The problem with these equations is that they express analogies and not identities: they do not equate two existing terms, but an existing term and the hypothetical cross-sex equivalent of another existing term. If the Proto-Polynesian terms for S m.s. and BS f.s., or the Thonga terms for F and FZ, were *identical*, the gender-switch operator could be directly derived from the structural equations of the terminology. Thus, for example, preservation of labels after switching of speaker gender by forming the (left-hand) product with the cross-sex sibling term or with the spouse term would imply, in the first case, merging collateral with lineal terms (so that nephews become sons), in the second case, merging affinal with consanguineal terms (so that fathers-in-law become fathers).

But if the corresponding terms are not systematically identical, how can we judge whether they correspond to each other or not? How do we ascertain that the Proto-Polynesian analogue of ***fosa* (S m.s.) is not ***tama* (S f.s.) rather than ***faka-fotu* (BS f.s.)? How do we know that the Thonga analogue of *tanana* (F) is not *mamana* (M) rather than *rarara* (FZ)? In fact, on what basis do we arrive at the premise that the Proto-Polynesian and Thonga cross-sex sibling terms correspond to the "cross-sex self"? This premise consistently underlies Read's analyses but he never demonstrates its validity. Would it not be more satisfactory (and more prudent) to state that forming the kin term product with cross-sex terms often allows label-preserving gender-switches for *certain* regions of the terminology (e.g. for ascending terms if we choose the sibling operator, for descending terms if we choose the spouse operator), rather than considering them as instantiations of a cross-sex alter ego? In fact, it is not even clear to me what the assertion that the cross-sex self is "instantiated" by the cross-sex sibling or the spouse might mean if this other "self" is not bound to use the same kin terms to designate the same persons as did the original self.

[3] I do not discuss here Read's interpretation of *makwabu* as "cross-sex sibling", in contradistinction from *nhondiwa*/*nsjiana* as "elder/younger same-sex sibling". Junod (1912: 217-220) actually presents all three terms as neutral sibling terms without reference to speaker gender.

Again, the answer to this question seems to lie in the implicit theory of gender identity underlying the assumption that a male speaker, in order to think "female" (that is, to use female terms) has either to adopt the terms used by his sister or spouse, or to transform the terms he uses for his male relatives into terms for their sisters or spouses (and vice versa for female speaker). This theory needs to be addressed explicitly in order to clarify the meaning of the "cross-sex self" terms, which obviously can neither be reduced to, nor grounded in, formal equivalence rules.

Generative asymmetry and generational skewing

Let us now turn to the concrete way in which the generation of female from male terms is achieved in Read's model of the Thonga terminology and to its implication for the interpretation of Thonga generational skewing. Note that there are actually not one, but *three* different gender-switch operators involved in this generation, of which only the first, the already mentioned cross-sex sibling term *makwabu*, used to generate the "female father" term FZ *rarara* from F *tanana*, is explicitly identified with "cross-sex self".

The second gender-switch operator is the female spouse term *nsati*, used to generate, again from F *tanana*, the mother term M *mamana*, interpreted as FW. This elimination of the mother term from the generator set (in favor of the wife term) is certainly the most provocative element in Read's paper, which is likely to arouse opposition not only from theorists (such as Shapiro 2017) who claim that all parenthood is rooted in procreation, but also from ethnographers of African societies who will claim that if there is a form of parenthood typically anchored in marriage rather than in procreation, this is fatherhood rather than motherhood. In fact, examples of classical African Omaha-type patrilineal societies such as the Samo (Héritier 1973, 1977, 1981) or the Gourmantché (Cartry 1966, 1973) make it difficult to consider a derived maternal link as "culturally salient"[4]. Also among the Thonga, the paternal link is fundamentally mediated by marriage: the children belong to those who gave the cattle (Junod 1912: 265n1).

The third and most important gender-switch operator involved is equivalent to identity. In fact, as can be seen from the kin term map above, most of the Thonga female terms are identical with the corresponding male terms (also see Heady's comment on this point). Read interprets these neutral terms as originally male terms that are subsequently extended to the female sphere by a label-preserving gender switch. However, it would be equally logical to claim that the generative process involves the extension of originally female terms to the male sphere – and indeed this interpretation appears more compelling given that there are *three* exclusively female terms (M *mamana*, FZ *rarara* and HZ *nhombe*[5]), but only *one* exclusively male term (F *tanana*), easily to be generated from the female terms as "mother's husband" (which this time *is* culturally salient).

[4] The frequent concentric structure of the virilocal polygynous homestead, with the man in the center and the wives at the periphery, as found among the Thonga, is far more widespread than Omaha terminologies and does not in itself imply a father-centered perspective, given that the paternal center itself is viewed from the periphery where ego lives with his or her mother.

[5] The male counterpart WB *mukonwana* is ambiguously gendered as also applying to WM.

In any case, the Thonga terminology with its large majority of *ungendered* terms appears light-years away from the Moso terminology, cited by Read, where all terms are *unilaterally* gendered. Far from manifesting a fundamental asymmetry, the thick overlap of male and female terms in Thonga terminology in fact recalls the highly symmetrical Proto-Polynesian case. In both terminologies, the neutral terms provide us from the outset with two series of parallel-sex terms which we may complete by generating the gendered terms (in Thonga: F, FZ and M) either symmetrically (using the same-sex sibling and parent generators) or asymmetrically (using the cross-sex sibling and spouse generators), and in the latter case, either from the male to the female side or vice versa.

The truly asymmetrical trait of the Thonga terminology resides not in the fact that FZ and M are generated from F (or vice versa), but that there is no separate term for MB, this position being absorbed by a term (*kokwana*) that also covers MF and MBS, in keeping with the equivalence typical of Omaha skewing. Contrary to what is claimed by Read, this skewing does not stem from a generational structure only on the male side (the female side lacking any autonomous structure), but rather from a generational structure that is partially suspended on the male side, as far as the maternal kin terms are concerned. I shall not discuss here the complications arising from the fact that the term *kokwana* merges not only the generations (on the female side only) but also the sides and the genders (at the second ascending generation)[6]. Though Read's method of splitting the term into an (unskewed and neutral) paternal *kokwana* (FF = FM) and a (skewed and male) maternal *kokwana* (MF = MB = MBS) may be problematic (see the comment of Whitely and Trautmann), I will focus on the latter aspect of the issue: namely, to what extent can the generative structure postulated for the Thonga terminology account for this reduction of male terms on the maternal side?

According to the asymmetric method hypothesized by Read, the MB term is generated by first passing from the male to the female side (from F to M = FW), and then by passing back to the male side (from M = FW to MB = FWB). This amounts to reconceptualizing the maternal uncle as an affine, a reconceptualization which, as in the case of the mother term, I doubt is "culturally salient". The example of the ritual disrespect of the uterine nephew[7] hardly supports it: with the exception of de Heusch (1978), cited by Read, most African ethnographers from Griaule (1954) on interpret it as a consequence of the uterine and not the affinal bond. But even if we accept that MB is generated as FWB, how does this explain the fact that the same term covers MF and MBS (or FWF and FWBS)? Read's answer that there is only one candidate for a male-marked term on the maternal side only restates the same question in another form: why is there only one male term on the maternal side (*kokwana* MF = MB = MBS), whereas there are two female terms on

[6] As a consequence, the kin term product "son/daughter of *kokwana*" is not unambiguously defined, as it includes terms which are not in a sibling relation: *tatana*/*rarara* on the one hand, *kokwana*/*mamana* on the other. This feature alone, common to all terminologies that merge paternal and maternal sides at G+2 but not at G+1, precludes the reduction of the sibling relation to a "parent's child" relation and necessitates the use of an independent sibling generator.

[7] A general feature of patrilineal African societies, with or without Omaha terminologies, contrary to what is said in footnote 20.

the paternal side (*kokwana* FM and *rarara* FZ[8])? Why is it possible to generate two distinct terms for the father's spouse M and his cross-sex sibling FZ but not a third distinct term from their combination, i.e. his spouse's cross-sex sibling MB?

To be sure, I do not claim that there is no logical connection between the gendered asymmetry of the generative structure and the generational skewing of the male terms on the maternal side. But this connection does not reside in a reduction of the female core structure, for which the same-sex (parent and sibling) generators would remain inoperative. As a matter of fact, the structural unproductivity of these generators does not so much concern the female terms as the male terms generated from female terms (MF, MB, MBS). It is not the uterine links that are eliminated from the generative structure, but rather the agnatic links of the uterine relatives. To take account of this feature, we need a more complex generative model than that of two same-sex core structures linked to each other in a symmetrical or asymmetrical way. We will have to envisage kinship terminologies neither as a patchwork of independent flaps sewn together by speaker-gender switching, nor as an accumulation of hierarchized layers piled on top of each other by alter-gender switching, but rather as a complex tissue of same-sex warps and cross-sex wefts, going back and forth between genders and generations. While we are still only beginning to grasp the productive processes that generate the manifold patterns of this tissue, Dwight Read's ongoing work, which has reached a new stage with this paper, has brought us a great deal nearer to its understanding.

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[8] I leave aside the additional complication that the term for FZ is also skewed, as it covers FFZ, albeit not FM.

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