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THE NEXUS BETWEEN KINSHIP AND RITUAL

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Not only ritual, but also kinship, can be understood as self-generative and in fact mutually self-generative social phenomena. They are in this sense foils for each other's production of social values, transformations, causes, and effects. Because this model of cultural agency is nonlinear rather than linear, it works on the transformation of social wholes rather than categorical divisions, and thus can be applied to medieval as well as contemporary socio-ritual contingencies.

What do we mean by a nexus between kinship and ritual? Is it an artificial construct imposed by the anthropologist, or is a general or universal feature of human social aggregation itself? If so, would it not be the single point of articulation through which kin relationship and ritual performance might grow and develop out of one another? These are but speculation; let me give you a concrete example from medieval European history.

The actuality of an effective point of articulation between ritual and social structure had an early precedent in the infamous Investiture Controversy of the twelfth century. Both the Holy Roman Empire, represented by the Emperor Henry IV, and the papacy, represented by Pope Gregory VII, claimed the right to invest bishops with their holy office, and the countervailing claims of the religious and secular orders threatened the whole hierarchical structure of medieval society. The impasse between social and ritual authority was resolved finally by an impromptu "ritual" invented on the spot: the Emperor was obliged to kneel in the snow like a penitent all night long at a place called Canossa before he could receive absolution from Pope Gregory.

It took me a long time to realize that the circumstances of Henry's capitulation were by no means unusual, for they correspond with standard practice in societies characterized by dual divisions, or moieties. I finally put two and two together in August 2011 on the banks of the Rio Negro in Brazil, where I had been invited by the indigenous authorities to attend the consecration ritual for a new ceremonial longhouse. The secular head of the society, adorned in brilliant red and yellow feathers, gave a long explanatory

lecture in which he pointed out that his people, the Tukana, rule the secular affairs of the alliance, whereas their affines, the Tuyuka, who speak another language, are the shamans in charge of ritual. By analogy then, Emperor Henry and his followers, who spoke Middle High German, were the Tukana, and Pope Gregory and his followers, who spoke Church Latin, were the Tuyuka. The main point, however, is that dual divisions of one sort or another are practically ubiquitous in human societies, and that they arbitrate their differences through ritual means.

What that, in turn, really means has long been a mystery to social anthropologists. What does ritual really "do" and why is it so important? There are no easy answers. But the best answer comes from Victor Turner's *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (1975): "Ritual enacts what cannot be thought, owing to thought's subservience to essences." Ritual, in other words, is the communication of the unsayable. (Sure enough: at the conclusion of the Tuyuka ritual they gave me a draught of Ayahuasca, and I was *speechless!*)

Both kinship and ritual are artificial constructs that anthropologists have devised to articulate the otherwise unmarked intricacies of everyday and ceremonial life, but they are not exclusive in this respect. Certain life-crisis rituals, such as weddings, funerals, and initiations, straddle both categories, and belong to both at once. They are *points of articulation*, like the investiture of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church, or the consecration of a longhouse on the Rio Negro.

Thus they permit the transformation of everyday secular life and specially charged ritual life into one another, such that without that transformation neither kinship nor ritual would be recognizable as such. So we have a right to expect some marked and deliberate manifestation of it, something like the social integration of the functionalists or the schematic non-linear logics of the structuralists. There are also, of course, *dialectical* models, such as those proposed by G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx, and actually discovered in the field by Gregory Bateson. But there is also the caveat, identified as "Schneider's Law" by Robert Murphy, to the effect that all structural-functional models come down to the same thing, which is that "if things did not work *this way*, they would work *some other way*." How often are qualified anthropological observers or theorists blindsided by their naive assumptions that a society or a culture must *work* in order to be valid as a subject of study, despite the fact that many of the most important ones, such as the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, *did not work at all*. (As a mark of courtesy, or just plain boredom, I have omitted consideration of my overworked society from this discussion.)

"Kinship" has no real existence as such anymore than any other abstraction. But this fact only serves to give added emphasis to the *concrete* particulars, like specific kin terms and kin relationships. These not only serve as prime organizers in human life, but, given the recent identification of Fox P2 in the Neanderthal genome, may be older than the human race. So, if it was the *idea* of kinship, as a quasi-institution that was invented by Lewis Henry Morgan, then it was the *reality* behind that idea that Morgan invented himself. But it is easy enough to belittle Morgan's contribution; for all his faults he did *objectify* kinship, and was the first to objectify the role it plays on a comparative basis.

But this approach had its drawbacks too. It tended to reify "types" of social organization just as much as the terminological categorization did, created hard and fast stereotypes like "matrilineal," "patrilineal," and "double descent"—dogmatic constructs that ruled the discipline for over a century after Morgan's death. It was only in the last four decades of the twentieth century that we learned, under the oftentimes impatient tutelage of David Schneider, that none of these so-called "archetypes" could possibly exist in its own right, and that they themselves only make sense as transformations of one another. Hence the Daribi of Papua New Guinea would be a totally *matrilineal* people but for the injunction to "buy" their offspring from their mother's line with huge payments of wealth. They live by the idiom of *normative patriliney*—meaning patriliney is something to be *achieved* rather than *assumed*. But for the ostensibly "matrilineal" peoples of Papua New Guinea, such as Malinowski's Trobrianders as well as the Barok I studied in New Ireland, the situation is almost the same but for different reasons: an ambitious father is obliged to "repossess" his begotten offspring by claiming and purchasing the men's house (a *taun*) of their mother's line. As the Barok like to put it: "your mother's people only give you what they have to, but what your father gives you is given out of pure love." (There is no word for "love" in the Daribi lexicon.)

Hence it is not the descent categorizations themselves that define these peoples and enable their social life, but the *transformations* from one class of relationships to another: transformative exchanges, occasions, and rituals that serve not only as designation-*al markers*, but also as operatives, points of action (protocol), that often enough introduce additional problems of their own. For they are points of *life-crisis* in which the learning curve of the individual intersects that of the society as a whole.

The Daribi kinship system, if not unique, at least has a very limited distribution pattern in Papua New Guinea. It has been described for not only some other peoples of the Purari River drainage, such as the Wiru (Strathern 1968), but for the Foi speakers of Kutubu (Williams 1940, Weiner 1918) as well as the Ningerum of Western Province (Welsch 1991). It is best described in the way my indigenous congeners explained it to me when I first began asking them about it.

Daribi draw an invisible security-circle around the local group, defined by the distinction between those who *share*, wealth and those who *exchange* it. "We marry those with whom we exchange meat and wealth; we do not marry those with whom we share meat and wealth." The key terms here are "meat" and "wealth," for these turn out to be the all-important *substance of exchange*, the *vital wealth* that extends the flow of life and relationship among kin units. In terms that are both cognitive and material at once, it makes life *possible*.

Because this distinction extends to all individuals, and all facets of life, it dominates the whole social structure of the people. Thus for the Daribi, a man's sister's children are the only ones he can call his own, since the offspring begotten of his wives are only his by right of making payments for them. The term for this purchase is *pagehaie* ("buying the base," since one's maternal kin are considered the base or basis of one's existence), and every single person, regardless of gender, must have his or her identity and paternal affiliation redeemed in this way. In cases of default (non-payment), the maternal

uncle (*pagebidi*, "man at the base") has the perfect right to take over custody of the child, or else deliver his infamous curse upon it, which can result in illness or death. (I was told by a Ningoram man that this sort of curse is the deadliest sort of sorcery practiced by his people.)

The model as a whole is a self-organizing and self-integrating one, for it substitutes its own cognitive criteria for the genealogical standards that most people in our own society consider to be the only authentic ones, and reproduces *itself* through its own idea of how reproduction takes place. We may think of it as "symbolic," but it is *reality* insofar as the Daribi are concerned. That is, every child is the result of the folding together or involution of its maternal and paternal legacies, and since all the people we have ever heard about began as children, this lineal involution defines both the kin significance of individuals as well as lineages. If a child is male, it will grow up to be a member of father's *zibi*, or lineage; if it is female it will eventually be married off to other *zibi*, so that by reproducing there it will bring in payments of wealth and meat from elsewhere, and thus augment the lineage of its birth.

In fact, what are normally called "bride price" and "child price" have exactly the same distribution pattern here, since a woman's brother is the *pagebidi* of her children, and holds her rights by proxy. And since the flow of credit is universally one of wealth and people substituted for one another, the resultant social order has somewhat the structure and function of a Savings & Loan Bank. For just as the wealth coming into a *zibi* may be regarded as investments or loans made in order to secure its future membership, so the wealth paid out may be seen as security insurance for its uterine children born elsewhere.

Hence the "flaw" or weak point in the social structure has to do not only with the segregation of the genders, which are consigned to entirely different life trajectories, but also the managerial control of the *zibi*'s assets on hand. The most commonly heard grievance during my years of residence at Karimui was that the older men "who are supposed to use this shared wealth to help us with our bride-prices, keep it for themselves instead and hoard it; they are like dogs, and only hungry for meat." In other words, the system in and of itself sets up cross-generational tensions and drives the younger men to seek out adulterous relations with the often frustrated wives and co-wives of the elder generation.

What is ritual? Objectified as a unitary cross-cultural phenomenon in Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process* (1969), exemplified ethnographically in Gregory Bateson's *Naven* (1958), ritual is a performance as well as a concept, a dramaturgical *enactment* of a transformation that cannot be expressed or represented through verbal means. For this reason, as Emile Durkheim has pointed out, it defines and belongs to a strictly bounded and often tabooed preserve of thought and behavior call the *sacred* (as opposed to the profane).

More importantly, the ritual transformation is one that plays a definitive role in a people's ontological world-perspective—their self-privileged model of being-in-the-world. So the point to be emphasized here is one that Turner has insisted upon time and again: *the fact that the transformation cannot be expressed in words necessarily excludes as well any other form of structural representation*, and thus is immune to structural or rational representation of any kind. To re-emphasize: "ritual enacts what cannot be

thought, owing to thought's subservience to essences" (Turner 1975), and for that reason a ritual is a prime example of what Turner calls "the liminal" or *antistructure*. (With Turner's blessing, I have used this concept in describing the effects of *obviation: the ritual does not belong to the culture; the culture belongs to IT.*)

Hence the standard response to the ethnographer's query about the origin and meaning of a given ritual is polite but dismissive: "We have no idea." In other words, the meaning of the ritual has been obviated, "anticipated and disposed of" in the performance itself, and as part of its natural functioning. Thus when the performance of the Daribi *habu* at Tiligi', Karimui, in which I had participated, came to its long-awaited conclusion, I approached its organizer, a man named Bai, and asked him about the meaning of the rite.

"Alas," he responded, "our fathers died before they could tell us what it means." The better answer would have been that their fathers could not have told them even when they were still alive, and, for all of that, this conversation took place only about 3 years after the region had been brought under administrative control. Nonetheless, I had been told very plainly something that it took me years to find out for myself: *a ritual does, not mean, it obviates, and what it obviates is the structuring of meaning itself.*

The *habu*, the distinctive ritual of the Daribi, with its emphasis on shamanic possession states and the enforced separation of the genders, seems to be very ancient. A variant form of it, known by the same name, together with its miniaturized form (*doziano habu* in Daribi, *usane habu* in Foi—"small *habu*" in both cases), is characteristic of the Foi speakers of the Kutubu region. Another variant, characterized by the seclusion of a party of celibate young men in the high cloud forest, where they are obliged to hunt wild game and preserve the meat, later to be taken, as at Karimui, to the main house, constitutes the *Seban ban*, the fifth stage in the initiation sequence of the Telefol and Faiwol peoples of the Star Mountains (see Barth 1975: Chapter 8). Not surprisingly for a rite whose vestiges are spread out over hundreds of miles of some of the most difficult terrain in the world, it means very different things to some very different peoples.

Or so it would seem. But the fact remains that each of the peoples identified with these practices makes a deliberate issue of *secrecy*; each recognizes a tabooed category of secret or forbidden talk (Daribi *porigi*, literally "the speech of remote intentions," Foi "leaf talk," Telefol *Weng Amem*), so that the real significance of the rite depends on its remaining a mystery to those who perform it even while they are performing it.

But that does not mean that the *habu* itself, or any variant of it, does not have a meaning or purpose. Rather it means that you will get varying degrees of veracity depending on whom and when you ask. Thus in 1968 in Tiligi', I was told that the purpose of the *habu* was "to fetch the soul of a man who had died unmourned in the bush and bring it back to the house, so that it will not victimize the children and pigs of the community." While good enough for a monograph on the subject (Wagner 1972), this explanation does not include the *how* and the *why* of the fetching back to the house, and completely ignores its supreme importance to Daribi cosmology. It glosses over the all-important fact that the young *habu* men who must spend over a month in celibate seclusion in the bush, must necessarily be possessed by the soul of the abandoned man, and that the

dispelling of the possession state corresponds to the reintegration of these hostages together with their hostage-taker with the community at large.

That purely descriptive account of the ritual corresponds to what a government official or interested outsider might be told about it in the 1960's or 70's, when, according to present day Daribi, "we were still in a pre-contact state." I was not able to recover the real truth about the *habu* until I returned to the field in 2000, and that has to do with what "dying in the bush" really means. And that, in turn, has to do with an ethnographic phenomenon that has never before been identified in Papua New Guinea, though it is known in Amazonia and plays a .major role in the cosmology of the Andean peoples.

"You see that mountain peak over there, the one we call 'Kebinugiai?' Well, that was once a hunter of that name, who had hunted over that territory his whole life and had developed so intimate a bond with the topography that after his death he simply turned into it." In other words, he was one of a special category of land-transformative shamans called *Buruhoa* (literally "place-soul people"), who are "remembered," after their deaths by the actual dirt and rock configuration of the landscape around them. Their ability to do so is linked to a very special understanding of the soul. Like the Wiru, a neighboring people (Clark 1993), Daribi regard the actual flesh and blood physicality of a person as the mere "picture-soul" of that individual, basically a holographic projection. Going by that logic, just as the physical being of a human being is a mere projection of an otherwise ineffable hologram called the *soul* (*bidinoma*), so the landscape that it inhabits is yet another *kind* of projection of that same soul. (Man into mountain, so to speak). In a very real sense the transformation that occurs at the death of a *buruhoa* is in every literal sense *the figure-ground reversal* of his ontological essence, for instead of knowing how to *picture* himself as a living being with the landscape as his background, he now learns to reverse the process, like printing a positive from a negative in photography, and in the event gains control over the soul-projection of all the creatures resident in his terraformed real estate.

As land-soul and basis of the figure/ground projection itself, in other words, he gains the power of severing the picture-souls of the game animals and birds living in his domain from their living bodies (!) and sending them to hunters in their dreams at night. Witnesses have described to me how a Daribi hunter will jerk bolt upright from his sleeping place in the middle of the night, grab his bow and arrows, and hurry to the place depicted in his dream, where he finds the game disoriented and easy to kill.

Identity theft on the Richter scale! This tells us all we need to know about the etiology of the *habu*. For nothing is worse than a bush-inhabiting *buruhoa* going rogue, disaffected from his erstwhile housemates to the point of severing the souls of their pigs and children from their living bodies and causing them to sicken and die as a result. This man must be brought back to the house and redomesticated at all costs.

Not only does the extreme social and residential separation of the genders that is the norm in Daribi society fit perfectly with the dramaturgical organization of the *habu* performance, it also provides the rationale for the *apical* function of the rite. Over and above the stated mission and purpose of the *habu*—to redomesticate a *buruhoa* gone rogue—it has a *universal* function as well: that of redressing the world-order (in which

gender separation plays a large part) when things seem to have come unstuck. This fact has an interesting history to it, an account that conflates the myth of the world/s creation and the facts of Karimui's first contacts with outsiders. In 1930, when the Australian prospectors Leahy and Dwyer passed through Karimui on their way to the south coast (after "discovering" the highlands), they appeared to Daribi to be retracing the steps of the creator or "Maker Of The Land" Souw, who had left the area going in the opposite direction. Eyewitnesses of the event told me: "We took the loose fitting clothing of the white men to be the sheddable skin of Souw, which he had only to cast off like a snake to become young again." But their greatest fear was that the two outsiders were the Creator himself, coming back to *unmake* the world this time. It was an apocalyptic moment, and it set a precedent. When the next Souw-impersonator, Ivan Champion, moved through Karimui in 1936, published photographs showed the explorer and his party to be surrounded by men wearing the *habu* attire, as though the explorer had been the *ultimate* rogue *buruhua*.

Instead of the normative pattern of strict male/female separation, the *habu* begins with a complete isolation of the men, who are then divided into two age-groups. The senior men are called the *be' habu* ("house *habu*°), who are obliged to remain at home, oversee the safety of the women and children, and represent the normative social order in the ritual confrontation that occurs at the climax of the rite. The younger men, called *habu bidi* ("*habu* men"), offer their souls up for possession by the rogue *buruhua*, and are compelled under very strict sanctions to spend a month or two in a remote shelter hunting game with the help of the *buruhua*'s special soul-estranging powers, smoke-drying the meat, which will then be taken to the house with great care and distributed ritually to the men of the community as a "gift" from the rogue *buruhua* in exculpation of his misdeeds.

But that conciliatory event can only take place after the bitter animosity between the house people and the renegade *buruhua* has been assuaged: one of those ritual competitions, like the deadly "ball-court" games in the civilizations of ancient Mexico and central America. Called "striking" (*hwebo*) in Daribi, it takes the form of violent shoulder-wrestling, in which single pairs of house men and *habu* men square off at one another and leap high in the air, smashing their shoulders together as hard as possible (I was obliged to remove my watch and glasses before participating, and even then was in constant demand to patch up injuries with my first aid kit). After the "sacramental" distribution of the preserved game, the *habu* enters its final phase via an ingenious double inversion of male and female roles. The women of the whole community, literally hundreds of them, excluded from the rite itself, begin to mass at the periphery. Dressed in transvestite male attire, as mock "warriors," they taunt the men with mocking songs, begging to be given some meat, finally they attempt to dance a peeled banana stalk (symbolic of male potency) down the corridor of the men's quarters and through it out the rear door, an act, which if it succeeded, would "take the souls of the men along with it." The men invariably intercept it and destroy it, which is why there are still men around today.

Nonetheless, the double-proportional comparison between male and female roles and statuses provides the key to the kinship/ritual nexus in this context, for the relation *men are to women AS house-men are to habu men* exploits the major variables upon

which society itself is founded: the tension between the genders, and the rivalry over marriage-options between older and younger males. The certainties of one fuel the uncertainties of the other, and vice-versa. In purely functionalist terms it would suggest that the ritual acts like the governor on a steam-engine (Bateson's analogy), restoring the balance between the two forces when it gets out of hand. This would imply a *cyclical* alternation between the social and the anti-social, with the failure of the one leading automatically to the institution of the other. There is some evidence that this is true of individual *habu* performances as well. I was able to witness the stages of the last two performances of a traditional *habu* cycle in which the remote communities of Noru and Tiligi' took turns at playing hosts and guests at each other's performances. Because of poor timing, I was only able to visit the *habu* men in their hunting lodge in 1964. However, at Tiligi' in 1968 I was able not only to witness, but participate in the whole performance. Informants never thought it relevant to mention the cyclical rivalry between communities, something I had to discover for myself, but it does reveal another "function," as it were, of the rites. Like modern day sporting matches between rival cities, it served both to display and make symbolic statement of unit identities. On a revisit to the area in 2005, I learned that at least two of the communities living in that remote part of Karimui had organized competing soccer teams, each identified by a symbolic tree leaf characteristic of its area (like "California Redwoods" vs. "New England-Sugar-Maples").

Unfortunately, although the above account may tell us all we might need to know about how the fit between kinship and the *habu* is structured in *formal* terms, it tells us nothing about how the *habu* is *motivated*, and whether it can effect changes of its own accord. We may take kinship for granted as a *sui generis* phenomenon, but ritual is always *some particular* something in and of itself.

What do they have in common, and what do they *not* have in common? First of all, the *habu*, as well as the kinship system, operates on a logic of subject/object transformations—we must *objectify* a thing in order to gain a practical purchase over it. In the Daribi case, this involves dramatic transformations between the inner soul—the seat of consciousness and cognition, and the external "picture-soul," of physical body, commonly called "the skin" in Melanesia (and Aboriginal Australia). These are cross-referenced by another, equally formidable, distinction between the respective male and female dispositions of the "picture soul" (*tigi-ware* = "skin body"). Basically what happens in the *habu* can be explained by a double-inversion of the normative gender roles in kinship. The women, at the climax of the *habu*, "picture" the men in transvestite attire, dressed as mock warriors and assuming an aggressive and adversarial demeanor vis-a-vis the men, whereas the *habu* men, reduced to co-dependency through their possession by the *buruhua*, "picture" the normative state of Daribi women. Altogether then, the whole dynamic of the *habu* is motivated—artificially provoked into being—by inverting the roles of normative kinship upon themselves: a world turned upside down.

Perhaps the best way of understanding this is to picture, in turn, what happens *ritually* in a Daribi marriage. When a young woman is betrothed, it is imagined that her *wegi-noma*, or "girl soul," is *taken*, and when she finally marries, it is *fastened*. (The parallel with soul-possession could not be clearer.) On that occasion the groom arrives at

the bride's father's house with a party of retainers, dressed all alike in the *ogwanoma'* (literally "boy-soul"): a black soot covering over the whole body, topped by a black cassowary plume headdress, with white shell ornaments for contrast (vividly contrasting black and white are the battle colors of the Daribi). They assume a military posture, standing at rigid attention in single file, holding the pearl shells of the bride price in the left hand, and a bow and a sheaf of arrows in the right. As the bride, dressed in female splendor, emerges from the house and walks down the file of men, collecting the shells from each of them, the men smartly replace the shells with an arrow from the sheaf, and snap back to "attention." They are protecting the *ogwanoma'*, the arch symbol of male honor and propriety, with a martial flourish, assuring that it will never be "taken."

And yet it is the *ogwanoma'* that is yielded up in the *habu*, for "taking a soul" refers to both the securing of a woman in marriage and the possession state endured by the *habu* men during their long stay in the bush. They have, as the Daribi put it, "the ghost on their skins." To mark this transformation and the trance-state it induces—they are ritually "married to the spirit"—the younger men are forced to wear a modified form of the *ogwanoma'* during their stay in the bush and even afterward when they confront the house men.

Thus we have in the *habu* a ritualized suspension of the social order, a subject/object shift between kinship and anti-kinship, in which the respective picture souls of men and women are exchanged for one another. The effective *ogwanorna'* of the young men is "taken," just as a woman's soul is taken in betrothal, whereupon the women assume an exaggerated form of the normative male picture-soul—the black-and-white photo print, as it were, of masculine prowess. Hence the crucial role that women play in the *habu*, the power behind the scenes, is both enabled and guaranteed by their strict exclusion from the ritual itself.

But that term "exclusion" covers a multitude of sins—the "is" and "is not" of Daribi social intercourse. For the real anti-kinship in Daribi life takes place when the *habu* is *not* in session. It takes the form of conspiratorial adulterous relations, often enough instigated by the (married) women themselves for purposes of blackmail. This takes the form of secret assignations between older married women, often sexually frustrated by impotent or indifferent mates, and younger single or newly married males, and represents the greatest single challenge in the Daribi social order. (More adultery is suspected than actually performed; more is performed than actually admitted to: Daribi have no need of fertility drugs.) In the classic case, the older house men are expected to "take care" of the womenfolk—wives and fiancées—of the younger men going off to celibate seclusion in the *habu*, despite the fact that there is a great deal of uncertainty as to what "take care" really means. (Does it include satisfying them sexually, or simply making sure that nobody else does?) It all depends on the picture-soul, doesn't it? In the exemplary case of a failed *habu*, which took place decades before the first Daribi contact with outsiders, the Noru people, who at that time were living wholly within the limestone formation known as Hweabi, were holding a *habu*. As the young *habu* men were approaching the main house after their long seclusion in the bush, they called out to the house men: "Have you been taking good care of our women while we were gone?" The answer, "we

sure have!" was taken badly by the deprived young males. One thing led to another, pretended hostility became actual hostility, and a shooting war broke out. The net upshot of this escalation was that the entire group of *habu* men, together with their wives and families, left their clan mates at Hweabi, moved several miles away, and founded the community that is now known as "Sogo."

In that case, now a part of Daribi oral history, ritual took the role of *instigating* kinship, rather than merely mirroring it and readjusting its tensions, and thus demonstrated that the "nexus" can work both ways: each mode works upon the other as the other works upon it, creating a tension that is neither social nor antisocial, but provoked or *hazarded*, as one might hazard a bet (Wagner 1995). One *dares* or *wagers* a ritual, much as one wagers one's fortune on the futures market on Wall Street, and, for these people, one's kinship is very much one's fortune. So, by the very logic of the ritual I have been discussing here, it is appropriate to ask whether kinship itself is not *hazarded* as well. That is, after all, how a *betrothal* works, is it not? "Taking a chance" on some particular wife or husband.

The idea that kinship statuses and relations are not merely prescribed or "given," something of a casualty of Morgan's method of diagramming them, but actually *provoked* into being by the participants themselves, has been recognized in anthropology since the days of Radcliffe-Brown, and was fostered by Gregory Bateson as well. I have also espoused it in a number of publications but with as little effect as Bateson or Radcliffe-Brown. The idea is that there are only 3 basic kinds of relationship in kinship—joking, avoidance, and respect—and that they are all transformations of one another, alternative versions of a single elicitory strategy. But for that very reason—the danger of one mode of relating morphing uncontrollably into another—they must be strictly bounded, segregated in thought and deed, and kept apart from one another. Even the incest taboo can be deduced from this need for separation.

As opposed to the *structural*, the *behavioral* precedent for Daribi kinship is based not on the imperative of redeeming each child by making payments to its mother's line, but on what might be called the *interdict*—the strictly enforced annulment or denial of kin relations themselves. This is the precept for *total and complete avoidance between mother-in-law and son-in law across every category of human interaction*. Referentially, the two would call each other "*au*" if they could speak together, but the fact of the matter is that they cannot, may not, must not. The taboo is deadly serious: *the two may not see one another, be in the presence of one another, or speak or overhear in any case any word or inference even remotely suggestive of au's name*. "Ouch!" as we say in English.

Of course they know each other's names, and everybody knows they know each other's names, but still the injunction holds: as Daribi themselves put it: "to look at one's *au* is like looking at the sun." Talk always spells trouble, especially in so sensitive a case, thus the only permissible congress between *au* is the giving of wealth and meat by the male, and the long purloined bestowal of her daughter by the female. (I have a single reference in my notes to a man who actually *raped* his *au*, an act that actually started a major war, though we may be sure the rape itself took place in dead silence!)

The "point" or "edge" of kinship in behavioral terms is just simply this: *no form of relationship, in either a behavioral or an intellectual sense, is in any way meaningful or emotionally viable, not to speak of socially compatible, unless it is first "set up," that is presented to the actor as a FOIL of its own real time social significance, such that it is the actor's very PENETRATION OF the foil—seeing through the disguises—that becomes in turn the enactment of the relationship itself.* In effect, every kin relationship must be "elicited," "set up" beforehand as if it were a joke, con, or ludicrous parody of what is really going on, and it is actually the way in which the actor *reacts* to it that determines the way in which the interpersonal relationship plays out. Take for example the "trash talk"—putting each other down in the most deliberately obscene way possible—that takes place between workers on a construction site. Each gibe or slur, no matter how crude, is actually a *foil* for the initiation of a joking relationship. If the victim takes it as a joke, they're for real, a buddy; if not, they're the kind of guy who cannot take a joke, and might as well quit the job. Or give up on relationships altogether. (This is called a *joking relationship*.) It is the direct opposite of a *respect* relationship, used with affines, heads of state, bank presidents, etc., in which the *importance* (as opposed to the *unimportance*) of the relative or relationship is *exaggerated* out of all importance to the context of interaction; if the actor can overcome their pretended fear of even *dealing* with the agnified Other ("Oh, the *shame* of it; why he is verily like unto a god!"), then their actions in doing so become the shape of their relations with Higher Authority. In effect, avoidance, joking, and respect exist in a tri-polar standoff with one another, such that each is the non-performance of the other two: joking is the avoidance of respect, respect is the avoidance of joking, and avoidance is the avoidance of relationship altogether.

We come at last to the difficult question of why this innovative concept of kinship as a self-generative or "staged" phenomenon is so difficult for traditional anthropologists to understand or accept. The answer is that, unlike Morgan's original genealogical mapping of kin relations, it is based on nonlinear rather than linear causality. Rather than treating cause-and-effect as a logic of linear-temporal succession, as in "descent" or "filiation," the self-generative model is, so to speak, "horizontal" and nonlinear, based on a differential rather than a time-sensitive or generational causation. It was precisely this kind of "multiple and distributive" model of intersecting causal connections that Radcliffe-Brown had encountered among the section and subsection systems of the Australian Aborigines, and that Bateson described so eloquently as schismogenesis among the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea.

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