

FROM TETRADIC SOCIETY TO DISPERSED ALLIANCE:

NOTES ARISING FROM A CHAPTER BY N.J. ALLEN

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I

N.J. Allen has recently investigated the possibility of modelling transformations from tetradic society – which he devised as a model of prehistoric human kinship and is intimately linked to his scholarship¹ – to what are conventionally known as Crow-Omaha systems, themselves the subject of a recent collection reappraising the problems associated with them (Trautmann and Whiteley 2012). Allen's chapter appears in this volume and is immediately followed by a typically sceptical chapter by R.H. Barnes (2012), which should remind us of the controversy surrounding Crow-Omaha not only over what this hyphenated category of analysis actually means, but also over whether it actually means anything at all, even for the Crow and Omaha themselves (two Native American peoples of the USA). However, I am not concerned with these controversies here, which broadly speaking revolve around two more general concepts: kinship terminology and systems of affinal alliance. These two concepts can, of course, be linked in certain circumstances, and included routinely in the latter are the prohibitions on marriage into the social groups, however defined (clans, lineages, even families), of certain relatives like ego's four grandparents. It is these prohibitions that are my concern here, coupled with the consequence that they ban repeating affinal alliances between such social groups for a number of generations. This results effectively in a dispersal of alliances that may also happen with cross-cousin marriage, though the formal model thereof does not show this or indeed require it. The temporary ban on re-alliances between alliance groups in subsequent generations may actually be expressed indigenously as such, as by many Munda, a linguistically related group of tribes and low castes in east peninsular India who were the subject of part of my doctorate (1984, but see also 1992: Chapters 7, 8). However, there is nothing formally 'Crow-Omaha' about the Munda, since their terminologies are entirely lacking in the characteristic vertical equations.²

¹ The original statement is Allen 1986 (republished with revisions 2004). More recent versions include Allen 1989 (written particularly with linguists in mind), 1998 and 2008.

² Many Munda terminologies have equations linking affines in ego's level with those either side of it (e.g. HeB=HF, and reciprocally yBW=SW), but these are not at all Crow-Omaha in type. Genealogical notations as in Parkin 1997: 9, List I.

The possibility of diachronic transformations between systems of prescriptive alliance and Crow-Omaha systems has been mooted before. A minor controversy surrounded alleged transformations from asymmetric prescriptive alliance (MBD/FZS marriage) to Crow-Omaha many decades ago (Lane and Lane 1959, Eyde and Postal 1961; rejected by Coult 1965 and Barnes 1984; see also Hornborg 1998), and it appears to be revived in Thomas Trautmann's chapter in the new collection (2012) as one of two possibilities. Trautmann's other suggested alternative is a change from an Iroquois pattern to Crow-Omaha. His argument is that Crow-Omaha, known principally for skewing, must also have crossness, not least because, in most cases, it is the cross kin that are subject to the skewing effect. However, crossness can very well exist without skewing, as it does in Dravidian and Iroquois. While Trautmann appears to think that direct change from Dravidian to Crow-Omaha is unlikely, he does consider direct change from Iroquois to Crow-Omaha a distinct possibility, as may have happened in North America (Trautmann and Barnes 1998).³ More generally, in his view, if skewing is applied to Iroquois, Crow-Omaha is the result. In fact, as the case of Sherpa mentioned in the next paragraph shows, changing Dravidian systems can easily produce Crow-Omaha equations, provided a distinction is made first between wife-takers and wife-givers. It is undoubtedly this latter distinction that has made Crow-Omaha seem closer to asymmetric than symmetric prescriptive alliance (or Dravidian), since some terminologies of asymmetric alliance also have it, and some of them do have a form of skewing, though it is different in detail. In principle, however, skewing could be applied to both Iroquois and Dravidian as well, though either structure would become something else (like Crow-Omaha), especially if wife-takers were simultaneously distinguished from wife-givers.⁴

By contrast, the possibility of symmetric prescriptive alliance or 'Dravidian' as a starting point leading to Crow-Omaha has received less attention. However, also some decades ago now, Allen himself suggested, in comparing the linguistically cognate Byansi and Sherpa

³ The Lanes mooted this possibility nearly forty years earlier (Lane and Lane 1959), though they did not support it with detailed ethnographic evidence, unlike Trautmann and Barnes. They also included Dakota, distinguished from Iroquois merely by having patrilineal descent, not matrilineal – not significant here for terminological patterning. Dravidian and Iroquois/Dakota terminologies are similar to one another, but differ in detail regarding 1) crossness (and by implication 'parallelness') and 2) the greater logical and ethnographic association of the former but not the latter with bilateral cross-cousin marriage or symmetric prescriptive alliance. See especially Godelier et al. 1998.

⁴ Skewing also applies to ZD marriage, an oblique form of affinal alliance and occasionally of terminology that is ethnographically but not structurally associated with symmetric prescriptive alliance and terminologies in both South India ('Dravidian') and the Amazon (see my other note in this issue). The observation that skewing implies crossness but not vice versa can be related theoretically to Witowski's work on lexical universals in kinship terminology (1972, itself inspired by Berlin and Kay's work on colour terms, 1969).

terminologies in the Nepalese Himalayas, that Sherpa had undergone certain changes prompted by the phasing out of prescriptive alliance, which by contrast had been retained in Byansi. Accordingly, while Byansi still equated the cross cousins with one another in symmetric prescriptive fashion, Sherpa no longer did. Instead, Sherpa had separated these kin types terminologically such that MBS was equated with MB and its reciprocal FZD was equated with ZD, thus exhibiting the two minimal Omaha equations (2012: 55-6; also 1975, 1976).

In returning to this general theme in a more ample way, and with as his starting point the notion of tetradic society that he developed subsequently to these studies of Tibeto-Burman terminologies in the 1970s, Allen considers not only the terminological aspects, but seeks to show how Omaha-type prohibitions on repeated affinal alliances might have emerged from tetradic society. The latter, it is important to realize, is a formal version of symmetric prescriptive alliance that is not found ethnographically, but is represented in what is assumed to be a devolved form by Byansi, among many other examples worldwide; the closest approximation to tetradic society itself is the famous Kariera case from Australia. In this note I am less concerned with the process of this postulated change than with the result, which Allen encapsulates in both a diagram (Allen 2012: 59, Fig. 3.3) and his text. In brief, in Allen's model there are five spouse-exchange groups, such that each group alternates its exchanges with two others in successive generations, then does the same in the next two generations, except in reverse (i.e. symmetric exchange over time, but asymmetric in any single generation). Only in the fifth generation is a repetition of the initial cycle possible: that is, between the two generations whose cycles are identical, three generations intervene whose cycles differ because in that period alliances between groups already allied in marriage may not be repeated. In that period, therefore, any group has to conclude affinal alliances with other groups, thus dispersing alliances and marriage partners among them all. This also accounts for the number five: if four groups (e.g. of each grandparent) are prohibited in marriage, there has to be a fifth to supply ego's spouse.

II

This alliance practice is close to what one finds in many Munda societies, though there is no restriction to just five spouse-exchange groups, and as already noted there are no Crow-Omaha-type vertical equations in the terminologies (Parkin 1992: Ch. 8). The practice of renewing the alliances of previous generations after a gap is also found in the caste society on occasion, including Kangra (Parry 1979, mentioned briefly by Allen). From the indigenous

point of view, it may be related to a feeling in north India that, while close kin marriage is wrong (unlike cross-cousin marriage in south India), it is nonetheless desirable to marry people with whom you can trace some past alliance. In India, with its deep concern for status in a highly hierarchical society – status that is partly negotiated through marriage alliance – this is an important consideration in choosing suitable spouses for one’s children. This set of circumstances is also reflected in two mechanisms for dispersing alliances across generations in India, the *four-got* rule and the *sapinda* rule (e.g. Tiemann 1970). The former in particular bans any marriage where any of the four grandparents of the bride and groom are the same, very like many reported Crow-Omaha prohibitions on alliance. The desire not to marry into unrelated groups is not restricted to north India: Faron mentions fear of sorcery being behind such practical restrictions among the Mapuche of Chile, though such alliances do occur. This case is interesting as a possible example of a shift from asymmetric prescriptive alliance to a mere preference for MBD/FZS marriages, which the recorded genealogies showed to be rare by the early 1960s (Faron 1962; also discussed in Needham 1967).

These delays also occur elsewhere in the world, for example, among the Eastern Abalam, Iatmul and Gnau of New Guinea (Forge 1970: 137, 142, 143 n. 9). In the latter case the relationship created by a marriage is either ended in the fourth generation or renewed through marriage between FFMBSSD and FFFZSSS (Forge 1970: 143 n. 9, after G.A. Lewis). Other examples include the Gumuz (James 2012: 140-6) and most famously the Samo (Héritier 1981).⁵ Among the Munda, they also occur with intensifications of alliances between any two groups *within* a generation, in sharp contrast to the fact that in later generations they will be impossible. As a result, marriages among many Munda societies are often conceived as preferably taking place between groups of siblings, that is, sibling’s spouse’s sibling (GEG) categories.⁶ Other examples are Kumaon in northwest India, where forty percent of marriages can be defined in this way, though no generational rule of delay is mentioned (Krengel 1989),

⁵ James hints that other groups may qualify, such as the Umeda and Baruya of New Guinea and the Mkako of Cameroon (ibid.: 137-8), while Forge suggested that many New Guinea societies permit the renewal of alliances after the lapse of the requisite number of generations (1970: 142, 144 n. 9). Haenen (1988: 474) mentions that the Moi of Irian Jaya, who have asymmetric alliance, permit the reversal of alliances after three generations, the exact possibilities being calculated by specialists called *nè foolus*, literally ‘history men’.

⁶ Other Munda marry cross cousins prescriptively, especially in Koraput District, Orissa. The two sorts of arrangement are actually not that far apart. In prescriptive systems, siblings-in-law are also cross-cousins: they cease to be so if there is a ban on repeat alliances in the immediately following generations, since then the vertical ties that lead from ego to them (in both directions) are broken, in which case cross cousins disappear and only siblings-in-law are left. Nonetheless both cross-cousin marriage and GEG marriage involve spouse exchanges between groups of siblings, and all models of cross-cousin marriage implicitly show intensity (i.e. repetition) of exchanges.

and possibly the Xingu Carib (or Kalapalo), among whom Basso says “‘sibling exchange’ marriage...is considered highly desirable’ (1970: 410), but also that marriages with non-relatives may be preferred in the next generation, though previous relations of marriage are also exploited in finding spouses (ibid.: 411, 413).⁷ The specification ‘GEG’ for such marriages can only apply to second etc. marriages in such a series, as it assumes that at least one marriage has already taken place between the two groups of siblings. No doubt in most cases ‘sibling’ must be treated as a classificatory category, as is clearly the case among the Gumuz (James ibid.). To return to the Kalapalo, one consideration in negotiating marriages is to provide potential allies to support oneself and to offer one a refuge if one is accused within one’s own group of witchcraft, accusations that could lead to one’s murder (Basso 1984).

Yet other examples are discussed by Viveiro de Castro (1998) and Tjon Sie Fat (1998), in chapters in the same volume dedicated to the differences between Dravidian and Iroquois already mentioned (Godelier et al. 1998). Both authors tend to think in terms of marriage to remote cousins rather than to GEG categories, meaning that the relevant passages have to be read using some lateral thinking, but both mention sister exchange as the basic marriage rule, which apparently often takes place quite intensely. Viveiros de Castro also distinguishes three-generation cycles like those of many Munda, which he calls ‘concentric’, from the two-generation cycles of the Aranda system, which he calls ‘diametric’ (1998: 356); another distinction is that the Aranda system is prescriptive, the Munda cycles not. The examples he goes on to discuss (ibid.: 356 ff.) include the Umeda and Gnau, studied by Alfred Gell, the Yafar, studied by Bernard Juillerat (all of Papua New Guinea), the Ngawbe of Panama, studied by Phillip Young, and the Kandoshi of western Amazonia, studied by Anne-Christine Taylor (also Taylor 1998: 205); the latter is discussed in more detail below). Tjon Sie Fat also discusses the Ngawbe (1998: 86-7), pointing out that, while they have a three-generation exchange cycle based on marriage to FFZDD, a two-generation cycle based on marriage to MMBDD is also possible. While FFZDD is Iroquois cross and Dravidian parallel, the reverse is the case for MMBDD (ibid.: 69, Table 3-3). Another possible example is the Kuma of Papua New Guinea, studied by Marie Reay, though the rule of delay, if any, is not specified in Tjon Sie Fat’s description (1998: 89-90). Finally Tjon Sie Fat describes both the Mundumugor, studied by Nancy McDowell, and the Yafar of Papua New Guinea as having a

⁷ Like, apparently, the Gumuz (James ibid.), Xingu Carib parents actively negotiate what Basso (ibid.: 411) calls ‘sibling obligations’ to obtain spouses for their children. The Xingu Carib terminology is bifurcate merging in +1 and -1, but generational in ego’s generation, and it is clear from Basso’s description that there is no prescriptive alliance here. Her analysis of Xingu Carib kinship is also explicitly structural rather than evolutionary.

four-generation rule of delay and sister exchange modelled on marriage to FFFZDDD (ibid.: 88-9).

Also of interest is another chapter in the same volume on the Cree and Ojibwa of Ontario and eastern Manitoba, Canada, studied by Désvaux and Selz (1998). Referring to Hallowell's 1932 sample, according to which only 22% of marriages within a single kindred were with a first cross-cousin, the authors suggest that this low figure was not likely to be due to missionary influence discouraging the practice, but to the fact that cross-cousin marriage is not very salient in the indigenous view. Instead the marriage preference is couched rather in terms of the repetition of existing marriages, evidently within the same generation rather than repeating those of previous generations. Almost double the percentage of the authors' sample of 244 marriages were of this type (17%) than the percentage of cross-cousin marriages (9.5%), and alliances were about equally symmetric (sister exchange) and asymmetric (groups of brothers marrying groups of sisters) (1998: 155-6, 166 n. 18). No rule of generational delay is noted here, but the data imply it, and the possibility that the marriage system is changing away from strict cross-cousin marriage is obvious. For the authors, population increase combined with community or settlement exogamy, giving more choice in marriage partners, is a more likely reason for this apparent change than missionary influence, which was not very strong in their field site. Reasoning surrounding exogamy and endogamy, apparently of communities, appears elsewhere in this volume in discussion of broadly similar cases, but it does risk confusing residential closeness, genealogical closeness and categorical closeness: cross-cousin marriage does not rule out choice of partner.⁸

Also in the same volume is a chapter by Taylor (1998) comparing the Achuar, Aguarana and Kandoshi, Jivaroan-speaking groups of western Amazonia. The main contrast is between the first and last of these peoples. The Achuar have a more or less straightforward system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage with a terminology to match, with a clear preference in addition for the genealogical first cross cousin. The one peculiar practice is what Taylor calls 'quasi-"prescriptive"' sororal polygyny (ibid.: 188), which has the effect of dispersing the alliances of a group of brothers, as the sisters of the wife of one brother are then not available to the others. The Kandoshi, by contrast, permit classificatory sister exchange within the

⁸ Chantal Collard (personal communication) collected data from a village near Quebec City indicating that eight percent of marriages involved sibling dyads (the practice did not extend to third siblings and beyond), preferably involving two brothers marrying two sisters, but almost as many involving sister exchange. Something similar may occur in Brittany (Segalen 1985). These examples show that the salience of sometimes intensified sibling exchange can characterize more developed and/or sociologically complex European and Europeanized societies too.

same generation in a manner that is clearly intensive: in Taylor's own words (*ibid.*: 201), 'marriage here tends to take on a collective character, with most "brothers" of each generation taking wives in the same local group'. She also finds that, statistically, 'a high proportion of marriages' (*ibid.*) result from WB-ZH ties, i.e. ties between two men who have exchanged sisters, which can also be read as the GEG category of ZHZ. Concomitantly, marriages into the immediately succeeding generations between the same groups are prohibited. Statistics, however, 'attest the existence of a few marriages between kin from the same local group three generations down the line, and above all a proliferation of marriages between residential groups having intermarried as a whole four generations before' (*ibid.*). Basically this goes along with a dislike of but tolerance for distant kin in marriage, as well as a decided preference for alliances with non-kin. However, due to genealogical amnesia, Taylor says, the real situation is that kin ties are no longer remembered after three generations, making the descendants of previous affines non-kin.⁹ Taylor also gives genealogical specifications for the third cousins who would be marriageable in re-alliances after three generations, though given genealogical amnesia it is doubtful that they mean anything to the Kandoshi themselves: 'MMMZSSD, MMFBSSD (cross by Iroquois reckoning, parallel by Dravidian accounting), or FFFZSSD, FFMBSSSD (cross in Dravidian, parallel in Iroquois)' (*ibid.*: 205).

Two further examples are described in the volume on marriage in Papua New Guinea entitled *Pigs, pearlshells, and women* (Grasse and Meggitt 1969). Cook's chapter on the Manga mentions a basic rule that second cousins are considered marriageable, provided they do not reside close to ego. However, it seems that this rule applies to second cousins who are simultaneously related to either male or female ego as FMBSC and FFZSC, while MMBDC and MFZDC are banned (see especially Cook 1969: 115, Fig. 4). Although the Manga apparently have an Iroquois terminology (called Seneca-type by Cook, after Pospisil; cf. Cook *ibid.*: 109, 111), Cook also decides that this is a prescriptive system, not a mere preference, evidently relying here on a misreading of Needham (Cook *ibid.*: 109). In fact, only five out of 186 cases in a sample followed this alleged rule, many more being free matches (29 in number) or straightforward cases of sister exchange between two unrelated men (32 in number). This low figure is possibly because it is only male ego's eldest daughter that has to follow the 'prescriptive' rule, backed up by the fear of sorcery from her MB. Also,

⁹ The Kandoshi terminology is non-prescriptive. The general similarity of the Kandoshi case to the Munda one is striking, and Taylor herself remarked on it at the conference at which we respectively presented these cases (see Godelier et al. 1998).

previous marriages are important, in the sense that they ‘establish kinship ties which ideally last for a specified two generations, after which the descendants are again regarded as non-kinsmen’ (ibid.: 100); this ties in with the ‘prescription’ for second cousins. And further, sibling groups are recognized as the main spouse-exchange groups: ‘Such affinally linked units are referred to as “brother-brother” units.’ From the point of view of the marriages of any one unit with another, ‘no additional marriages may be conducted with that unit for at least one more generation’ (ibid.: 107), though it is not clear whether marriages can be intensified within a generation. Finally, FMBSC marriage, at any rate, is also conceived as male ego giving his daughter to his MBS as a bride for the latter’s son (i.e. MBSS). Cook’s Figures 3 and 4 (ibid.: 111, 115) combine the ‘prescriptive’ rule with the practice of sister exchange, indicating that marriage practices fundamentally involve symmetric exchange between groups. This is an interesting case, since it is clearly a society on the cusp of abandoning cross-cousin marriage entirely, and marriage practices already have most of the features of the other cases described in this note.

Another example from the same volume are the Daribi, studied by Roy Wagner (1969). Here the basic exchange group is again a group of full siblings, called a *zibi*, who share incoming bridewealth and outgoing bridewealth obligations, meaning that, although sister exchange is licit, it is disliked, as only a woman is obtained in exchange for a sister – a woman who cannot be shared out between the recipient brothers in the way a brideprice can. In general, indeed, a *zibi* should not be both wife-takers and wife-givers to one’s own. One way of getting round this is an arrangement ‘whereby a man gives his daughter by one wife in marriage to the brother of another of his wives’. This obviously represents an exchange, but the women involved are in different genealogical levels. Even so, ‘as in sister exchange, this kind of ongoing relationship is precluded by the fact that the lines have exchanged women in both directions’ (ibid.: 61).¹⁰ Marriage should not take place with second cousins or any closer kin, ruling out repeat marriages between any two *zibi*. However, as far as same-generation marriages between *zibi* are concerned, ‘once a woman has passed from one *zibi* to another in marriage, the further giving of women in the same direction is enjoined by the kinship system’ (ibid.: 61); and further, each *zibi* can ‘continue to take as wives the sisters of those women it has already married’ (ibid.: 63). This is clearly connected with the coming together (but not fusion) of clans into what Wagner calls a ‘superclan’ or ‘community’. The

¹⁰ This arrangement resembles the situation described by Ian Walker for the island of Ngazidja and is similarly a bit of a makeshift, though it is not identical with it, due mainly to the difference in descent mode (patrilineal among the Daribi, matrilineal on Ngazidja). See my accompanying note in this issue.

main example he gives is of two clans, Pobori and Wazo, living in a single community: ‘Pobori and Wazo clans were formed from a single ancestral unit by segmentation, but have since intermarried heavily’ (ibid.: 66), in the proportion of 26% of all the marriages of both clans over a four-generation period, though presumably still without repeating marriages between the same sub-clan units in subsequent generations. This may be why the remaining 74% of the marriages of both clans were contracted elsewhere, and there is certainly a discernible degree of alliance dispersal. Wagner sums this up by saying that ‘the concentration of marriages, and therefore of alliances, is an optative element in Daribi social structure, subject to conscious manipulation... The technique of concentrating alliance ties by making many marriages in one place is a tactic within the system of “multiple and distributive opposition”¹¹ obtaining among clans’ (ibid.: 65-6).

Finally I return to the possible connection of these marriage practices with Crow-Omaha terminologies, with which I started, though it has not been possible to make many remarks on terminologies regarding most of the cases I have discussed here for want of the necessary information in my sources. However, the fact that there is no necessary connection between the two has already been pointed out above, and it is also confirmed by a comparison of two closely related societies in central Brazil, the Shavante and Sherente, both studied by David Maybury-Lewis (1967, but especially here 1979a) and both representing the sole survivors of the Akwẽ branch of the Central Gê-speaking peoples. Once probably a single ethnic group in the Rio Tocantins region of Goiás state, it is thought that the Shavante split off from the Sherente at the start of the nineteenth century and migrated southwest to the region of the Rio Das Mortes in or near Mato Grosso state. Both groups ban marriage into male ego’s mother’s clan, therefore regarding MBD marriage as wrong and distinguishing MB from WF in their terminologies, and they disallow sister exchange, but they both approve of marriages between groups of classificatory or real brothers and sisters. Both also have separate affinal terminologies, but (using Murdockian terminology), while the Shavante terminology is Omaha in kind, the Sherente one is Dakota. At this point I reintroduce the hypothesis of Trautmann and Barnes, mentioned above, that in part of North America Crow-Omaha systems may have derived from Iroquois, rather than vice versa. The Dakota label is generally that given to the ‘Iroquois’ pattern in societies with patrilineal descent (the actual Iroquois of upper New York state being matrilineal), to which it can be considered an equivalent terminological pattern, as there is no intrinsic difference between the two. The

¹¹ Citing R.F. Salisbury.

close relationship between the Sherente and Shavante on general cultural and linguistic grounds raises the interesting possibility that the Shavante derived their Omaha-type terminology from an earlier Dakota/Iroquois type that was perhaps common to both when they were living, virtually indistinguishably, in the same area – a development that would have had about 150 years to take effect by the time Maybury-Lewis studied them. The two consanguineal terminologies are very similar both lexically and structurally, the only structural difference being the extension of the Sherente equivalence of cross kin in ego's and the -1 generation to the +1 generation as well in Shavante (see the two matrix diagrams in Maybury-Lewis 1979a: 225 ff.).¹²

To return to the main theme of this note, both the delays and the intensification of alliances within a generation are likely to be reported more widely in world ethnography, though they have not really been theorized as such, nor even been widely noticed on the comparative level.¹³ While we still may not have an ultimate explanation for them – which is probably to be sought in strictly local reasons for the abandonment of prescriptive alliance or cross-cousin marriage – we may be a step closer in correlating them with other, equally puzzling features, including the terminologies and affinal alliance practices subsumed under the persistent but elusive Crow-Omaha label.

¹² This indicates that neither terminology is a pure example of its supposed 'type', though as Maybury-Lewis mostly uses descriptions rather than genealogical denotata to translate kin terms, this is obscured at first sight and makes more global comparisons somewhat tricky and inexact. However, his mode of describing the terminologies is reflected in his broader belief that labels drawn from the conventional study of kinship do not help us understand Gê societies (especially Maybury-Lewis 1979b). Accordingly, although he began his discussion of these two terminologies by suggesting the labels 'Dakota' and 'Omaha' for the Sherente and Shavante respectively (1979a: 240-1), he did not like either because the main difference between them came down to how they treated cross-cousins respectively, and he felt this was peripheral to how these two societies should be interpreted in the wider and more comprehensive sense. These labels do, however, suit my own arguments, and I have therefore considered it both convenient and instructive to retain them here.

¹³ One exception may be Paul Henley, who has posited an 'Amazonian' model of kinship which 'is similar to the canonical dravidianate insofar as the general distribution of terminological categories in the three medial generations is concerned, but it is very different in three other crucial and related respects: the absence of a positive rule of marriage, the absence of a category of cross-relative in Ego's own generation and the presence of a set of exclusively affinal terms' (1996: 62). Henley sees this at once as a semi-complex system and as the basis from which elementary structures have derived in Amazonia (rather than vice versa), which taken literally seems like a contradiction in terms and certainly goes against much received wisdom on this matter. He also makes it clear that the cross-parallel distinctions involved are Dravidian, not Iroquois (the latter is a further possible derivation from his 'Amazonian' type). Although there is evidence of both the intensification of sibling exchanges within a generation without cross-cousin marriage and the repetition of alliances after the elapse of a number of generations in the Amazon, Henley does not include either among the characteristics of his 'Amazonian' model. As I hope to have shown here, it is anyway not restricted to the Amazon but occurs in many other parts of the world as well.

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