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REVISITING KOHLER, GIFFORD AND RIVERS: SECOND MARRIAGES AND CROW-OMAHA TERMINOLOGIES

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***Abstract:** This article revisits the hypothesis, originating with Josef Kohler at the end of the 19th century, that the distinctive equations of the Omaha kinship terminology can be explained with reference to the Omaha's rules about permissible relatives for second marriages. The article reviews the more recent relevant literature for both this situation and the expectation that a male ego should marry MBW in some societies with Crow-type terminologies. When compared, the two situations prove to be inverse mirror images of each other. Earlier theories comparing these second marriages with the sororate and levirate are also re-evaluated.*

Introduction

It is now well over a century since Gifford (1916) and Rivers (1914) invoked certain second marriages as an explanation for Crow-Omaha-type (C-O) terminologies, and even further from Josef Kohler's initial attempt (1897; translated 1975) to marshal such an explanation for the Omaha themselves. These various explanations have proved controversial and have been rejected by other scholars.¹ Although not intending to take sides in this debate myself, in this article I wish to

¹ Among other early supporters of this hypothesis, apart from Gifford and Rivers, were Lesser (1929), Lowie (1930) and Aginsky (1935); among early critics, Durkheim (1898), Radcliffe-Brown (on grounds of the unsuitability of 'speculative history'; 1952 [1941]: 56-8), Murdock (on evidential grounds; 1949: 123-4) and Lévi-Strauss (1969, Ch. 22).

revisit these ideas with reference to a wider body of literature that has only appeared since these three scholars wrote.²

The Omaha people are, of course, famous for giving their name to one of these two terminological arrangements or types that make vertical equations between fairly closely related kin, the other main such arrangement or type being called ‘Crow’, also named after a Native North American population.³ As well as their respective specific diagnostic equations (see below), there is a difference in the fact that these two arrangements express patrilineal and matrilineal modes of descent respectively through the vertical equations they make, though the actual mode of descent in the society concerned does not invariably correspond to this.⁴ Moreover, societies with these terminologies typically disperse marriages across other descent groups than those of ego and at least some of his ascendants (parents, grandparents etc.), rather than allow marriages to continue uninterrupted, generation after generation, into the same descent groups in the manner of prescription and cross-cousin marriage (cf. Lévi-Strauss’s idea of semi-complex systems; see 1966).

Quite apart from the controversy over Kohler’s hypothesis, there has long been resistance (e.g. Needham 1969: 164; 1971: 14-16; Barnes 1984, 2012) to seeing Crow-Omaha terminologies as genuine ‘types’ at all, in the manner of prescriptive terminologies associated with cross-cousin marriage, for example. One difference is in the equations these various ‘types’ make and their respective links with specific marriage rules. Moreover, prescriptive terminologies are logically closed and regular systems of classification compared to C-O ones, which, like all non-prescriptive terminologies, are infinitely extendable in their ability to generate potentially long chains of relatives. There is also the objection that, worldwide, societies have other ways of dispersing alliances that certainly do not occur with, let alone require, C-O terminologies.⁵ Nonetheless the vertical equations with which C-O terminologies are associated certainly exist in many parts of the world and have legitimately invited explanations for them, which have been provided in some abundance ever since Morgan first revealed their existence to scholarship in the nineteenth century (see McKinley 1971, Barnes 1984, for more detailed histories; also the more recent collection edited by Trautmann and Whiteley, 2012).

² None of this literature is very recent, a reflection of the retreat from the more technical side of kinship studies in the past few decades. Due to the age of many of my sources, use of the ethnographic present should therefore be assumed throughout. The paper also assumes a sufficient technical knowledge of kinship concepts and arguments on the part of the reader. My use of the words ‘prescription, prescriptive’ refers to cross-cousin marriage (or positive marriage rules) and/or the associated terminologies, following the usage of Rodney Needham (see especially Needham 1973). Abbreviations for kin types are as follows: F = father, M = mother, B = brother, Z = sister, S = son, D = daughter, H = husband, W = wife, ms = man-speaking, ws = woman-speaking, ss = same-sex, os = opposite-sex, e = elder, y = younger. They are frequently used in combination.

³ The actual Omaha terminology should be distinguished from ‘Omaha-type’ terminologies, i.e. those that have the same minimal vertical equations as actual Omaha. The same consideration applies to ‘Crow’ and ‘Crow-type’. Where possible, I follow this practice here. I also use the abbreviation ‘C-O’ to indicate both types taken together.

⁴ The latter point has in fact long been recognized: see the summary in Barnes 1984: 127-8.

⁵ One example is north India. For a brief summary of such methods of dispersal, see Parkin 2021: 276 note 1.

One topic I am interested in in this article is the fact that some aspects of C-O terminologies show them to be inverse mirror images of each other. This can be seen especially in what are generally acknowledged to be their minimal diagnostic equations: Omaha MB = MBS, M = MBD, FZC = ZC; Crow FZ = FZD, F = FZS, MBC = C. However, the most common second marriages in each case of the sort that concerned Kohler can also be seen as inversely related to each other, namely WBD and FZH (Omaha-type) and MBW and HZS (Crow-type). As discussed at the end of the article, these can arguably be seen as modified forms of the sororate and levirate as conventionally understood. It is therefore C-O second marriages and the possible connection with the sororate and levirate that I wish to focus on in this article as an update to previous work on this theme. Certainly, older articles by, for example, Lesser (1929) and Aginsky (1935) addressed and linked both issues, naturally very much in line with the theoretical perspectives of their own day. Of the two authors, however, only Lesser makes reference to Kohler, without specifically mentioning the latter's theory about the significance of second marriages. Aginsky does not reference Kohler at all, and about two thirds of his paper is taken up with presenting hypothetical cases.⁶ Other authorities who made a similar connection following Kohler and who are discussed further below are Gifford (1916) and Rivers (1910, 1914). The age of all these texts in itself makes a renewed look at these topics appropriate in light of more recent material and perspectives.

Kohler and the Omaha people

I continue this exposition with a brief account of the actual Omaha, many of whom still live on a Native American reservation in Nebraska. They have patrilineal descent, and they expect the dispersal of marriages between the same descent groups over time through prohibitions of marriage into the descent groups of one's parents and grandparents, in the manner described above. As a result, they lack prescriptive marriage rules enjoining marriage to a cross cousin. They therefore also lack the full range of expected equations associated with prescription, especially cognate-affine equations, though some inter-cognate equations in their terminologies are compatible with prescription (e.g. F = FB = MZH; M = MZ = FBW; FZ = MBW; S = BS (ms); D = BD (ms); S = ZS (ws); D = ZD (ws)).⁷

However, as Kohler pointed out (1975 [1897]), certain preferred second marriages linking male ego with certain of his wife's relatives can be correlated with some vertical equations in the actual Omaha terminology. These relatives are WFZ, WZ and WBD, who are respectively members of three successive generations of the same patrilineal descent group and are also linked because male ego may marry any of them in what are, of course, marriages subsequent to his first; in addition, in Omaha they themselves are terminologically equated, along with other kin types (see Barnes 1984: 134, ms term 16). Thus, the first and last of these specifications, though not the second, would be involved in oblique (inter-generational) marriages with ego. From the point of view of ego's son, it has often been pointed out, these women are respectively MFZ, MZ and MBD, who are also terminologically equated with one another by the Omaha, and

⁶ I am grateful to one of the anonymous referees for this article for drawing my attention to these two texts.

⁷ Barnes *ibid.* As can be seen, these equations all lack specifications for primary affines, which would make them prescriptive and not just compatible with prescription. In addition, all the terms for these equations have other specifications associated with them as well, not all of which could be accounted for in the same way. See *ibid.*: Tables 9, 10 (pp. 132-7). Most of the account that immediately follows comes from the same source.

with the same qualification (*ibid.*: 132, ms term 4); here, ego's son would be marrying obliquely in the second case and to a +2 (alternate generation) relative in the first case. A crucial argument of Kohler's is that, if male ego marries any of these women, they would effectively become stepmothers and therefore classificatory and/or substitute mothers for ego's son; hence the addition of 'mother' as a specification under this term, and hence by extension the minimal Omaha-type equation $M = MBD$ as well, given that all these women are each other's patrilineal relatives.

In fact, a more economical explanation for the latter equation is the simple fact that a woman's same-sex patrilineal successor is not her daughter (who is linked to her by matrilineal descent) but her MBD, to whom she is linked through the patriline of her brother (ego's MB; this would apply even where these second marriages are not allowed, as among the Samo; Héritier 1981: 86ff.).⁸ A number of texts to be discussed in due course debate the possibility of a conflict of interest in some societies between the respective claims of male ego to his WBD and of his son to the latter's MBD in particular (there being the same woman in this scenario), given the possibility that ego might appropriate his son's rights to the latter's MBD by marrying his (ego's) WBD; alternatively, some argue, he may surrender his right to his WBD in favor of his son (e.g. Faron 1956, 1961; see more detailed discussion below). Finally, such second marriages may produce other equations, as Barnes pointed out (1984: 157): for example, 'The equation $FMBDS = F$ would make sense on the assumption that FF married his WBD, since the Omahas also equate FB with F'. In fact, these equations turn up under actual Omaha ms term 3 and ws term 3 (*ibid.*: 132, 135).

Though of theoretical interest, as has often been pointed out, second marriages are usually infrequent to rare even in those societies where they are permitted, not being expected of individuals in the way that first marriages so often are, though expectations concerning the sororate and levirate, discussed later, may form a partial exception to this. At all events, the relative infrequency of second marriages challenges the plausibility of their explaining the characteristic equations of C-O terminologies, which, as just indicated, in themselves are much less rare worldwide. Nonetheless in the Omaha case they exist, and Barnes, a more modern authority than Kohler who has gone into the question of 'Omaha' kinship more deeply than most and who co-translated Kohler's work into English, clearly sympathizes with the latter, if somewhat cautiously; in particular, he has added considerably to the vertical equations Kohler found that are compatible with these second marriage preferences (Barnes 1984: Ch. 5, especially pp. 157-60) and claims that they are a complete set, 'barring possible slips and oversights' (*ibid.*: 154).

In the discussion below, I will concentrate less on the terminologies than on second marriages to WBD in the Omaha-type case. However, we should also consider the inverse situation of second marriages among Crow-type terminologies. Shortly before Gifford published, Rivers (1914) described such a situation among the Banks Islanders of the western Pacific. Specifically, they had matrilineal institutions and a Crow-type terminology, and also permitted marriage to the widow of male ego's MB in what would of course be a second marriage for her. If we compare these two situations, 'Crow' and 'Omaha', we come up with two reciprocal pairs which, as already noted in brief, are again inversely related. In the patrilineal, Omaha-type case, we have the possibility of an already or previously married male ego marrying a junior female relative through his wife, namely WBD, the reciprocal of whom is FZH, categorically the spouse of a +1 collateral parallel relative. In the matrilineal case, with a Crow-type terminology, MBW is a similarly defined relative, though inversely to FZH (obtained by reversing the gender orientation for

⁸ One can make the same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, about the Crow equation $F = FZS$.

each letter in the abbreviation); moreover, she is marrying for a second time to a relative traced through her deceased husband, namely her HZS.

Turning now to HZS, we see that he is similarly defined as WBD, though inversely: both kin types are categorically a spouse's opposite-sex sibling's opposite-sex child. Apart from the distinction of actual kin types, there are also some other differences between the two situations. Unlike in the Banks Islands, where male ego inherits MBW from his MB when the latter dies, in the Omaha case the death of the spouse is not required before male ego can marry his WBD: he can marry her polygynously.⁹ Moreover, there are differences of status: WBD is a junior female with presumably little status or influence because of her gender and/or age. However, HZS, although junior, is male and may be the heir generally of his MB, the latter himself having prestige as head of a matrilineal unit of some sort, depending on the society (often as a local chief). Moreover, on balance an Omaha male ego who is FZH to his WBD can be expected to have more relative prestige and power than a female ego who is MBW to her HZS, as the MBW may not have much choice over being inherited in this manner. However, I have come across no marriages of an MBW to HMB, the analogue to WFZ in the Omaha, patrilineal case, and marriage also seems rare to HB (cf. Omaha WZ), though this possibility is at least more plausible. Most of the literature on Omaha-type terminologies talks, if at all, about WZ and WBD marriage more than WFZ. A final but important point is that there is no evidence that C-O marriages necessarily coexist with such marriage practices – indeed, there are plenty of cases where they do not – and it is not an argument of this paper that they do. Nonetheless those cases where these features do co-exist invite an explanation of the fact and deserve one quite as much as any other anthropological phenomenon.¹⁰

Other examples of WBD etc. marriage

In considering other examples of WBD marriage, especially in association with Omaha-type equations, it will be convenient to start with the Osage, another Native North American group located close to the Omaha and similar in general socio-cultural terms; the chief source for their broadly Omaha-type terminology and marriage preferences is Nett (1952). In two places (*ibid.*: 168, 178; the explanation on the latter page is somewhat clearer), Nett speculates that WBD used to be a second marriage preference for a male ego, typically being married polygynously with male ego's first wife. Since ego's wife and WBD were members by birth of the same patrilineage, they themselves were related as FZ and BD, and Nett also says that the relationship was a close one, that the FZ was more like a sister to her BD, and that their respective children would be likely to be brought up together; this suggests possible age alignment between them, despite the difference of generation. Nett makes no mention of male ego marrying his own WFZ, who would have been a generation senior to his first wife, nor that he could marry his WZ, unlike among the Omaha. Later in the paper, however (*ibid.*: 179-80), she suggests that WBD marriage might have been a relatively recent practice and that, as a consequence of its introduction, the woman who was ego's WFZ and MFZ from the point of view of male ego's son ceased to be equated with 'mother' (cf. Morgan) and became a classificatory grandmother to him. By infer-

⁹ If the MBW were allowed to marry her HZS in MB's lifetime, it would be polyandrous. Much rarer cross-culturally than polygyny, polyandry is most unlikely to be permitted in such a society owing to the usually high prestige of the MB, who can be expected to have sufficient power to prevent it.

¹⁰ As one of the anonymous referees for this paper pointed out, another difference between these two situations is that consanguineal relatives of ego's affines (WBD, HZS) are distinguished from affines of his or her consanguines (FZH, MBW). I am grateful to the referee for this comment.

ence, as a +2 relative she might even then have become a potential bride for ego's son. None of this is very clear, though, and the only fairly certain conclusion we can take from Nett's data is the possibility of marriage to WBD being allowed polygynously at some time in the fairly recent past. Even that is an assumption drawn from Nett's examination of the terminology, and she does not seem to have collected informants' statements confirming this, though the information on the closeness of FZ and BD did come from informants.¹¹

In a now very old text, already referred to, Gifford (1916) mentions WBD marriage as rare but possible among the Miwok. McKinley, in his later account of Gifford (1971: 236 & 246 n. 5), doubted there were any such marriages, especially as one of the two cases Gifford supposedly recorded turned out to be a marriage to WFZ, also permissible among the Omaha, so perhaps not quite the exception McKinley thought it was. Quite possibly there were WZ marriages too, which on their own would have been less remarkable in being an example of the sororate. All three specifications, WFZ, WZ and WBD, had the same Miwok term, *woklii*, and could be married, while, assuming MBD marriage between the same lines in the previous generation, marriage to WBD would also be marriage to MBSD (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1969, Ch. 22; Forth 2008). Forth, in a careful appraisal of the Miwok situation, suggests that in effect this ethnic group had prescriptive MBD/FZS marriage, despite the terminology being Omaha in type, not prescriptive.¹² Both Forth and Lévi-Strauss (the latter somewhat more firmly) appear to accept that the Miwok had WBD marriage, but both deny the validity of Gifford's reason for this, namely that at some point a privilege allowing ego to marry WBD was transferred to his son, to whom the woman would be MBD. Forth also adds (*ibid.*) that on Rindi (a domain on the island of Sumba, Indonesia, where he himself had worked; see 1981), WBD may substitute for the lack of an MBD, while on Kédang (also Indonesia), Barnes (1974: 257) notes that in a second, usually polygynous marriage the wife may be WZ or WBD, a *mahan*, a term also applied to the prescribed relative for first marriages, MBD, and MBSD. MBD and WBD are also equated in the Purum terminology of northeast India (Needham 1962: 77).

Hopkins' study of the Tzotzil of Chiapas State, Mexico (1969), has only a brief discussion of marriage possibilities; he states that marriages between sibling's spouse's siblings (GEG) categories are allowed both symmetrically and asymmetrically, possibly also cross-cousin marriage or marriage to MZD, all of which are apparently minor practices, perhaps limited by a preference for settlement endogamy (*ibid.*: 101). Hopkins is more concerned with the terminology, which is fairly conventionally Omaha in type, and for which he conducts a semantic analysis of the sort pioneered by Floyd Lounsbury. This shows, though he does not comment on it, that not only are WZ, WBD and WFZ equated, their ws reciprocals ZH, FZH and BDH are also covered by the very same term; in the actual Omaha terminology, the two reciprocal sets have separate terms (ms 16 and ws 16; Barnes 1984: 134, 137). This points to an equivalence in the Tzotzil terminology for some reason, though it is unclear whether it is related to second-marriage preferences.

We can be more certain about the Ungarinyin (Ngarinyin in some more recent work) of Australia, studied by Needham (1960) on the basis of much earlier studies by Radcliffe-Brown (1931: 337-9) and Elkin (1932: 312-17); they are a society with patrilineal descent and some

¹¹ Early in the paper Nett states that she had difficulties in eliciting this information from Osage informants, apparently out of a fear of opening old quarrels, especially over rights to land.

¹² Forth's suggestion amounts to an explicit desire to see prescribed marriages as sufficient for designating an affinal alliance system as prescriptive, unlike Needham's suggestion that prescription is a matter of the terminology alone (1973).

Omaha-type equations. Needham lists one term linking W, WBD and WFZ (but not WZ), another linking FZH and ZH (reciprocals of WBD and WZ) but not BDH (reciprocal of WFZ). It is not clear whether the second set are ws terms only or are used by males also. In terms of marriage possibilities, the lines of FF (ego's line by birth), MF and MMB are banned to male ego, but the latter can marry into the line of FMB, and Needham especially mentions the same-generation kin type FMBSD as the key referent here. Both Radcliffe-Brown (1931: 338) and Elkin (1932: 313-14) also mention this marriage choice, though Elkin declared he could not find any marriages to actual FMBSD. The term for this relative is *maringi*, which is also used for the first series above (W, WBD, WFZ), as well as FM and FMBD. Together with FMBSD,¹³ the latter two specifications are patrilineally related women, just as are W, WBD and WFZ. Finally, both Radcliffe-Brown and Elkin mention WBD marriage here, the former being a little more categorical on the possibility than the latter, who states that it is rare in Australia generally. However, Needham does not make much of this, being much more concerned to disprove Livingstone's hypothesis (1959) that the Ungarinyin, or indeed anyone else, can practice FZD/MBS marriage as a regular system of prescriptive alliance.

Among the Muyu of what is now Irian Jaya (western Papua New Guinea), one term covers WZ, WBD and their reciprocals ZH and FZH; they are not among the extensive list of alters whom one may not marry provided by their ethnographer Schoorl (1993: 39), though whether they are actually married to any extent is not clear. However, Schoorl does record Omaha-type vertical equations in the terminology, one of which covers M, MBD, MBSD, FMBD and FMBSD, none of which are in the list of prohibited spouses. Similarly, though partly discontinuously, MB = MBS = FMB = FMBSS (FMBS is not mentioned, though he could be expected to feature here as well). MBD marriage is preferred in some areas, though practiced infrequently, and this is clearly not a prescriptive system.

Stayt (1931) worked with the Venda on the Transvaal–Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) border. He remarks that a lot of Bantu peoples have WBD marriage (ibid.: 179), supported by the data below. As well as having Omaha-type equations, the Venda terminology equates WyZ, WBD and WBDD under the term *musadzana*, literally 'little wife', but not WFZ, of whom Stayt makes no mention. In addition, two other terms, evidently synonyms, denote, inter alia, FZH, ZH and BDH, but not MFZH, the reciprocal of WBDD. However, these are not the main marriage preferences among the Venda: this is MBD, marriage with whom is 'practised wherever possible, and is an essential feature of the society' (ibid.: 175); there is also some FZD marriage, but this is considered wrong, and the terminology is not prescriptive. Stayt also speculates, as have others elsewhere, that WBD marriage might once have been commoner: 'Today, if [male ego] has a son, this woman must be given to the son [as his MBD], and only if he [male ego] has no son is he allowed to keep her for himself' (ibid.: 177). Stayt further says that if male ego obtains a wife from his WB for his son, he (male ego) is initially regarded as the woman's husband by virtue of having paid the bridewealth; only later does his son act as the husband. This sounds a rather dubious arrangement not mentioned in other cases of WBD marriage, nor is the fact that this gives the woman in effect two husbands – in other words, it would be an example of polyandry, a rare practice globally. More plausibly, it seems that male ego has a claim on first his WZ, then his WBD, if his first wife proves unsatisfactory or dies. Perhaps less plausibly, the claim is said to extend to WBW, whom one would imagine WB normally being reluctant to give up. Possibly, though, the claim is actually on WB to find ego a second wife, whoever she may be,

¹³ Needham's list also gives *maringi* as FMBSSD, possibly an error for FMBSD, which is otherwise missing from his list.

and the claim on WBW is merely a bargaining tactic designed to prompt her husband to give ego WZ or WBD. In any case, Stayt also says there is strong avoidance of WBW, which hardly suggests the possibility of marriage to her.

Beattie says that among the Bunyoro of Uganda, male ego can marry WZ polygynously (1960: 56). An old text on the Swazi of Swaziland (Marwick 1940), then still a British Protectorate, tells us that marriage into male ego's mother's clan is preferred, despite actual MBD and MZD both being denied him. Male ego can, however, marry into FM's clan and also take WZ and WBD as second wives. The terminology is neither prescriptive nor Omaha-type (see also Moore, below). The Alur have a terminological equivalence between WZ and WBD, though their ethnographer Southall (1956) gives no information about their marriage preferences.

Teitelbaum (1980) writes that the Kpelle of Liberia and Guinea have an Omaha-type terminology and a preference for actual MBD marriage (the terminology is therefore not prescriptive), closely followed, apparently, by classificatory MBD/FZS marriages. However, provided male ego's first wife is his MBD, WBD can also be married subsequently. If one's first wife is an MBD, marrying WBD also amounts to marrying MBDBD, a formula reducible to MBSD. MBD and MBSD are related as FZ and BD.¹⁴ Teitelbaum links this practice to a preference for repeating marriages between the same patriline without resort to exchange marriages between two groups of siblings (i.e. ZHZ/BWB), although asymmetric marriages between BWZ and ZHB are allowed. In the absence of descent groups, it seems that marriage possibilities and prohibitions are phrased and calculated in terms of specific kin types here. Also greatly preferred are obviously second marriages between FZH and DHZ, for whom the reciprocals are respectively WBD and BWF. This is potentially significant because with symmetric prescriptive alliance DHZ occupies the same structural position as WBD, while BWF is equated with FZH. Whether this denotes a change in marriage practices is not clear. In fact MBD marriages are 'infrequent' (ibid.: 43), though FZD marriages are possible, and are even seen as 'modern' (ibid.: 41).

Moore usefully lists some other examples of WBD marriage in brief, drawn from the literature available at that time, some of it very old even then (see Moore 1963: 301). In Africa, the Lovedu allow MBD and, less approved, WBD marriage, and girls in a joking relationship with the latter's reciprocal, FZH, will jocularly call him 'husband'. Among the Nyakusa, it is said, MBD marriage has given way to WBD marriage over time. In Asia, the Pramalai Kallar of south India allow WBD marriage as a substitute for WZ, potentially in violation of the Hindu Marriages Act, which bans polygyny among Hindus.

The Sumi Naga (in earlier literature Sema Naga) prefer MBD in marriage, but according to Moore (ibid.) WBD marriages turn up in the genealogies recorded by the ethnographer Hutton (1921). However, more recent information casts doubt on this, while also mentioning that the Sumi have the avunculate and that the MB is a respected figure with a key ritual role in ego's marriage.¹⁵ Among the nearby Thado Kuki, Moore says MBD is prescribed, but 'wife' and WBD share the same term, the latter also being regarded as a potential second wife.

In China, Fêng Han-yi states in a number of places that WBD marriage was possible, though seemingly a practice of the feudal aristocracy, and even then rare among them (1967: 47-

¹⁴ In fact, the actual Omaha term for WZ etc. has a number of other specifications, which can be linked in pairs of kin types such that the two such kin types are a generation apart, all mapping out a relationship between FZ and BD. The significance of this phenomenon is at present unclear to me.

¹⁵ For this new information, I would like to thank Prof. Avitoli Zhimo of the University of Delhi, India, herself a Sumi Naga, and Dr Iliyana Angelova, University of Bremen, Germany, for facilitating contact with Prof. Zhimo.

51, 56). In Papua New Guinea the Mende prefer MBD and only allow WBD if one's wife is dead (Moore 1963). Among the Murngin in Australia, MBD marriage is preferred, but men also marry WBD. A father is said to take his son's potential wife (his son's MBD) 'to keep her for him' (Warner 1930: 221), though both Warner, the original source (*ibid.*: 256), and a subsequent commentary by J.A. Barnes (1967: 6, 44) hint that this is exceptional. Moore does not discuss the terminologies in any of her examples.

Elsewhere (Parkin 2021: Ch. 8) I have discussed the case of the Mapuche in central-southern Chile, studied by Faron (e.g. 1956, 1961), who associates MBD marriage with periods of relative peace in between the various wars against the Spanish and the Chilean state, whereas he sees WBD marriage as being linked with periods of conflict, both internal and external, or at least instability. He interprets the latter mainly in terms of male ego appropriating his son's MBD in male ego's second marriage. However, with the emergence of patrilineages, more or less coinciding with or following pacification and settlement on reservations, a former regime of affinal exchanges between smaller families gave way to a more stable, extensive and ordered system of exchanges between lineages. At the same time, transplantation on to reservations led to the political aspects of Mapuche post-pacification society being focused on the non-kin groupings and the reservation itself more than related kin groups as in traditional Mapuche society. Faron also sees the change from WBD to MBD marriage as associated with a general transfer of rights from father to son consequent on eventual pacification, this being a way of countering the tendency of young men to leave the reservation for labor migration in the new settled conditions. Coupled with a general decline in polygyny, WBD marriage therefore died out. Faron nonetheless sees WBD marriage as fundamental to Mapuche sociology in the past, and he also makes the point, discussed at the end of this paper, that it can be linked not only to polygynous unions in general, but more specifically to the levirate and sororate. Although Faron records Omaha-type terminologies for the Mapuche as well as others, depending on the period of history, the respective chronologies of the change from WBD to MBD marriage and changes in terminological patterns do not match (*cf.* Parkin 2021, Ch. 8). Whatever the case in the past, WBD marriages are not known among the Mapuche today, though some MBD marriages do take place (Gabriela Piña, personal communication).

The instances of WBD marriage I have described so far have been in societies with patrilineal descent, but the Bemba, a matrilineal people of Zambia, also allow it according to Richards, alongside cross cousins and classificatory CD (Richards 1951: 181). Conversely the similarly matrilineal Plateau Tonga of what was then Northern Rhodesia do not allow WZ or WBD in marriage, nor asymmetric GEG marriages, cousin marriage being more normative, though at the time the Tonga were coming under pressure from the local missions to ban first cousins (Colson 1958). A similar situation (WBD not mentioned) occurs with the related Gwembe Tonga (Colson 1960).

MBW marriage

As already noted, it was Rivers who first stated that MBW was inherited by her HZS in the Banks Islands (1914), remarking that it 'may even be said to be the orthodox Banksian marriage' (1910: 54-5). On one island, Merlav, he was told that FZ marriage was also possible, though less so today than previously (*ibid.*: 50). This may represent a return marriage in a matrilineal society, described more fully by de Sausser (1955) on the Pende of Congo (see in detail below).

On Baniata in the Solomon Islands, among another matrilineal people with a Crow-type terminology, MBW marriage is described as possible but not a rule, though the term *mani* applies

to both MBW and her reciprocal HZS (Scheffler 1972: 365). At least two matrilineal peoples in Africa also allow marriage to a deceased MB's widow: the Bemba (Richards 1950: 230) and the Ashanti (Fortes 1950: 271).

The Tlingit (de Laguna 1952), who are divided into matrilineal moieties, have a complicated set of marriage preferences, one of which is ego as HZS marrying his MBW in what is a second marriage for her following the death of her husband, ego's MB. However, MBW is also ideally FZ, an equation compatible with symmetric prescriptive alliance, though this is not specifically mentioned. Otherwise women marry FB or FZS, specifications linked in their Crow-type terminology. Moreover, men in noble circles marry FZ or FZD, connected by a similar Crow-type equivalence. In the latter two cases, the reciprocals (and therefore spouses) fall into the MBC and BC categories, another set of Crow-type equivalences. Here terminological equivalences really do seem to have something to do with marriage preferences.

Moore gives a list of other cases here too, again based on others' ethnography (1963: 302-3). Among the Haida – matrilineal neighbours of the Tlingit – if ego is the heir of an MB who is a chief, he must both marry MBD and inherit MBW, otherwise FZD marriage is preferred; there is no evidence of FZ marriage. However, there are occasional indications that the latter combination between FZ and FZD as preferred wives may occur elsewhere (ibid.: 303).

The Dogon of West Africa allow MBD marriage, and ego has sexual access to his MBW. The Ga of Ghana allow marriage to FBW but not MBW; a man may nonetheless arrange a marriage between her and his son, to whom she is FMBW (reciprocally HZSS). The Timne and Limba of Sierra Leone may allow MBD marriage and more certainly allow MBW. The Ba-Kaonde of what is now Zambia allow marriage to MBD and inheritance of MBW unless MB has made one of his brothers his heir (Moore ibid.). Conversely the Mende of Sierra Leone allow marriage to both MBD and MBW, but cannot marry MBD if, as he might, he has had sexual relations with MBW while his MB is still alive, as this would be *simongama*, roughly 'incest' (Little 1951: 146). By special permission of his secret society he can also marry his WZ if his wife dies (ibid.: 145).

Probably the most promising example of these sorts of arrangement, and certainly one of the most fully described, are the matrilineal Pende of Congo-Zaire, for whom FZD marriage was the preference in the 1950s and reportedly also FZ earlier, supported by the absence of a term for FZH, as male ego himself would then have occupied that position. The reason given for these preferences is that it enables us 'to see our father's face': that is, they are an expression of reciprocity in returning a spouse to one's father's matrilineage for one taken from it a generation previously (in line with the alternation in the direction of spouse transfer in the formal model of FZD/MBS marriage).¹⁶ Marriage to MBD, by contrast, is ordinarily disliked as shameful, but if male ego's father fails to find ego a wife from within his own matriclan, ego can apply to his MF or MB, who may give him a daughter, a classificatory MBD, as a wife. There are also a number of marriage options two generations apart, which can be quite common, depending on area, especially FMB/ZSD, but also a man with either SD or DD (at least classificatory CD). +2/-2 marriages are associated with areas that permit MBD/FZS marriage; they are not found where FZD/MBS marriage is the sole preference, e.g. in Kasai. More significant for the present discussion, MBW and HZS have the same term, and it appears they may marry, though the text is not very clear on this point: on p. 53 there is a rather oblique indication that they may (see also diagram, p. 54), but on p. 57 we are told that when MB dies his widow is taken by his ZSS, not ZS (i.e. a

¹⁶ This may therefore be the closest instance to the sort of FZD/MBS marriage system Needham declared to be impossible (1958, 1960).

marriage between HZSS and FMBW); also, in his lifetime MB can marry ZSD or ZDD (i.e. an FMB/ZSD or MMB/ZDD marriage; see above). MB/ZD marriages are universally condemned, however, as being between referents of the ‘same blood’, despite the pair addressing each other as ‘spouse’ in joking relations, although such marriages sometimes take place at the MB’s insistence. There are some equations compatible with, though not diagnostic of, symmetrical or bilateral prescription, namely $M = MZ = FBW$; $F = MZH$; $WB = ZH$; $BW = WZ$; and $WZH = B$. Among the Pende of the Kasai region, interestingly, the equation $FZD = \text{‘spouse’}$ also occurs, clearly linked with the marriage preference for FZD (de Sousberghe 1955). Although this is a complicated picture of possible marriage options, MBW-HZS marriage does appear, potentially, to be part of the mix.

Paradigms

We therefore have four situations or paradigms with preferred marriages that correspond logically to one another, though in inverse ways:

- 1) In a patrilineal society, female ego marries FZH and/or FZS; their reciprocals are WBD and MBD (see Venda example)
- 2) In a matrilineal society, male ego marries MBW and/or MBD; their reciprocals are HZS and FZS (see Haida example)
- 3) In a matrilineal society, male ego marries FZ and/or FZD; their reciprocals are BS and MBS (see Pende example)
- 4) In a patrilineal society, female ego marries MB and MBS; their reciprocals are ZD and FZD (examples, not described here, in south India and among certain Native Amazonians like the Trio; see Rivière 1969)

Paradigms 1 and 2 are inversions or mirror images of one another, as are paradigms 3 and 4. Cross cousins are involved in all cases, as are +1 and -1 collateral cross kin. Paradigms 1 and 4 are both cases where male ego can pre-empt his son’s expected marriage to MBD (ego’s WBD) and ZD (ego’s FZD) respectively; it is probably no coincidence in these two cases that they both feature senior males with presumably prestige and power in relation to genealogically junior women. Similarly but inversely, paradigms 2 and 3 feature senior but possibly dependent women who can be expected to lack agency in relation to men who have custody of them.

Why these practices?

As most previous writers on this subject have already pointed out, these marriage practices can be explained with reference to their similarity to the sororate and levirate. Both anthropological coinings, the sororate and levirate are aspects of the long-recognized circumstance that marriage in many societies around the world is less a matter of relations between individuals than between whole social groups, such as descent groups, territorial groups like villages, or spouse-exchange groups existing for little if anything beyond governing marriage and its choices. Thus in the sororate, what is often called a ‘lineage sister’ is typically married as a substitute for or supplement to a man’s first or main wife, who came from the same lineage. The second marriage may or may not involve polygyny (depending on whether the first wife is alive or not), may be due to the first

wife allegedly being barren,¹⁷ and may be a response to a demand that the wife-giving group replace a wife who has died. The Omaha case, in which WFZ, WZ and WBD are members of the same patriline, is in effect a version of the sororate, as are those societies I have reviewed that permit only the WBD as a substitute or additional wife. Since, however, WFZ and WBD are not members of ego's genealogical level, unlike WZ, the definition, or at least the usual understanding, of the sororate and what it involves may be insufficient, as might be the name itself, since it would no longer apply strictly to sisters alone (cf. Latin *soror*, sister).

Similar considerations, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the levirate, which is usually seen as a way of supporting a widow who has lost her husband by allowing or, often, expecting her to marry her late husband's brother in his place. Often, as in north India – and for rule-based as well as obvious demographic reasons – this is the younger brother, with whom the woman may well have a joking and even sexual relationship in her husband's lifetime, again as reported in north India (see Kapadia 1966). Mostly, it seems, this is mainly a feature of patrilineal societies, where it occurs at all. However, the practice in the matrilineal societies we have looked at of a man inheriting his MBW as a widow can also be seen as a sort of levirate, even though here too etymologically the term *levir* (Latin HB) may no longer be strictly appropriate. Moreover, unlike the sororate normally, the levirate can also be seen as a form of inheritance, and indeed the notion of 'widow inheritance' is sometimes used (including by myself; e.g. Parkin 1992: 115-120) for a situation in which, unlike the classic levirate, any children of the widow's second marriage are not attributed to her deceased husband but to his brother. That may not be an issue in the case of male ego marrying his deceased MB's widow, who will normally be older and very possibly beyond child-bearing age. However, the possibility of inheritance frequently is an issue, as ego may well inherit all his MB's possessions and his social status, especially if his MB was a chief or other leader.

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¹⁷ At least, she might get the blame for the barrenness of the marriage, though the problem may actually lie with her husband.

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