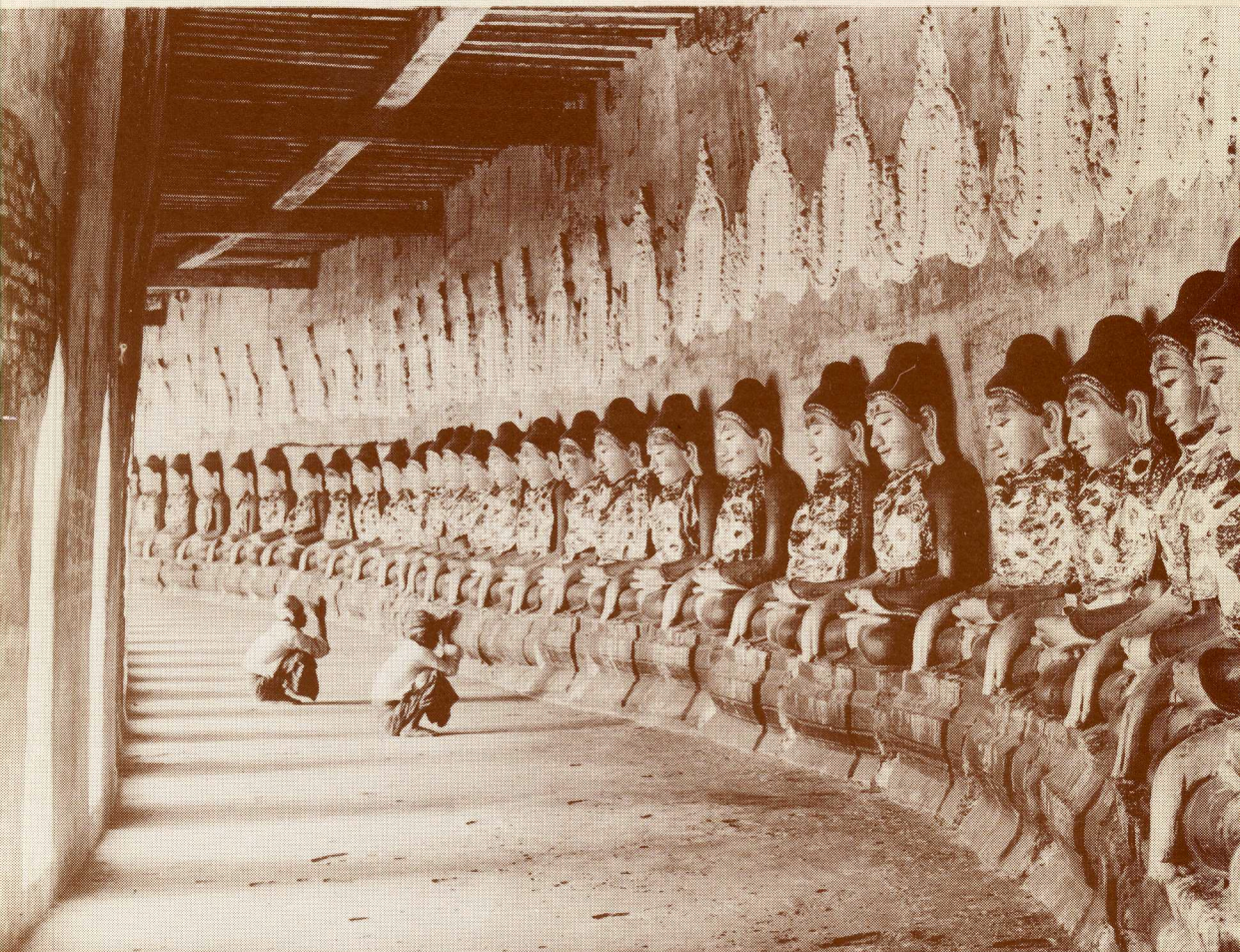


# CONTEXTS AND LEVELS

Anthropological Essays on Hierarchy



Edited by

R.H. BARNES, DANIEL DE COPPET, and R.J. PARKIN



JASO OCCASIONAL PAPERS No. 4

General Editors: Jonathan Webber, Steven Seidenberg, Edwin Ardener

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**R.H. Barnes, Daniel de Coppet  
and R.J. Parkin**



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R.H.B.  
D. de C.  
R.J.P.

R.H. BARNES and DANIEL DE COPPET

## INTRODUCTION

DUMONT (1964: 9) has written that in order to understand Indian civilization, we must establish an intellectual rapport between it and the formal categories of our own system. This perspective permits ramifying comparisons drawing in further systems (Dumont 1979: 798). Central to Dumont's understanding of caste is the principle of hierarchical polarity attached to every criterion of distinction (1964: 18) and the opposition of status and power (1966: 268-9). Although in Dumont's view (*ibid.*: 273), India has exported only 'quasi-caste' to Southeast Asia and elsewhere, he also holds that as a comparative principle hierarchy is capable of varying manifestations and worldwide investigations (*ibid.*: 33-4; 1980: 245). A number of authors have demonstrated this potential in studies of widely different historical and cultural provenance presented to Dumont as *Différences, valeurs, hiérarchie* (Galey 1984). Among these papers is a joint examination of hierarchy and exchange in four geographically separated societies by four authors, three of whom are contributors to the present book (Barraud, de Coppet, Iteanu and Jamous 1984).

Dumont's conception of hierarchy is seen by these authors as providing a method of anthropological analysis relying on the conception of hierarchical opposition as extending throughout the totality of the ideology of every society. Comparison should be directed toward the differing patterns in the hierarchical ordering of social value. Key terms in Dumont's approach to comparative sociology are difference, ideology, value, totality, opposition and hierarchy. Hierarchy is relevant to the sociology of holistic civilizations such as India and of individualistic systems such as those of Western nations. Dumont strictly distinguishes hierarchy from social stratification and mere inequality. Hierarchical opposition applies to fundamental social values and entails distinguishing levels of value, whereby the ultimate level encompasses lower levels. Reversals may mark the difference of level, so that what is superior at the

level identified with the whole of society may be inferior at subordinate levels. The levels are ordered only in reference to the totality of ideology. In Dumont's perspective the notion of equal opposites in structural taxonomies and classifications is less useful than hierarchical opposition, which also brings into question the modern distinction between facts and representations. The conception accounts for differences between all societies, especially between modern and non-modern civilizations, and is not just another feature among several in a logic of symbols. The observer and his background are integral aspects of Dumont's comparative analysis of ideological systems in a way that, perhaps, has not always been so true of British and French structuralism and of the various applications of the Hegelian dialectic. The classic expression of Dumont's comparative understanding of the place of hierarchy in the world's cultures is to be found of course in *Homo hierarchicus* (1966), devoted to Indian caste. He has often discussed aspects of the issue in publications both before and since that book and has recently elaborated his views on hierarchical opposition and encompassment (see especially Dumont 1979; 1980: 239–45). Subsequently others have proposed more specific interpretations or developments of Dumont's statements (Tcherkézoff 1983; Houseman 1984).

The papers in this volume derive from a conference held at St Antony's College, Oxford in March 1983 in conjunction with the Institute of Social Anthropology and supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council of Great Britain and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France. The authors have attempted to explore the comparative potential of Dumont's ideas of hierarchy in social contexts different from the classical Indian sphere. Some papers describe societies peripheral to that sphere (in Nepal and Tibet), others set forth historically derived though geographically separated systems (Bali, Lombok), while the majority of papers deal with communities of Melanesia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Africa with no direct connection to Indian caste. Most contributions are largely ethnographic in focus, but the first three treat more generally with the ideas of hierarchy and context.

The French participants are associated with the Equipe de Recherche d'Anthropologie Sociale: Morphologie, Echanges (ERASME), which derives from the Recherche Coopérative sur Programme 436, led from 1976 to 1980 by Louis Dumont, who still directs the scholarly programme of ERASME. Although the other participants are associated with five different British universities, all but two are either employed by the University of Oxford or have recently been postgraduate students there. Unfortunately, not all persons who were invited to participate found that they were able to do so; for example Gregory Forth, who nevertheless submitted a paper, was in Southeast Asia. One of the participants was unable to return a revised contribution.

Professor Dumont was a Lecturer in the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, from 1951 until he assumed the Chair in the Sociology of India at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, VIe Section, in 1955. He was at least in part responsible for stimulating the Institute's long and fruitful involvement in the works of Marcel Mauss and Robert Hertz (Evans-Pritchard 1954: vii; Dumont 1979: 816; 1983a: 167–86); and his own publications in



many branches of anthropology have had a rich and unbroken influence on the teaching and research done there. It was especially appropriate, therefore, that a conference devoted to his ideas be held at Oxford; and the authors and editors wish this volume to be received as a token of appreciation and gratitude to Professor Dumont for his profound contributions to our subject.<sup>1</sup>

The members of ERASME reveal a kind of *conscience collective*, such as has been attributed to the group of collaborators around Emile Durkheim (Needham 1963: xxx). No such unified outlook can be ascribed to the other contributors, save what may result from similar training and reading. Hobart is known for a series of stimulating publications on Bali, and Howe has launched another such series. As it happens the two have worked in Balinese communities quite near to each other. McDonaugh and Duff-Cooper have recently completed Oxford D.Phil. theses on the Tharu of Nepal and Balinese of Lombok, respectively. Forth has published a major monograph, *Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba* (1981), as has Howell, *Society and Cosmos: Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia* (1984). Allen continues a long series of contributions to Indo-Tibetan studies. Aspects of Barnes's discussion of Dumont's work have recently appeared in his *Two Crows Denies It: A History of Controversy in Omaha Sociology* (1984).

Casajus has published several papers on the Tuareg of Niger. Pauwels has recently received her doctorate 3ème cycle on a documentary study of Tanimbar, Indonesia. De Coppet has published a number of scholarly analyses of exchange in the Solomons including, with Hugo Zemp, *'Aré'are: Un peuple mélanésien et sa musique* (1978). Barraud's paper provides readers of English with an opportunity to sample the results of her work in the Kei Islands, Indonesia, hitherto available in her remarkable structural monograph, *Tanebar-Evav: Une société de maisons tournée vers le large* (1979). This book initiated the collaborative series of Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Atelier d'Anthropologie Sociale, under the general editorship of Louis Dumont. Other titles include Iteanu's *La ronde des échanges: Circulation et valeurs chez les Orokaiva* (1983), Tcherkézoff's *Le roi nyamwezi, la droite et la gauche: Révision comparative des classifications dualistes* (1983), and Casajus's *La tente et la solitude, mariage, parenté et valeurs chez les Touaregs du nord Niger* (forthcoming). Dumont's most recent books are *Essais sur l'individualisme: Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne* (1983a) and *Affinity as a Value: Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia* (1983b).

Dumont has remarked (1964: 14) that we may not assume in advance what relations will obtain between the various levels or aspects which by common sense we distinguish in a society. Instead we must discover the nature of these

1. Dumont has remarked that in his four years of teaching at the Institute, 'I became familiar with British social anthropology and I received in the Institute [that Evans-Pritchard] directed a second training, so to speak. It was for me an orientation complementary to that I had gained from Mauss: the second eye which helped me to develop a sort of stereoscopic vision' (Dumont in Galey 1982: 18). At Oxford Dumont replaced the famous Indianist M.N. Srinivas.

relations in each concrete case and be prepared to accept the results even when they do not confirm our preconceptions. The spirit of this position surely is in harmony with Allen's comment below that the value of Dumont's notion of hierarchy 'depends on its application either to the problems he has set himself, or to other bodies of material' and with Barnes's generalization that 'the nature of opposition, hierarchical and otherwise, is a matter for empirical demonstration in each culture and the results may be very different from culture to culture.' The papers in this collection set out to make precisely the same careful exploration that Dumont says must be made.

In the second edition of *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980: xvii, 241), Dumont tells his readers that he is indebted to Raymond Apthorpe for his understanding of the hierarchical relation between the encompassing and the encompassed. Most contributors have come to the idea in the reverse direction from Dumont, having learned of it from Dumont first and encountered Apthorpe's version only later. This pattern of events may explain why the full implications have not always seemed so clear to Dumont's readers as he would have wished. Indeed, things could hardly have been otherwise, for Apthorpe's exposition is to be found in an unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis of 1956 which is unavailable even to persons working in Oxford. By happy coincidence Apthorpe was able to attend the conference and to participate in discussions. Furthermore a summary of his work on hierarchy and opposition has recently been published (Apthorpe 1984). Without attempting to characterize the scope or implications of his paper, we may observe that he distinguishes (1984: 285) four categorical cases associated with four sociological situations. The first case consists of complementary and contradictory categories marking a relationship of hostility. The second case involves including and excluding categories and the relationship of hierarchy. The third case requires intersecting categories and cooperation. The fourth concerns contrary categories and competition. He relates these cases to the idea of a universe of discourse. Apthorpe's explanation differs in various ways from Dumont's. In the first place he clearly and correctly separates contradictory opposition from contrary opposition. Unlike Dumont, he also distinguishes both of these types from hierarchical opposition. In the case of hierarchy, he does not speak of the *identity* of the part with the whole, but merely of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, he makes the intriguing, if not clearly elaborated, claim (*ibid.*: 292) that all four types *can* be complementaries.

Allen continues the discussion of universes of discourse, when he considers the possibility of a transcendent third term. He also compares hierarchy to the linguistic notion of markedness and to the metaphor of centre and periphery. Hobart observes that if we treat context like a thing and try to pick it up, so to speak, it turns out, quoting a Balinese aphorism, to be like grasping the sea. Hobart perceives a difficulty in formulating a theory of context in the Western tendency to view relationships as pseudo-objects. A consequence is the obscuring of the extent to which knowledge is built up from a plurality of perspectives.

De Coppet in fact attempts to capitalize on a multiplicity of perspectives in 'Are'are knowledge of land tenure and the link between men and the ancestors

as related by the Solomon paramount chief Aliko Nono'ohimae Eerehau. The analysis leads him to a comparison with Hofstadter's 'strange loops' and Escher's drawing 'Drawing Hands'. De Coppet's comments at this point implicitly explain why Tcherkézoff chose the Escher print for the cover of his recent book (Tcherkézoff 1983). Dealing with another Melanesian case, Iteanu forthrightly argues that levels are not abstract theoretical constructs invented by anthropologists, but are actual social facts as defined by Durkheim, which impose themselves on the ethnography. He also makes the noteworthy inference that reversal is only one form among several of a shift in ideological levels.

While discussing right and left in Rindi (Sumba, Indonesia) hairstyles, Forth suggests that Dumont's definition of hierarchy should be regarded as referring to symbolic, rather than logical, relations. Allen's comments about transcendence (see also Apthorpe 1984: 291) may be exemplified by Barraud's discussion of the sailing-boat of the Kei Islands, Indonesia, which represents two partial and hierarchically related holistic conceptions of society, turning on contrasts between internal and external perspectives. Pauwels reviews the hierarchical relations between human and cosmic power in ritual and exchange in the culture found in the nearby Tanimbar Islands of Indonesia.

Howe examines the extent to which the Indian system of caste is paralleled in Bali and concludes that the question leads not to a definitive answer but to a sequence of considerably more illuminating questions. Duff-Cooper continues this exploration among Balinese of the adjacent island of Lombok.

Howell describes her dismay in being unable to find hierarchically ordered features in the culture of the Aslian Chewong of Malaysia. The Chewong emphasise equality and suppress hierarchy. Though distinction, separation and juxtaposition are present in Chewong thought, the Chewong dominant value is recognition and equality. Hierarchy, though also present, is the 'inferior value' or 'non-value', in Dumont's terms.

Casajus exploits Dumont's idea of value levels to explore the practice of men wearing veils among the Tuareg of northern Niger. Another African people, the Nyamwezi of Tanzania, receive consideration in Tcherkézoff's discussion of black and white dualism. Tcherkézoff actually recognizes three distinctive patterns of hierarchy. In this sense his paper represents an extension of Dumont's formulations.

McDonaugh investigates the hierarchical implications in the layout of houses among the Tharu of Nepal and India. Clarke explores the potential and limitations of Dumont's approach among a Tibetan Buddhist community of the High Himalaya of Nepal and argues the need for simultaneous application of a variety of perspectives. Though the ethnographic circumstances described in these papers are diverse, the essays of this collection are united by the determination of each of the authors to respond to Dumont's invitation to give hierarchy its due place in sociological analysis.

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R.H. BARNES

## HIERARCHY WITHOUT CASTE

DUMONT has argued (1980: xvi) that 'hierarchy is at the heart of the "unthought" (*l'empensé*) of modern ideology.' Anthropologists themselves are not free from the ideological blindness to hierarchy of their own background and must therefore make an unusual effort to overcome it. Dumont argues that whereas we readily perceive different positions within a chain of command, or inequalities of aptitude and function, we are prone to misconstrue hierarchy proper. Hierarchy is an inevitable and necessary part of any society, even the most egalitarian in outlook. We must give hierarchy its due.

Dumont's aim is to goad us into according hierarchy its appropriate place in social analysis. The question posed by the sociology of India—whether there is caste, in the sense of a *jati*-like system, outside India—is not parallel to the issue of the generality of hierarchy. Although Dumont places emphasis on the specificity of the Indian institution and gives consideration only to certain historical and ethnologically related cases in the near vicinity of India, hierarchy, which is closely linked to religious or cosmological conceptions, is in some configuration or other universal. Dumont's position is that while holistic societies differ in the pattern of their systems, they are linked by the presence of hierarchical levels of value and the identity of the supreme value with the totality (cf. ERASME 1984: 74–7).

Dumont reminds us (1980: 6) that 'actual men do not *behave*, they *act* with an idea in their heads.' But (p. 20), 'man does not only think, he acts.' Furthermore, men have not just ideas, but values. Whereas we may be tempted to treat ideas as timeless systems, values imply choice and action. 'To adopt a value is to introduce hierarchy.' Hierarchy, therefore, is an inevitable result of the fact that men think and act, that is, of social action.

Dumont employs (ibid.: 343) a suggestive use of the word ideology, which might be characterized as systems of ideas and values in social action.

Specifically, he declines to adopt the commonplace usage of 'ideology' to refer negatively to the doctrines and delusions of social classes. Over and above possible contradictions and variations according to social milieu, 'there is a basic ideology, a kind of germinal ideology tied to common language and hence to the linguistic group or the global society'. In turning to hierarchy, Dumont intends to give primacy to meaning (ibid.: xx) over mere forms which (like social stratification) can be observed from the outside.

Structuralism as Dumont conceives it has entailed a shift from function to meaning, such as he (1975: 333), following Pocock (1961: 76), finds in Evans-Pritchard's classic monograph, *The Nuer*. This new, structuralist, emphasis on meaning depends on sensitivity to context. Since the matter of *context* enters into some criticism that Dumont has aimed at recent, and avowedly structuralist, studies of ideology, something should be said about the subject in advance. Certainly nothing is more widely shared or commonsensical than the notion that nothing can be understood except in its context, taking the word in the derivative sense of 'the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs'. Why waste time talking about it? There are specific reasons, having to do with the history of anthropology in Britain, which in any case justify a few desultory remarks.

If there is justice in Dumont's various criticisms of British anthropology, it lies not in any indifference to context, but in a failure to put their recognition of context to structuralist purposes. Malinowski may have been 'a futile thinker' (Evans-Pritchard 1981: 199), but 'the Evans-Pritchard distinction of situations' (Dumont 1979: 807) is perfectly Malinowskian. It may be too that a shift from function to meaning occurs within *The Nuer*, but it is anachronistic to suppose that anthropology had not previously paid attention to meaning. A few dates will demonstrate the point. Malinowski's functional classic *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* was published in 1922, while his contribution on 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages' appeared only a year later in Ogden and Richard's *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923). His more modern *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, with its extensive yet pragmatic attention to meaning, came out in 1935, two years before Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. The worst and most extreme version of Malinowski's functionalism appeared posthumously in 1944, four years after *The Nuer*. No doubt Malinowski's functionalism extended to language (J.R. Firth 1957: 101). At any event, his discussion of 'context of situation' in 1923 (pp. 306-9) differs from Evans-Pritchard's attention to context in *The Nuer* (1940: 135-6) principally in its omission of any reference to value. Justifiably Leach (1957: 120) speaks of Malinowski as a 'fanatical theoretical empiricist'. The critical shift was not therefore merely from function to meaning, but from functionalist empiricism to structuralism.

Dumont (1980: 66) defines hierarchy as 'the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole'. Hierarchy is a relation between the encompassing and the contrary (ibid.: 239). The idea of encompassing brings in the issue of distinctions within the whole and the oppositions of the resulting parts. Dumont demonstrates (pp. 239-40) encompassment by the

story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib. By this act, the undifferentiated Adam is differentiated into the opposed prototypes for men and women. 'On the first level, man and woman are identical; on a second level, woman is opposite or the contrary of man.' The reader should note in passing Dumont's idiosyncratic use of the terms 'identical' and 'contrary'. An additional feature of Dumont's theory is his reference to levels. At some points in his discussions, he appears to have in mind levels of analysis, but he is quite plain that hierarchy produces levels within an ideology. 'The same hierarchical principle that in some way subordinates one level to another at the same time introduces a multiplicity of levels' (ibid.: 241). Whatever else may be said about it, Dumont's idea of hierarchical levels is an analytic construct and in that respect may be contrasted with common sense contexts, situations or contexts of situations. Some of Dumont's remarks (1979: 813) suggest that where empiricists are satisfied with identifying contexts, structuralists ought further to recognize levels. 'It is not enough here to speak of different "contexts" as distinguished by us, for they are foreseen, inscribed or implied in the ideology itself. We must speak of different "levels" hierarchized together with the corresponding entities' (1982: 225).

In some unexplained indirect way or ways, contexts and levels are comparable. Levels are brought about by distinctions, that is oppositions, but they may be identified by reversals (1979: 812; 1982: 241).<sup>1</sup> When, in a society in which the right is pre-eminent, an element classed as left in some regard becomes pre-eminent, 'this is an indication that the level encountered here is clearly distinguished from the others in the indigenous ideology.' Although commonly women are regarded as inferior to men, often they are superior within the context of domestic or family relations. I take it that Dumont would object to translating directly the levels in question with domestic *context*. Those who wish a concrete definition of levels are bound to remain frustrated.

Dumont's principle of encompassment, by now linked so inextricably in our minds with his distinctive interpretation of Indian sociology, derives as he tells us (1980: xvii, 241) from Raymond Apthorpe, who was his student at Oxford. 'In the hierarchical case, according to Apthorpe, one category (the superior) includes the other (the inferior), which in turn excludes the first.' Dumont acknowledges (1979: 810) that at first sight some commonplace oppositions do *not* exhibit this relationship. For example, although the right typically has ideological superiority over the left, we do not normally consider that the right includes the left. We may agree with Dumont that right and left are defined 'only in relation to the whole' and that they do not have the same relation to the whole of the body. The difference between them is '*ipso facto* hierarchical because it is related to the whole'. In relation to the whole, the right is 'more essential, more representative, etc.' The passage under examination seems to concede that hierarchy need not fit Apthorpe's model—that all that is essential is division of

1. Needham's recent argument (1983: 112) that the class of reversals is polythetic seems to me no great objection to Dumont's formulation. It may be less useful to regard reversal from the point of view of a cognitive class made up by anthropologists, than to focus on the fact that for some purpose people intend to turn things around.



the whole into unequal pairs. If so, the nature of opposition, hierarchical and otherwise, is a matter for empirical demonstration in each culture, and the results may be very different from culture to culture.

Dumont turns to an empirical example to resolve what initially looked like a merely definitional matter. Evans-Pritchard's famous article on Nuer spear symbolism (1973: 100) says of the spear that 'as an extension of the right arm, it represents the whole person'. Perhaps it is typical or even always the case that the right represents the whole. Even so, as an empirical question, it would have to be demonstrated anew each time another field situation were taken up.

Dumont employs two figures in an attempt to distinguish merely complementary opposites from hierarchical opposition (1980: 242). The first is a rectangle cut vertically into equal halves labelled 'A' and 'B'. The second consists in a rectangle labelled 'X' in the centre of which is a second rectangle labelled 'Y'. The first diagram expresses a universe of discourse exhausted by two complementary or contradictory classes. Despite the fact that both 'A' and 'B' are subsumed within the greater whole, Dumont does not speak of their relationship to it as hierarchical. The second diagram expresses hierarchy. Like the first figure, there is unity at the superior level, distinction at the inferior stage, and 'X' and 'Y' are related by complementarity and contradiction. Element 'X', however, stands both in opposition to 'Y' and for the higher order unity. Thus, right and left exemplify this 'hierarchical opposition' on those occasions when the right stands for the whole as well as for part of the internal division.

Dumont's diagrams are remarkably similar to the alternative diagrams of Winnebago society published by Radin in 1923 and exploited by Lévi-Strauss in a paper (1956) on dual organization (see Barnes 1984: 64–5). Lévi-Strauss said that the alternative tribal models given to Radin by Winnebago 'correspond to two different ways of describing one organization too complex to be formalized by means of a single model'. 'Even in such an apparently symmetrical type of social structure as dual organization, the relationship between moieties is never static, or as fully reciprocal, as one might tend to imagine' (English translation, 1963: 134–5). This paper gave rise to a debate concerning the accuracy of his analysis of Winnebago, South American and Indonesian societies (Maybury-Lewis 1960; Lévi-Strauss 1960), which may be left aside here. With justification, Lévi-Strauss interprets Radin's information as showing alternative theories of society: one based on division into moieties, the other showing a unified tribe set apart from a line of virgin forest on all sides. The first or diametric dual model he describes as static, whereas the second model of concentric dualism is dynamic, containing an implicit triadism (1960: 151). There is no mention in Lévi-Strauss of different levels in an ideology, simply disagreement among informants.

In a society such as the Osage (La Flesche 1973), where moieties are indeed associated with left and right, presumably the apparently static dual opposition of the moiety structure would have to be represented by Dumont's model of hierarchical opposition, with one moiety encompassed by the other. The Osage Sky moiety is on the left, the Earth moiety on the right. 'By the interlacing relations between these two great divisions the leaders united the people into one ever-living body' (ibid.: 32). Published data on the Osage (and also for the very

similar Omaha) show few explicit signs that one half of the tribe stands for the whole, but the mystical superiority of the Sky moiety places it in association with the cosmos, which of course subsumes daily concerns, the earth and the tribe. Implicitly, therefore, a relationship of the kind presupposed by Dumont may underlie traditional tribal organization. In this instance it is the left, not the right, which encompasses the opposite, if that in fact is what happens. A Dumontian interpretation presumably would identify a reversal here and a shift in levels. Unfortunately, the Sky moiety seems always to be associated with the left. When La Flesche does describe a reversal, it involves not a transformation in the association of right and left, but a movement of the point of orientation from the east to the west, bringing the Sky moiety from the south to the north (*ibid.*: 40). At any event, a moiety system such as the Osage or Omaha tribal circles expresses simultaneously the dual division of the tribe as well as its unity as opposed to the surrounding environment both of nature and of other human groups. Furthermore, the division in two makes no sense except as an expression of the whole (cf. Tcherkézoff 1983: 113–26, especially on Osage reversal, p. 120).

That reversals indicate difference in levels in an ideology may be accurate in principle. There may, however, be difficulties in practice about the evidence. The Omaha tribal circle is modelled on the *internal* organization of the earth lodge. Though it specifies where the tents are pitched when the tribe is on the annual hunt, the orientation is essentially domestic. We might expect, therefore, that some of the binary associations are different in other, *external* contexts. We must rely now on the published ethnographies, and they give no such evidence. In passing, it might be noted too that so far as published information goes, right and left is far less emphasised in Omaha than in Osage culture (Barnes 1984: 54–8). Culture changes may cover up or cause the loss of reversals in an expected place. When I was working among the Kédang, they had lost their village-wide ceremonies, now in Léuwayang partially revived. There simply was no opportunity to witness reversals that we might think would be employed in annual ritual cleaning of the village. Furthermore, reversals are commonplace in certain stages of rituals. They may therefore indicate merely that you have arrived at such a stage; or must we say that even in ritual they always indicate a change of ideological levels?

At one point (1980: 239) Dumont speaks of hierarchy as the encompassment of the contrary; at another (p. 242) he speaks of the relationship as being that of contradiction (though the definition he gives [p. 241] of contradiction is the correct one). In the logic of propositions, two statements are contradictions if it is impossible for both to be true and for both to be false. Propositions are contraries when both cannot be true though both can be false. Binary opposites are not propositions, but by virtue of their logical form, they may figure as predicates. Consequently, we may speak, as Lyons says (1977: 272), in a derivative and obvious way of pairs as contradictories or else as contraries. Aristotle, from whom we derive the distinction (Lloyd 1966: 161–2), did deal with oppositions between propositions alongside those between terms (contraries, correlative opposites [double and half], positive and privative terms [sight and blindness]).

For Aristotle, 'male' and 'female' are contradictories, while 'hot' and 'cold' are contraries. Not all contraries are opposites ('red' and 'blue'); furthermore, contraries are gradable in that the negation of one side does not necessarily imply the confirmation of the other. Whereas Dumont treats contraries as though they were the same thing as contradictories, Needham (1980: 51), in what purports to be an application of Aristotle's distinctions among opposites to the Meru, actually reverses their meanings, writing of contraries as 'opposite terms which admit of no intermediate thing or property'. Despite terminological confusions, Dumont and Needham both have in mind exhaustive opposites which are not gradable. Lyons (1977: 272) remarks that the distinction of contradictories and contraries corresponds to the distinction of ungradable and gradable lexemes within the class of lexical opposites, but applies more widely. For this reason, he proposes (p. 279) to use 'antonymy' for gradable opposites (e.g. high and low) and 'complementarity' for ungradable opposites (e.g. male and female).

Lloyd (1966: 96) remarks that the Pythagorean table of opposites (right/left, male/female, rest/moving, straight/curved—all exemplifying limited/unlimited) obscures the difference between the logical relationships in the different pairs, obscuring in particular the fact that some pairs are actually contraries admitting intermediates. Lyons says (1977: 278) that 'gradable antonyms are frequently employed in everyday language-behaviour as contradictories rather than contraries.' It is a commonplace experience of anthropologists that the oppositions employed in cultures are heterogeneous not only as to content but also in logical nature.

Right and left are commonly regarded as 'exhaustive opposites based on an absolute cut' (Ogden 1967: 72). Both Dumont and Needham treat this opposition as though it permitted no middle term. In fact, in so far as the terms refer to a whole, they very well fit into the tripartite scheme, right, middle and left. Lloyd (1966: 93) comments that in Homer on occasions the battlefield is divided into a right, a left and a middle. Perhaps it is normal that any culture sometimes treats right and left as contradictories, sometimes as contraries. Certainly this situation happens in Kédang, where I did my first fieldwork. Commonplace examples of unmediated reference to right and left occur there as well, for example, when a foetus on the left side of the womb is treated as a sign that the child is female, or, if on the right side, as male. Of course here an analogy is drawn between what happens objectively to be a contrary (right/left) and what can only be a contradiction (male/female). Right and left are mediated in more complicated representations of the whole, as when the village is symbolically divided into head, feet, right, left and middle.

The tendency to treat contraries as though they were in fact exhaustive and unmediable oppositions may go some way toward explaining the implicit dynamism in apparently static dual systems. Mediable contraries are just as capable of referring to the whole as are contradictories, though they suggest the potential of tripartite or other plural schemes. The contraries (above/below, north/south, left/right) associated with the Osage or Omaha moiety systems represent the moieties dyadically, but all allow a middle term—the centre or, in

fact, the middle. Reference to the middle is by no means lacking in Omaha ceremonial. This point seems to underlie Lévi-Strauss's hypothesis of an implicit tripartition in any dyadic scheme; for the complementarity of two opposed halves is only a first approximation of tribal relationships.

Complementary opposition has recently shown a surprising capacity to provoke polemics. In a paragraph which strikes me as more tendentious than not, Dumont (1979: 810) asserts that 'opposition is uniformly treated [presumably by Oxford anthropologists in the first instance] as a distinctive opposition, a simple "polarity" or "complementarity"'. The implication is that to speak of complementary opposition is to take the position that both sides of the opposition have equal status. I should have said rather that, if we include Radcliffe-Brown (1951), anthropologists have either said nothing about the issue or have generally accepted that complementary opposition involves an unequal relationship. What otherwise is 'the near universal pre-eminence of the right hand' about (Needham 1973: xxxiv)? In the conclusion to a study of Kédang representations (Barnes 1974: 305) I said that Kédang conceptual order is based on a form of dualism consisting of pairs of ranked and complementary opposites. 'The hierarchical character of such complementary relationships leads to orientation of the developed representation. The superiority of right to left—seemingly a universal feature of thought—becomes a law of motion to the right.' For my part I see no reason to follow Dumont in distinguishing between complementary opposition and hierarchical opposition, for they are one and the same.

It also seems hard of Dumont (1979: 807) to dismiss the collection on *Right and Left* because of a supposed neglect of Evans-Pritchard's distinction of situations when the authors of the papers in the book spend so much time talking about contexts. Dumont specifically charges that Needham's use of two-column tables confuses or elides contexts. In the end all that may be involved is Dumont's discomfort with a particular 'expository convenience'. Perhaps such tables ought to be avoided, if for no other reason than their proven capacity to cause misunderstandings. I have not even found it possible, or at least useful, to put all Kédang opposites into a single table. Perhaps Needham has not been as consistent as he would wish. His denial (1973: xxv) that all elements within a single column belong to a single category, although in accord with the position taken in his article on Meru symbolism (*ibid.*: 117), would have carried more force had he not inadvertently referred (p. 119) to 'the category of the left' or 'the category which includes the left'.

Indeed, there are more substantial inconsistencies in his various publications concerning homology of opposites. Dumont (1979: 807) asserts that for Needham the oppositions in the tables are more or less homologous. At first sight this interpretation would seem a grossly unjust reading of the passage (1973: xxviii) in which Needham makes explicit that the formal relation of analogy  $a : b :: c : d$  does *not* entail the homologies  $a \equiv c$  or  $b \equiv d$ . Though such homologies may obtain in particular cases they must, Needham says, be demonstrated in each case. The practical example of homology given in the passage is an interpretation, which Needham denies, such as that if women and the north



appear on the same side, then the north is feminine. The main point presumably is that if Needham had never drawn up the table of Meru oppositions, no one would have suggested that the north was feminine. However, in a recent discussion of analogy (1980: 46–7), Needham seems to expose himself more plainly to Dumont's criticism. There he says, 'the terms in each column need have no common property, but they are connected as homologues.' He even goes so far as to suggest that they *may* constitute a polythetic class. His figure of the 'quaternary structure of analogy' now fixes the terms on opposite sides of an analogy in relations of homology. Gone are any reservations about empirical contexts. The Needham position of 1980 is incompatible with the Needham position of 1973.

There are further obscure aspects of the discussion of homology. If through their attitudes and deeds a people exploit an analogy such as right : left :: male : female, left may be homologous to female in that they occupy the same relative position in their respective pairs. It is quite another step to say that one can be predicated of the other, such as female is left or left is female. Much of the disagreement occurs in quite a different situation. If there is a further analogy such as right : left :: upstream : downstream, there is no reason at all to assume without evidence that male/female enters into an analogy with upstream/downstream or that there are any relationships of homology between the terms.

Another issue is transitivity. In Onvlee's classic structuralist study (1949) of eastern Sumbanese symbolism there occurs the following set of analogies—Watu Bulu water-channel : Maru water-channel :: high : low :: male : female. At the same time this proportion is also exhibited—Watu Bulu channel : Maru channel :: male : female. Presumably the analogies are transitive. Other analogies in Sumbanese culture may well not be, so that each case still requires demonstration. Other formal issues little or not at all discussed by anthropologists have to do with the symmetry, inversion, inverse symmetry and alternation of analogies (cf. Hesse 1966). Onvlee draws our attention to the fact that for Sumba male/female is a cosmic principle. It relates heaven to earth, God to man, and regulates the relations between men in fundamental ways. It enters into the structure of society, where the asymmetric system of marriage alliances is expressed in an analogy relating wife-givers to wife-takers as male to female, WG : WT :: M : F. Empirical questions can be formulated and explored according to Figure 1.

- WG : WT :: M : F
1. M : F :: WG : WT    symmetry
  2. WT : WG :: F : M    inversion
  3. F : M :: WT : WG    symmetrical of inverse
  4. WG : M :: WT : F    alternation

*Figure 1*

Here, no. 1 would be implied in respect of the original term of comparison, i.e., superiority/inferiority, and even though it is only contextually true that M is

superior to F, WG superior to WT. *But* symmetry replaces the particular by the general and vice versa. The information content is less. No. 2 is certainly implied, and it is also necessary for the social relationship to work. For no. 3, see the comment on no. 1. As for no. 4, it changes the nature of the relationships represented by the two signs : and ::. Previously : were relationships of contrast, :: relationships of similarity. Now : are relationships of similarity, :: relationships of contrast.

Aristotle, and others after him (Needham, for example, 1980: 51, 58), spoke of the parts of an opposition as comprising species within the genus which is made up by the union of the pair. There is of course a logical difference between an object belonging to a concept on the one hand, and a concept belonging to a higher order concept on the other (Frege 1891: 26–7). There are neither right objects, nor right concepts, though by analogy both things and concepts are compared to right and left.

In a recent book, Needham refers (1980: 46) to hierarchy in a way which might appear to imply the sort of egalitarian treatment of opposition that Dumont criticizes. There he says that the terms of the system are articulated not by hierarchy but by analogy. In fact, he is not speaking about whether right and left refer hierarchically to the whole (genus) of which they are the parts (species) (Dumont 1979: 810). He is merely claiming that the columns in his tables do not themselves represent a genus comprised of the terms listed in the column, and that a given opposition (right/left) is *not* necessarily hierarchically subsumable in another (north/south). That is, he says nothing specifically about hierarchy as conceived by Dumont. There is, of course, a direct comparison between Dumont's idea and Needham's reference to right and left comprising species of the genus that they together make up, but since he makes no explicit use of the word hierarchy here, their similarity in outlook remains only implicit.

Dumont (*ibid.*: 809) defines hierarchical opposition as obtaining 'between a set (and more particularly a whole) and an element of this set (or of this whole); the element is not necessarily simple, it can be a sub-set'. Furthermore, the element is *identical* with the set; for example, a vertebrate is an animal. There is also difference: a vertebrate is not just an animal, and an animal may not be a vertebrate. There is certainly an unacknowledged difference between this example, and that in which Adam simultaneously represents mankind and male individuals. Vertebrates are no more representative of animals than invertebrates. Leaving aside for the moment the question of identity, hierarchy as Dumont defines it here is a part/whole relationship or synecdoche. Aristotle defined metaphor as a transfer from genus to species, species to genus, therefore really synecdoche, while applying 'metaphor' to all tropes (Brooke-Rose 1958: 4); and rhetorical theory has trod an unending definitional circle ever since. In Dumont's theory of hierarchy it is presumably insufficient that a relationship of species to genus obtain; hierarchy requires that one species (or half of a pair) be identical to the genus. This situation he calls a logical scandal, there being a relationship of identity and one of contradiction (that is, difference) in effect at the same time (1980: 242).

There are two main objections which can be advanced against Dumont's

definition of hierarchical opposition. The first is that it confuses two quite different logical relationships. There are four separate relations which are commonly expressed by the word 'is'. It may refer to 1) existence: 'God exists'; 2) identity: 'Socrates is Plato's teacher'; 3) membership of an element in a class: 'Plato is a philosopher'; or 4) the subordination of one class to another: 'whales are mammals' (Patzig 1962: 9). The so-called ontological proof of the existence of God by Anselm of Canterbury depends on confusing the first relation with the third (Frege 1891: 27). Dumont has confounded at least 3 and 4, and possibly both of these with 2.

It may be that empirical cultures do often confuse an element with the set of which it is a part. But as presented by Dumont, identity is a question of definition and is no longer an empirical matter at all. If we return to Evans-Pritchard's study of Nuer spear symbolism, we find that he speaks of the spear and the right side as standing for and symbolizing the self. He nowhere speaks of the right as being *identical* with the self. Burell (1973: 176) comments on a tendency to explicate 'similar to' or 'like' on the model of 'identical with', so that similarity appears as a weak or deficient form of sameness. However, he observes that similarity can only be understood by reference to a context, and that similarity expresses a different kind of notion from identity. 'The roles of identical with and similar to are as diverse as is logic from poetry' (ibid.: 177). Aristotle's schema of analogous usage  $a : b :: c : d$ , resembling as it does mathematical ratio, suggests a paradigm of formal logic. Rather than regarding mathematical ratio as paradigmatic, we might think of it as a degenerate form of proportionality. For mathematical ratio both sides of the proportion are related by nothing more than equality (identity) (ibid.: 184–5). Hesse (1966: 59–63) also distinguishes analogies involving identities from those concerned with only similarities. In fact, it is just this confusion between identity and analogical similarity which Lévy-Bruhl attributed to non-modern cultures (with specific reference to the Veda) and which I had to reject as being applicable to Kédang symbolic use of their otherwise quite practical distinction between odd and even numbers (Barnes 1982: 15–16).

Cassirer attributed the same confusion to mythical thought. 'Mythical thinking makes no sharp dividing line between the whole and its parts,...the part not only stands for the whole but positively *is* the whole.' 'Mythical thinking knows only the principle of the equivalence of the part with the whole.' 'Mythical thinking does not know the relation which we call a relation of logical subsumption, the relation of an individual to its species or genus, but always forms a material relation of action and thus...a relation of material equivalence' (Cassirer 1955: 64–5). At any event, the supposed *pars pro toto* structure of 'primitive', mythical or religious thought has often been asserted (Nilsson 1920; Cassirer 1956: 42, cf. Eliade 1959), yet without the express emphasis on its hierarchical nature, or the clearly formulated comparative programme characteristic of Dumont's sociology. In an otherwise rather confusing, if not confused, passage concerning participation, Lévy-Bruhl (1975: 84) decides, '*Pars pro toto* is not a principle, nor an axiom: it is we who formulate it and who give it an abstract and conceptual expression.' His claim that persons in simple

societies merely feel this participation between the part and the whole may be debated. But if anthropologists do indeed have to give conceptual expression to ideologies in order to ask questions about their logical properties, then let us take care to get our own formal terms straight.

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N.J. ALLEN

## HIERARCHICAL OPPOSITION AND SOME OTHER TYPES OF RELATION

UNDERSTANDING a society must involve understanding the system of ideas and values on which it is based, and this underlying system must consist in elements and the relations between them. In pursuing this line of thought, structuralism has laid much emphasis on the relations, and Dumont himself introduces his notion of hierarchical opposition by contrasting it with another 'type of relation', namely distinctive (complementary, symmetrical or equistatutory) opposition. The level of abstraction is clear from the start, and the notion is in addition presented as immensely important. Both types of relation may well be 'universal components' of culture (1978: 101), and the comparison with Hegel's dialectic is in effect a claim to a position within the mainstream tradition of continental philosophical thought (thus reminding one of the use of 'category' in *Année Sociologique* writing). Genesis is cited by Dumont to provide an example, but at the same time it contributes mythological resonances scarcely inappropriate in the context of such fundamental ideas. Moreover, hierarchical opposition is closely related to hierarchy, and to the criticism that he uses that word polysemically Dumont replies that any idea to which a fundamental place is attributed *ipso facto* receives a multitude of partial and secondary senses (1979: xxxv — xxxvi).

An analytical notion (or theory or heuristic tool) of such abstraction, theoretical ambition and richness is not likely to be easy to pin down and evaluate. Three possibilities suggest themselves. One is to trace its growth and application in the work of its originator. In brief, in the 1950s the notion of complementary opposition seemed adequate, though the seed sown by Apthorpe was germinating. *Homo Hierarchicus* in 1966 represented a transitional phase, and it was the reaction of critics (especially Heesterman?) that led to the explicit formulations, first in 1971, then in the second edition in 1979. The

notion was applied to the Hertzian dualist work in 1978 and to the ideology of the moderns in 1980. These summary facts leave much room for the intellectual biographer.

A second approach would be to ignore the genesis of the notion and try it out by applying it. The proposal is that whenever the ethnographic materials appear to offer a structuralist opposition of the form  $X/Y$  the analyst should ask himself whether there is some sense or context in which element  $X$  is or represents the superordinate totality (whole, set) to which in other senses or contexts both elements alike belong. As a rider, he should also ask whether the relationship can be reversed, whether there are special circumstances under which  $Y$  represents the whole and  $X$  is subordinate. For example, these questions might be asked concerning the totality formed by the traditional ritual and religious life of the Thulung Rai of East Nepal (Allen 1976). Simplifying only slightly, this domain has a binary structure, the priest dealing with tribal welfare and continuity, with ancestors and the good dead, while the medium deals with unpredictable individual affliction, with evil spirits and the bad dead. The priest is *par excellence* guardian of tribal tradition, and it can probably be argued that he is closer than the medium to representing the tribal ideology as a whole. As to other levels, I am not sure whether within the domain of the medium there is some sense in which the priest is present but subordinate, but a reversal can perhaps be recognised in an even more inclusive context. Tribal life is nowadays encompassed by the Hindu milieu and to the outside world it is the medium who represents the local tribal tradition, and seems fated to do so increasingly.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, the value of Dumont's notion to an empirical discipline must depend on its application, either to the problems he has set himself, or to other bodies of material. However, I attempt here a third approach, essentially theoretical, with a view to facilitating application by bringing the notion into clearer focus. Without any pretence of completeness I suggest a number of different ways of envisaging or discussing hierarchical opposition, one borrowed from a neighbouring discipline, one based on a different choice of metaphor, one setting this type of relation in the context of others and of the possible transformations between them.

### 1. *Unmarked : Marked*

Dumont describes the hierarchical relationship as 'queer at first sight', even as a 'logical scandal' (1971: 69; 1979: 400). However, he also notes (*ibid.*: 398) that it

1. A thorough treatment would have to relate the Thulung opposition to Dumont's priesthood/possession and Durkheim's religion/magic. The latter is often judged to be ethnocentric, and presumably the Thulung are unusual in structuring so dichotomously what is elsewhere often a continuum. Their two officiants in fact conform moderately well to the polar types of Goode 1976.

is a common feature of vocabulary, and this being so it would be odd indeed if it had escaped the attention of linguists. In fact it is regularly discussed by them, under the heading of marking or markedness. The notion was developed particularly by the Prague school from the 1930s onwards (Trubetzkoy, Jakobson, Vachek), and has become common currency.<sup>2</sup> To give a few examples, Martinet (1970: 186, reprinting pieces from 1956–7) has a chapter entitled 'La hiérarchie des oppositions distinctives', which opens: 'La notion de marque est de celles qui sont indispensables pour bien comprendre la structuration du langage'. In Britain, Lyons (1970: 16), introducing a well-known collection of essays, gives markedness a prominent place next to syntagmatic/paradigmatic in a section on structuralism, and the concept is described as 'extremely important' in his *Semantics* (1977, I: 305). In American circles one of the most prominent users of the concept has been the anthropological linguist Greenberg (especially 1966), who among other things emphasises its importance in studies of language acquisition and language change.<sup>3</sup> The following remarks cover ground extremely familiar to linguists.

'Marking involves a relation among categories in which the unmarked is hierarchically superior to the marked' (Greenberg 1975: 80). Unfortunately, the nature of the superiority is not at first sight identical in all applications, and it is necessary to consider examples from different planes of linguistic organisation. It is easiest to begin with 'formal marking' in morphology, since this explains the analytical terminology. If one takes the singular and plural forms of a representative English noun, say *tree*/*trees*, or the non-past and past forms of a weak verb, say *jump*/*jumped*, then the second form in each case is marked by a suffix while the first is unmarked. The suffix specialises the marked form, and it is the unmarked that is the better representative of the superordinate abstraction of which the two contrasting forms are expressions; the tree-sparrow inhabits more than one tree, but the singular seems natural. It is its hierarchical superiority, not merely its brevity, that makes it seem natural to list the unmarked form in a dictionary.

Let us turn to a stock example from phonology where the analytical notion was first elaborated. Many languages have just two dental stop phonemes, /t/ and /d/, voiceless and voiced respectively, whose distinct phonemic status is demonstrable by collecting minimal pairs. Thus German has *Teich* 'pond' ≠ *Deich* 'dyke', *Seite* 'side' ≠ *Seide* 'silk'. At first sight this is a simple and symmetrical complementary opposition between two phonemes which exhausts the superordinate domain of dental stops. But although both letters may be written at the ends of words, in this position they produce no minimal pairs; the opposition is neutralised and only the voiceless stop is pronounced. Thus the singular of *Bunde* 'bundles' is *Bund*, but it is indistinguishable in pronunciation

2. As I noted briefly in 1978: 193, it is not clear why the notion was not incorporated in Lévi-Straussian structuralism during the early phase of maximum influence from linguistics. One can find odd references (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1962: 87, 136), but the notion is not used systematically.

3. For an example from this tradition see Brown 1984, a recent installment in a body of work that seems to me of considerable theoretical interest (cf. Allen 1984).

from *bunt* 'multicoloured'. The voiceless phoneme represents the whole category, occurs in the wider range of contexts, and is the less specialised. Here one can talk of 'distributional' as distinct from 'formal' marking. However, the two are closely related: the voicing of the hierarchically inferior parallels the suffix in the previous example, and the suffixed example was also the less widely distributed. But it is probably clearer here that /t/ encompasses its opposite /d/, as *man* encompasses *woman*.

No doubt it is semantics that provides the applications of markedness closest to the interests of the anthropologist. In particular, gradable opposites are typically asymmetrical in meaning, with one member being used to represent the whole dimension. *Long* and *short* are antonyms, but one normally asks about the *length* of an object rather than about its *shortness*. This means that *long*, the positive pole of the opposition, is unmarked in the distributional sense. It is the less specialised, the one used when the opposition is neutralised; and this is merely another way of saying that it 'includes its opposite'. Often, as in *healthy/unhealthy* or *auspicious/inauspicious*, the positive pole is also unmarked morphologically. In general, and this also applies to ungradable, 'either-or' opposites such as *man/woman*, normal order puts the unmarked first. This point, discussed by Malkiel (1969: 341 ff.) in connection with the broader phenomenon of irreversible binomials, explains why one tends to make X hierarchically superior to Y, rather than vice versa.

The theory of markedness is quite complex and there are certain paradoxes. It is particularly unfortunate that the label 'marked' is itself unmarked relative to its antonym, and similarly it is perhaps confusing that in the examples from morphology and phonology the unmarked member of the pair was characterised by an absence (of suffix or distinctive feature respectively), while under semantics the unmarked member was treated as positive. The appearance of the unmarked form in a wider range of contexts can lead on (especially in Greenberg) to the identification of the unmarked with the statistically more common. But although different criteria of markedness often coincide, they can conflict; from a semantic point of view *boys* can perhaps be regarded as hierarchically superior to *boy* (Lyons 1970: 17). Moreover the degree of markedness shown by different pairs can vary, so that *bitch* is more marked relative to *dog* than *woman* relative to *man* (Lyons 1977, I: 309).

Languages and ideologies are not so similar that the analytical tools of the linguist can be transferred without difficulty to the purposes of the anthropologist, and it would be wrong to minimise the gap. Morphologically, *pure* and *impure* are unproblematically unmarked and marked (as are many of their Indian-language equivalents), and semantically the relationship is similar, though weak. It is a large step from these facts to the argument that in Hindu society purity as an idea-value is hierarchically superior to impurity and that the opposition is the fundamental principle structuring the ideology of caste. In general, the levels, elements, contexts and wholes of interest to the anthropologist are far less easy to recognise and specify than the corresponding entities of the linguist; and the place of consciousness in the materials of the two disciplines is hardly the same. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, it

remains true that in both cases a notion of hierarchical opposition is indispensable in the search for structure. One hopes that, as on previous occasions (Ardener 1971: xxx ff.), anthropological theory can here draw with profit on the experience of a neighbouring discipline. To repeat, the rapprochement is not intended to disparage Dumont's originality, but is made in the hope of rendering his proposal less idiosyncratic and more assimilable.

My main purpose has been to draw attention to the parallel between the two analytical notions rather than to exploit it, but at a lower level of abstraction it is interesting to note how often in practice the oppositions and series of oppositions proposed by structuralist anthropologists do show markedness. Dumont's pure/impure could be expanded to touchable/untouchable and valued/devalued, while the Thulung priest/medium is associated with health/illness, good dead/bad dead, day/night. In the implicit or overt lists of oppositions set up by numerous analysts from Hertz onwards, Beattie notes (1976: 222ff.) that one column, the one containing right rather than left, typically contains elements that are somehow superior, positive or preferred. In all these various cases, relating to different theoretical viewpoints and different cultures, if one simply looks at the morphology and semantics of the English words, most of the oppositions to which the criterion is relevant take the form unmarked/marked, rather than vice versa.<sup>4</sup> I suppose that in the last analysis this is because both languages and ideologies are subject to certain logical constraints. A vocabulary in which the concept of order was lexicalised as 'anti-chaos' seems almost as implausible as an ideology which at its highest level made disorder outrank order. Is it logically possible that Evil encompass Good (Dumont 1982: 223-4)?<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Centre : Periphery

The theoretical importance of metaphors is widely recognised (e.g. Salmond 1982), and any anthropologist interested in kinship will know how much can

4. It is not claimed that all conceptual oppositions show markedness. For English speakers Heaven may outrank Earth ideologically, but in the absence of neutralisation a claim that it was unmarked could only rest on quite unconvincing indirect arguments such as connotation (high/low) or more natural word order. Moreover, particular markedness relations in English are not necessarily universal, nor even conditionally so (i.e. universal *if* the opposition is present). Certain North American languages are said to have the feminine unmarked (Greenberg 1966: 39, 79-80, citing Lounsbury).

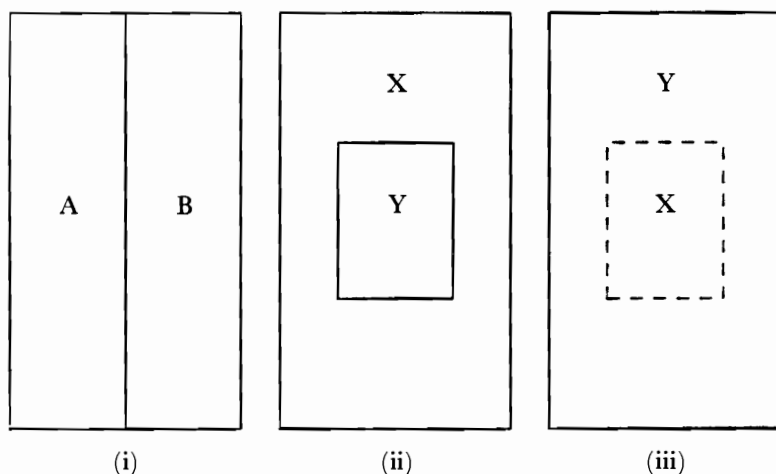
5. If I do not pursue the matter further it is partly because of the limitations inherent in all dualistic approaches; the problem presents itself differently in the context of four-element structures. One might also search within language for parallels to Dumont's notion of the reversal of a hierarchical opposition with change of level. Semantics seems to offer examples. *Short* is hierarchically subordinate to *long*; but within the subordinate domain the marked form *shortish*, which implies greater length than *short*, is subordinate to it.



turn on the precise form given to diagrams. So when Dumont pictures hierarchical opposition by drawing an outer rectangle representing simultaneously the whole and the superordinate element, and a concentric inner rectangle representing the subordinate element, it is natural to consider possible alternatives. In particular, why not reverse the allocation of values so as to make the central element dominant, the peripheral subordinate?

Dumont's diagram conforms to his verbal imagery whereby the superordinate entity is described as 'encompassing' (French *englober*). Similarly the notion of purity is compared to an immense umbrella or to the cloak of Our Lady of Mercy, protecting or embracing all manner of beings (1979: 84, 107, 268). Since a cover makes no sense without something covered, this simile puts the emphasis on the subordinate level or phase of duality, while the Marx-derived comparison of the encompassing with ether (1977: 192, 28) emphasises the level of unity; one imagines the ether pervading the whole field *before* the appearance of the central square. In either case one works conceptually from outside inwards.

With the alternative diagram one would work the other way round. Again there are two possibilities. Emphasising phase two, one can start with a central square and represent the subordinate element by a rim added on outside but conceived as an extension of the centre. A more satisfactory image, conforming better to Genesis, starts with the square representing the totality and adds the subordinate rim *inside*. One can also separate rim and central component by a dotted line, so as to give weight to the priority of the whole (see Figure 1).



- (i) Dumont's representation of contradiction and complementary opposition.
- (ii) Dumont's representation of hierarchical opposition.
- (iii) Alternative representation of hierarchical opposition (X continues to represent *both* the whole universe of discourse *and* that which is opposed to Y).

*Figure 1*

To represent the subordinate element in a hierarchical opposition as peripheral rather than central has the advantage of conforming to much English usage, both everyday and analytical, as well as to conceptions common to most cultures. I suppose that in general an insider anywhere is more highly valued than an outsider, and the textbooks regularly mention tribal self-appellations translatable as 'Man'. No doubt most peoples have confidently located themselves at the centre of the cosmos, relegating the rest of humanity to the margins. The ambiguity as to whether these 'others' are inside or outside the boundaries of the cosmos mirrors precisely the two ways of drawing the second diagram, and corresponds to the wider problem of whether or not Order embraces Chaos, or Good Evil.<sup>6</sup>

Dumont's representation has its advantages. It emphasises the significance of the extremities of the caste and *varṇa* hierarchies as against the middle ranges. Moreover, it avoids the risk of confusion arising from the political connotations of 'the Centre', and it allows for the fact that ultimate values may lie in the background as 'taken-for-granted', rather than constituting the focus of attention. In thinking about global configurations of idea-values there is room both for the encompassment and centrality representations (not to mention the regular structuralist imagery of levels and depth).

### 3. *Transcendent : Differentiated*

Hierarchical opposition may appear at first sight as a binary relation, like contradiction, that is, a relation between X and Y in Dumont's notation. But there is a third relevant entity, namely the whole, the universe of discourse, X before it is differentiated, Adam before he loses his rib. Calling this third entity A, one can say that X and Y are differentiated while A transcends such classification. Hierarchical opposition exists if X is identified with A as well as with not-Y. By fusing the inter-level relation with the intra-level, the notion compresses into binary form what from another point of view is ternary. Leaving transcendence on one side for the moment, we may ask first whether structuralism needs to put as much emphasis as it has done on binary formulations.

Non-dualistic structures are not entirely neglected by linguists. Martinet (1970: 83-9) attacks the *apriorisme binariste* of certain phonologists, and Lyons (1977, I: 287-90) discusses many-member lexical sets such as days of the week, military ranks and numerals. Thus the semantic structure of the seasons (the pattern that might underlie in common the English lexical set and that of some

6. *Homo Hierarchicus* (n. 96c, in connection with world-renunciation) alludes to the need for a study of Hindu concepts of space. Such a study could well include the phenomenon whereby a territory is represented as a unity by virtue of the relationship of shrines within it to the parts of the body of a being that once walked the earth (Allen 1981).

other language) consists of four elements linked by a relation of cyclical successivity. A dualistic formulation would miss the essence.

Among the anthropologists, Dumont's strong sense of continuity with the tradition of the *Année Sociologique* makes it particularly appropriate to turn first to Mauss (1968, II: 143–8). Commenting in 1933 on Granet's treatment of right and left in China, Mauss emphasised the need to go beyond the pioneering work of Hertz. The early work (his own included) had been based on a simplistic sacred/profane dualism, and a great deal would be missed if the laterality opposition was treated without reference to the other spatial dimensions. To understand the thinking of a whole portion of humanity (he probably meant in and around the Pacific), the right/left relation needed to be taken together with the up/down and front/back relations; often too, one should take account of a centre associated with ego and sometimes identified with the cosmic navel (or the inhabited space of the camp, etc.). He envisaged the whole set of relations as 'a sort of sphere' with six poles radiating from the centre with its 'special quality' (ibid.: 145). But he was not thinking solely of conceptions of space. He had in mind a complex combining 'positions, powers [*puissances*] and purities', and in extreme cases embracing not only ego and his position but 'all the other positions, all the beings, things and events in relation to other things'. The objective should be the ensemble of things and relations. Mauss does not speak of the centre as 'transcendent', nor of the whole as constituting a 'level' distinct from that of its components (indeed the latter word was not part of his ordinary theoretical vocabulary though, like Durkheim, he would surely have accepted the idea). But it is clear that for the inventor of the 'total social fact' the route to holism was not necessarily or solely through dualism.

In the same connection one can cite Lévi-Strauss's essay on dual organisation (1958, especially pp. 168–9). The argument, on the basis of the supposed logical priority of generalized over restricted exchange, is that the really fundamental type of relation is triadic, but that this form is subject to transformation via the concentric (asymmetrical) form towards the diametric (symmetric). In a general way, all those who write in a structuralist mode about transition, liminality and mediation also call on triadic formulae. But rather than attempt a fuller survey of the types of relation proposed by anthropological structuralists I return to transcendence, to the relation between the whole and its component parts.

Two reasons suggest that the way to tackle the question without excessive abstraction is via kingship. First, for Dumont, ever since his 1962 essay on the subject (1979: 354; cf. pp. xxii–xxv), the relation in India between the purity of the priest and the power of the king is the example *par excellence* of the superordinate encompassing the subordinate, and of the reversal of the relationship within the subordinate domain. In comparison, the relation between purity and its contradiction, impurity, is scarcely to be thought of as hierarchical in the strict sense (1971: 75). Secondly, in most traditional societies, if any human can be described as transcendent, it is the king. Very commonly, of course, he is associated with a Centre in the cosmological sense mentioned above. Even in classical India, Manu (V, 96 and VII, 5) states that the king's

body is made of the particles of the substance of the eight gods who guard the cardinal and intercardinal points. In this sort of instance the centre stands for the whole in a spatial sense, but often also the king transcends the social differentiations within his realm. The Reth of the Shilluk transcends the ceremonial bifurcation of his kingdom as well as the territorial one (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 77).

Behind kingship in classical India lies the prehistoric institution guaranteed by the etymological link of Latin *rex* with *rāja*, so in relating kingship to priesthood Dumont turns to the analyses of the Indo-Europeanist Dumézil. In particular he takes from Dumézil (though also referring to Hocart) a Hegelian view of the *varṇa* schema as being not linear but rather a series of dichotomies or inclusions (*emboîtements*): the three Twice-born opposed to the Shudras, within the Twice-born the Two Forces opposed to the Vaishya, within the Two Forces the priest opposed to the warrior-kings. This mode of construing the *varṇas* is not without justification, but the explicitly Hegelian dualist approach receives no emphasis in Dumézil's work after the 1940s. Desbordes (1981: 46) refers to it as an 'idée sans lendemain', and Dumézil himself (1981: 339) attacks philosophers and structuralists in the Hegelian tradition 'who find it difficult to tolerate the intrusion of a system with three homogeneous terms into their Weltanschauung, and struggle...to reduce two of them to unity so as to be able to find once again the familiar, comfortable binary confrontation'. (The three terms in question are, of course, the three functions of Indo-European [IE] ideology, one of whose manifestations is the structure of the first three *varṇas*.) There are, in fact, contexts where the first two functions come together in opposition to the third, but kingship is not one of them (see now Dumézil 1971, pt. 3). Comparative study of the king in IE myth and epic shows him rather as a transfunctional being who represents the synthesis of all three functions. Abstractly then, the structure consists of a transcendent entity on one level and three differentiated ones on the subordinate level.

I hope to return to this topic in the context of an argument for both the existence of a fourth function in IE ideology and its significance in the structuralist analysis of Hinduism. For the moment it makes little difference either whether there was a fourth function or whether, if so, the king transcended it. The question is rather how Dumézil's analysis relates to the paradigmatic example of hierarchical opposition and to the type of relation itself. Since Dumézil is using the materials from the Hindu epic and elsewhere to demonstrate a prehistoric ideology, while Dumont is envisaging classical Hindu culture, we must consider the steps needed to move from the earlier configuration to the later.

The essential step is the loss of the concrete embodiment of the totality, i.e. the disappearance of the king from the level of synthesis. Together with his title and aspects of his claim to totality (notably his claim to spatial centrality), he moves into the level of differentiation, into the Kshatriya or second *varṇa*, but at the same time he loses at least the priestly component of his former wholeness. All that is now 'left behind' on the superordinate level is the abstract notion of transcendence or ultimate social value. This is now taken over by the priesthood,

which thereby gains its access to both levels and its hierarchical superiority. So far, this account of the transformation corresponds roughly to Dumont's argument (1979: 356–7; cf. p. xii) that the Indian configuration arises from the secularization of kingship, with strict elimination of its usual sacerdotal component and the exaltation of the priests and their purity. As for the latter, 'an idea that grows in importance and status acquires the property of encompassing its contrary' (Dumont 1982: 225). But there is a loose end. In order to speak of the encompassed principle of the second *varṇa* as the *contrary* of the encompassing principle of the first, it is necessary to put on dualist spectacles and merge the third lower-level element in the Dumézilian model with the second, or omit it altogether. Is this justified?

Talk about kings moving levels is somewhat remote from real history and perhaps reminiscent of Saussurean chess-playing, but the point can be approached in other ways. For the sake of argument, imagine a society divided sharply into a small number of segments, each segment performing a different function, and each such function relating to a cluster of ideas (= 'element') within the ideology. If the totality of the ideology is segmented in this way we could speak of an 'elementary structure of ideology' (not that Dumézil claims that the three functions exhaust the IE ideology). We can suppose also that the ideological elements are felt to be mutually irreducible and that the members of the corresponding groups are felt similarly to be radically heterogeneous. The structure is as holistic as one could wish, but there is no logical necessity to incorporate hierarchy: each segment could be supreme in its turn or in its context. How could such a configuration be transformed into a more familiar type?

What is needed is a process of homogenization, a blurring of those sharp boundaries which so greatly facilitate the approach of the structuralist. One way to bridge the heterogeneities (apart from dividing and subdividing the elements until they blur) is to set up an entity that transcends them, and then relate each element to it, but in differing measure. The original qualitative difference is thereby supplemented by quantitative difference along a single scale (of purity, perhaps). To model the continuation of the process one can go on to eliminate the qualitative differences, narrow the differentials along the scale, and de-emphasise the transcendent, now that it has performed its catalytic function.

This scenario takes account of Mauss's views on the evolution within each category from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous (Allen in press), and also of some ideas on the ultimately elementary forms of social organisation (a preliminary formulation can be found in Allen 1982).<sup>7</sup> This is not the place to give empirical substance to its suggestions or to deal with the questions it begs. My point is that as well as being tried out on empirical material (as by

7. As Dumont says (but in the context of the modern subject-object dualism [1982: 229–30]), there is a need to bring together theories of social morphology and theories of exchange. Actually, as noted above, Lévi-Strauss's triadism relates to his concept of generalized exchange, while my own interest in four-element structures relates to (among other things) a view of the field of kinship in which the standard structuralist emphasis on the 'horizontal' exchange of siblings is supplemented by a concept of the 'vertical' exchange of children.

Tcherkézoff 1983), the notion of hierarchical opposition needs to be assessed against other conceivable types of whole-part relation and their mutual transformations. I suppose it will be a long time before the discipline develops a technical language adequate to its problems, and it would be premature to think of holism or transcendence solely in terms of hierarchical opposition.<sup>8</sup>

8. For an attempt to use markedness theory to criticise one aspect of Dumontian theory, see Scheffler 1984.

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MARK HOBART

## TEXTE EST UN CON

*Gajah sama gajah berjuang, pelandok mati di tengah-tengah.*

When elephants fight, a mouse-deer in the middle will be killed.

THE stimulus for this collection of essays was, I understand, a difference of views between Needham (1973) and Dumont (1979) over the significance of context and conceptual levels in classification. With the sage advice of the Malay proverb in mind, rather than stand between elephants, this mouse-deer proposes to view matters from a nearby clump of little-penetrated intellectual undergrowth. From this vantage-ground it looks as if the battle-ground is as often used as it is odd. So, from the (somewhat spurious) safety of my chosen thicket, I shall feel free to cast aspersions far and wide. It is a little reminiscent of the apocryphal story about Jean Genet. When, after the intervention of leading French intellectuals, he was released from 'perpetual preventive detention' for burglary, he was asked what he felt about the nation's celebrated philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, having devoted a book to him (*Saint Genet, comédien et martyr*). He is said to have replied simply: '*Sartre est un con!*'—so preserving his existential purity. For more humdrum reasons the brunt of my paper might be summed up as *texte est un con*.

A serious difficulty in much anthropological argument is that there is no satisfactory theory of context.<sup>1</sup> This is the more awkward as a major

1. My focus is a little different from the other essays in this collection, as one of the editors, Dr Barnes, asked me specifically to comment on some of the theoretical issues of context and levels. I hope the result will not be entirely irrelevant. The paper I originally presented at the Oxford conference on 'Context and Levels' (8–11 March 1983) was too long for inclusion here, and so has been split into three. The first section on problems of text and context is given here. The second, on truth-conditional semantic alternatives to a contextual account, will appear separately. The final

contribution of anthropology—popularly known from the work of Malinowski—has been to show the importance of context in almost any aspect of culture. A reason for the difficulty, I shall suggest, is the curious relationship of context to a text. Text requires context, but appeal to context involves a kind of confidence trick—for everyone invokes it but no one knows quite what it is. This, rightly, makes critics suspicious that the whole business is a ‘con’. So it may be worthwhile to consider why the concept of context is problematic.

What then is context? Etymologically ‘text’ is usually traced to the Latin for ‘tissue’, and so ‘context’ to what is woven together (Onions 1966: 913, 209), *contextus* being a ‘connexion, order, construction’ (Skeat 1963: 132) and *textus* being something woven, as the structure of a narrative, so giving the modern ‘text’ (Partridge 1966: 698). Put this way various questions arise: what kind of web or tissue is being woven? About what is it woven? And what connections, or order, is being constructed? At each turn context appears as incomplete and hinting at something else as its focus: activities, ideas, speech, texts or whatever. In some sense, almost anything can serve as a context for something else. The problems start, however, if we try to classify such relationships to find out what is ‘essential’ to them. For context is just an analytical convenience designed for a particular purpose, but there is a danger of it being seen as somehow substantive, or complementing something substantive. Now, if we treat context as a kind of thing, we run into difficulties when we try, so to speak, to pick it up only to find, as the Balinese put it, that it is

*sekadi ngambel segara*  
like grasping the sea.

There are other perils. It should be clear, from the etymology if nothing else, that context has metaphorical roots. How dead are these? If context is merely a synonym for relationship, order or structure, why use a term with connotations of weaving, encompassing and other, often confused, images? There is (at least) one interesting ambiguity in the metaphor of weaving together. Are we to take it as a confluence, or connection, and stress that parts cannot fully be distinguished from the whole (*both one thing and another*)? Or is it a conjunction, or complementarity, which needs disentangling (*either one thing or another*)? Our Hellenic intellectual tradition is comfortable with dichotomies—the apotheosis being perhaps the Aristotelian laws of thought—even if the world does not always divide up neatly. The study of context is torn between recognizing a range of possible metaphors on the one hand, and submitting to the dictates of classification and logic on the other. In this battle, context often lands up as the left-overs at the table of text, with a curiously left-footed status of its own.

Sadly, this is not yet all. If it is unhelpful to view context as a discriminable class of phenomena, let alone as neatly opposed, or contrasted, to something else, is this latter set at least exclusive? Unfortunately what is ‘not *a*’ is not necessarily *b*. Such pseudo-dichotomies are regrettably popular ways of making an analysis

seem to work. Consider, for instance, how often 'emotion' is defined by contrast to 'intellect', instead of a negatively defined ragbag (Rorty 1980; Needham 1981). Likewise, Lévi-Strauss lumps together almost every figure of speech not subsumed under metaphor as metonymy, as if it were a coherent, or even homogeneous, class (cf. Hobart 1982a: 53). Such stuff are edifices made on, if fleetingly, for also

We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. (*The Tempest*, IV.i.146-8)

While some wait prostrate for a revelation at the altar of context, others have been busily rubbing their lamps to summon up the more co-operative, if promiscuous, spirit of text. Indeed, culture itself has recently been treated as a meaningful text, capable of spawning its own context (Geertz 1973, borrowing from Ricoeur, e.g. 1970 and 1971). This kind of approach is of interest, not least because in the Ricoeurian version the relation of text and context is treated as the dialectical aspect of the hermeneutic circle and promises a solution to the problem. The argument is also able to draw upon the lively debate in recent French 'post-structuralism'. Unfortunately this is also the point at which it starts to emerge that different protagonists use the same key concepts, like text, discourse and meaning, at times apparently unwittingly in quite different ways. To the extent that the debate itself is a text, it is one into which everyone reads something different or even incompatible with other views. Perhaps a better metaphor than waiting for a god to appear is building a tower to the heavens only to discover Babel.

This talk of metaphor touches on an important point. Culture is not a text (however understood), nor a set of rules, nor even a discourse. It may be useful for a specific purpose to regard culture, for a moment, *as if* it were a text, a discourse or whatever; and members of particular cultures may write texts, hold discourse and act according to rules. But culture is complex and cannot be captured in any single metaphor. Such metaphors may prove more or less illuminating: 'structure' has faded in favour of 'text', itself often—and I think wrongly—confused with 'discourse'.<sup>2</sup> Now the creators of these metaphors may be clear as to what they are doing—Ricoeur and Foucault write elegantly on figures of speech—but one suspects that not only are their acolytes often less discriminating, but that the masters, if for no other reason than that committing oneself to develop one view of culture precludes other possibilities, end up being mastered by their own metaphors.

2. Except to the most disciplined intellectual ascetic, who can detach the technical use of terms entirely from natural language (in which case why bother to borrow 'pre-constrained' images at all?), the choice of words has implications. To me, at least, text has connotations of fixity, coherence and meaning, whereas discourse suggests divergence of opinions, negotiability and argument and so is a question of power. These implications of metaphors are, of course, discussed in Kuhn (1962), where they are referred to as 'paradigms' (Masterman 1970). Kuhn has since rephrased his usage for the history of science (see Barnes 1982).

What I am leading up to is the serious problem of translating between cultures, not unakin to the historian's problem of inferring the significance (in Hirsch's sense, 1967) of ideas in different epochs. Without, I think, begging the question, our own theoretical constructs have their own contexts, in the sense that our concepts and permissible logical moves are products of a particular cultural tradition. It cannot be assumed *a priori* that all cultures construe notions like culture, text, discourse, rule and so forth, in the same way. The obvious retort to this is that these theoretical tools are the expensive products of reflections and of tested efficacy, which do not depend upon the ways any culture may structure, coherently or not, such explicit notions as they may happen to have. Unfortunately, this argument is more convenient to the armchair philosopher than it is convincing to the necessarily more empirical ethnographer. It is not so much a question of wielding costly forged intellectual tools, as it is (as even the most hardened Popperian might admit) of considering how universally valid are the assumptions which inform our complex, articulated theoretical models. Notions like text and discourse can, on a little probing, be seen to presuppose a theory of the relation of thought, word and object, ideas about meaning, a theory of action and intention, canons of rationality, and even a view of the relation of man and society. To each age these might appear as self-evident, but one of the few certainties in this world is that at some future date present theories will be seen to hide some pretty shaky assumptions. As I shall try to show, theories of text and discourse are shot through with presuppositions more glaringly ethnocentric than their protagonists would ever dare admit. Reflecting on one's navel may be great fun, but how much does it tell one about what an Amerindian makes of a shaman's chant?

Lastly, let me briefly contextualize the problem of context, as this will be relevant later. There are two traditional theories of truth which may also, as the question of how language fits the world, be rephrased as theories of meaning. Now, such well-worn dichotomies as nature and culture, *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*, cause and meaning are not unconnected with theories of truth. To put it simplistically for present purposes, Correspondence Theory, which stems from at least as far back as Plato, argues that truth consists in some form of correspondence between belief, or language, and fact. By contrast, Coherence Theory, more popular with the rationalists, holds that a statement is true or false depending upon whether it coheres or not with a system of other statements. The latter underwrites many of the brands of contextualism in anthropology and elsewhere. Much of the complaint of hermeneutics, that the human sciences involve understanding (*Verstehen*), not just explanation (*Erklären*), may be seen as the objection of coherence theorists to the narrow stricture that truth must be found solely in some fit between the world and its formal representation in statements, formulæ or whatever. The counter to the correspondence view (espoused, for instance, for scientific theories by Popper) is a more holistic approach which stresses the need for analysis of the fit between statements, so involving some theory of rationality or logic (argued for science

by Duhem and more recently Quine). Thus the problem of context is linked to the wider debate about the nature of truth and meaning in different philosophical traditions.

With these general remarks out of the way, we can turn to look in more detail at some of the problems in formulating a theory of context in culture.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most thorough discussion is to be found in 'post-structuralist' writings on the nature of 'text' and its relation to society and the individual. A suitable starting-point is Ricoeur's argument for treating culture as a text, which can be contrasted with the different views of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida in particular, in order to show some of the drawbacks of a focus on text, or even discourse, and—despite their avowed reflexivity—the difficulty in escaping certain presuppositions of Western metaphysics. I conclude with remarks on why a theory of context is so hard to formulate and suggest one possible solution.

Theories of text, like canned foods, come in many varieties. Of especial interest to anthropologists, however, is the view of 'meaningful action considered as a text' (the sub-title of the original publication [1971] of Ricoeur 1979). His point is to show the relevance of hermeneutics as a general method for the human sciences. To do so, he sets out to show that action has similar features to text and that they are tractable to the same methodology of interpretation.

The connection between text and action briefly is as follows. Discourse consists of speech events, but what is important is

...the *meaning* of the speech event, not the event as event (Ricoeur 1979: 76; emphasis added).

It is this meaning which is inscribed, and so 'fixed', in writing or text. This 'objectification' of discourse as text is also true of action by virtue of its 'inner traits', which are similar in structure (ibid.: 81). There are four critical parallels between text and action:

1. The units of discourse, and so text, are sentences which have propositional content. In decreasing measure they also have, in speech act terminology, illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Actions have a similar form (here Ricoeur [ibid.: 81–3] relies upon Kenny 1963). The content and forces together constitute the meaning of the text or action.
2. Text is distanced from the author's original intention and develops consequences of its own (Hirsch's 'significance', 1967: 8), just as action does, history being its 'sedimentation' in institutions (Ricoeur 1979: 83–5).
3. Meaning further surpasses events by virtue of the power of reference. Texts refer originally to situations (an *Umwelt*) in which they are produced, but have the capability of referring to other (possible) worlds in which future readers live. In fact 'the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts' (ibid.: 79; this is

3. Not all the approaches can be dealt with here, for instance speech act theories or the Bateson-Wilden ecological view, which I discuss in the paper on truth-conditional semantics referred to in footnote 1 above. Some of my comments below have, however, an obvious bearing on these arguments.

the encompassing *Welt*). Analogously, the meaning of an important action transcends 'the social conditions of its production and may be reenacted in new social contexts' (ibid.: 85–6).

4. Discourse also refers back to the speaker, as well as to a putative listener. In text this becomes partly detached, so 'the verbal intention of the text' takes over from the author's intention (ibid.: 90; cf. 1976: 12–22), while a plethora of possible readers are created. Likewise, the meaning of an action becomes detached from the actor and becomes 'the sense of its forthcoming interpretations' through time (1979: 86).

The objectivity of meaning, independent of its original vehicle, is the vital link between text and action.

The free-standing nature of meaning is central to Ricoeur's argument that hermeneutics is the appropriate method for the human sciences. Dilthey's difficulty in distinguishing explanation, as the proper aim of natural science, from understanding in human science was that the latter required special recognition of the psyche as an irreducible element in the analysis. Ricoeur proposes overcoming the dichotomy between causal explanation and understanding meaning by recourse to a dialectic in which the meanings, once understood, can be tested objectively for relative validity by a logic of probability (ibid.: 90–2; borrowing from Hirsch 1967), which he holds can meet Popper's criterion of potential falsifiability (1959). The reverse process moves from the scientific validation of meaning to the possibility of new understandings. Once again reference is the key. When the text is distanced from its original setting, it may either be treated as a worldless entity—this is the comfortable world of structuralism—or (and Ricoeur implies such an option is incomplete) it may be shown to disclose a new world, remote from that of its inception, in which the sense of the text (in Frege's idiom) implies a new set of references (Ricoeur 1979: 94–8). The goal, then, is the discovery of the 'depth-semantics' of the text, which is its sense detached from its author (ibid.: 97–8). Finally, there is something similar in action and social phenomena to this sense, for equally,

...social structures are also attempts to cope with existential perplexities, human predicaments, and deep-rooted conflicts (ibid.: 100).

Text, action and social structure ultimately speak of the human condition.

Ricoeur offers a fascinating synthesis of culture-as-text. As I remarked earlier, however, we must enquire further into what this model presupposes and entails, at which point nasty drawbacks and grave inconsistencies come to light. There are several obvious issues which invite investigation. How alike are text and action? Which theory of meaning, and of the relation between word and object, is invoked, and what are its implications? How far is Ricoeur committed to a view of truth and human nature? How transparent are the metaphors in the model? What is his theory of context? And what is the dialectic through which Ricoeurian hermeneutics works? Such questions draw out uncomfortable, and even ethnocentric, assumptions behind the argument.

How alike are text and action? There is one simple difference. Actions, as events, arguably have effects in the world in one sense independent of a mediating 'mind'. Obviously the relationship between events is relevant in

respect to some framework, or paradigm (see Goodman 1978: 1–22, 91–140), but would one wish to go so far as to say that the consequences of actions do not exist in any sense prior to being recognized? Are, for instance, the effects (immediate or long-term) of the *Blitzkrieg* on London entirely on a par with the text of *Mein Kampf*? Secondly, if all actions are like bits of text, then most of them are mammothly boring and repetitive, life taking on the baldness of Ionesco's *Prima Donna*. Anyway, the sentences of text are not isolated entities but are linked by logic (in a fairly strict sense), narrative conventions, structure and so on, a matter about which Ricoeur says little but, for instance, Foucault regards as critical (see especially 1972). Even if we were to allow actions propositional content, how far are they linked logically, or can be said to have truth value?<sup>4</sup>

In Ricoeur's scheme what makes an event, be it utterance or action, relevant is that it has 'meaning'. Whatever may happen later, this meaning derives from intention. Unfortunately intention is an awkward animal, which has long been the bugbear of hermeneutics and the philosophy of action. Apart from the problems of establishing what an author's intentions are (Hirsch 1967), is it to be treated as an inner state or inferred from public behaviour? Must it be conscious? Can one have conflicting intentions? In short, as Wittgenstein has pointed out (1958: 214–19; 1959: 32, 147), is it a coherent notion at all? All this pales beside the problem of how different cultures might construe intention differently, and how its analogues, if they exist, are distinguished from wishing, willing, deciding, or even accepting fate, or whatever. It would look a bit silly if hermeneutics, in trying to understand other cultures, had to import the current battle in Western philosophy about intention as a *deus ex machina*. Some cultures do have differing notions of action and intention (Marriott 1976; Hobart 1982b, 1983). So are we not committing a category mistake if we substitute what we choose to regard as intention for what they understand by the ideas they use? A hermeneut's lot, to paraphrase W.S. Gilbert, is not a happy one!

The nub of Ricoeur's link of text and action is that both have 'propositional content' (1979: 81, 82). This view is as traditional as it is questionable. For a start, it is far from clear that it is useful to posit such abstract entities, bearers of an even more abstract 'meaning', as propositions (Quine 1953a; 1970).<sup>5</sup> The more interesting truth-conditional theories of meaning do not, in fact, deal with propositions as their object but with sentences (Davidson 1967a; 1967b). Nor, as Ricoeur notes, does the study of propositions include all that is relevant for an analysis of culture. It is becoming increasingly clear that language alone is sufficiently heterogeneous that not even speech-act theory exhausts the subject. Jakobson, as one example, isolated six functions of language, combinations of which can be distinguished analytically in any sentence (1960). Language—as

4. Rejecting a correspondence theory of truth does not necessarily salvage Ricoeur's argument. It just requires us to consider the criteria of coherence, warranted assertability, and so on, in whatever theory is used instead. As we shall see, such an option is not easily open anyway.

5. It is not necessary here to consider the debate between Strawson (1950; 1952) and Quine (1953b) on how formal logical systems should be. It is enough to note that both reject the stress upon propositions, and point to the need for context, albeit in different ways.



indeed art and other forms omitted by Ricoeur—may exemplify, express or represent, typically, commonly and so on, something as something else, in a way which does not fit easily in a propositional, or speech-act, theory (Goodman 1978: 12ff.; see also Lyons 1977). To reduce language and action to propositions is rather like entering a wrestling contest in a straight-jacket.

If the stress on propositions is questionable, the idea that text or action 'contains' something is dangerous. This is a beautiful illustration of what Reddy calls the 'conduit metaphor', where language is treated as a vehicle which must therefore contain something, be it meaning, sense, propositions or other similar contents (1979). As he notes, there is nothing intrinsic to language which requires it to be viewed in this way, and there are serious objections to doing so. Regardless of whether one chooses to regard such metaphors as 'constitutive', in that the subject-matter is ineluctably constituted in part by the image, or ideally dispensable as part of 'clearing tropes away' (Quine 1979: 160) to make room for knowledge, implicit reliance on a 'conduit metaphor' is at best perilous, at worst nonsense. It is one thing to say that, for a given purpose, it is useful to regard language as a container. It is quite another to assume that some ontologically 'objective' entity is necessarily contained in text, let alone hold that this is in fact the perduring reality behind culture.<sup>6</sup>

In one sense, the foregoing is ancillary to Ricoeur's central concern with meaning, which is what, in the last analysis, links text and action. So what kind of theory of meaning does his argument use? It is not, in fact, easy to say. At different stages theories of propositions, reference, intentions, speech acts, context and use—otherwise considered incompatible contenders—all feature. The aim of this synthesis appears to be not so much to reflect on the contradictions, as to argue for the generality and many-facedness of meaning. Unfortunately there is bitter disagreement among schools of hermeneutics, which stress meaning, as to how it is to be understood (Hobart 1982a; 1982c). The difficulty is neatly highlighted by one of Ricoeur's main exponents, Geertz, for whom symbols are the vehicles of meanings, a symbol being

...anything that denotes, describes, represents, exemplifies, labels, indicates, evokes, depicts, expresses—anything that somehow signifies (1980: 135).

This looks a little like the Charge of the Hermeneutic Light Brigade. Meaning is prepared to leap the obstacles that worry the more pedantic. As it is hard to see how almost anything does not, on some reading, fulfil at least one of Geertz's verbs, presumably everything is symbolic and therefore meaningful. This does rather deprive meaning of any meaning. Such a broad definition happily makes

6. Ricoeur also makes great play on other sets of metaphors. Ideas are given an impression of substance they would otherwise lack in the use of spatial metaphors (inside/outside; interiorization/exteriorization; distanced; open up the world). These verge towards the substantive at times (discourse is fixed, or inscribed; actions sediment), until the text becomes a mock human (the intention of the text, what a text says). Finally, it comes to life (possessing force; having power to disclose) and is even charmingly bourgeois in its interest in property (and appropriating). This might be harmless were it not that the reality of text, and the corresponding unreality of context, is more the result of the writer's imagination than of the 'properties' of text. Texts, after all, do not speak; men in culture read them.

meaning seem to occur almost everywhere and so, intuitively, it emerges as a pervading feeling in the landscape, so to speak. This is, of course, by virtue of the sweeping definition in the first place. Perhaps there are rewards for so hard-worked an intellectual factotum.

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty-Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra'. (*Through the Looking-Glass*)

Behind Ricoeur's concern with carving out a broad domain for meaning, there lies the specific problem of how meaning relates to the world. Simple as it might seem, this is one of the thorniest issues as, at the least, it involves a triangular relationship of word (name), concept (sense) and reality (thing).<sup>7</sup> Now the French Saussurean tradition concentrates on the relationship of words (here as text) and sense, which leaves the difficult problem of how either of these relates to the world. More than most post-structuralists, Ricoeur faces the latter question in order to account for the peculiar capacity of text to apply in different situations. For reasons we shall see, he grounds himself in Frege's famous, but difficult and disputed distinction between sense and reference. As Ricoeur interprets it,

The 'what' of discourse is its 'sense', the 'about what' is its 'reference' (1976: 19). Sense is the meaning immanent in discourse, and thus in text; whereas 'reference relates language to the world' (ibid.: 20). It is exactly how language relates to the world which has proven so difficult to specify fully.

There are two aspects of this problem which are worth brief mention because they bear on context. Ricoeur produces a modified version of Frege to cope with Strawson's (1950) criticisms of the Russellian interpretation:

...the same sentence, i.e., the same sense, may or may not refer depending on the circumstances or situation of an act of discourse. No inner mark, *independent of the use of a sentence*, constitutes a reliable criterion of denotation (1976: 20; emphasis added).

As Geach remarks, there has been 'a sad tale of confusion' (1980: 83) 'between the relations of a name to the thing named and of a predicate to what it is true of' (ibid.: 29). Ricoeur's emphasis is not on denotation ('the relationship that holds between [a] lexeme and persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language-system' [Lyons 1977: 207]), but on reference which is 'the relationship which holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions of its utterance' (ibid.: 174). On the one hand, this commits one to some version of what Parret has called 'the Augustinian-Fregean picture theory of language' (1980: 80), which raises all the problems of the status of imaginary objects, logical connectives and so forth (see Hobart 1982a). On the other hand, reference involves some notion of context in which utterances are made. It has been finding a suitable theory of context which has proved hard (see Parret 1980: 73-96). Unfortunately, because it

7. The terms in parentheses refer to Ullman's usage (1962: 57) drawing on Ogden and Richards 1936: 11. See also Lyons 1977: 96ff. for another of the many formulations.

looks much easier to handle, there is a widespread tendency to focus upon text and its sense rather than upon the range of social contexts in which text is used. As Harris has pointed out (1983), theoretical linguists (and one might add philosophers) deal with a highly idealized view of language, the homogeneity of speech communities and the ability of speakers, and by decontextualizing discourse ignore issues of power and the conditions in which language is actually used.

The second issue is about truth and human nature. Ricoeur requires that texts have meaning, or sense, by virtue of being true of the world in which the author, and the potential reader, lives—in other words some version of a Correspondence Theory. At the same time, the intention of the author, and later the verbal intention of the text, are crucial, so he leans towards Grice's theory of meaning as recognized intention. As this has been developed, the stress is upon understanding being linked to a particular utterance in a particular context, depending upon the presumption of shared standards of communication and a degree of mutual knowledge (Grice 1975, 1978; see Sperber and Wilson 1982 for an interesting development of this approach). Such a stress on context is likely to be uncongenial to Ricoeur in several ways. It circumvents, and indeed questions, the relevance of truth and reference in favour of convention, but in such a way as to de-centre text and emphasise the complexities of context. To what extent is embracing both Frege and Grice like trying to have one's cake and eat it?

It is for these reasons among others, I suspect, that Ricoeur grounds himself on a particular view of human nature and truth. If there is a constancy in the human condition, it may be argued that the diversity of cultural conventions and individual circumstances do not affect the capacity of text to address itself to the humanity of the reader. In a sympathetic reading of Ricoeur, Donoghue points out that in this view of text,

...the reader wants to restore the words to a source, a human situation involving speech, character, personality, and destiny construed as having a personal form (1981: 99).

This tradition he designates 'epireading' (from the Greek *epos*, speech) by which one moves back from text to persons and shared experience, through which we 'verify the axiom of presence' (ibid.) of common humanity, and reach through words towards 'the aboriginal situation' (ibid.: 151). The alternative, 'graphireading' (from *graphos*, writing), to which we shall come shortly, prefers to focus on discourse rather than the self, and questions the search for true intentions in men, or meaning in texts.

The single, true interpretation is an autocrat's dream of power (ibid.: 199).

Leaving aside the questions of the two traditions of reading for a moment, it is necessary to ask to what Ricoeur is committing himself. What are the implications of grounding an approach in a theory of truth, and a view of human nature? It is one thing for mathematically-minded philosophers like Frege and Russell to wish to fix meaning to truth about the world; but if one wishes to inquire how men in different cultures, or historical periods, understand the

culture or world about them, such a theory becomes distinctly uncomfortable. For among the main questions men may wish to ask is: what is human nature? And what constitutes truth? To the extent that Ricoeur bases his theory of meaning upon a theory of truth and human nature, it becomes impossible for his brand of hermeneutics to inquire about these, because they are already assumed. Should such an approach attempt to comment on, let alone argue that life confirms the value of these theories, it runs the danger of begging the question.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, on this view what is the relationship between explanation in the human sciences and the dialectic? For, as Hirsch puts it,

The special problem of interpretation is that it very often *appears* to be necessary and inevitable when in fact it never is (1967: 164; emphasis in the original).

The danger is ever-present that the interpreter

...has been trapped in the hermeneutic circle and has fallen victim to the self-confirmability of interpretations (ibid.: 165).

Ricoeur's reply is that the hermeneutic circle is the 'first figure of a unique dialectic' (1979: 88) in which

Guess and validation are in a sense circularly related as subjective and objective approaches to the text (ibid.: 91).

What is suggested is two different ways of looking at text.

Now in its classical formulation, the hermeneutic circle

...has been described as the interdependence of part and whole: the whole can be understood only through its parts, but the parts can only be understood through the whole (Hirsch 1967: 76).

In other words, and this is what is relevant for the Ricoeurian version, to understand (part of) a text one must understand the context, but to understand the context one must understand the text. In terms of our earlier distinction of popular theories of meaning, on the one hand the analysis of text *per se* deals with its correspondence with something outside, while on the other it deals with its coherence with other texts. From one point of view the advance of hermeneutics is that meaning cannot be squeezed entirely into *either* correspondence *or* coherence theory. The problem is, how are the two related? Ricoeur's answer is through a dialectic, treated as an oscillation. This is not so much a rational step from a thesis to an antithesis, as a stress on different ways of looking at things. The shift from dialectic as logical to a metaphor for perspective, raises immediately the question of whether there are necessarily only two views, and whether they must be related by formal logic. Part of the persuasiveness of the image of the dialectic, I suspect, is that it is the simplest form of an alternative metaphor. Rather than look for the whole truth from a single perspective, or

8. The problem may be put another way. If we require a theory of human nature to account for the 'nature' of culture, which in turn illuminates the perennial problem of humans—by virtue of their natures—are we not caught in a circularity?

two, there may be many points of view, the relations between which will depend on one's interests at the time.

At the start of this paper I suggested that ideas like text, or discourse, rest upon assumptions about the nature of language and the world, rationality, truth and others. The focus on text tends to de-centre context, and encourage the search for something essential rather than a plurality of perspectives. The value of Ricoeur's argument is that, unlike many authors, he has been at pains to spell out the assumptions upon which his argument is based—as indeed anyone must, in the last resort. In this last section I wish briefly to bring in three other approaches to text and discourse to point to the different ways such concepts are used, and to see what light they shed on the problem of context. Gradually it should become clear why context is such an elusive animal, and why 'logical levels' are tarred with the same brush as context.

There is a school of thought which questions how possible it is to find a true meaning in a text. Instead, one does not look beyond text and context for ultimate human verities, but recognizes that one is trapped within an endless web of past significations. Text, and by extension culture, is studied best by distancing oneself and watching the play of possibility as one meaning immediately gives way to another. In his later phase, Barthes has dismissed structuralism as half-hearted and has embraced what Donoghue (in a hybrid neologism) calls 'graphireading'. To Barthes, hermeneutic interpretation of a text is inadequate because

This conception of the text (the classical, institutional, and the current conception) is obviously linked to a metaphysics, that of truth (1981: 33).

For, in fact,

Any text is a tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text.... Epistemologically, the concept of intertext (that is the texts of the previous and surrounding culture) is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality... (ibid.: 39).

Text, in this sense, has two aspects:

The phenotext is 'the verbal phenomenon as it presents itself in the structure of the concrete statement'...whereas the genotext 'sets out the grounds for the logical operations proper to the constitution of the subject of the enunciation'; it is 'the place of structuration of the phenotext'... (ibid.: 38, citing Kristeva 1972: 335–6).

All culture is treated as a set of texts, context merely being the other texts. Behind this surface are the logical rules according to which texts in any system are structured. The structuralist legacy is clear. As we shall see, however, the study of text is not the dispassionate science it often claims to be, but a dank, private orifice into which it is convenient to crawl to ignore the complexities of context.

Granted this definition, Barthes' focus is accordingly on the text not as a fixed entity but as a methodological field. The differences between the 'classical' and

Barthean views can be represented as:

thing → process  
product → productivity  
truth → play

Where Barthes differs from Lévi-Straussian structuralism is in the refusal to step beyond play to ground text in any definite structure (of which play makes a mockery). Language has free play and is not to be rooted in a Kantian view of being reducible to the innate operations of the human mind. The implicit metaphysics of much theory is rejected in favour of metaphor. For

...text can be approached by definitions, but also (and perhaps above all) by metaphors (1981: 35–6).

With the positivist search for truth undermined by metaphor, we are cast free at last on the sea of language.

Perhaps the most extreme critic of 'logocentrism' (the stress on the original, meaningful word or reason behind text) is Derrida. The brunt of his attack is against what he sees as the Western obsession with 'the metaphysics of presence'. This puts primacy on the search for an original truth, reachable by consciousness and subjectivity, an ideal voice speaking behind the web of signification, hinting at what is truly so as being present to a person. We are caught in an endless play between the signifier (words) and the signified (ideas) as we seek the unattainable.

Pure presence or self-proximity is impossible, and therefore we desire it. Giving up this desire, we should engage in the play of presence and absence, play that cannot be comprehended within a metaphysics or an ontology (Donoghue 1981: 161, on Derrida).

To date Nietzsche has offered the most radical critique of being and truth, Heidegger of metaphysics, and Freud of consciousness and identity (Derrida 1972: 250). But these critical discourses are trapped in a kind of circle. For

*There is no sense* in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is alien to this history... (ibid.; emphasis in the original).

Anthropology does not, as one might think, offer a way out.

...the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he is employed in denouncing them. This necessity is irreducible; it is not a historical contingency (ibid.: 252).

Derrida offers us a Kafkaesque world in which we must shunt around for ever in the prison of our metaphysics. Our attempts to escape require us to use what we are trying to escape from. So we must shuttle back and forth between signifier and signified, constantly being redirected as we search for an answer.

The alternative, it seems, is a despondent world where text and context weave into a closed tissue. Before considering whether the fate of the anthropologist is as glum as Derrida paints it, it is useful to stand back and reflect on the problem from the point of view of a historian such as Foucault. Starting also from our own

philosophical tradition, Foucault points out that it limits the possibilities of knowledge

...by proposing an ideal truth as the law of discourse and an immanent rationality as the principle of their unfolding... (1981: 65).

But this rationality, which underpins the Ricoeurian relation of thought, word and object, and of text and reader

...is only a discourse that has already been held, or rather it is things themselves, and events, which imperceptibly turn themselves into discourse as they unfold the secret of their own *essence* (ibid.: 66; emphasis added).

It may not be language which is the trap but the assumption that there is an essence behind discourse. Derrida tends to presuppose that words can only be used in one way. As Donoghue is at pains to point out, the styles of different authors express their different attitudes to language and its possibilities.<sup>9</sup> There is more than one way to skin a cat—or a text.

What complicates the issue is that different authors have rather different ideas of what it is they are talking about. All react against the structuralist, and ultimately Saussurean, formalism. Derrida questions the superiority which is accorded to concepts (the signified) over signs (signifiers); Barthes focusses on the play of text and intertext. Ricoeur, in particular, points to the preoccupation with signification at the expense of the far more complex relation of predication which operates at the level of the sentence as the unit of discourse and text. For Foucault, however, discourse is not at the 'level' of speech (*parole*) at all.

A statement belongs to a discursive formation as a sentence belongs to a text, and a proposition to a deductive whole. But whereas the regularity of a sentence is defined by the laws of a language (*langue*), and that of a proposition by the laws of logic, the regularity of statements is defined by the discursive formation itself (1972: 116).

Against Ricoeur, Foucault sees discourse as not frozen into text,

...a mere intersection of things and words...a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (*langue*), the intrication of a lexicon and an experience... (ibid.: 48).

It is an empirically identifiable domain between language and speech. Against Derrida, Foucault argues that discourse

...is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history...it is, from beginning to end, historical—a fragment of history, a unity and a discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations... (ibid.: 117).

Discursive formations frame the ways in which knowledge, language, texts and so forth can be understood in any historical period. Discourse is not stable. It is transformed by virtue of a complex play between its contradictions and internal logic on the one hand, and processes of power on the other, which are in turn rephrased in the transformation.

9. 'Truth, far from being a solemn and severe master, is a docile and obedient servant' (Goodman 1978: 18). As, on at least one reading, language gains meaning by reference to truth, I find it interesting to see how Goodman's observation looks if one substitutes 'language' for 'truth'.



Foucault is concerned not to lose sight of the contextual wood for the textual trees. In his later works especially, he stresses the conditions of discourse and the relation of discursive freedom and power. On this overview, *pace* Derrida,

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (1978: 101).

Among the ways in which discourse is tamed and its kaleidoscopic possibilities held in check are the search for the 'truth' behind the words (often identified with the author's intention), and the exclusion of some discourses as the product of madness, and of others as being improper (sexuality or violence, for instance), sacred, esoteric, etc. Finally, there are internal procedures which serve to classify, order and so limit what is admissible, such as the 'discipline' imposed on what is acceptable in academic discourse at any time (1981: 56). Discourse is not our prison. Rather

We must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse find their regularity (ibid.: 67).

Instead of depending on terms like signification, originality, unity and creation, we can locate the reality of discourse as an epistemological entity by substituting respectively: condition of possibility, regularity, series (sequentiality) and event (ibid.: 67–8). The key analytical concepts are

...no longer those of consciousness and continuity (with their correlative problems of freedom and causality), nor any longer those of sign and structure. They are those of the event and the series, along with the play of the notions which are linked to them: regularity, dimensions of chance (*aléa*), discontinuity, dependence, transformation... (ibid.: 68).

Ricoeur and Foucault both use the notions of discourse and text, but they understand quite different things by them.

To pull the strands together: what progress, if any, has been made in clarifying what are text and context? To Foucault, Derrida is trapped in the Saussurean view of language and the metaphysics of truth and presence he himself has gone to such lengths to condemn. Ricoeur's escape from semiotics into semantics ends up equally in reifying, at times deifying, text with its link to truth through a constancy in human nature, which ignores history and cultural difference—in short, context. Even the desire in which Barthes and Derrida wish to ground discourse is itself historically constituted—a point Girard has made against a Freudian fundamentalism by pointing out that desire itself is learned by imitation (1977; 1978). One is reminded at this stage of Collingwood's shift from the tradition of Dilthey and Croce he shared with Ricoeur to a historicism in which text must be interpreted in its historical context (1946). Context, as perspective, is critical to Collingwood in another way. A narrow framework of space and time are typical of science and arguably a sense of the reality of text. In a broad frame the opposition of text and reader, or culture and the individual, is

transformed so that society and the individual no longer appear as ontological entities, but are seen to be constituted together, mutually defined, and changing (Collingwood 1945; see also Rorty 1976). A narrow frame stresses the apparent reality of that dangerous Durkheimian dichotomy of individual and society. The difference between epireading and graphireading boils down to which one puts first. It is rather like a child at breakfast wondering whether to open his boiled egg at the pointed end, or turn it upside down and crack the base.

A remark might be made in passing on metaphysics. Derrida has commented on the limitations of an anthropology which exports its own metaphysics. As we have seen, these include culturally specific notions of being (presence), rationality and truth. How unavoidable are these constraints, so we cannot but view other cultures in our own terms? There is a historical approach—represented here by Collingwood and Foucault—which argues for the possibility of distancing and reflexivity (of a kind quite different from the phenomenologists' man thinking about his own origins and nature). It is an empirical question how far other cultures have different metaphysical schemes. The anthropologist's parallel to the problem of historical understanding is the grossly underestimated one of translation. There is, however, no ground for thinking we can never escape the metaphor of the prison-house of our own ideas. Only in the short term do these seem stable. After all, one of the few certainties is that our ideas change, in part as we reflect on our discourse. Is there any reason they cannot change by reflecting on the discourse of others?

Oddly enough, we can conclude quickly. As early as 1940 Evans-Pritchard noted that anthropology deals in crude concepts which denote relationships. Any advance must include 'relations between these relations' (1940: 266). Text, let alone context, is not an object but sets of relations, the relationships between which are complex. The weakness of semantic theories of implicature is in managing to define relevant context, be it linguistic, social or interactional. On one side the subject under discussion constrains the likely range of what is pertinent. Against this, differences in roles, interest, power and perspective make the potential contexts different for those involved. Text provides apparent continuity; context the possibility of difference. The claim that there is a truth, in text or whatever, implies a kind of essentialism of great convenience to political élites. So a stress on text, as against context, involves questions of power and preference. The alternative does not entail social life collapsing into a nominalist nightmare, because for most purposes rough expectations exist of what are the 'normal' (see Cavell 1969) kinds of relationships likely to be brought into play. Situations may, however, always yield new possibilities as they are viewed from fresh or unusual perspectives 'in a new context'. This possible creativity and openness make context negotiable. Spheres traditionally as different as politics, religion or art may become the field for, or means to, the play of different views. To define context substantively is to ignore the human imagination.

How does this discussion bear on the question of levels? Dumont's insight was that, in India, the opposition between ideas and institutions of power and of ritual purity are encompassed at a higher logical level, or position in a

classificatory hierarchy, by purity as a core concept. The difficulty of dual classifications, he suggests, is that they ignore possible asymmetry between members of a class, and also the wider hierarchical context of classification (Dumont 1979).

What has context, as understood here, to do with levels? For a start, encompassing is a contextualizing move. It seeks to structure material in a hierarchical classification, so that a species at one level may be also the classifying genus at another. This presupposes that reality has levels, or that cultures work by hierarchical taxonomy, or that language contains logical levels. The first is rankly essentialist and overlooks the role of the observer. The second raises questions about whether taxonomies are necessarily hierarchical (Conklin 1964; Needham 1975), whether a culture can have only one taxonomic principle at work, and whether all cultures share identical principles. The last involves a dubious view of language and ontology (see Russell 1903; Wilden 1980: 117–24; cf. Gödel 1965). We must also be careful as to exactly what is involved in that loose notion ‘opposition’. Croce criticized Hegel for confusing what is opposite and what is distinct (1915). Ideas which are logically opposite can be synthesized; ideas which are distinct cannot be assimilated to the same scheme. Before purity can encompass power we require evidence that they are opposite, not just distinct. So it is one thing for Dumont to argue that hierarchical taxonomy is empirically evident in Indian ideas of caste—or that purity and power are for some reason of the same logical order in India—and quite another to argue that confusions or contradictions can be resolved in any culture in these ways without begging the question (cf. Dumont 1979).

Foucault’s point is that classifying is a notorious means for controlling discourse and knowledge. So is classificatory encompassing an objective process dealing with fixed facts? Or is it a possibility, or a strategy, permitted by the system? Classification is a special kind of contextualizing move, for it enunciates which are the essential features and how they are related. So it is a strategic, indeed political, interpretation of discourse. One can see why the Brahmanical élite should espouse such a view. Are we to assume that all groups agree and that there is no other possible perspective? Ethnographic evidence suggests there are, in fact, others (Derrett 1976; Inden forthcoming). On broader theoretical grounds, it is unlikely that there is only one possible classification. As Quine has argued, any theory is under-determined by the facts, which may support several alternative interpretations (1960). A classification is not so much a description or structure as an assertion or challenge, and part of the argument about, and attempt to legitimate, power. Just like the promotion of text, the focus on hierarchical taxonomies involves an attempt at closure, by virtue of unrecognized metaphors—here, of encompassing and levels. Reality does not come in tiers, nor is it neatly packaged. Different groups may believe, or choose to argue, that it does. But then again others may not.

To conclude, I have suggested that the difficulties in formulating a theory of context are linked to certain predilections in Western thought. These include what have been called ‘the metaphysics of truth’, or ‘of presence’, by which relationships become viewed as pseudo-objects, and as the observers’, or indeed

participants', relationships to what they see de-emphasised and translated into 'objective' facts in the world. The concomitant danger is of spawning spuriously substantive dichotomies in which overlapping possibilities ('both/and') become exclusive ('either/or'). The consequence is that text and context are not part of a connected tissue, but opposed, and skewed so that text attains a reality at the expense of context. Similar remarks might be made of the not unrelated opposition of individual and society. Looking for the true 'essence' of something disguises the extent to which knowledge is built up from a plurality of perspectives (a point made by Burke about irony, 1969). What is conveniently dismissed is the play of the imagination (see also Donoghue 1981: 171–2, on Barthes). Among the more powerful ploys of essentialism is a stress on order and classification, whether by seeking to define context, or by classifying reality in some determinate way. Society is not a thing, nor a language, nor a text, nor yet a discourse. These are metaphors which may be useful in looking at a problem for a particular purpose. To treat metaphors as substantive is one of the sins Dante forgot to include in his vision of hell. Those who do so in the end run the risk of being mugged by their own metaphors. One wonders if Jean Genet might not have approved their fate.

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SERGE TCHERKÉZOFF

## **BLACK AND WHITE DUAL CLASSIFICATION: HIERARCHY AND RITUAL LOGIC IN NYAMWEZI IDEOLOGY**

### *Introduction*

THE concept of 'hierarchy', which is central for the comparative study of holistic societies in Dumont's work, can be applied to a great variety of ideological forms in addition to the Indian caste system (see the Indonesian and Melanesian examples elsewhere in the present volume). It can also be applied in the study of a given society to quite different planes of analysis.<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify this concept, a comparison should be made of the several analytic planes in a particular case, like that of the Nyamwezi of northwest Tanzania. When studying Nyamwezi rituals, the observer is led to consider: 1) a complex dualistic classification, often called 'symbolic classification'; 2) a network of ceremonial exchanges which broadens into a complete cosmology, hence a *cosmological circulation*; and 3) a global order of values, the core of the ideology, constituted by a dual religious reference. The ancestors, who in this society are regarded as the origin and end of everything, are divided into two sets, the familial ancestors and the collective ancestors, the latter being embodied in the royal dynasty.

Although briefly summarizing analysis described elsewhere (Tcherkézoff 1981; 1983), this essay will demonstrate that dualistic oppositions cannot be properly described in terms of 'contexts', but must be explained by reference to hierarchical 'levels'. This stance must be adopted if analysis is to accommodate 'contradictions' that may occur in an ideology and avoid making assumptions in advance where crucial divisions may be located in the ethnographic data.

1. I shall reserve the term 'level' for a different and more precise application.



Nyamwezi people, the most numerous of Tanzania, were divided into more than one hundred chiefdoms at the end of the nineteenth century, just before the arrival of the Europeans. Blohm's ethnography (1933) shows what Nyamwezi society was like at that time. Blohm was one of the first missionaries to stay there, and between 1897 and 1916 he patiently collected more than three hundred interviews with old people about their rituals, which he published in the original language. We can therefore go beyond his German translations by turning directly to his vernacular texts.

Blohm's publication allows us to assess later works by the missionaries Bösch and Gass and the better known writings of the government anthropologists Cory and Tanner, in that it provides the background necessary for separating Nyamwezi thought from the interpretations of later authors.

In every chiefdom, the *nsemi* was a sacred king, much like the kings of the great interlacustrine African kingdoms. Among the living, he embodied supernatural forces and the collectivity of ancestors, to whom he principally directed his attention and who were the main source of public sanctions. His duties were to conduct the rites of the agricultural cycle, mainly the sacrifices to the spirits of his royal predecessors when the time came for rain-making, planting and harvesting. He also addressed his royal ancestors in case of war or epidemics and performed special rituals in case of a breach of a royal taboo, such as the birth of twins, murder, killing a lion, or failure to observe the very precise chronological order of all the acts involved in agricultural work. When the king became old or sick, he was put to death and immediately replaced.

Around him at the court lived the People of the Great Village (*banikuru*), among whom were hereditary dignitaries, but also other people who, having broken a taboo, took refuge at court by a special procedure, that of breaking at the entrance royal paraphernalia used in ceremonies related to the ancestors; or others who were seized because they were unable to pay the royal fine incurred by their breach of the prohibition. Relinquishing any relationship with their own family, they lived the rest of their lives at court, where they could reach quite high positions.

Beyond the Great Village were numerous hamlets (*kaya*) scattered throughout the chiefdom, where a small group of often unrelated families lived, having followed or subsequently joined a man who 'cleared the land'. This man might be recognized by the king as a village headman, inasmuch as he would report to the king cases of murder, the birth of twins, and so on, and organize the collective work that sometimes had to be done at court. Several *kaya* could also be grouped into a greater village (*limbuda*) under a single village headman. The smallest unit in such hamlets was the household, or *kaya*, organized around a man and his wives, each wife having her own house, or *numba*, with related elders, married and unmarried children, and adopted dependents.

Non-kinship relationships within the hamlet entailed treating and speaking of mutual assistance as 'debts' to be remembered and repaid. They were distinguished from consanguinal relationships, or *budugu*, in which assistance was obligatory and did not lead to indebtedness. Included in *budugu* relatives were all cognatic kinsmen of ego, wherever they might live, so long as they had

not forgotten the tie, continued to help in the rites and sacrifices of birth, marriage and death, and contributed toward fines imposed after the breach of taboos. Such rituals involved both sacrifice and the ceremonial payment of hoes, goats and cattle.

The yearly cycle was marked by two seasons. The rainy season, the time of the 'black' rain, was devoted to work in the fields and the cultivation of sorghum. The dry season was the time for feasts, marriages, murders and wars. The 'white' drought, if enduring, provoked terrible fear and displayed the anger of the ancestors.

The following discussion focuses on a brief example drawn from the extensive Nyamwezi system of classification. Cory (1960; but see also Beidelman 1961: 250) alone has discussed the place of right and left in Nyamwezi chicken divination, and Abrahams (1967: 5, n.3) has drawn attention to the fact that, unlike their neighbours, Nyamwezi associate left with males. Of the numerous oppositions the Nyamwezi recognize (Tcherkézoff 1983)—directional, sexual, numerical, between colours, and so on—they seem to emphasise the oppositions of black/white and back/front ('back', *mugongo*/'head', *mutwe*).

This paper will concentrate on the meanings of black and white in all the ritual contexts where these colours appear as a necessary element of a ritual act. One of the main examples, concerning the contrast between the two seasons of the year, has already been introduced. There are five such ritual contexts: 1) familial sacrifice in which a group of kin invokes its proximate ancestors; 2) royal sacrifice where the king asks his ancestors to bless the country with rain, crops, health and success in war; 3) chicken divination occasioned by illness in the household; 4) chicken divination at the selection of a new king; and 5) the ritual for initiation into fraternities.

Taken separately, the first four contexts reveal little more than the complementarity of black and white. The fifth context, or the first four taken together, reveals a more complex pattern, involving a hierarchy of levels. This pattern aids the understanding of the total ideology and the overall configuration of ceremonial circulation within Nyamwezi society.

### *Familial Sacrifice*

The diviner prescribes the ritual known as *kuhoja* mainly in connection with illness. Depending upon the seriousness of the illness, he may order the consecration of a row of beads to be worn after the ceremony as a bracelet or necklace and the consecration or sacrifice of a goat or cow. The consecration consists in anointing the bracelet or the animal with sorghum flour mixed with water (*lwanga*),<sup>2</sup> a mixture which must first have been brought into contact with

2. Strictly speaking, sacrifice consists in the same consecration followed by puncturing the ear or throat of the animal with a knife. A general account of the *kuhoja* ceremony may be found in Tcherkézoff 1985.

the sick person. By means of the consecration, the soul of the ancestor passes from the sick person into the bracelet or animal. This procedure is said to 'give a house' to the ancestor, who until then had been a 'wild animal' but now becomes 'established among his descendants'. Letting the blood of the sacrificial animal fall to the ground completes the process: the ancestor's soul reunites with his body under the ground, the blood representing the principle of life.

Of interest at present is the diviner's choice of the type of bracelet or animal. If the ancestor belongs to the paternal side, the 'side of the head, of the front', and is therefore denoted by the left hand, the beads must be white. If the ancestor is on the maternal side, the 'side of the back', the right-hand side, the beads must be black (Bösch 1930: 101).

The ancestor's origin is also expressed by the animal's sex (male for the paternal side, female for the maternal side) and by the hand which the sacrificer uses to anoint the animal (left for the paternal side, right for the maternal side). The diviner also specifies the appropriate colour. For ordinary cases of misfortune, the specifications for the animal are simple: a single colour, usually black, or at most spotted black and white. In more serious cases the animal must possess 'two hairs', black and white in a special pattern, that is, with one white spot on the head (Blohm 1933, vol. iii, texts 54e, 54h, 54i; Bösch 1930: 73, 94, 128, 158, 221; 1938: 89; Millroth 1965: 160). This pattern is regarded as superior to a merely random mixture of colours when it is used in royal sacrifice.

### *Royal Sacrifice*

In royal sacrifice the victim normally has a white spot on its head and only cattle are used, whereas in familial sacrifice such an animal is resorted to only for serious cases. Families usually use only goats. The ordinary forms of royal sacrifice apply to minor troubles and illness in the royal family or court. The king invokes his ancestors on altars which are small 'houses of the ancestors' situated near the palace.

In serious trouble, like drought, and in the principal rituals of the annual agricultural cycle, the victim must be entirely black. The diviner may even specify that the animal to be sacrificed be one which was born at night. It must always be male, in contrast to the use of both sexes in familial sacrifice to indicate the derivation of the ancestor. Sacrifices to bring rain are held at the graves of kings (Bösch 1930: 128; Cory 1951; Millroth 1965: 135-7).

The order of progression differs in the two contexts of familial and royal sacrifice. In royal sacrifice there is a transition from black and white, with a stress on the asymmetry of the single white spot, to completely black. In familial sacrifice the movement is from a lack of colour specification or at most a single colour to the asymmetrical pattern of the two colours. This difference may be called an inversion, although since we are speaking at the moment only of two

different contexts, the pertinence of the idea of inversion has not yet been demonstrated.

### *Divination at Death or Illness*

In cases of illness or death, before deciding what procedures should be followed, the diviner may use a chicken to find out whether an ancestor or a witch is responsible and who that ancestor or witch is. The diviner looks at the situation of a spot on the chicken in terms of the oppositions of right/left and head/back.<sup>3</sup> White or clear spots indicate ancestors; black or dark spots imply witches (Blohm 1933, vol. iii, text 146; Bösch 1930: 220–1; Cory 1960: 22–4; Millroth 1965: 138–40). If an ancestor is responsible people say ‘that is all right’; this is the expected answer and in the order of things. In the case of a death it means that the entire funeral and burial can be carried out and the deceased will become an ancestor. In a case of illness, it means that someone who has recently died has finished his walk in the wilderness and wishes to return to live among his kin. The first consecration or sacrifice carried out for him constitutes his second funeral. It could also indicate the return of a long-dead ancestor who, though already established among his kin, had gone away because no sacrifices had been made to him for a long time. An ancestor’s establishment in the domestic area of the living is always temporary and must be regularly renewed. Cosmology requires this regular renewal. Sacrifice also reasserts the ancestral value of the family’s cattle herd, making it possible to use them in ceremonial exchanges in connection with the various stages of the life cycle and in connection with other groups, including the royal court. Illness is actually an expected event and a link in the chain of transformations which bring about the renewal of generations (Tcherkézoff 1985).

A black spot indicating a witch is an occasion of serious trouble. The family has to go to a special and expensive diviner to obtain magical medicines against the witch’s influence. Otherwise, they may decide to kill the witch, a step always taken in the case of a death. This measure involves them in another costly relationship with the king, for by shedding blood they have endangered the whole kingdom. Vengeance nevertheless seems necessary, in order to re-establish the victim in the ancestral cycle (see Tcherkézoff 1981, vol. ii, ch. 5).

3. It may be recalled in passing that this is the only previously described aspect of dual classification among the Nyamwezi, mentioned by Cory (1960) and drawn to the attention of a wider audience by Beidelman in his paper on the Kaguru (1961: 250). Beidelman’s article immediately followed Needham’s analysis of the Mugwe of the Meru (1960). Beidelman quoted the Nyamwezi example to underline the richness of African ethnography on this topic and to emphasise the lack of attention given to the subject there. Needham’s Meru study marked a return of interest after a long neglect following Hertz in 1909 (for an account of Needham’s analysis of the Meru case and of Hertz’s paper see Tcherkézoff 1983).

The spot is black not just because witches are black, although of course witches work at night and their substances and actions are associated with black. Furthermore, the ancestors cannot be said to be only white, since ancestors from different sides of the family are distinguished by black and white. Black and white in this case denote the ill-omened and the propitious answers respectively in divination, and indicate either trouble disturbing the normal order of things, or else the normal presence of the ancestors. They have exactly the opposite implications in divination for the king.

### *Divination for Selecting a New King*

When a king is selected, white spots are a negative answer and black spots a positive one. White spots say that a candidate would bring only drought to the country, while black spots presage numerous dark clouds bringing heavy rain (Cory 1951: 7).

It would be tempting to compare more closely the two forms of divination to see if there are other marked differences, or even a clear inversion of the favourable and unfavourable meanings of black and white. In familial divination a white answer is accepted with relief, whereas in royal divination it is feared. In the first case it denotes the continuity of the chain between the living and the dead. In the second case it represents a disruption of the continuity of the yearly cycle which, as the cycle of agricultural ceremonies shows, expresses the continuity of society as a whole and guarantees its persistence. These different implications mark *two levels of Nyamwezi ideology*.

We may speak about inversion here if we take chicken divination as a single context. We may not do so if we regard illness and death among commoners as an issue quite distinct from the election of kings, or regard the relationship to ancestors and witches as an entirely different matter from the relation between the two seasons. Surely, though, it is no coincidence that the two contexts of sacrifice and the two contexts of divination reveal the same inversion of symbols.

The hypothesis that this transformation is an inversion implies that it occurs within a total pattern, and we might hope to find confirmation in ritual concerned with the totality of society, such as that which takes place within the initiation hut.

### *The Initiation Hut*

The Nyamwezi are regarded as a society without initiation, but we have several descriptions of the ritual for entering one of their 'secret societies'. Applying such a name to these clubs, associations or fraternities is misleading, though it is true

that it is difficult to describe them. The choice of a secret society is quite free, but most people enter one or another of them. Although they are numerous, the manner of initiation is similar everywhere. Entrance to a secret society appears to be a direct continuation of familial sacrifice. When all familial rituals prescribed by a diviner have failed, the diviner organizes an initiation ritual to induct his client and other candidates into his own society. Also, clients sometimes join the diviner's society after being cured. While undergoing treatment the client becomes the 'ox' of his new 'father', the diviner. In the secret society, this new family tie becomes firmly established. Initiation belongs to the context of sacrifice and the relation to the ancestors, expressed through illness, and involving divination, consecration, sacrifice (in the strict sense) and initiation. It is linked, therefore, to contexts 1 and 3, but as we shall see it also shows elements of contexts 2 and 4, the symbolism of the wet and dry seasons.

The ritual is complex and lasts several days. A period when the candidates are secluded in the bush contrasts with a period when they remain in a large hut made specifically for the occasion, where they learn the rules of their new society. I shall limit myself here to a description of the interior of this hut (Cory 1946; see also Bösch 1930: 169–202; Blohm 1933: 39–40; Gass *et al.* 1973: 400–29; Millroth 1965: 140ff.). Just inside it there are, along with other objects, two large pots representing the two sides of the ancestors, paternal and maternal, head and back, white and black. One pot is called 'man', the other 'woman'. One holds the male symbol, an axe or bow, which is used in all rituals, at birth and marriage, and so on. The other holds the female symbol, a long wooden spoon. Under each of the pots there is a jewel or *iholero*, a term applied to beads, copper bracelets, or specially shaped shells which are used to call the ancestor and which he enters during consecration. The master of ceremonies explains clearly that one side represents the paternal ancestors and the other the maternal ancestors, the two meanings being shown to everyone (Cory 1946). Neither is higher than the other, as they are both placed on the ground. Contrasting to this dual symbol on the floor there are a number of white spots made with cotton inside the conical roof of the round hut. These spots represent stars, the roof being called the sky. No distinctions exist in the sky. According to myth, the people who live there, the primeval ancestors, are one-sided, having only one eye, arm and leg (Bösch 1930: 46; Gass *et al.* 1973: 391).

In the sky there are only one-sided ancestors. On the earth are found 'head hand' and 'back hand' ancestors. Between the unity of the sky and the disjunction of the earth, there is room left for movement. Drawings are made on the wall, which of course cannot be seen all at once. First facing the door and then turning left, the candidate walks around the hut. He sees the evening star and moon, then the morning star and sun, followed by a white circle called *kipwa* for the dry season and a black circle, *kitiku*, for the rainy season. Next there is a red line representing the first light of dawn and three red, black and white semi-circles in unspecified order standing for the rainbow.

This ritual procession around the hut follows a logical order, beginning with night, proceeding to morning, then to dawn, the boundary between night and day, and ending with the totality of the three colours representing night, day

and the transition between night and day. This interpretation derives not from universal common sense, but is plain in the ethnographic context. Sacrifices are always made at the limit between night and day. The victim is killed at the first light of dawn. The white and black circles, representing the dry and rainy seasons respectively, intervene in the overall order of the procession. In this case the black circle, the last one, is superior. A dialectical or polythetical analogy between the two different associations of white and black would wrongly associate the white light of day, which is declared by many proverbs to be good and bring warmth and 'strength', with the whiteness of drought, where sunshine is viewed not as a 'fire warming the house' but as a 'devastating fire'. It would also combine the fearful black of night (witches) with the life-giving black rain (Blohm 1933: 140). I will argue later that the only relationship between the black of night, sorcery and witchcraft and the black of rain must be understood as between two *levels* of the ideology.

It can be said, therefore, that the initiation hut displays these two levels in a single pattern linked to the larger context of sacrifices. The two levels are marked by the static opposition between the ancestors of the male and female sides (the two pots) and the dynamic opposition between the two seasons (the two circles). Their occurrence together within the context of initiation justifies the interpretation that the contrasts between familial and royal sacrifice and between common and royal divination involve inversion between ideological levels and not between irreducible contexts. In the totality of the two circles representing the seasons the black circle, which comes last, seems to be superior. Divination for selecting a king shows as much. Furthermore, the entire year may be referred to as 'the wet season'. People may count years by rains, but they never count by droughts (Blohm 1933: 142). Another comment can be made about the use of circles to represent seasons. The Nyamwezi oppose linear ordering of events, marking the succession of generations, to cyclical ordering of the yearly cycle, where the progression of time is inverted (Tcherkézoff 1981, vol. ii, Conclusion). Nyamwezi say that 'the year has been caught from behind, as when a hunted animal makes a wide turn and gets behind the hunter'. The tie to near ancestors is thought of as a 'straight path' (Cory 1951: 37-8).

Three different patterns appear in the contexts reviewed in this paper. The first of these may be called hierarchy in the strict sense. Here, there is a superior level marked by *a* and an inferior level marked by the alternative *a* or *b*. In the annual sacrifices conducted by the king the victim is always black, as opposed to the two coloured animals or two colours of beads used at other times in royal or familial sacrifices. Also, it must always be male, as opposed to the alternative of male or female in other contexts.

The second pattern is hierarchy broadly speaking, which may be called totalization in a sense different from that used by Lévi-Strauss (see Tcherkézoff 1983: 115ff.). Here the superior level is marked by the union *a* + *b* and the inferior level by the alternative *a* or *b*. This form is the most all-inclusive and is

represented by the symbolism within the initiation hut (the two seasons one after the other) and by the white and black beads used in familial sacrifice. It expresses a very general feature of Nyamwezi ideology, and is expressed also in the relation to the nearest ancestors, thought of as being symmetrical and disjunctive and characterized by linear time, as opposed to the relationship to the collectivity of ancestors, which is embodied in the royal line and associated with the flow of life in the yearly cycle. Some of the cattle exchanged in connection with marriages and murders must be given to the court, where they are thought to be transformed into the sorghum which the king distributes annually to be planted throughout the kingdom. This sorghum is the catalyst in the transfer of souls, for the sorghum and water mixture which is fed to an infant before any other food permits the soul given by the collectivity of ancestors to pass into him (see below).

The third pattern is characterized by inversion, as in the use of black and white in chicken divination. Here at the superior level *a* is greater than *b*, while at the inferior level *b* is greater than *a*:  $a > b$  and  $b < a$ .

Hierarchical opposition can always appear in these three forms. Had we looked at the oppositions right and left, 'head' and 'back', or odd and even, we would have found the same three patterns. Why is it necessary always to distinguish two levels? To speak only of the complementarity of *a* and *b* or an analogy of *a* and *b* to *c* and *d* is meaningless. The terms within a classificatory system, of the objects used in ceremonial exchanges, have no meaning independent of the total hierarchy of the ideology.

In Western thought, where an object is defined by its substance or intrinsic properties, change or time is revealed by a shift in location or size of the object. But in societies whose ideologies Dumont calls holistic there is no substance, only relationship to the whole. Another characteristic of modern logic, that is, to see everything only on a single level, makes it impossible to express movement of any kind. The recognition of different levels permits the recognition of movement. Inversion, so puzzling to our way of thought, is therefore commonplace in holistic ideologies. If we say that *a* is bigger than *b*, our logic does not permit us to say simultaneously that *b* is bigger than *a*, because that would imply a change in substance. If we say that *a* is before *b* and that at another moment *b* is before *a*, we will say that there has been a relative change in momentum of *a* and *b*. In holistic logic *a* and *b* do not have measurable speeds. Their only characteristic is their relationship, and change is expressed by shifts such as that from *a* before *b* to *b* before *a*. In our own language we must speak of different levels, rather than trying to explain inversion by such misleading phrases as catharsis or rituals of rebellion. In fact, problems would arise if there were no inversions, for these represent the elementary operation of holistic logic. Modern thought cannot understand inversion, while modern society has suppressed most aspects of ritual.

We shall return shortly to consider the cycle of cattle and sorghum, the coming of the rain, and the status of twins, in order to reach conclusions about the relation between classification and ritual cycle and that between levels of the taxonomy and those in the ideology.



It is a well-known feature of East African societies that cattle serve as ceremonial money and are considered to be a material manifestation of the ancestors. Many analyses ignore the possibility of reversals at different levels of the ideology, but often link values related to cattle directly to the opposition of men and women or to status differences between pastoralists and agriculturalists.

Only at one level of Nyamwezi ideology is herding by men more prestigious than the agricultural and domestic tasks of women. The determining value here is the tie to the near ancestors of two or three generations on either side. The preparation of sorghum pudding appears to be profane in comparison to the control and exchange of cattle (in bridewealth or blood-price), expressing the strength of ancestral ties. However, sorghum is the highly-valued product of an elaborate and complex annual ritual at the royal palace. Its transformation in the ritual is the condition of the renewal of life once a year for every family in the chiefdom. A different level of the ideology is of concern here, with reference to the royal ancestors regarded as the 'fathers' of all Nyamwezi.

Ceremonial exchanges concern the various types as well as the consequences or resolution of murder or marriage. In either case part of the payment is given to the king in a double form, consisting in parts called the 'head' and the 'back'. Generally speaking, the head and the back denote the two halves of the human body, and their union is considered the expression of a person's completeness. The same symbolism attaches to the main part of blood-price, which is regarded as a life-giving gift, enabling the re-creation of a complete body with elements of the 'head' half, associated with the paternal ancestors, combined with elements of the 'back' half, associated with the maternal ancestors (Tcherkézoff 1984). The implications of these exchanges go beyond the two groups immediately concerned. The exchanges are part of a total ceremonial circulation.

After death, a Nyamwezi's body and soul separate. Soon afterwards, the relatives of the deceased begin a great variety of sacrifices which take place from time to time in response to illness. The main result of these sacrifices is to reunite the wandering soul of the ancestor with its body and to give him a 'house', so that he may 'reside' among his descendants and protect them. These sacrifices are repeated regularly because the ancestor has a tendency to leave the 'house' to become 'errant' again, and then malevolent. These sacrifices have an effect on the whole family herd, even though only one animal is consecrated to the ancestor or put to death. To use a metaphor, the whole herd is 'recharged' with ancestral value, enabling it to be used in ceremonial exchanges (see Tcherkézoff 1981: 608).

Part of each exchange is directed to the court in order to 'nourish' it. Having 'swallowed' the gift (*kulya*), the royal couple, assisted by the priest, may 'push out' the new sorghum of the year (*kufumya, kuhoja*). Sorghum, it is said, is 'born' from the queen's womb and then distributed throughout the country to be sown by every family. Subsequently, royal sacrifices ensure the maturation of the sorghum. The duality of 'swallowing' and 'pushing out' expresses a general law of Nyamwezi ritual. The expression to 'push out' may apply to birth, entrance into the new year, payment of ceremonial gifts, the letting of blood in sacrifice,

and the soul's leaving the body at death. Each event must be preceded or followed by 'swallowing', which may be to die ('to be taken by the Death, *lufu*'), receiving the ceremonial gift, or eating the sacrificial meat. The queen cannot give birth to sorghum if she has not been 'swallowing' all year long or has not been nourished by the ceremonial gifts. The circulation of cattle is transformed into the circulation of sorghum from the court to each family. The final step in the circulation which begins at death occurs in the ritual connected with birth.

After the mother is 'opened', the infant is 'opened' too (his ears are 'opened' by producing a special sound near his head), in order to provide a path for the soul. Next, the infant receives its first food in the form of sorghum. In his commentary Blohm (1933: 188) says that the collectivity of the ancestors gives a soul to the infant and will return to retrieve it at death.

Sorghum seems to be the necessary medium for the renewal of life. A new body is given to the soul by its means, sorghum's efficacy deriving from its very origin. Other rituals confirm this idea, as in marriage, where balls of sorghum are used to consecrate the new union, or in the birth ceremony for twins, where their first food has to be brought from another kingdom because twins represent the essence of Nyamwezi kingship everywhere in Nyamwezi country. Hence sorghum is clearly the medium of the royal 'soul', which like the other symbol of Nyamwezi kingship, the lion, is outside. (All actual dynasties are thought to originate from 'outside' the kingdom.) After being fed, twins, though alive, immediately become like the ancestors and receive sacrifices.

These oppositions concerning the different evaluations of cattle and sorghum, men and women, concern the two levels we have already identified in connection with colour classification. With reference to the close ancestors (level 1), the 'head', 'left-hand' or paternal side is symbolized by the bow and said to be superior. A man has authority over his wife because 'he has the bow' and because men look after livestock. At this level, white beads (for the paternal ancestors) are valued because in general white stands for the ancestors, in opposition to the black of witchcraft, usually attributed to the 'back' or maternal side of the family. However, with reference to the collectivity of ancestors or royal ancestors (level 2), the 'black' side, the side of the 'back', is valued; for all royal ancestors are 'children of the back' (given that the succession to kingship is from mother's brother to sister's son) and are responsible for the 'black', in this case the rain which enables sorghum to thrive. After success in 'calling the rain', the court 'gives birth' to the sorghum for the new year (Cory 1951: 33-40).

One anecdote shows vividly how strongly linked these conceptions are. When colonial influence caused the rule of royal succession to be changed to patrilineality, the Nyamwezi were terrified, for they thought that no more rains would come (Abrahams 1967: 46). Though the king did not lose his responsibility for organizing the ritual calling for the rain, no longer being a sister's son of his predecessor he was no longer of the 'back' and 'black' side, and therefore no longer on the side of the rain.

To say that the levels identified in the formal structure of dual classification are the same as those that appear in the ritual cycle implies that they are the levels of the total ideology and that a circular relationship exists between these

levels. Symbolic elements are not defined by particular contexts, that is, independently of the overall system of thought, the levels in that system, and the transformations, such as inversion, which they imply. Consequently, there is no need to find a specific meaning for the colour black, for instance. It is wrong to ask whether black is more closely related to witchcraft than to rain-laden clouds. Fortunately, the context of initiation brings together the associations of black with rain and with the maternal ancestors, with the difference that jewels (*maholero*, plural of *iholero*), consecrated to the ancestors, are exactly comparable to the beads (*maholero*). If we were to focus only on the binary relationship between black and white, we would miss the total position of the relationship within Nyamwezi ideology and would assume that there was something in common to the black of the maternal ancestors, the black of witchcraft and the black of rain. Depending on whether we focus on witchcraft or rain, we would assign black either to the inferior or superior column in a two-column scheme—unless we were simply to ignore one or other of the associations as being incoherent. In fact there is no single meaning behind these associations, although there are ritual connections between maternal ancestors, witchcraft and rain.

As we have seen, sometimes the victim for a royal sacrifice must be born at night. The black skin of the animal consequently refers not only to black clouds but also to night. Night is always spoken of as 'the time of the witches'. Only at night can they be seen going through the walls of huts, riding hyaenas, visiting sleeping people, and making them sick by sleeping on them. When caught, they are killed and thrown into the bush. Their bodies may not be left in the village. Rain also belongs to the outside world, to the bush, and comes from 'beyond the horizon'. The king is able to call the rain because he too comes from the bush, being a lion who has come to 'eat' the land of the chiefdom, as witches 'eat' their victims by giving them deadly diseases. In order to call the rain, the king requires the help of specialists or diviners called *bafumu*. Diviners are the only people who are not identified with a specific chiefdom. They are organized in 'secret societies' which extend beyond the chiefdom. Witches too are supposed to be organized in similar associations. In a long drought the king is thought to be sick. He must spit on a stick which is brought to a diviner in the same way as is done when a person is ill and wishes the diviner to 'dream' in order to find out which ancestor or witch is responsible. In some cases the diviner will order the king to sacrifice a human. The victim must be caught and killed at night as if he were a witch. Furthermore, as has been seen, witches are generally looked for among the maternal or 'back' relatives, those whose ancestors are associated with black beads.

We may say that the black of the superior level of the ideology (the rain) is the negation of the black of the inferior level, implying not a contradiction within a single level, but a circulation between two levels of the ideology. While rain comes from outside, witches are expelled to the outside. In a way, 'black' (and 'back') witches have to be expelled to the bush so that the king, who is the other 'black' and 'back' person and who sits now in the centre of the kingdom, may call for rain. Throughout the year, the king receives in his court the murderers of

witches, 'thanks' them in actual words, and 'swallows' the fine they bring him, which is much smaller than the blood-price paid by the murderer of someone who is not a witch. In taking on himself the weight of these murders, he protects his ability annually to 'push out' or to give birth to the rain. For this reason the king says of the killers of witches that they have made a good sacrifice for the country. They 'have done good to the country'; and the good always refers to rain.

Attention to levels also helps us to understand the ritual for twins. The ritual is too elaborate and lengthy to be gone into in detail here, but a few points may be noted. The birth of twins is an accident endangering the agricultural cycle. All work must stop in the fields, for twins bring drought. Such a birth is a white act, as is murder; and both are included in royal taboos. The purpose of the ritual is to 'blacken' this event. At the end of the ritual, the twins' parents are smeared with black soot at court, where the twins are reborn and immediately become collective ancestors for the chiefdom. At first they are kept outside the village with rubbish, where they are metaphorically killed and buried in a way that brings them back into the court. There is a homology here between the hierarchical structure of levels, and the ritual circulation from a dangerous white event to the ending of the danger and creation of a new positive influence through blackening that event. At the end of the ritual the twins' parents may work on anyone's fields, where they initiate the work and promise an abundant harvest. Twins are often invoked in prayers to the ancestors. It is as though they had to be born dangerously in order to be propitious.

It would appear that life and rain depend on hierarchically cyclical transformations of white twins into black ones, black witchcraft into black rain, and white deaths (those caused by the ancestors) into sorghum which, like twins, is thought to be born at the court as the 'child of the queen' and which germinates and grows in response to black rain. The levels revealed by the transformations of oppositions in the classificatory system, that is, by inversion and totalization, constitute the conceptual framework for ceremonial circulation and exchanges. The analysis of such a classificatory system, when carried out without the use of *a priori* notions such as the principle of non-contradiction, may provide a key to the particular ritual logic of a given society.

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DOMINIQUE CASAJUS

## WHY DO THE TUAREG VEIL THEIR FACES?

IN ORDER to illustrate the utility in anthropology of the concept of levels, I have deemed it appropriate to return to the origin of the notion in Dumont's work, rather than merely applying a schema. Dumont first uses the word in his discussion of the relation between status and power in Indian civilization (1966: 107). Whereas castes are ranked according to purity, *varna* are ordered by an entirely different principle. In the *varna* model, the Kshatriyas follow Brahmans and precede the Vaishyas, even though some customs of the warrior castes are less pure than those of the trader castes. The observer may perceive a contradiction in this situation. According to Dumont, this contradiction results from the fact that the main values may vary in their expression. If the value of purity always prevailed, the Kshatriyas would not be superior to Vaishyas. However, other, less eminent, values can counterbalance purity. A society may in certain contexts emphasise values which in other contexts it subordinates, a possibility which leads Dumont to speak of levels. A level, as he seems to use the term, is a set of contexts in which a given order of values is expressed, and the level is opposed to other sets of contexts expressing other values.

Dumont's interpretation of levels and values guides the present study of the Tuareg institution of the veiling of men.<sup>1</sup> The following analysis concerns

I am most grateful to Brenda Miller, who has translated the French version of this paper into English.

1. Murphy (1964) has proposed an interpretation of the Tuareg veiling, but this is not the place to discuss this analysis. I shall say only that it uses a very broad notion of 'social distance', which does not take into account the ethnographic specificity of the institution. In particular, it does not explain why the women do not veil themselves, even though they must, like men, keep some 'social distance'; nor does it explain the links between the veil and manhood, or between the veil and the *kāl asuf* (see below).

material collected in a group of northern Niger tribes, the Kel Ferwan.<sup>2</sup> Male veiling is of central importance to the Tuareg, who define themselves as 'those who wear the veil'. They attribute two contradictory origins to the custom. This paper aims to explain this contradiction. I will turn first to a description of veiling and its ritual context, where another 'contradiction' corresponds to that in the mythical origins of the veil.

### *The Rituals*

The rituals cannot be understood without referring to the conception the Tuareg have of the dead. The dead have a twofold nature. The Tuareg say that after their death, men and women become what they call *aljin* (from the Arabic *jinn*) or *kəl əsuf*. *Kəl əsuf* are malevolent spirits who roam deserted areas.<sup>3</sup> A dead man, as a *kəl əsuf*, always haunts the tent in which he died and received funeral rites. But one never says, 'The late so-and-so is a *kəl əsuf*'; one only says in a vague and general way, 'Dead people are *kəl əsuf*.' Only the anonymous dead are clearly *kəl əsuf*, or at least only they are viewed as such.

Genealogical memory does not extend very far, and the names of the dead are forgotten after one or two generations, whereupon they enter the mass of anonymous *kəl əsuf*. However, because of the pious memory the living have of them, some holy men escape that oblivion. Far from being considered *kəl əsuf*, they are presumed to be the means through which God displays his blessing, his *albaraka*. Any man who circles around the grave of such a holy man is likely to receive such a divine blessing. These holy men may, perhaps, take on the appearance of *kəl əsuf* and leave their graves nightly to haunt the tents of the living, but at least when one evokes their memory by piously circling round their graves, one does not regard them as *kəl əsuf*. During the years or months following their burial, the other dead are likely to display divine blessing to a lesser degree, but unlike holy men, their names are quickly forgotten and they lose this quality.

Thus one can conclude that oblivion turns the dead into malevolent spirits, while those whose names have not (or not as yet) been forgotten are on the contrary benevolent ancestors. It is not clear whether or not the latter sometimes appear as *kəl əsuf*. A statement such as 'so-and-so is a *kəl əsuf*' is meaningless. On the other hand, a new-born child is considered similar to the *kəl əsuf*, and even as being one of them. The name-giving ritual is intended to draw him from the

2. For a general description of the Kel Ferwan Tuareg, see Nicolaisen 1963.

3. The Tuareg *aljin* or *kəl əsuf* have some features in common with the Arabic *jinn*, as described by the Koran and classical authors (see for instance Al Mas'oudi 1962, vol. ii: 451). But they differ in that the Tuareg say that the *kəl əsuf* are the dead. I shall be using the plural form *kəl əsuf*, 'those of the *əsuf*' (the singular is *ag əsuf*, 'son of the *əsuf*'). *əsuf* means first the 'deserted areas' which the *kəl əsuf* are always roaming, and also 'loneliness' and, approximately, 'spleen'.

realm of the *kəl əsuf* he comes from, and to place him in society (see Casajus 1982).

Thus the human condition is viewed as a sort of circular journey, out of the world of the *kəl əsuf* and back into it again. The attribution of a name draws men from this world and its obliteration returns them to it. In this journey, men are never far from the *kəl əsuf* and always have to guard themselves against them (see Figure 1). Education chiefly consists of learning to deal with proximity to the *kəl əsuf*. An old man is supposed to have greater ability to deal with that proximity than a young man, and greater ability still than a child.

These brief remarks will enable us to account for some aspects of the wedding and name-giving rituals. The wedding ritual mainly focuses on the wedding tent, which will become the tent of the newly-married couple. This tent belongs to the wife, since tents are transmitted from mother to daughter, and a woman's tent and that of her mother are considered more or less identical, almost as being a single tent (for more details, see Casajus 1981). Women are sometimes called 'the tents', and a man can call his wife 'his tent'. When a young child enters puberty, he no longer consents to live in his mother's tent and has to build some precarious shelter in the bush. He will not live in a tent again until he marries, and then his status will not be the same as it was in his mother's tent; he will only be a guest and will always run the risk of being deprived of a tent should there be a divorce. Marriage can be considered as the moment when a man enters a tent belonging to a stranger. In fact, to marry, for a man, is 'to make a tent'. Marriage can also be considered as the passage of a woman from one camp to another, since the camp is a patrilocal unit, but we will see that it is the former point of view which prevails.

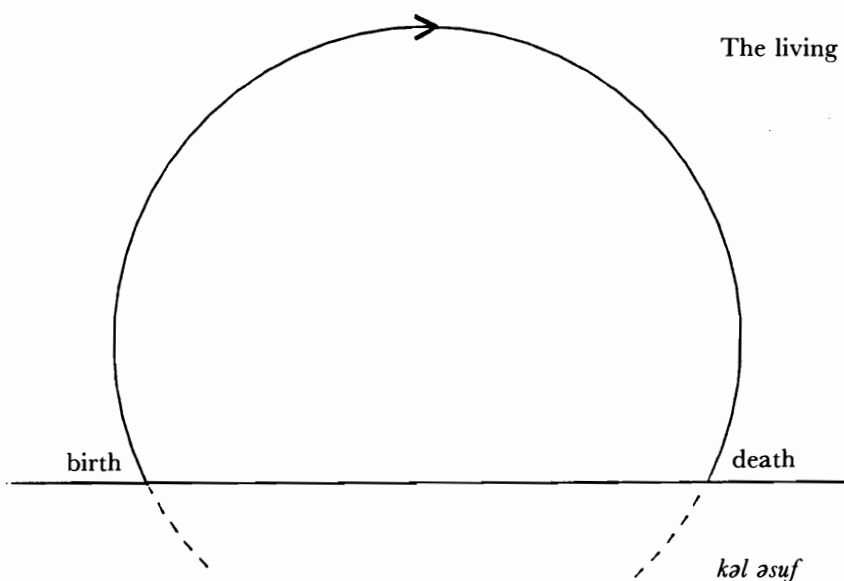


Figure 1



The north side of the tent is considered masculine. It is also the side by which the *kāl asuf* can attack. The south side of the tent is feminine, and is also the side where women give birth to their children. The wedding tent is not erected in the usual way, the entrances being not in the western and eastern sides, but in the northern and southern sides. The bride enters by the southern entrance and the bridegroom by the northern entrance. Informants compare the unusual orientation of the entrances of the wedding tent to orientation in the grave, where the dead lie in a south-north direction, and they compare other episodes of the wedding ritual to certain funeral rituals. These evocations of death illustrate that, when entering the wedding tent, the bride and bridegroom are entering the tent in which they will die and which they will haunt after their death.

This evocation does not have the same meaning for the bride as for the bridegroom. He enters a tent which for him is a new one, while the bride enters a tent which is identical to the one in which she was born. There is a transition for the former, but not for the latter. This seems to explain why the bride must enter the wedding tent by the southern side and the bridegroom by the northern side. The former enters the tent by the side where she was born, an indication that her status will remain the same as that she had formerly, in the tent of her birth. The bridegroom, also born on the 'feminine' side of the tent of his birth, enters the wedding tent by its 'masculine' side, illustrating that for the first time in his life he will be in a tent as a man. The northern side of the tent is also the side threatened by the *kāl asuf*, and in fact the bridegroom is entering the tent he will haunt. His wife will haunt it too, but in her case the marriage makes no difference—she is not *entering* it in the same sense, that is, for the first time.<sup>4</sup>

Men and women do not have the same status in the journey which leads them from the world of the *kāl asuf* and back to it. The closeness between a man and the *kāl asuf* is made apparent at least once in his life, at the very moment he enters the wedding tent; for a woman, this closeness remains more discreet.

In the journey which brings men back to the realm of the *kāl asuf*, every man is in a sense an intermediary between the *kāl asuf* and his son-in-law.

$$\begin{array}{l} B \Delta = \emptyset B' \\ A \Delta = \emptyset A' \end{array}$$

A and B will die in the same tent, or at least in two tents which are considered identical, the tent of B' and the tent of A'. B will die in and haunt a tent in which A will later die. In this sense, B shows A the path he will have to follow. This point is emphasised by some details in the wedding ritual.

I have stated that some dead men are the means through which God gives his blessing to the living. By their mediation, the living partake of a reality which has nothing to do with the confrontation between society and the *kāl asuf*. In the same way, although the bridegroom is considered similar to the *kāl asuf* in one

4. It is true that she is entering a new camp, but it is the tent that must be referred to because it is the tent, not the camp, that she will haunt (see Casajus 1983).

episode of the wedding ritual, in another episode he resembles the dead holy men. In the latter he lies still and silent in the wedding tent, whereas the bride circles around it. He is the means through which God gives his blessing to the wedding tent and renders it fertile. God is also supposed to intervene in the choice of the new-born's name: a Muslim cleric chooses the name, with the help of God. The very attribution of the name is supposed to draw the child from the realm of the *kāl əsuf*. Men, being so close to the *kāl əsuf*, cannot choose the name by themselves; only God, who is eternal, can do so, since he has no part in the confrontation between the living and the dead. In all three situations a reality which exists beyond this confrontation manifests itself and makes possible the journey I have spoken of. It allows children to be born, it allows the tent to be fertile, and it allows certain dead men to become benevolent towards the living. God allows life to spring from death, but only in so far as he is a remote and transcendent divinity.

### *The Veil*

The wearing of the veil is first of all considered to be a way of showing what the Tuareg call one's *takarakayt* (reserve) and *asshak* (dignity). *Takarakayt* mainly governs the relations between a man and his son-in-law or father-in-law and is associated with connotations of fear. *Asshak* is a closely similar, but wider notion, consisting principally of a parsimonious use of words. Tuareg are men of few words, and they express themselves only by hints and understatements. Informants sometimes say that a man veils his forehead by *takarakayt*, and his mouth by *asshak*. Furthermore, the veil is also a means of protecting oneself from the *kāl əsuf*; and finally, it is a sign of piety. Women too are expected to show reserve and dignity (though to a lesser degree perhaps) and to protect themselves from the *kāl əsuf*, and they are also supposed to show some piety. But they do not veil themselves in the strict fashion that men do, only hiding a part of their hair. Thus the Tuareg do not attribute the same value to the female veil as they do to the male, and indeed men are generally called 'the veils'. This brings us to ask what there is about a man that imposes upon him a greater display of *takarakayt* and *asshak*, as protection against the *kāl əsuf* and as a sign of piety.

Let me first point out that *takarakayt*, as I have already indicated, is linked with affinity. Every man must adopt the veil at about twenty years of age, when grown up and likely to marry, since only a man who is already veiled can marry. The moment when a man adopts the veil is marked by a seven-day period of claustration, as is the wedding itself. This and other evidence shows the link between the wearing of the veil and the status of husband or potential husband.

The mouth must be strictly veiled. In particular, a man is supposed to hide his mouth from his female cross-cousins because, it is said, it is not appropriate to show one's mouth to a potential wife. Here again, the veil is linked with the status of potential husband. But why such stress on hiding the mouth and what connection might this have with this status, and with manhood?

To understand this, we have to know that when a young man begins to have nocturnal emissions (the Tuareg say, when he 'begins to dream'), he must begin to think about wearing a veil. The word for sperm is *imendghas*, but frequently the terms *aman*, 'water', and *aman n elis*, 'man's water', are used. In some myths, water and sperm are likened to each other. The theme of women impregnated by water occurs frequently in Tuareg and Berber mythology (see Ibn Khaldoun 1978, vol. i: 205, 278). *Aman* can refer to several kinds of liquid, including saliva, though the specific word for saliva is *iladän*. This indication allows us to make an association between veiling the mouth and virility. Although the indication in itself is a weak one, it cannot be neglected because semen and saliva are comparable not only in that they are both kinds of 'water', but also in that both, as well as water itself, may conceal *käl asuf*, or at least be closely associated with them. In some myths telling of women being impregnated by water, it is the *käl asuf* that provide the impregnating power. Similarly, muttering appropriate words over the food and drink someone is about to consume serves to incite the *käl asuf* to act against him. In this context, the *Käl asuf* are not only associated with saliva, but with the spoken word as well, since speech is considered a vehicle for their action. It is now possible for us to understand that as well as symbolising a kind of refinement, moderation in speech, which is a sign of behaviour dominated by *asshak*, shows concern for not exposing one's fellow man to the evil of the *käl asuf*. Finally, the mythical hero Amerolqis illustrates a certain association between sperm, speech and the *käl asuf*. The Kel Ferwan are familiar with the name Amerolqis, although they are less familiar with his deeds than are other neighbouring tribes (see Aghali and Drouin 1979). Amerolqis is said to have invented poetry, and it is the poetic word more than any other which implies the action of the *käl asuf*. Amerolqis is also said to have had such powerful virility that his semen could flow over the ground or in the waters of rivers.

A man therefore wears a veil as though, once his sperm is ready to flow, any analogous flow of saliva or spoken words from him also has to be feared, all of which have in common the fact that they bring about the action of the *käl asuf*. It is not so much that a man's mouth has something to do with his virility, rather that the closeness of the *käl asuf* is apparent in both. We have already noted a man's closeness to the *käl asuf*; as he enters the wedding tent from the northern side, he is seen as being similar to them. A young man whose virility is awakened, and even more so a man who is of an age to consider marriage, are nearing the time when their closeness to the *käl asuf*—which for a woman remains discreet—will be apparent to all; it is this imminent closeness that must be veiled. Certainly, speech and saliva are dangerous elements in both men and women, but a woman is not obliged to keep her mouth veiled because as far as she is concerned the danger is not made more potent by the appearance of proximity to the *käl asuf*, as it is in the case of a man.

While women are the custodians of tents and are sometimes called 'those of the tent', men are called 'veils'. The veils men wear symbolise the fact that they do not have a tent of their own, that they are born on the southern side of one tent and will one day enter the northern side of another. They begin to wear a veil occasionally when they leave the first tent (their mother's tent), but adopt it

permanently when they are old enough to enter the second tent, which is generally that in which they will die.

The older a man becomes, the more he counts in society, and the less chance he has of being associated—as is a new-born child—with *kəl əsuf*. Only if he uses his speech and virility improperly is he as dangerous as they are. Words spoken with care, saliva that is not spat out (as in the magical practices mentioned above) and semen which is not allowed to flow carelessly, as Amerolqis is said to do, are in themselves not dangerous. They are present, however, ready to flow, and carry the weight of a latent danger from which one must protect one's fellow man. In the final analysis the veil a man wears is a means of saving him from anticipating his future destiny in a negative way.

This may appear to contradict the statement that the veil protects its wearer from dangers to which the *kəl əsuf* may subject him. Proximity to the *kəl əsuf* means both fearing them and being feared by others. As a symbol of a certain closeness between a man and the *kəl əsuf*, the veil is designed to protect him from them, and to spare others the dangers that may come from him. Perhaps we may suggest a systematic approach similar to the one the Tuareg themselves propose. The lower portion of the veil protects others by ensuring that a veiled man's words are not spoken carelessly, while the upper portion of the veil protects his hair from being within the reach of the *kəl əsuf*, since it is by the hair that the *kəl əsuf* often try to come in contact with men. This would appear to be in keeping with the fact that *asshak* (which compels a man to veil his mouth) involves speaking with reserve, and *takarakayt* (which compels a man to veil his forehead) is above all associated with connotations of fear.

It is understandable that a man must veil himself in the most strict fashion before his son-in-law or his father-in-law. My father-in-law, who will die before me in a tent close to the one in which I will die, stands between me and the *kəl əsuf*. In looking in his direction I am, as it were, looking in the direction of the *kəl əsuf*. With regard to his closeness to the *kəl əsuf*, I am protecting myself with the veil, and vice versa.

### *The Veil and Joking Relationships*

Although a man wears a veil in front of his son-in-law or his father-in-law, he may appear unveiled before his male cross-cousins. Cross-cousins have a joking relationship and one of the most common forms of joking is pulling off a cross-cousin's veil. This clearly contradicts the foregoing, and examination of it should therefore be situated in the context of the various forms of joking between cross-cousins.

A cross-cousin can also be pushed to the ground; his grave may be stepped on, and on the day of his funeral, his family may be asked to postpone the burial. Informants have made it clear that no one has ever dared to engage in the latter two types of 'joking'. However, they state that they are nonetheless acceptable,

and readily mention them to illustrate just how far joking among cross-cousins can go.<sup>5</sup> If the above reasoning is correct, that is, that being veiled means concealing the fact that my future destiny is to become one of the *kāl əsuf*, then becoming unveiled, which my cross-cousin can force upon me, must mean displaying that destiny. It is this consideration which appears to be the common denominator in joking behaviour among cross-cousins: to push a man to the ground is to put him in close contact with the *kāl əsuf*, since the ground is their domain. Similarly, the dead who appear as *kāl əsuf* are those who, instead of remaining in their grave where they can potentially diffuse their *albaraka*, come out among the living. Thus to postpone the burial of a cross-cousin is to make him resemble the dead who have left their grave, the *kāl əsuf*. To step on his grave—instead of piously walking around it as one does around the grave of the dead who dispense *albaraka*—is again to make him resemble the dead who do not dispense *albaraka*, again, that is, the *kāl əsuf*.

What is unveiled amid laughter among cross-cousins is veiled by fear in interactions between a son-in-law and a father-in-law. This can be understood by the fact that two cross-cousins are born respectively of a sister and her brother, the latter having to leave a tent close to her and enter another in order to take a wife (and who therefore appears similar to the *kāl əsuf*). They originate from a man who moves from one tent to another, and thus makes his closeness to the *kāl əsuf* apparent. The implication of their mutual joking seems to be: 'What good is there hiding our common closeness to the *kāl əsuf* from each other? We know how close we both are to them. Doesn't the very fact that a man makes the closeness apparent by changing tents during the course of his life explain the fact that we are cross-cousins?' Clearly a father-in-law knows as much about this as does his son-in-law, but he is not his equal in this matter. Cross-cousins joke among themselves like equals in the face of the *kāl əsuf*. It is because one is closer to the *kāl əsuf* than the other that the father-in-law and the son-in-law hide this closeness from each other.

### *The Muslim Veil*

We have seen that the veil recalls the closeness between men and the *kāl əsuf*, or rather, that men do not move toward the *kāl əsuf* in the same manner as women. Certain myths, admittedly collected in Ahaggar, Algeria, seem to confirm these analyses to a certain extent, since they all present variations on the following themes. Women were impregnated by the *kāl əsuf*, but the children they gave birth to were so ugly that they veiled their faces. These children were none other than the first Tuareg, and the Tuareg practice of veiling the face dates back to that time (Lesourd 1954: 33; Hama 1967: 125). We have stated that men also veil their faces as an expression of piety. When informants comment on this

5. Other types of joking exist, but because of their lesser importance we can neglect them here.

aspect of wearing a veil they speak about other traditions that differ greatly from those mentioned previously. According to these they veil their faces to imitate the Prophet Mohammed, or King Solomon (*ennebi Sulāyman*, the 'prophet' Solomon), whom they consider to be Mohammed's spiritual predecessor.

The fact that the veil can have two different and even contradictory putative origins is a mythical expression of a 'contradiction' which has already been revealed in this paper. When the bridegroom enters the wedding tent by the northern side, he resembles the *kāl asuf*. When he is lying inside the tent, he resembles those dead who are remembered for their great piety. Few men conduct their lives with the exemplary piety which spares them from being forgotten, the lot common to their fellow men. But when in the wedding tent all men are as much the instrument of God as the venerated dead, even though few will be counted among the pious after their death. The veil is a symbol both of the closeness between men and the *kāl asuf*, which becomes apparent when they enter the wedding tent, and of the dignity which, once lying in the tent, they share with the most pious of the dead. A man who is of an age to marry must veil that closeness and demonstrate that he will soon reach that dignity. The double nature of the status of husband which is comparable to the double nature of the veil is an expression of a more global situation. If the movement of men is possible from the realm of *kāl asuf* and then back to it—rituals bear witness to this—it is because society sometimes has access to a space that transcends that movement. The veil reminds men of the inexorable nature of that movement, and of the opportunity they are sometimes given to attain another reality.

The wearing of the veil therefore has two references. One must be considered superior, since it is only because men sometimes have access to a space transcending their ordinary condition that they can continue to live despite the malevolence of the *kāl asuf*. The human condition must deal with both references. We may speak here of levels, since the values, or at least the preoccupations involved in the two references, are different and even contradictory. In certain circumstances men must deal with their closeness to the *kāl asuf*. In other circumstances they must deal with God. The best illustration of this double requirement is the situation of the bridegroom who in one episode of the wedding is similar to a *kāl asuf* and in another episode becomes an instrument of God. References to the two levels are concentrated in the wearing of the veil, which explains its two contradictory putative origins. When the veil refers to proximity to the *kāl asuf*, it reveals an unworthy origin. When it refers to a space beyond the confrontation of men and *kāl asuf*, it shows a glorious origin. But even in this case, the inferior level is not forgotten. For the Tuareg, King Solomon is an exemplary Muslim, but in many Arabic legends, of which the Tuareg are also aware, he appears to be close to the *jinn* (Basset 1888). The importance of the notion of transcendence should therefore be stressed—in India too *dharma* occupies a transcendent position—and we should be sure that when we speak of 'levels' in any given situation, some form of transcendence is involved.

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DANIEL DE COPPET

## ...LAND OWNS PEOPLE

*In Honour of the Late Aliko Nono'ohimae Eerehau*

A TITLE of this sort, in the form of an 'Are'are statement, indicates that in contrast to the other contributors in this book I will limit myself to an allegedly dull *context*, that is, *land tenure*, through which ultimately the whole of this society is revealed.

First, a few points concerning method are in order. When dealing with societies very different from our own, our goal is to understand their ultimate values. This comprehension is indispensable if we wish to compare these societies among themselves and with our own. Comparison is only possible if we analyse the various ways in which societies order their ultimate values. In doing so, we attempt to understand each society as a *whole*, and not as an object dismantled by our own categories. In our view, the very topic of this book, 'contexts and levels', paves the way for a comparison not of social sub-systems but of societies in their own right.

In distinguishing our own individualistic society from holistic societies, Louis Dumont has insisted that the latter show more interest in relations between men, while the former emphasises the relations between individuals and things. In Melanesian ideology, men and things are fully *beings* at different stages of their transformations. Dumont's statement might be bluntly translated in the following manner by a Melanesian: 'We Melanesians are strictly bound to a chain of beings, while you Europeans run after the possession of beings, even though these are not always goods.'

A statement made about religion in 1982 by a young evangelical catechist from the Solomon Islands gives us some insight into Melanesian views concerning the upper end of the chain of beings: 'For white missionaries religion seems to be nothing more than a boring monologue which takes place in church every Sunday, while for us in Melanesia religion is a dialogue; God answers us through our own voices and we are able to act out this dialogue in the church or



wherever we may be.'

These two Melanesian assertions trace the boundaries within which this paper tries to shed some light: in what do the links between ancestors, humans and mere objects consist? Social relations would appear to be of a different kind when, for the sake of the continuation of the universe, humans are viewed as contributing to the parts being played by all 'beings', i.e. things, animals, humans and ancestral deities.

The observation of 'Are'are land tenure on the island of Malaita in the Solomons is an engrossing task to which I have devoted myself over many years. Recently, during the last week of 1982, the 'Are'are paramount chief Aliko Nono'ohimae Eerehau in his house at Maruitaro dictated to me an extensive text, comprising a list of forty-eight articles with an introduction, and explaining in detail the different rules of this Melanesian land tenure system.<sup>1</sup> Land tenure has always been a matter of great concern to the 'Are'are: they vigorously opposed all attempts made by the colonial power to modify their tenure system or to register their land, arguing that a European land code would certainly disregard their own and destroy 'Are'are society. Nowadays 'Are'are land tenure is something that the new generations, brought up in the schools, find very difficult to grasp, since they have been taught the European way. Eerehau's land tenure codification provides a comprehensive explanation of the 'Are'are system intended to contribute to the establishment of peaceful relations between the older and younger generations. The text has great anthropological interest as well, since it combines clarity with a kind of 'translation' understandable to Westerners as well as to the Westernized.

'Are'are society forms part of Melanesia; the people speak an Austronesian language and cultivate gardens using a slash-and-burn technique. Land is plentiful, although fallow periods last ten to fifteen years. Their principal set of rituals concerns funerals and must be performed on the death of every man or woman,<sup>2</sup> thereafter giving rise to an ancestor cult. Funeral feasts as well as all others consist of a very intricate circulation of prestations which can be understood simultaneously from three different points of view: 1) as mere reciprocity between the individual actors in the exchanges; 2) as two complementary ceremonial functions enacted by two groups of people

1. In 1943 Aliko Nono'ohimae Eerehau became the leader of the Maasina Ruru movement known as Marching Rule, which advocated full respect for Melanesians and fair treatment from the whites. For the rest of his life he was a great political figure, capable of predicting and shaping the future of the Solomon Islands. In 1982 he had just spent seven weeks in Europe comparing Melanesian and European societies, enjoying his discoveries and strengthening his ideas about the future of Melanesia. Sadly, he was found to be suffering from severe kidney failure and had to return home, fully aware of the fact that his life was almost over. His codification of the 'Are'are land system is the last text he offered me for publication. It should be recognized as his testament. He died seventeen months later, on 31 May 1984, after attending an important political gathering.

2. Except those of 'murder victims', on which see below.

performing together a complete ritual, such as marriage, funerals, the restoration of peace or the reaffirmation of a big man's renown; 3) and finally, from a point of view where no explicit exchange can be observed, except that between life and death. In the third case the three different elements pervading the universe and composing each living human being move along different complex, criss-crossing chains of transformation (for more details, see Coppet 1981; Barraud *et al.* 1984). These elements—'the body', 'the breath' and 'the image'—are ordered hierarchically. The 'image' encompasses the two others, not simply because it contains them, but because images are responsible for the separation of the three elements (which occurs at death) as well as for their reunification (that is, life) through marriage and conception. Shell money, in its circulation, is converted into each of the three elements but is also, in its own right, *the images of the dead*, that is, the might of the ancestors.

In the introduction to his text, Eerehau explains why 'land is not to be taken in vain':

First appeared the Word,<sup>3</sup> Fate (*sihoto'o*) and Good Fortune (*nanamaha*). From them people came into being. First arose the apical ancestors (*Rioanimae*), from them follow all the genealogies down to the present time. Apical ancestors stood up and ruled over all places (on the land); in the ground they were ancestor-snakes; in the rivers, ancestor-crocodiles; in the sea, ancestor-sharks; and on the mountain tops, ancestor-eagles.<sup>4</sup>

This recourse to the myth of origin shows how ancestral authority is fused with locality, not only on the surface of the land but also vertically, in the depths of the earth, in the rivers, in the sea and in the sky. In fact, locality cannot even be conceived of without the apical ancestors and their subsequent deeds at each of the places of origin. If earth (*mako*), rivers, sea and sky previously existed materially, land proper (*hanua*) came into being with the apical ancestors and was then extended to all funeral sites by their descendants, the entire 'Are'are people, down to the present.

Eerehau's introduction continues:

[...] The apical ancestors revealed the five sacred rituals of Prosperity, of Magic, of Killing, of Pig Breeding and of Taboo Lifting. From these fundamental rituals all works derived: praying (to the ancestors), healing, fighting, pig-raising, gardening, house-building, sea travel and the making of shell-money.

After the rise of the apical ancestors, Eerehau indicates, the main rituals were introduced and, closely linked to them, nearly all the various activities. Work decidedly does not depend on the individual's initiative, but on the performance of specific rituals which repeatedly associate the society with its ancestors. Daily

3. *Warato'o*, literally 'the word that hits and creates at the same time'.

4. All apical ancestors were humans, but only some of them later became one of these predatory animals. They were and still are supposed to govern locally and tame the wild species in question.

life appears as part of the greatest task: the performance of all rituals in the name of something higher.

The text goes on:

Three kinds of leadership ['big men'] were established among the people: Aaraha ni mane, Hahuaaraha and Namoaaraha.<sup>5</sup>

The apical ancestors issued ten commandments:

- Do not defile what is sacred.
- Do not kill without reason.
- Do not despoil one another.
- Do not harm one another.
- Obey the will of the apical ancestors.
- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not be obsessed by women.
- If you have had sexual relations, then marry.
- Do not slander another.
- Do not try to rise above others.

We thus see that the land tenure codification refers first to the apical ancestors, then to the principal rituals, thereafter to the 'big men', and finally to the code of conduct for individual action. Leadership is introduced after the principal rituals, clearly indicating that the 'big men', as well as ordinary people, must conform to the rituals.

The introduction ends with a brief statement preceding the first of the forty-eight articles:

We 'Are'are, we live through the Word. The Word spoke and created land and sea; it spoke again and created people. This is why land owns people and people take care of land. [...]

§1. 'Are'are people do not own the land. The land owns 'Are'are people. The Land owns men and women; they are there to take care of the land.

To the Westerner, even if he reads the text very carefully from the beginning, this assertion comes as a surprise. It is easier to accept the idea that ancestors control the living and extend their authority over the land than to acknowledge that the land itself 'owns people'. In this case people are strongly subordinated to the land, that is, to their ancestors who are buried there and to whom they are related. Land is not only part of the genealogical origin of each living person, land is also *intimately related* to each succeeding generation, to each male or female descendant, including those living today.

At death all descendants, from the *apical ancestor* down to the present, have become *intermediary ancestors* who intervene in everyday life to benefit or harm the living. They act in all rituals and 'works' (with one exception), inflict illness and, ultimately, death. Each intermediary ancestor is located within a funeral site. Each piece of land is related to his ('its') descendants, and the ancestor (the land) 'rules over' all activities which take place there.

Land is clearly not simply soil, but rather an entity always fused with the ancestors, under whose joint authority the living are placed. This is land

5. The first applies to the whole 'Are'are, the second is typical of southern 'Are'are, the third of northern 'Are'are.

considered as *hanua*, that is, 'land as a sacred being' invested with a definite power over all the deeds of both men and women.

We now understand why the living have to *look after* the land and take good care of it. This principle requires the constant observance of all duties regarding the ancestors and their funeral sites, the fulfilment of all the rituals taking place on a given piece of land, the efforts of men and women to embellish the land, particularly with beautiful gardens, houses and feasts, and finally the correct behaviour of all its inhabitants.

From the underlying precept which states that 'land is not a thing to be taken in vain' to the first article of the land-system code, Eerehau has forced us to cover a substantial distance:

1. 'the hitting and creating Word' caused the *apical ancestors* to appear at definite places on the land;
2. they established the principal rituals and entrusted responsibility for both land and people to the *intermediary ancestors*;
3. leadership was introduced among the people, with three different types of *big men*;
4. the apical ancestors also imposed a strict code of behaviour on *individuals*.

Since land exercises authority over people, Eerehau goes on to list thirty-six articles incorporating many details that specify how to deal with land and laying down all the fundamental rules thereon. The basic subordination of all individuals to higher values becomes obvious, especially for the 'big men', who must not only obey the ancestors, but also lead the main rituals.

Something should perhaps be said about the difference between the two kinds of ancestors, apical and intermediary. Apical ancestors are the origin of the society. No one gave birth to them; their afterbirth was not ritually dealt with (for they were not born), nor were they put to death by their ancestors (for they had none). They were not buried and were not given proper funerals, which would have had to include the many money prestations usually presented in honour of the 'image', as well as the transformation of their two other components, 'the body' and 'the breath', into money. Apical ancestors were not transformed into money circulating through the whole system of exchanges. Their corpses were simply left to rot on the ground like the bodies of those who have been murdered. In some cases, their putrified body fluids were metamorphosed into the ancestor-predatory animals already mentioned.

Intermediary ancestors on the contrary had a normal birth, and their afterbirth was buried. When they were put to death by one of their own ancestors, they were given proper burial and complete funerals. All three of their elements (body, breath and image) were properly transformed into money and therefore entered into the overall circulation between life and death which is the society's responsibility. Intermediary ancestors are located at their funeral sites

and at the same time, in the form of money, they are part of the total system of exchanges.

They participate as well in all the principal rituals—those concerned with prosperity, magic, gardening, pig-raising, house-building, travelling and the making of shell money, with the exception of the one involving the preparation and commission of a murder. This latter ritual is always performed with the assistance of the 'killer's' agnatic apical ancestor. On no other ritual occasion do apical ancestors participate.

Two different *levels of value* can be identified here: one where only an apical ancestor is invoked, that is, when killing is involved, and another in the case of the prosperity ritual, where reference is made only to intermediary ancestors.<sup>6</sup> When 'Are'are society is considered as a whole, the encompassing superiority appertains to the intermediary ancestors, who are responsible for all exchanges, for the circulation of money and for the successful circulation of the basic components of the universe and of individuals: the body, the breath and especially the image (see Barraud *et al.* 1984). All the principal rituals such as funerals and marriages are oriented towards this endless task, and not just ordinary individuals but even the most eminent, the 'big men', have to act accordingly. Only the 'killers' with their peculiar goals have to rely on the superiority of the apical ancestors, at a special value level where the intermediary ancestors are encompassed.

With regard to land, the intermediary ancestors have far greater importance than the apical ones. They intervene in numerous crucial activities such as gardening, pig-raising, travelling, house construction and the making of money. All these activities are dependent on the goodwill of ancestors located in nearby funeral sites. Land also plays an important role in the transformations of both 'the body' and 'the breath' of the dead. Without a good taro harvest 'the body' cannot achieve its transformation into money at the conclusion of funerals; 'the breath' relies on good pig-breeding in the forest in order to achieve its necessary conversion into money. These transformations are accomplished under the authority of the intermediary ancestors located in the land. Even the conversion of 'the image' of the deceased into money is strongly, though only indirectly, related to his land and to that of all the persons attending his funeral feast. These lands are the domain of the intermediary ancestors.

However, each piece of land is in addition always connected with an apical ancestor, who is at the origin of a genealogy including all his male and female descendants. The site of an apical ancestor is the only place where his male descendants may carry out the war and murder ritual if they want to go out on a killing expedition and be purified after the killing. The site is not only the place of origin of a long genealogy of people, but also of an extended series of different settlements spreading out from the initial spot, each of which has become a funeral site. It is the place where the male descendants keep up their fighting

6. The main rituals are ordered on two scales, which refer to the various ripening stages of both the coconut and the areca nut. These two scales show that the prosperity ritual *tauuahi* precedes and transcends the 'killer's' ritual.

strength and their right to fight. Apical ancestors are fixed at each place of origin, ready to help their male descendants in their killing activities. In invoking this help, the descendants must trace the agnatic line back to an apical ancestor. In all the other domains apical ancestors play no role whatsoever. Such a fact shows how limited in value is the *origin* compared with the everlasting exchanges which result in the cycle of life through death.

On the whole, as many myths indicate (see Coppet and Zemp 1978: 94–9), apical ancestors and intermediary ones belong to two different levels of value which, in the special context of 'big men', differentiate between the 'killers' and 'the masters of peace'.

Land proves to be a very special entity, created by the Word prior to the apical ancestors. It contains and materializes all the ancestors up to the present, and rules over the living and all their activities. This reversal of the European ownership relation is thus in strict conformity with the fundamental ideology of 'Are'are society.

### PEOPLE OWN LAND

But Eerehau now startles us with the code's thirty-seventh article:

The Land owns people, but people own land:

1. because *your Tree* is there!
2. because *your Afterbirth* is there!
3. because *your Funeral Site* is there!
4. because *your Apical Ancestor* is there!

That is why you own land, that is why you rule over land!

Here the basic precept has been completely reversed. Our surprise is increased by the fact that the order in which the four points of the demonstration are listed has also been inverted; the apical ancestor, for instance, now appears in fourth position. The complete change of style is also striking: Eerehau suddenly addresses *you*, the reader. It is clear that we now are led to consider land from the individual's point of view.

1. 'Because *your Tree* is there!' The linguistic formula here is particularly remarkable because normally the word 'tree' takes a quite different possessive adjectival mark. In the 'Are'are language, these marks belong to one of three series: 1) *ku, mu, na*, which apply to the majority of kinship terms, to the different parts of the person and especially to the three basic elements 'the body', 'the breath' and 'the image'; 2) *nau, 'oo, na*, which apply to four kinship terms (husband, wife, son and daughter), to ancestors, funeral sites, genealogies, feasts (funerals, marriages, etc.), food and various objects, some of which are dangerous such as flutes, body ornaments and money; and 3) *haku, hamu, hana*, which concern things on which persons may stand, sit or lie, like beds, seats and

canoes as well as land.<sup>7</sup>

When talking about a tree, one always uses the second series, since trees fall into the category of objects. 'Your tree' would thus be rendered by 'ai-'<sup>oo</sup>. But here Eerehau employs the expression 'ai-mu, utilizing a possessive mark from the first series. This is an ancient idiom, which proffers the greatest respect to the person addressed. It indicates that one's tree is intrinsically part of his person, in exactly the same way as his head or his 'image'.

'Your tree' means all your achievements, your beautiful gardens, your numerous pigs, the splendid feasts you have given, the assistance you have rendered to others, the great amount of money you have contributed for ritual and musical performances. Your success is seen as a superb tree rising high over your land and embellishing it.<sup>8</sup> Its roots extend deeply into the earth, its highest branches reach up into the sky: in its spreading vertical dimension, it resembles a living transposition of an apical ancestor's extension after death.

If this tree comes as a surprise, it is mainly because such an ordinary piece of property, distinct from its possessor, has been transformed here into a living part of him. No longer considered an object, it becomes consubstantial with the person as an essential extension of the self, bringing personal identity to completeness. This shift exemplifies the reversal, in favour of the person, of the possessive relation between land and people, and shows why individuals deserve such an unexpected superiority.

2. 'Because *your Afterbirth* is there!' In accordance with the 'Are'are birth ritual, the afterbirth must be buried by the mother (or by a woman who assists her in childbirth) in the forest near the small hut where she has just given birth. The word for 'afterbirth' here takes its usual possessive mark, from the first series, which is used principally for the different elements of the human body. The burial of your afterbirth is a clear indication that an important part of your self remains in the land, the part which, together with your person, has grown out of the combination of your father's semen with your mother's 'piece of blood' and thus recalls the fact that your birth involved both 'sides of (your) genealogy', paternal and maternal. In the tenure system, land is inherited both from the father and from the mother. Consequently each man or woman has rightful access to the land located around all funeral sites where one of his or her many ancestors has been buried. On its burial in the land, your afterbirth becomes proof of your multiple ancestral network of funeral sites extending on both

7. The word 'land' can take a possessive mark either from the third or the second series. With the third series mark, the only polite form, one cannot determine whether the person in question simply lives on the land or is also its owner. The second series mark, which is always used with a definite purpose, emphasises the true ancestral relation of the person to a specific piece of land.

8. Asked whether this ancient idiom 'ai-mu, 'your tree' had any relation to the commonly used word 'ai-mu, which simply means 'your arm' or 'your hand', Eerehau denied any possibility of confusion.

'sides'; the land itself bears witness to this. As 'your tree' extends your self vertically, 'your afterbirth' testifies to your relation to different pieces of land, extending your self horizontally to all the funeral sites of your intermediary ancestors.

Just as the vertical dimension of 'your tree' resembles the extension after death of an apical ancestor, the burial of 'your afterbirth' authenticates your genealogical relation to all these pieces of land and gives you a status resembling that of an intermediary ancestor related to many funeral sites.

Other evidence also helps us to understand the importance of your afterbirth's burial. Only women may bury afterbirths; only men may bury dead men or women who die non-violently. But while these dead must be buried in a special way which prevents their corpses being eaten by pigs, afterbirths are just superficially covered over with earth, without any protection against pigs. These two kinds of burial may be contrasted with the treatment given to the bodies of 'murdered' persons, which are always 'left to rot on the ground' or eaten. In addition to true murder victims, this latter category includes suicides, women who have died in childbirth, and dead fetuses. In fact, afterbirths are disposed of in a way similar to that of murdered people.

When the women bury the afterbirth, they seem to plant it like a taro, actually a dead taro which has lost its living stem (the new-born baby). Without its stem a taro is ready to be eaten, either by men after being cooked, or by pigs if raw. In fact, the way afterbirths are buried does not prevent pigs from digging them up and eating them. The afterbirth is treated like a taro, except that it is left to be dug out and eaten by pigs in the forest.

Again, when women bury the afterbirth they seem to be burying a non-'murdered' person, but as the afterbirth may also be called *poo-na wera*, which means literally 'the pig of the child',<sup>9</sup> it is as if they were burying a pig instead of a human. And we know that, in contrast with buried bodies protected against pigs, the burial of an afterbirth does not prevent pigs from eating it. In this respect, even though they are buried, afterbirths are left to the pigs like dead fetuses and all 'murdered' people who are left to rot on the ground. The afterbirth may be understood simultaneously as a kind of taro, cut off from its reproductive stem and left for the pigs to feed on in the forest, and as a dead 'pig', treated like a dead fetus or a victim's body and also left for the pigs to feed on in the forest.

Given its treatment as a taro and its denomination as 'the child's pig', the afterbirth may be considered as endowed with two of the three fundamental elements, that is, 'body' and above all 'breath', which are represented by the two sacred species taro and pig. Such a statement is in accord with the fact that murdered people have no chance of becoming an ancestral 'image', and that new-born babies have only a tiny and fragile 'image'. Afterbirths have no

9. The word for 'afterbirth' used in the text is *huhua-mu*, which takes a possessive mark from the first series, as it is a part of the body, as in the case of its synonym *poo-mu*, 'the umbilical cord and the placenta'. The word for 'pig', *poo*, takes a possessive mark from the second series. *Poo-na wera* is ambiguous, since it appertains to both the first and the second series and may suggest either the placenta or the pig.



'image' to recycle. As with the transformations that take place during the funerals of non-'murdered' people, which allow the deceased to be divided into the three elements ultimately transformed into money (that is, an 'image' or the intermediary ancestor himself), the burial of the afterbirth seems to accomplish a very important closing ritual which ensures success to the newly born child. It returns to the forest a taro-like 'body' and to the pigs a pig-like 'breath', which result from the childbirth process. Both have to rejoin and nourish the two distinct cycles in which respectively the 'body' and the 'breath' elements circulate. It should also be noted that while the dead are buried in such a way as to prevent pigs feeding on the corpses, only the burials of afterbirths and the bodies of murdered people left in the forest recycle the 'breath' element. Therefore, the burials of afterbirths are necessary stages along the chain of transformations which the 'breath' element follows before returning to the pigs.

If taros and pigs must first be eaten at funerals in order to achieve the transformation of the dead person into an intermediary ancestor, the birth of a child has to be followed by the burial of his afterbirth in the ground, where taro may grow and where pigs will certainly eat it. These facts indicate that nourishing the earth and feeding pigs with someone's afterbirth gives a 'body' element back to the taros and a 'breath' element back to the pigs. This process not only assures the child's vitality, but also guarantees the necessary return of the two fundamental elements to the sacred species, which makes them available for the human life cycle. If 'your afterbirth is there' in the land, it proves that, in return for your life, through the land, you have given back the share of 'body' and 'breath' which must rejoin the universal circulation. And that is also why you own land.

3. 'Because *your Funeral Site* is there!' With this third argument, Eerehau refers to the funeral site of an intermediary ancestor. For the first time in the text since the reversal of the precept, the presence of an ancestor's 'image' is directly invoked. Previously, only two extensions of the person into the land were explicitly referred to: his 'tree' and his afterbirth. Both concerned 'the body' and 'the breath' elements, although the 'image' element was also present somewhere in the background.

The funeral site itself is a clear indication that 'the image' is located 'there', in the land, and that you or your forebears have performed the complete funeral exchanges necessary to transform a dead relative into a full ancestor with all the appropriate qualities. At his funeral site you can talk to your ancestor and assure his participation in your daily life. Any man or woman is entitled to have definite rights over land, because 'the images' of his or her forefathers have been ritually dealt with and transformed into true ancestors. Since you participate in the unending series of funeral feasts which create your ancestors, you therefore own land.

That Eerehau speaks of 'your' funeral site, *te'ete'e 'oo*, implies the presence there of one of your many intermediary ancestors, whose identity is left

unspecified. But the expression 'your funeral site' also incorporates a startling ambiguity, for it could well indicate your own future funeral site!

Such an ambiguous statement should not be understood as a touch of humour, for it suddenly calls attention to the social fact of one's own death, treated as a necessary condition for life in general. To say that you own land 'because your funeral site is there' implies that your personal authority over land will never be stronger than when you approach the status of an intermediary ancestor. At this step of the demonstration, the individual's point of view becomes congruent with the holistic value level, where land has authority over people.

In this peculiar formulation, we recognize the generalized principle of 'hierarchy' which Louis Dumont has proposed in his effort to understand and compare societies: the encompassing of the contrary. Instead of simply acknowledging a paradox in the tenure system, which would seem to leave the society in a flatly contradictory situation, with no other issue than a dialectical *fuite en avant*, we find that the individual's point of view appears here as encompassed by the global value level, that of the society as a whole. The 'Are'are land tenure system thus reveals a typically holistic society.

4. 'Because *your Apical Ancestor* is there!' This statement follows the one concerning the intermediary ancestor, as if the two kinds of ancestors could not be isolated from one another. Since apical ancestors are at the origin of all their descendants—the intermediary ancestors as well as the living—they also authorize the possession of land by the people. But this last argument in support of the possession of land by individuals implicitly makes reference also to the right to kill, legitimated by an individual's relation with his agnatic apical ancestor. The demonstration of the right to own land thus concludes with a reference to the domain of killing and to the origin, which contrasts with the superior domain of exchanges by means of which the various cycles of the three fundamental elements are assured. The text thus fully sets forth the individual's point of view which is, however, restricted to an encompassed level of value.

Ereghau has come full circle. His final argument proving people's right to possess land brings us back to the apical ancestors and their primeval deeds, the very place where he began his demonstration that

#### LAND OWNS PEOPLE....

In our effort to understand this Melanesian land tenure system, we have not encountered simple paradox and contradiction, but rather the hierarchical formula: 'the encompassing of the contrary'. The superior level of value corresponds to the totality and stresses that land owns people, this principle encompassing people's right to own land.

We have found also that the twofold demonstration comes full circle in a rather peculiar fashion. The hierarchy of values is firmly established in one unceasing circular movement embracing what Westerners separate: life and death. The precept is not only reversed, but this reversal is made possible by the fact that, in the global life cycle of the society, the living recognize the supreme value of the ancestors and partake thereof.

Each of the two opposite sides of the demonstration also comes full circle. Starting with the apical ancestors, the first side leads us to the principal rituals, which were first performed by the intermediary ancestors, then to the big men, and finally to the code of conduct for individual action, which introduces the remarkable 'tree'. This 'tree' gives its possessor an appearance similar to an apical ancestor's vertical extension after death.

The second side begins with the 'tree', continues with the afterbirth, which refers to the return of the 'body' and 'breath' elements into the land, then with the funeral site, where the intermediary ancestor's 'image' is located, and concludes with the apical ancestor himself, which is a reference to the most individualised ritual, that of fighting. This brings us back to the origin, when apical ancestors arose and initiated 'Are'are land, which owns people....

Eerehau's text, which evidences the encompassing of the contrary while at the same time coming full circle in its twofold demonstration, exemplifies Melanesian discourse which verbalizes and makes comprehensible the crucial circular movements that unite the ancestors with the living, death with life, the society with the universe. Although circular, these movements have no levelling effect on the hierarchy of values, which remains the kernel of the society, and rules over the whole process.

We are reminded of Douglas R. Hofstadter's book, where he analyses the work of Gödel, Escher and Bach (1980). What Hofstadter describes as 'strange loops' may be recognized in Eerehau's text, where different and contrasted value levels seem tangled together, but at the same time remain hierarchically ordered. The fact that Eerehau himself dictated the text, which evidences a 'strange loop', does not, however, mean that he is at an 'invisible and inviolate level', like Escher drawing 'Drawing Hands', the famous lithograph (*ibid.*: 689–99). Eerehau on the contrary is an integral part of the 'cosmomorphic' system of his society, and as such of its land tenure and overall social systems.<sup>10</sup>

10. The word 'cosmomorphic' is further explained in Barraud *et al.* 1984: 514.

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ANDRÉ ITEANU

## LEVELS AND CONVERTIBILITY

LEVELS, in Dumont's sense of the term, are denoted—for the modern observer—by a contradiction or a 'logical scandal' (1979: 400). While this logical scandal is perceived as such only by the observer (who understands it through the filter of our modern ideology, which values only the individual and thus denies the existence of levels), it implies for the culture under study a specific type of social and ideological organization characterized by the separation of different levels. In such a social system, elements are not to be understood solely in their mutual opposition, but simultaneously with their relative position to a third element—a value. Each element carries indissolubly both an oppositional meaning and a valuation. Each element is then ontologically part of a level and does not conflict with elements pertaining to other levels, even if these are logically contradictory.

Thus levels are not abstract theoretical constructs invented by anthropologists. They are social facts as Durkheim defines them and they assert themselves out of the ethnographic observation of specific societies. Nonetheless, they have largely eluded anthropologists because they conflict with our traditional conception of social anthropology and our modern ideology.

In the study of exchanges, the bias appears clearly in transactional theories, which consider that exchanges are centred on individuals and thus that all the objects of exchange are convertible to a common standard of value. The theoretical implication, that objects of exchange are devoid of any transcendent value, is obviously false—at least in the Melanesian context, where it is necessary to recognise the reality of levels. The following case-study of the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea, while not aiming to reconstruct the whole configuration of

This paper owes a great deal in its English form as well as in the clarification of many ideas to Bette Clark, to whom I would therefore like to express my thanks. Further substantial help in the elaboration of this paper has been provided by my colleagues of the CNRS team ERASME.

values of the society, will demonstrate how, even in the restricted fields of ceremonial prestations, levels are a structural feature.

In a report published in 1969, Schwimmer relates the opinion of Sivepe villagers when confronted with the idea of equating all the goods constituting a brideprice with money:

Sivepe people expressed some horror at the thought that this should be referred to as a 200 dollar bride price; to them the gift of pig, bark cloth, food and traditional valuables were gifts of a special type that could not be equated with money. I asked one informant whether this was perhaps a modern trend? 'Not modern but silly,' he replied (Schwimmer 1969: 82).

In this passage, Schwimmer implies that recently introduced items cannot be assimilated to traditional ones. In my subsequent field studies, I discovered that the informants' answers had to be understood in a radically different way. Modern items can in fact be used simultaneously with traditional goods in brideprice and any other kind of prestation. However, whatever the nature of the goods, *in every ceremony there are different levels of prestations, and the goods offered at different levels can never be simply added up*. To illustrate this proposition, I will briefly describe the cycle of initiation ceremonies as I witnessed them and as they were later explained to me.<sup>1</sup>

This cycle, which has already been described by Williams (1930), is divided into three parts. In the first part, called Jape, the villagers offer their children to the spirits of the dead,<sup>2</sup> in order to invite them into the village. When the time for performing an initiation has been decided, the children are secluded away in allied villages or small houses built in the bush. Those who are initiated prepare the ceremony. For about a week, during the day, they roam the bush to obtain sufficient game from their ancestors. At night, their preparations consist of welcoming all the groups from the other villages who are willing to take part in the ceremony. Together, they chant special ritual songs in order to welcome the spirits, and they practise all the secret musical instruments: *sepiripa*, the long

1. All Orokaiva rituals include offerings of different foods (pig, taro, banana, yam, sugar-cane); some include shell jewels and feathers. Nevertheless, I will here confine myself to describing offerings of pigs, since they are the most important ones. Wild pigs are identified with the spirits of the dead: both wander in the bush, neither having dwellings nor names. The spirit is an image, *ahihi*; the pig when domesticated becomes a body, *hamo*. Somehow the wild pig is like the external body of the spirit.

When piglets are captured by men for domestication, they are treated exactly like children, carried in a string bag, breast-fed, given a name and a location in the village under the house of their 'mother' and 'father' (their owner). Domesticated pigs are thus equated with children.

2. For the Orokaiva, the spirits of the dead, ancestors, and primeval characters are one and the same thing. They are all dead people, *ahihi* (also, 'image without a body'). They interact with the living in different ways, according to the occasion. In initiation they are collectively Jape, but they are further distinguished by different names, and each acts in a different way. When they attack the people in the bush, they are *onderi* and then take on any kind of appearance. In myth they are always characterized by their dual nature—of wild animals (most often wild pig) and men.

flutes, *umbuvupa*, the bullroarer and *kornipamoni*, the shell of a nut called *puga*. Women as well as men take part in these preparations, all the participants assembling the specific paraphernalia that they will use during the ceremony. Each group of men is identified by the name of the ancestral character it represents, while all the women are collectively called *sivoropoka*, a character terrifying to all men. All the non-initiated keep away from the hunt as well as the night-time preparations because everything concerned with Jape is secret; should a non-initiated person hear or see anything of it he would be afflicted with physical deformities such as baldness, prominent testicles or distorted joints. The produce of the hunt is hidden away in a small hut built specifically for this purpose in the bush, not very far from the edges of the village.

When everything is ready, the children are gathered at night close to the village. They are each armed with a stick, and are warned 'You will see the spirit Jape and you will hear him'. They are told that Jape will attack them, and that they will have to defend themselves with the sticks. He might kill them, but if they behave as instructed, nothing will happen to them. They must neither laugh, nor eat anything, even if offered to them; otherwise, they will be killed immediately with a spear. If seized by the spirit, they should call out the name of their ancestor and they will be released. Then the children are brought into the village where they form a line. Strange noises can be heard in the darkness and, suddenly, a huge row of Jape spirits that they cannot yet see rushes at them and the ground trembles. The spirits' attacks go on through the night and into the morning. However, the spirits do not content themselves merely with attacking the children, but destroy all the symbols of social life. They burn or damage the houses, steal fruit from the palm trees that mark the limits of the village, and pull the trees down to the ground by attaching ropes to their tops. They kill the domestic pigs, provoke brothers to fight each other, induce adultery and, finally, they damage the bodies of all the participants.

There are two ways in which the children can escape maltreatment, depending on the type of ritual that their fathers have organised. If a platform has been built for them, they will try to climb on top of it, where they will be out of reach of the spirits. Alternatively, if each father has tied down the domesticated pig that he will later present at the time of his child's decoration, the initiate can step onto the body of the immobilised pig and stay there safely. 'When the spirits see that such a big pig will soon be offered for the child, they are satisfied and will not treat him roughly.'

Nonetheless, the spirits will not stop their destruction of the village until they are presented with a prestation called *ji be torari*, 'the wild fruit' (literally 'the fruit that has been collected from the trees'). This prestation is brought from the bush by some of the villagers and consists of the produce obtained by all the participants in the hunt,<sup>3</sup> plus a large quantity of wild fruit and vegetables. This prestation to the spirits, *ji be torari*, has some special features. First, it remains

3. When hunting for this ceremony, people gather any kind of wild game (*o*). Each type of animal can be specified by a name prefixed by *o*: *o aisi* (bandicoot), *o gumba* (cuscus), *o ohu* (pig). The meat of all these animals is called *o*. Pigs are different from other animals only in that they alone are the ones to be domesticated.

secret until the last moment, which clearly distinguishes it from all other prestations, invariably made in the open with as many witnesses as possible. Secondly, it bears the name *ji be torari*, which implies that it is composed of wild fruits of the forest, the domain of all non-human beings. Thirdly, it will never be returned (*mine iraera*), unlike all other ceremonial prestations. When this prestation has been made, all the visitors return home and the village will be left *siosa*, as the villagers call it, meaning 'upside down' or 'meaningless'.

In the afternoon of the same day the second part of the initiation ceremonies begins. First, the children are taken away and secluded in special houses built for them on the edge of the village. Their pigs (the pigs that will be killed for them later) are kept under the same houses. For a period of three to seven years the initiates are not allowed to go out of the house, have sexual intercourse, speak loudly, or wash. The spirit Jape watches over them: should they break any of these rules, they are immediately killed. The spirit also induces the children to grow by feeding them abundantly, by smoking them through burning magical plants under the house, and by anointing their bodies with coconut oil. The spirit is usually embodied by men and women related to the children's parents through a brother-sister link, for the children cannot be seen by their mother or father during this period. If everything goes well, their bodies will grow big and handsome, and their parents will be surprised and proud when they eventually see them. If, on the other hand, the children are killed and buried secretly in the bush, their parents will say that the spirits have taken them away; they cannot complain because, in the beginning, they offered their children to the spirits.

When the Jape ceremony is finished, the village also needs help because everything has been destroyed. Not only houses, trees, animals, and all the other material manifestations of the village but also social relationships are in an alarming state. No one is permitted to leave the village, have sexual relations, cook food, climb trees, wash or comb hair, or cut trees or grass. All social and personal activities cease. Gradually, one by one, all the prohibitions will be lifted for the villagers, and life will resume its normal, more active course. Just as the trees which have been attacked by the spirits 'will bear more and bigger fruit', so the village will intensify its efforts to produce all the garden vegetables (particularly taro) which are needed for the next part of the ceremony. This effort will be two-fold, because not only will people have to plant extended or extra gardens in order to ensure an abundant harvest, but they will also have to solve all the social and personal problems that have developed over the previous few years, that is, during the first part of the ceremony. Should any problem be left unresolved, the harvest would immediately be threatened by sorcery or by the ill will of the spirits of the dead.

After a few years—perhaps from three to seven—when the harvest is ready for the next stage of the ceremony, the children come to be called *eha mei*, 'new children', with new and strong bodies. The village itself is a new village, restored from the state of disarray in which the spirits had left it, with a new crop of garden food and new (or at least renewed) relations between the villagers. This new village will now engage in a huge *pondo* or ceremonial feast.



When they have plenty of crops, the men of the village build a large ceremonial platform called *o oho* in the centre of the village. Each one of its stilts represents one of the pigs that will be killed. The father of every initiate chooses one man to decorate his child from head to toe. A few weeks later, when these men have the decorative paraphernalia ready, the villagers collect their vegetables from the gardens and bring them ceremonially to the village, installing them on the platform. When everything is ready, the women of the village take the children down to the river before daybreak, for their first wash in several years. Then, not far from the village, they clear a small area in the bush where the children will be decorated. Late in the afternoon all the children, now adorned, are gathered and brought into the centre of the village, together with groups of dancers, who have been assembled and prepared by those responsible for the decoration in order to enhance the beauty of the children. When the parents see their children grown and decorated, they are amazed at how big and beautiful they have become. The ritual transformation is now over for the children. They climb onto the platform, where they can be seen by all the other participants. The parents then secure the pigs (which they are about to offer for the transformation of their children) with strips of bark-cloth, and lay them down at the foot of the platform. Then, rushing up and down, they bring all the vegetables down to the ground, where they arrange them in piles. The pigs are carried up to the platform, where they are slaughtered with spears and cut up. The pieces are brought down and placed on top of the piles of vegetables. Each pile is publicly allocated to those people who have helped to 'form the child's body', the largest pile generally going to the person who did the decoration.

The people who have received food immediately return to their villages, where they in turn redistribute it to all those who had helped them gather the decorative paraphernalia, and to their kin, co-villagers and friends. At the end of the night, the man who initially received the offering will probably be left with nothing but a little taro and a tiny piece of pigfat. Back in the village where the ceremony took place, the father of the initiate keeps the decorations that adorned his child. In order to recover these objects, the decorator will have to give the child's father the exact amount of food that he himself was given, and as soon as possible. This return prestation, being exactly equal to the first one, is called *pondo mine* (return *pondo*). The decorator therefore gathers food from the people to whom he has previously given part of the *pondo* he had received, and he complements this with all the vegetables from his garden and some domesticated pigs. After receiving *pondo mine*, the father distributes it in *hande* prestations to the people who have helped him prepare the initiation ceremony, and to those who have contributed some food to the initial *pondo*. Like the decorator, he is left with nothing by the end of the night. Except for the decorator, who will have to return the feathers and the shell jewels to the people from whom he borrowed them, the initiation is now finished.

In order to simplify, I have described each prestation as being composed of only two stages: the first, when the food is given to the people on the platform, this prestation being called *pondo* (or *pondo mine* when it is returned); and the second, when this first prestation is shared in the receiver's village. Each of these

prestations is called *hande*. Actually, everyone who receives something in the second phase shares it again amongst his friends and kin, etc. These *hande* prestations continue throughout the night that follows the ceremony. Each household cooks part of the food and passes the rest on to other people; each house shares dinner that night with guests from other houses or visiting young people. This carries on until all the food is finished (*indari irae*). Eventually, some people will succeed in abstracting some meat from their guests. This meat can be put away and preserved for further use by smoking, but this is very rarely done.

These two types of prestation, *pondo* and *hande*, have distinct characteristics. *Pondo* is given for a reason (*amila be*, or ceremonial action involving transformation of the body) that must be publicized before the food is given away. It is said to be given 'for the body' (*hamo*) of the person who receives it, and requires freshly killed domestic pigs. Furthermore, during initiation—which is the most important ritual occasion—the pigs are slaughtered and cut up on top of the platform. It requires a very prompt return gift (*mine*), exactly equivalent to the first one, and involves villages or groups of people—not individuals—as givers and receivers. The people who are particularly active in *pondo* are called *pondo embo*, who are supposed to consume all their food during this activity. On the other hand, *hande* is given for no specific reason other than the desire to give, which comes from the 'inside of man' (*jo*); it is thus given for the *jo*, and not the body of man. It never involves freshly-killed domesticated pig not given previously in a *pondo*, but is often made with wild game. It involves relations between individual persons, and there is no obligatory return (*mine iraera*). Those who like giving in this way are called *hande embo*, but they are under no obligation to give all their food away in this manner.

I will now try to identify the contexts of these offerings. As I have shown elsewhere (1983a), the whole of the ritual can be understood in the following way.

The villagers ask the spirits to enter the village. In so doing, they expose themselves as a human society to total destruction, because they negate the fundamental separation between men and spirits and between village and bush. When everything that is human has been destroyed by the ceremony of Jape, the spirits are given 'wild foods' (in the offering of *ji be torari*) to make them desist. Nevertheless, the children that have been exposed to the wrath of the spirits are now under their power in the ceremonial *oro* house. Gradually, the village recomposes itself by performing all the necessary rituals around this house. When everything is ready, the village exchanges domestic pigs with other villages,<sup>4</sup> and the children, by now grown up, are freed from their captivity. The

4. Most often, the decorator of a child belongs to a different village from that of the parents. He is generally the mother's brother of either the child or the father, and affines usually live in different villages. In those cases, although prestations are given in the name of individual persons, they have the significance of inter-village exchanges (see Iteanu 1983a and 1983b). Nevertheless, the father

whole process ends when the children stand in full decorative costume on the platform for the slaughter of the pigs, where they are finally differentiated from them. The pigs' bodies will be cut into pieces but the children's bodies remain whole, at least for the time being, though they may later be killed in warfare, and themselves cut into pieces and eaten. Thus it is through initiation ceremonies that the subject and object of exchange are differentiated. Pig and man will not be identified again, and then only individually, until the man's death, when his buried body is transformed into that of a pig or some other wild animal that returns to the forest. While initiation differentiates the children from the pigs collectively, death nullifies this difference for one person only. For an individual subject, the period of time between initiation and death is his (or her) span of life as a subject. For the society as a whole, for as long as the initiation ceremony is regularly repeated, the difference between the subject and the object of exchange is perpetuated—men have pigs to kill in *pondo* and meat to share in *hande* prestations.

Three hierarchically ordered contexts of exchange (which do not coincide with the tripartite division of the initiation) can be distinguished within the initiation ceremony. A closer look at the nature of the prestations themselves will make this point more evident.

In the first instance men are interacting with spirits. Their contact allows them to separate the pigs from the children and, by so doing, to transform the pigs into objects of exchange. In the second instance the pig as a whole is slaughtered and cut up on the platform; and in the third instance the pieces of pig are distributed and then eaten. Initially, the child is not distinguished from the pigs, and the two form a unity which is clearly demonstrated when the child, in the first part of the initiation ceremony, steps onto the body of the pig that will later be killed for him. When alone, he is attacked by the spirits, but he and the pig combined constitute a totality very much like the spirits acting in the myth, where man and pig cannot be distinguished. Because child and pig together resemble the spirits, the spirits leave the child alone. Thus the pig is to be understood as a part of this pig-child totality, which is split in two in the initiation rite. In the subsequent instance the live pig itself is a totality; after being cut up, the pieces of pig are parts of a whole of higher rank, the pig as a whole.

I have demonstrated that these so-called 'contexts' of offering are *hierarchically ordered levels* by illustrating that the objects circulating at each level are always parts of a whole that circulates at a higher level. An object circulating at a higher level is ceremonially divided, and then circulated on a lower level, and so on. In

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might sometimes choose a co-villager as decorator. In those cases the return of the *pondo* prestation must take place at once. This rule, stated by the informants, underlines the double characteristic of the *pondo* prestation: 1) there can be no unilateral *pondo*—not even for a moment—within the village; 2) the very idea of *pondo* being negated, by the fact that it occurs between partners of the same village, means that the requirement of a quick return, which characterizes *pondo* prestations, must be strengthened. Altogether, whatever the choices of the fathers, globally the initiation *pondo* always involves several villages, and is conceived as such.

contrast, an object that has circulated at a lower level can never be recirculated at a higher level. Thus higher levels of exchange encompass lower levels.

With this understanding of levels of exchange and the uni-directional circulation of objects across them in Orokaiva ritual, it now becomes clear why—in the passage I quoted earlier—the Orokaiva find ‘silly’ the idea of summing up all the prestations involved in a brideprice. For them, prestations at different levels are different ‘things’ and cannot be added up.

To investigate further the nature of levels I will turn to the two other major Orokaiva ceremonies: marriage and funerals. When a girl marries she is secretly taken away during the night by the groom to his own village. In the morning, when the girl’s parents see that their daughter has disappeared, they will call on all their relatives to help search for her. An armed party is formed, which travels to the village of the groom. Upon arriving, the girl’s kinsmen insult and shame the groom’s family, and even destroy their village, thus behaving exactly like spirits towards their future affines. They will not desist until their request for prestations, called *o sobu* (‘the pig for having walked in the morning dew’), are satisfied. These prestations are retained by the recipients, and indeed will never be returned. Only when they are satisfied do they start discussing the brideprice, which always includes a domesticated pig. It is said to be the ‘body’ or the ‘grease of the bride’, and thus the parents of the girl will not eat any of it. When they have obtained a satisfactory brideprice (*dorobu*) the party returns with it to the girl’s village, where the father redistributes most of it, always including all of the pig, since he and his family can eat none of it.

Here again we have three levels of prestations. At the first level, by acting like spirits the bride’s party achieves a transformation opposite to that of the initiation, in confusing the girl with the pig in the brideprice. They leave the girl, but take the pig to give to the father of the bride as if it were his daughter. Because they have agreed on this occasion to deny the difference between the girl and the pig, they are given *o sobu* prestations. At a second level the father receives a pig and taro from his in-laws in a *pondo*-like way. At a third level he redistributes it in a large *hande* to his friends, kin and co-villagers.

One finds the same three levels of offerings in the funeral ceremony. To be brief, I will describe the case of a husband who dies before his wife.

When a man does not move any more (*wasiri irae*), he is declared dead (*pehari*). While one man blows a conch-shell to call the mourners from other villages, the co-villagers of the dead man surround him and begin to mourn. This involves acting like pigs and singing a special mourning song which recalls the deeds of the deceased. Gradually, mourners from the surrounding villages join the party, imitating the behaviour of pigs. The crying continues all night, and in the morning the body is buried, soon to change into wild animals. The mourners eat nothing during the night, but in the morning some of the people from the deceased person’s village gather food that belonged to the deceased to share among the mourners. This prestation is called *si ta indari*, the ‘food for the tears’.

The mourners eat and then they leave the village, carrying away the food which has been left over. The widow then goes into seclusion in the house in which the deceased has been buried. She will not wash, nor have sexual relations, etc., but she sews a mourning jacket (*baja*) that represents the image (*ahihi*) of her dead husband. During her seclusion she is fed by the relatives of the dead man. When it is time for her to cease mourning and come out of seclusion her brother organizes a ceremony. He gives a pig and taro to the relatives of the dead man. The widow comes down from the house, takes off the mourning jacket, and puts it over the body of the pig. She is then free to leave and remarry if she wishes, and the relatives of the deceased distribute the pig and taro in a large *hande*.

Here also the first prestation is given for a change that has taken place to the body. This is the reverse of the transformation that takes place during initiation, where pig is separated from man: the mourners merge pig and man by performing the ritual which transforms the man's body into a pig. For this they are given *si ta indari*, a prestation that will never be returned. Again, this level of prestation involves a relation between spirits and men. The spirits have caused the man to die, and the mourners themselves act like spirits, adopting behaviour that is at once human and pig-like. The prestation of a pig by the widow's brother, while marking the end of the transformation of the dead, is also seen as a return for the brideprice. The deceased had given a pig to his in-laws at the time of marriage. These in-laws now have to bring a pig in order to get back their sister, a prestation which will not be reciprocated. Finally, the *hande* is very much like all the other *hande* that I have mentioned.

Figure 1 sums up all the prestations I have described. All the first-level prestations involve relations with spirits (even in the case of marriage, where the spirits are not 'true spirits' but affines acting like spirits). They acknowledge a change in the relative position of human and pig: in initiation, children are

	Initiation	Marriage	Funeral
1st level	Jape—Children given to spirits and separate from pigs. <i>ʔi be torari</i>	Affine acting like spirits. Girl given for a pig. <i>O sobu</i>	Deceased given to spirits and transformed into pig. <i>Si ta indari</i>
2nd level	<i>Pondo</i> → ← <i>Mine pondo</i>	<i>Dorobu</i> →	<i>Pondo</i> ←
3rd level	<i>Hande</i>	<i>Hande</i>	<i>Hande</i>

Figure 1

separated from pigs; in marriage, a woman is confused with a pig; in the funeral, humans and wild animals are merged. At the second level, the *pondo* of the initiation ceremony is equal in its structure and its components to the sum of the *dorobu* of the marriage and of the *pondo* of the funeral, the return prestation of the initiation being, at least in principle, less delayed than in the second case. At the third level, all the *hande* prestations are equivalent.

The hierarchy of levels of exchange that I have shown in these three rituals, if not sufficient to give us a total picture of the structure of Orokaiva society, nonetheless allows us to re-evaluate the notion of reciprocity which has often been considered as the paramount structural value in Melanesian societies. Among the Orokaiva, in fact, reciprocity, and especially immediate reciprocity, is required only for *pondo*, a subordinate level of exchange. What, then, is the value of reciprocity here?

The Orokaiva explain all their ceremonies as being a repetition of the activities of their ancestors. The rituals (*o ohu ta wasiri*, 'pig's behaviours') have been handed down by the ancestors and they are repeated because they are the only way to keep in touch with them. Orokaiva society is not structured by principles of descent: genealogy is replaced by ritual in its function of linking ancestors with the living (Iteanu 1983b). While men never modify any part of the ceremonies, they act in rituals through their food prestations. It is man's specific and original attribute to give food in ritual, choosing the amount, the quality and the presentation. At the higher level, that of relations with the spirits, perfect repetition of the rituals is valued. At the lower level of *pondo* (relations between villages, in which men exchange pigs), the value of repetition appears in the *mine*—one prestation being the exact repetition of the other—and the return gift must be made as soon as possible. This confirms the superiority of initiation over marriage and funerals: the first implies more or less immediate return, while the other two entail a delayed return. This superiority is congruent with the fact that, while in initiation 'true spirits' are present, in marriage and at funerals there are only men acting as spirits. At the lowest level, repetition ceases to be important, and *hande* depends only on the will (*jo*) of individual subjects, to which the value of repetition becomes subordinated. Reciprocity is thus for the Orokaiva a subordinated value which reasserts at a lower level the primacy of a superior value, namely repetition of the ritual cycle.

Finally, a few conclusions on the topic of levels. For the anthropologist levels at first sight appear as a 'logical contradiction'. However, this does not give rise to any conflict or intellectual discomfort in the society studied. On the contrary, this 'contradiction' seems to be, for the people, the most obvious, or at least the wisest thing in the world. This is so because, in the indigenous view of that society, each fact is perceived in its relation to the society as a whole—a

conception which implies the existence, in that society, of a paramount value and a hierarchy, and, within the hierarchy, of levels. For the people, then, things are not contradictory because, belonging to different levels, they are not comparable one to another: they are hierarchically ordered and, in relation to the whole, bear different values.

In societies structured by exchange, kinship theories, alliance theories, economic theories and even transactional theories have failed to explain the fundamental unity of the cycle of exchange, because they have ignored the value that is to be found both in the objects and in the actors of exchange.

In the Orokaiva case, for instance, analysing each exchange as a discrete event would never explain why, in the initiation *pondo*, one has to reciprocate the food prestation, while in the mourning ritual, in fairly similar circumstances, no return prestation is required. On the other hand, considering all the Orokaiva exchanges to be governed by a similar objective standard of value leads to a similar, if opposite, mistake. In such a system of exchange an anthropologist should not call, for instance, a pig a pig without stating at once its relative position within the global cycle of exchange or, to put it in Dumont's terms, without specifying the level in which it stands in relation to the configuration of values.

For the anthropologist levels become apparent when changes of level occur in the performance of any social activity. These changes of level can take different forms in different societies, and even within the same society. One well-known form of this is reversal (see Tcherkézoff 1983). In the Orokaiva case the changes of level take the form of ritual partition of the object of exchange, which restricts convertibility. Since levels are hierarchically ordered, objects of exchange can only circulate towards less-valued levels—partition compels them to circulate in only one direction.

The recognition of levels allows us not only to understand the global structure of the exchange cycle, but also to reconsider notions like reciprocity, whose only claim to superior value is its supposed universality (see Schieffelin 1980). Reciprocity is attributed a subordinated value by the Orokaiva, and this certainly applies also to many other Melanesian societies. Thus a recognition of the very existence of levels within the exchange cycle, in societies where exchange forms the core of the social structure, gives us the best chance of achieving a true comparative theory of exchange, since it helps us to perceive the culturally specific hierarchy of values.

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GREGORY FORTH

## RIGHT AND LEFT AS A HIERARCHICAL OPPOSITION: REFLECTIONS ON EASTERN SUMBANES HAIRSTYLES

RECENT remarks by Professor Dumont on the subject of hierarchical opposition (1979; 1980) have in large part been directed against English-language writings on the topic of dual symbolic classification and the related notion of complementary opposition. In this regard Dumont has focussed in particular on the analysis of the opposition of right and left—deriving ultimately from Hertz—as carried out by Rodney Needham and others (see especially Needham, ed., 1973). Dumont's main criticism of this latter body of work is that it involves a separation of fact and value by assuming an *a priori* equality of the two sides upon which an ideological asymmetry is then imposed (1979: 810), so that the right-left contrast is then treated as a 'distinctive opposition' or 'a simple "polarity" or "complementarity"'. Against this view, Dumont argues that the hierarchical aspect of right and left is inherent in the distinction itself, since it is definable only by reference to a 'whole', namely the human body, and that the two sides are not related in the same way to this whole.

My objective here is to analyse certain usages and ideas of the Rindi people of eastern Sumba which relate to the contrast of right and left in the light of Dumont's framework of hierarchical opposition. In so doing, I hope to show that this notion can indeed illuminate and add to our understanding of the operation of lateral symbolism in this ethnographic setting. More particularly, I shall be concerned with a problem in Rindi symbolic classification arising from the way men and women are said to arrange their hair, which seems to involve a contradiction between stated rules and what appears to be done in practice.

Before outlining the evidence pertaining to this matter, however, I would point out that my use of Dumont's ideas does not mean that I accept his position

regarding hierarchical opposition in its entirety. Especially problematic is his claim that with hierarchical opposition—which he of course defines as a relation between a whole and a part, or encompassing and encompassed—the part is at one level ‘identical to’ (or, elsewhere, ‘consubstantial’ with) the whole (1979: 809; 1980: 240). It is difficult to see how this statement could ever be true, unless it is taken to refer to something like metonymy or synecdoche (using these terms in an extended sense, to include relations beyond figures of speech), where some part or element stands for, takes the place of, or represents a whole.<sup>1</sup> This seems to me an important point, for it suggests that hierarchy, as Dumont defines it, refers broadly speaking to a symbolic, rather than a strictly logical, relation; and this is certainly so with the instances of hierarchical opposition involving right and left described below, which as I shall show are a function of a particular system of symbolic classification.<sup>2</sup>

# I

The significance of right and left in eastern Sumbanese culture is discussed in various places in my monograph on Rindi (Forth 1981). In general, the right is connected with masculinity and with life, and the left with femininity and death. The two lateral terms are further employed to define two opposed rules of order expressed respectively as *palua kawanangu*, ‘to move, proceed to the right’, and *palua kalaingu*, ‘to move, proceed to the left’.<sup>3</sup> In anticipation of what follows, it should be noted at the outset that where the rules apply to motion or spatial order, ‘movement to the right’, considered as a progression from left to right,

1. In this regard it is interesting to note J.D. Sapir’s recent observation that ‘synecdoche, like metonymy, draws its terms from a single domain; however, one term always includes or is included by the other as kind for type, part for whole’ (1977: 4), a formulation which directly recalls Dumont’s conception of hierarchy.

2. Another reservation concerning Dumont’s thesis relates to the noticeable disparity between the several relations he cites as examples of hierarchical opposition, viz., ‘animal’ and ‘vertebrate’ (1979: 809), Adam and Eve (1980: 239–41), and right and left. Not only is it questionable to what extent these different relations can be assimilated to a single type, called hierarchy or hierarchical opposition (see, for example, the distinction Sapir [1977: 13] draws between ‘taxonomic’ and ‘anatomical’ modes of hierarchy in his discussion of synecdoche), but it would seem to follow from the differences between them that the ‘identity’ which Dumont postulates between whole and part refers to something different in each instance.

3. The two phrases comprise *lua*, ‘to go, move, travel’, and *kawana*, ‘right’ (see PAN \**vanan*, Dempwolff 1938: 164), and *kalai*, ‘left’, respectively. As I shall show below, by no means every case in which these rules apply involves physical movement or even a spatial orientation, so the phrase *palua kawanangu*, for example, could perhaps be more comprehensively translated as ‘to proceed, do something, right’ (see Section IV below). Other possible contextual translations are ‘to make (something) go right’ and ‘like a rightward movement, procedure’. With these qualifications in mind, however, I shall continue, for convenience, to gloss *palua kawanangu* (or *kalaingu*) as ‘to move, movement to the right (or left)’.

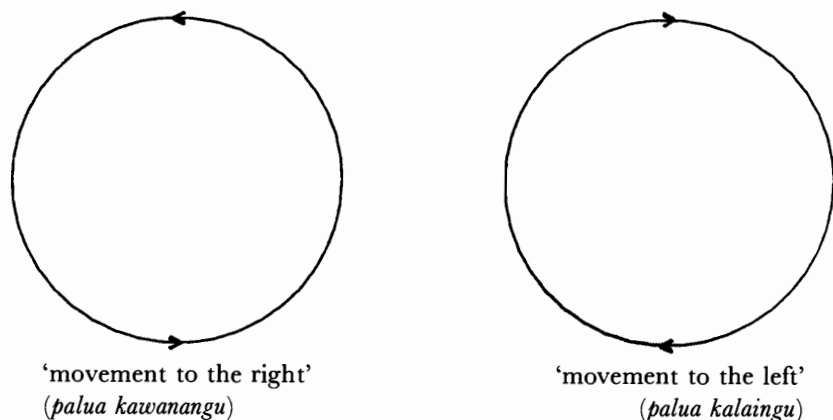


Figure 1: Movement to the Right and to the Left

normally denotes an anti-clockwise direction or sequence around a given focus as viewed from above and, so to speak, from the outside, while 'movement to the left' refers to the reverse direction (i.e., clockwise) as determined in the same way (see Figure 1). Unless otherwise indicated, therefore, whenever I refer below to movement to the right or left it is these two sorts of motion or sequence respectively that are intended.

One reason for stressing this point is that in some parts of Indonesia (see, for example, Howe 1981: 228 concerning Bali) a rule of 'movement to the right', as an expression of proper or auspicious order, denotes on the contrary a clockwise direction. Such a difference between related cultures therefore indicates that, as regards the notion of moving to the right—which seems to be widespread in Indonesia (see also Barnes 1974, *passim*)—it is not actual direction or arrangement, that is, the physical manifestation of the principle, which is primary but rather the symbolic values attaching to the categories of right and left.

The Rindi state that the rule of movement to the right governs all matters connected with life (*lii luri*) and defines correct order among the living. The principle is thus applied to such diverse concerns as, for example, the sequence in which house-posts are erected around the centre of a building; the manner of encircling a sacrificial fowl over an offering of betel and areca before dedicating the bird to an ancestor; the direction in which buffalo are driven around a rice field, and bales of new thatch are carried around a house just prior to the completion of a renovation; and the order in which different houses of the Rindi noble clan each provide a pig for slaughter at the annual renewal rites performed in the chief village.<sup>4</sup> In addition, whenever cooked food is offered to some

4. In this case the rule is that in any given year the animal should be supplied by the lineage group whose house is situated to the right (as one faces outwards from the front of the building) of that belonging to the donor in the previous year.

spiritual being, the latter is requested to receive this 'to the right' (*kei palua kawanangu*).

The Rindi also use the expression 'movement to the right' to describe the manner in which women should pass between groups in marriage, as defined by their system of asymmetric alliance. This application of the idea, then, reveals an instance where the rule does not refer to spatial relations in any concrete sense. Nevertheless, the implication of its appearance in this context is clear enough, since it refers here to a procedure which if properly followed secures the continuance of life, while its contravention would have deleterious consequences. Indeed, adherence to the rule of movement to the right is deemed essential to the successful outcome of all the activities mentioned above, and for obtaining and securing prosperity and well-being in general.

As movement to the right defines correct order in matters that concern the living, so the dead are governed by the opposite rule, 'movement to the left' (*palua kalaingu*). Consequently, the Rindi conceive of arrangements and procedures in the world of the dead as being ordered inversely to their counterparts among the living. Thus the dead are said, for example, to be left-handed, to build their houses in the opposite manner from the living, and so on (see further Forth 1981: 200-2); and it is consistent with these ideas that funerary usages in Rindi reveal numerous examples of practices carried out in accordance with the principle of movement to the left.

One area in which this inversion of right and left as between the living and the dead is most clearly expressed is the manner of wearing clothes and binding the hair. Whereas living persons should arrange their hair and clothing in conformity to the rule of movement to the right, the dead are said to do so in the opposite fashion, so as to effect a movement to the left. This idea is given concrete expression in the way clothes are placed on a corpse in preparation for burial, in the manner of binding the deceased's hair, and moreover in the way the hair and clothing are worn by the specially costumed functionaries (*papanggangu*) who attend a noble corpse (see Forth 1981: 199). Such usages thus illustrate how the right-left opposition is used in eastern Sumba to represent the relation between the living and the dead, and more generally the opposition between life and death considered as antithetical states of existence. Yet the appearance of the contrast in this context also gives rise to a problem with both ethnographic and analytical implications. For while the Rindi expressly state that, in contrast to the dead, living persons of both sexes should arrange their hair and clothing so as to move to the right, in actual practice a difference of this sort is also observable between (living) men and women. Specifically, I found that women wind their hair in a clockwise direction (as viewed from above) in a way which contrasts especially with the men's method of wrapping clothes around the body, and which therefore suggests a *de facto* movement to the left (see Barnes 1974: 187 for a comparable situation in another eastern Indonesian society).

Here, then, we appear to be confronted with a discrepancy between statement and practice whereby two procedures that in other contexts are distinguished as movement to the right and left respectively are both represented as movement to the right. As to how this situation might be accounted for, I suggest that we

would do well to consider the relation of right and left in this instance as a hierarchical opposition since, viewed from a certain perspective, the right can here be seen to subsume or encompass the left. In order to elucidate this relation, however, it is necessary first to examine more closely the evidence relating to the wearing of clothes and the arrangement of the hair in Rindi.

## II

The basic item of men's dress in eastern Sumba is a loin-cloth (*hinggi pakalambungu*). This is wrapped round in an anti-clockwise direction (as viewed from above), by holding the outstretched cloth behind the body, then placing one end at the centre of the abdomen with the left hand, and finally winding the remainder of the cloth one-and-a-half times around the waist, and tucking it at the front, with the right hand. A man's head-cloth (*tera*) is wound in the same direction around the head. In contrast, no female garments are actually wrapped around the body. The basic item of female attire is a tubular skirt (*laui*) which is often simply held up with the hand, or under the arm. When necessary, a woman may fold the skirt at the front and tuck it over. But while I was told that this too should be done 'to the right', I am not sure whether any particular arrangement is consistently followed in practice, nor, indeed, whether the contrast of clockwise and anti-clockwise movement is in any way relevant in this connection.

The inclusion of manifestly opposed arrangements under the principle of movement to the right is therefore most clearly observable in the case of men's clothing and women's hair, since as noted, the latter is actually wound clockwise around the head. At this point, the question naturally arises of how Rindi men wind up their hair. Unfortunately, the evidence I have on this question is inconclusive. In part, this is because in contrast to women, the vast majority of men of middle age and younger nowadays wear their hair short, while those who do retain long hair normally cover it with a head-cloth. Yet even in those few instances where I was able to make direct observations, my findings were inconclusive, and my records do not show whether any particular order was consistently followed in practice. Looking back, it now seems that I may have been so assured by informants' statements that both men and women wound their hair 'to the right', and that the dead did so 'to the left', that the question of how people actually wore their hair did not concern me as much as it should have; and although I was not altogether unaware that the arrangement of women's hair differed from the way men put on their clothes,<sup>5</sup> I may simply have assumed that any discrepancies I encountered derived from incidental divergences from traditional rules.

5. I was subsequently able to confirm my impressions concerning the arrangement of women's hair from photographs (see, for example, Forth 1981, Plate 3b).

Obviously, the question of how men actually arrange their hair could not be settled by asking informants, since the answer can only be given in terms of movement to the right or left, and as we have seen the former principle may be manifest either in an anti-clockwise or a clockwise direction. Nevertheless, there is some reason to suppose that men should wind up their hair anti-clockwise, and thus in the opposite manner from women. First of all, if the sexes were contrasted in this way, this would accord with the general association mentioned earlier between the right and the masculine and the left and the feminine. Secondly, there is conceivably some practical advantage in men winding their hair anti-clockwise, as this is what they do with their head-cloths. Thirdly, the lateral opposition as between the sexes can be referred to another contrast that has symbolic value with regard to the hair. Thus once, when I remarked on the discrepancy between the arrangement of men's clothing and women's hair, my informant stated that while men's clothes were disposed so as to result in a movement to the right as seen from above, women's hairstyles followed the same principle *as seen from below*. In effect, then, with this interpretation a difference of direction is transformed into one of perspective, so that instead of the contrast of right and left we have that of above and below; and since in eastern Sumba male and female are generally associated with above and below respectively, it would not be surprising if this opposition also found expression in men's and women's hairstyles. In fact, this opposition is expressly linked with another aspect of men's and women's hair; for the former, wound into a tight knot at the centre of the head, is described as 'up, above' (*dita*) while the latter, wound into a low, flat and looser bun further to the back of the head, is described as 'down, below' (*wawa*) (Forth 1981: 158).<sup>6</sup>

Although it does not bear directly on the question of how men should wind up their hair, another indication that men are associated with the anti-clockwise, and women with the clockwise direction is an implicit equivalence between a woman's hair and a man's head-cloth (*tera*).<sup>7</sup> Whereas a man's top-knot is called *kawuku*—a word which refers more generally to a knot or joint—a woman's bun of hair is called *kawuku tera*, a phrase that can be glossed as 'head-cloth knot' and interpreted to mean 'a knot or bun of hair that resembles, or serves as, a head-cloth'. And as we have seen, these two 'head-coverings', one masculine and of woven fabric and the other feminine and of hair, are further contrasted by being wound in opposite directions around the head.

6. The women's style mostly referred to in this paper, in which the hair is wound around the head just above the temples, is what might be described as the standard or formal style. Occasionally, when working, women also wind up their hair in a higher bun—though not so high and tight as a man's top-knot—and one sometimes sees younger women with their hair swept back into an oval bun at the nape. The latter is possibly a newer fashion and a departure from the traditional style.

7. Only rarely do women wear head-cloths and, when they do, the cloth, about a metre in length, is simply draped over the head with the two ends crossing at the front. A woman's head-cloth is called *tera tamali* (*tamali* is 'veil'). As the same term is applied to a veil that covers a corpse, this is one of a number of usages consistent with the symbolic femininity of the dead in Rindi (see Forth 1981: 205–7).

## III

From here on, then, I shall assume that as regards the proper arrangement of a man's hair the rule of movement to the right is to be understood in the normal way, as illustrated in Figure 1 above. But whatever the actual procedure may be, there is still the question of why, in regard to the women's hairstyle on the one hand and men's clothing on the other, two manifestly opposed arrangements should be represented identically as two instances of movement to the right. In other words, we need to consider why the arrangement of a woman's hair is not described as a movement to the left, particularly in the light of the numerous associations between females, and what is symbolically feminine, and the left side.

The key to this problem, I suggest, is to be found in the idea that the dead in the afterworld wear their hair in accordance with the principle of movement to the left, thus in a manner opposite to the living. In the light of this idea, the statement that (living) women wind their hair 'to the right' can be understood as pertaining specifically to, and as stressing, the contrast between the living and the dead, while at the same time suppressing, as it were, the apparent difference between the two sexes and hence the implicit suggestion that living women might wear their hair in the same way as do the dead. In this area of symbolism, therefore, the eastern Sumbanese might be said to be faced with a classificatory dilemma arising from the simultaneous application of the contrast of right and left to male and female on the one hand and to the living and the dead on the other, and moreover from their identification of life with the male principle, and death with the female. Put another way, since the living include both males and females, it would seem necessary to decide whether living women are to be classed as living and thus opposed to the dead or as females and thus opposed to males. But this is a decision which the Rindi have, so to speak, refused to make. Thus it would appear that while the contrast of gender is given expression in practice, at the level of representations it is only the contrast of life and death which is recognized, since at this level the difference between women's hairstyles and the arrangement of men's clothes (and, as I have suggested, their hair as well) is in effect disguised by the statement that women wind their hair to the right.

Situations similar to the above are discernible in other areas of eastern Sumbanese life. One concerns the disposition of horizontal components of the house, which also should be positioned anti-clockwise around the building so as to 'move to the right'. In this instance, the rule means that the 'trunk end' (*pingi*) of a piece of wood should be on the left, as one faces the building from the outside, and the 'tip end' (*kapuka*) on the right (see further Forth 1981: 32-4, 421; and, for a similar rule in Kédang, Barnes 1974: 68). However, with the various rows of roofing slats, for example, the pieces alternate in this respect from the eaves to the top of the roof, so that half the slats are actually placed the other way round. As the trunk end of a piece of wood is considered more durable than the tip, this is done in order to create a balance of strength within the building. Yet, even though odd- and even-numbered rows of slats are thereby arranged in opposite

directions, informants denied that one set moves to the left; and the reason given for this was that movement to the left governs correct order only among the dead, whereas the house is a place of the living.

In a similar vein, Rindi informants disagreed as to whether the piece of metal placed in the mouth of a corpse should always be put inside the left cheek, or inside this cheek only if the deceased were female (Forth 1981: 172). Clearly, there is here the same sort of classificatory dilemma as is implicit in the case of the women's hairstyle. Interestingly, though, it presents itself in the inverse manner, for this disagreement (which is between two conflicting rules rather than rule and practice) suggests a subordination of the right to the left in death rather than a subordination of the left to the right in life (see Section IV below).

#### IV

From all that has been said so far it seems obvious that the significance of right and left in eastern Sumba is contextually variable, in that different associations (male/female, life/death) of the two lateral terms pertain to different contexts.<sup>8</sup> Yet it is equally apparent that native thought does not always keep these contexts apart. Thus in the case of the women's hairstyle, what appears to be a leftward disposition would seem to connote death, even though its occurrence here is perfectly consistent with the association of the left with the feminine.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, one could say that this failure to separate contexts—or to regard meanings as contextually specific—is precisely the reason for the suppression of the contrast of movement to the right and to the left as regards the women's hairstyle. But more importantly, because this suppression is effected by representing an apparent movement to the left as an instance of movement to the right, the absence of a distinction between contexts also gives rise to a hierarchical opposition between the two lateral terms.

This relation can best be illustrated by a diagram as in Figure 2. From this it can be seen how the hierarchical opposition, an encompassing of the contrary, exists only by virtue of the combination of two levels in such a way that the opposition of right and left at the lower level is assimilated to one term at the higher level.<sup>10</sup> The diagram also shows how these two levels coincide with the two contexts in which the right-left opposition is relevant. Thus the difference

8. This is, of course, a point that has often been made with regard to dual classification based on analogy (see, for example, Needham 1973: xxv–xxviii; also Schulte Nordholt 1980: 247).

9. As shown just above with regard to the practice of placing a metal object in the mouth of a corpse, the left can also connote femininity where its main purpose is apparently to symbolize death. It is worth noting as well that the opposition of right and left does not always signify both life and death and male and female. Thus, for example, in the Rindi house the left side is the feminine side, but it has no particular association with death. In fact, corpses are prepared and kept for burial on the right, masculine side of the building.

10. Cf. Dumont's statement that '...the clearest formulation of the hierarchical opposition is gained by separating and combining two levels. At the superior level there is unity; at the inferior level there is distinction...' (1980: 242).



between the women's hairstyle and the arrangement of men's clothing (and hair) exists at the factual level, its context being, of course, the contrast of male and female, while the difference between the arrangement of hair and clothes among the living and dead is located, in the first instance, at the level of representations, and pertains to the opposition of life and death. In this way, then, it can be seen that the conflation of contexts in this case is equivalent to the combination of two levels which is involved in hierarchical opposition.

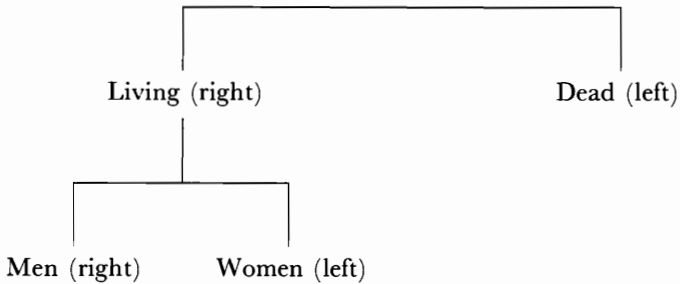


Figure 2: Contexts of the Right-Left Opposition in Eastern Sumba

The reader may have noticed a close resemblance between these two contexts and levels and the levels (or 'partial aspects') to which Dumont refers in his analysis of hierarchical opposition *per se*. Thus he states that, whereas at a lower level terms that compose a whole are contrary and distinct, at a higher level they are identical (see, for example, his interpretation of the relation between Adam and Eve, 1980: 239–41), and that the one term, the superior, is identical to the whole. In the example we are dealing with here, this higher level is identifiable with the level of representations, where right and left are equated by virtue of two manifestly opposed dispositions both being identified with the right. Accordingly, the lower level can be identified with the level of facts, where there is an observable difference between the sexes with regard to lateral arrangements.

It needs to be stressed, however, that while the observable facts in this case appear to be entirely subordinated to a cultural representation, it is necessary, in order to discern a hierarchical opposition between right and left in the first place, to ascribe significance to the difference which is manifest at the factual level—and not just significance for the analyst but for the eastern Sumbanese as well. In other words, this difference too has value and does not exist simply at a level of empirical reality devoid of meaning. The contrast between the living and the dead in the manner of wearing the hair, on the other hand, illustrates a situation which in most respects is the converse of the above. For in this case the opposition exists mainly as a representation which, in so far as it expresses a difference between the world of the living and that of the dead, would seem necessarily to exist in the absence of observable facts. Yet there are facts which bear upon this issue, and it is moreover possible that here also there is a discrepancy between practice and native statement. As noted, the rule in Rindi

is that the hair of a corpse should be wound so as to move to the left. However, if among the living the hair of men and women is wound in different directions, then it is quite conceivable that the two sexes might display differences in death as well. Indeed, such a difference is suggested by the disagreement noted above regarding the placing of a metal object in the mouth of a corpse. Unfortunately, though, since I never had the opportunity to observe the winding of a deceased person's hair, I am unable to confirm whether or not this is so.

Nevertheless, the more general point is that, just as the rule of movement to the right governs all matters connected with the living, so movement to the left is pre-eminent in death. Hence since the right, the superior side in life, appears in the instances discussed above to encompass the left, we should also consider whether in death the left might encompass the right. Rindi statements provide some support for this suggestion. Thus when I asked whether left-handed people might become right-handed after death, I was told that they did not, and that all the dead were without exception left-handed, a notion which, it should be noted, appears contrary to the principle of inversion that generally governs the representation of the relation between life and death. Furthermore, there is the idea, which is also expressed in funerary ritual (see Forth 1981: 205–7), that a dead person, regardless of sex, is received into the land of the dead in the same manner as a new bride when she first enters her husband's village. Here, then, we have an indication that, while in life masculine principles, of which movement to the right can be counted as an instance, can subsume the feminine, in death feminine principles, such as movement to the left, can subsume the masculine.

The foregoing observations call to mind Dumont's claim that hierarchy 'offers the possibility of reversal', so that '...that which at a superior level was superior may become inferior at an inferior level', and moreover, so that 'the left can become the right in what might be called a "left situation"...' (1980: 244). As the eastern Sumbanese show in manifold ways that they regard life as superior to death, one could therefore describe movement to the right as being superior (and hence encompassing) at the 'superior level' of life and inferior at the 'inferior level' of death, death being for the eastern Sumbanese precisely the sort of 'left situation' to which Dumont refers.

In fact, following Dumont we might go even further and suggest that for the dead, movement to the left is, in a sense, movement to the right. Support for this proposition can be found in the circumstance that, in a way similar to 'right' in English and the word for 'right' in many other languages, eastern Sumbanese *kawana* ('right') can also mean 'correct, true, valid, exact, proper' (see Kapita 1982: 110), so that the phrase *palua kawanangu* might be understood not simply as a reference to 'movement to the right' (i.e., the right side) but also to correct order in general, regardless of any lateral, directional, or spatial considerations. In a similar vein, *kalai*, 'left', has the further senses of 'erroneous, wrong'. However, since correct order among the dead—and, it may be worth adding, among the living as well, as regards the treatment of a corpse—is defined as movement to the left, if *palua kawanangu* is taken to apply to all instances of correct order, it follows that in this context *palua kalaingu* ('movement to the left')

must be counted as an instance of it. Clearly, this possibility is dependent upon the phrase *palau kawanangu* having two distinguishable senses, one of which includes the other. At the same time, though, it should be emphasised that, here as elsewhere, the hierarchical aspect of the relationship between right and left consists precisely in the absence of a rigid distinction between these two analytically distinguishable meanings.

## V

As some of the above remarks suggest the applicability of the notion of hierarchical opposition beyond the limited instances of lateral symbolism previously described, it is worth briefly considering ways in which the eastern Sumbanese conception of the contrast of life and death can itself be interpreted as hierarchical. As I have shown elsewhere (Forth 1981: 201–5), in Rindi the relation between life and death is conceived in terms of two distinct and seemingly contradictory representations. On the one hand, death is represented as the antithesis and as an inversion of life; indeed, it is in this view that the opposition of movement to the right and movement to the left has relevance. But there is also a wider perspective, in which life and death appear as complementary stages of existence. The living are then seen ultimately to derive from the dead the means of life, and the dead, in a certain sense, eventually return to the living. In this respect, therefore, death can be said to be encompassed by life, as it is subsumed as one stage in a cycle of life, that is, a cyclical transfer of life-giving spirit. In Rindi, this single cycle of existence was never expressly stated to be governed by the rule of movement to the right. Nevertheless, such a notion would appear highly consistent with particulars of eastern Sumbanese symbolic usage; and in any case, it seems clear enough that, as regards the single, oriented movement of vital spirit, the contrast of movement to the right and to the left is no longer germane. In other words, at this level the duality of right and left is dissolved in a unity which, for the Rindi, is linked with the right, just as life and death are merged in a process which results in the perpetuation of life.

## VI

My aim in this paper has been to demonstrate how Dumont's notion of hierarchical opposition can be applied to certain instances of the contrast of right and left in eastern Sumbanese symbolism, and in so doing I have gone some way beyond my initial point of departure, which was the apparent discrepancy between stated rules and common practice as regards the arrangement of

women's hair. In this final section I shall briefly discuss the limits of this analytical notion and its relation to other possible approaches.

Just above it was shown that, in so far as *kawana*, 'right', can refer both to the right side and to proper procedure in general, the hierarchical aspect of the right-left opposition in eastern Sumba is suggested even at the level of semantics. What is more, there are in this society other usages which indicate a relation of encompassing and encompassed between right and left, as for example the practice of reducing, in a very real sense, a house that is in need of repair to its superior right side (see Forth 1981: 40). Also, one could find a number of areas of eastern Sumbanese symbolism and classification, quite apart from the matter of laterality, where the notion of hierarchical opposition could be usefully invoked.<sup>11</sup>

Even so, it is not at all clear that a hierarchical relation, or an encompassing of the contrary, is present in every instance where the right-left opposition is symbolically significant in eastern Sumba, or that the right side can always be shown to be equated with some larger whole. The point is, then, that hierarchy as defined by Dumont is an aspect of the lateral opposition which is discernible only in certain settings in which the contrast appears. According to Dumont, the inequality of the two sides is not only a matter of value but also one of 'actual fact', or 'of nature', and this he claims is because '...the right-left pair is not definable in itself *but only in relation to a whole...*' (Dumont's emphasis), which is ultimately the human body (1979: 810). The question is, however, whether this inequality, and the necessity of defining the two terms with reference to a body, must always be expressed in a hierarchical relation in Dumont's special sense. In addition, since he employs the contrast of right and left as just one illustration of a more general phenomenon of hierarchical opposition, we must also ask whether all instances of dual classification (and complementary opposition) can be interpreted as instances of hierarchical opposition.

If this is what Dumont is claiming, then so far as the eastern Sumbanese data are concerned his thesis is cast in some doubt. Here, a large part of the problem stems from his identification of the 'distinctive opposition', to which he opposes hierarchy, with equality and complementarity, and then equality and complementarity with one another. For in this way Dumont implicitly excludes the possibility of a middle term, namely inequality without an encompassing of the contrary, or what might be called 'non-hierarchical inequality'. It is difficult, moreover, to see why viewing opposites as complementary should involve treating them as equal. Complementarity may be said to entail equality in so far as the relation between complementary terms is symmetrical and reversible: that is, if *x* complements *y*, then *y* must complement *x*. But this of course does not mean that the two terms are in every respect equal; in fact, in the

11. See, for example, the relation between the eastern Sumbanese noble rulers (*maràmba*) and the highest religious authorities (*ratu*), which in fact recalls that between king and priest in Hindu theory (see Forth 1981: 246, n.17). The notion of hierarchical opposition is also suggested by the fact that many paired terms in ritual language refer to entities related as whole and part.

most commonplace instances of complementarity that one could call to mind, they are palpably unequal.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, therefore, complementarity is but one aspect of the total relationship between terms that can enter into a complementary relation. Hierarchy is another such aspect;<sup>13</sup> and in this regard I would furthermore suggest that hierarchy, particularly as it can be seen to apply to the right-left opposition, may best be viewed as a function of complementarity, and more specifically as a situation in which the manifest inequality between certain pairs of complements can be referred to their differential relation to the whole which they together compose. It will be apparent here that my main disagreement with Dumont concerns the way in which he opposes hierarchy and complementarity (by identifying the latter with the distinctive opposition) and the radical distinction he wishes to draw between analysis in terms of hierarchical opposition and analysis based on the notion of complementary opposition, or 'binary classification' (1979: 810). Indeed, in this respect Dumont's thesis is somewhat self-contradictory, for in another place (1980: 241-2) he admits 'complementariness' as an aspect of both distinctive and hierarchical opposition. Moreover, as indicated at the beginning, in the primary case considered here hierarchy appears as a concomitant of a particular system of binary classification, in that the subsumption of both right and left under the former term is bound up with the fact that both the opposition of male and female and that of life and death are analogically associated with the lateral contrast. The hierarchical relation, I suggest, is something that may be 'added to' a relation of complementary opposition, as indeed in the instances of eastern Sumbanese lateral symbolism described above. But if we are not to go too far beyond the data, then it must be admitted that not always is it clearly present, that is, not invariably does it find expression in cultural usage. Otherwise, by taking the notion of hierarchical opposition beyond a point where it can be sustained by the evidence, one is in danger of weakening a potentially useful analytical concept.

12. Dual symbolic classification based on analogy in fact presupposes an inequality, or asymmetry, between paired elements. Thus as Fox (1971: 247) has correctly observed, 'a dual cosmology is characterized not by a simple pairing of elements but by the analogical ordering of elements within pairs according to some criterion of asymmetry' (emphasis added).

13. See Dumont's statement that 'in saying that the right-left opposition refers to a whole we are saying that it has a hierarchical aspect...' (1979: 810).

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CÉCILE BARRAUD

## THE SAILING-BOAT: CIRCULATION AND VALUES IN THE KEI ISLANDS, INDONESIA

IN THE British Isles, it is hardly necessary to insist on the fact that island peoples are conscious of the sea as part of their environment. In France, where continental feelings are so strong, one might have to explain at length the fact that the sea is of first importance. Different contexts lead to different reactions to geographical data.

Many island societies in Indonesia have long been open to influences from the surrounding world. These external ideological elements, often metaphorically described as the sea or embodied in the sea, have in some cases been integrated among the highest local values. However, the fact that a country is surrounded by water does not necessarily always have identical consequences concerning ideological values. One can perfectly well imagine an island culture oriented towards the land and almost ignoring the sea.

These rough examples illustrate the difference between what may be defined as a 'context'—that is, a mere factual situation—and a 'level of ideology'—that is, a partial ideological point of view which defines the society with reference to the values ordering it as a whole.

In the society of Tanebar-Evav in the Kei archipelago (located in the Southeast Moluccas, Indonesia) formal speech (ritual idioms, proverbs, songs and so on), spatial organization, social structure, rituals and ceremonial exchanges are more often than not defined along two axes, one referring to the sea, the other to the land. This is not due simply to the specific situation of the Tanebar-Evav people as islanders and the obvious necessity of dealing with the natural environment. The complementary opposition between sea and land is one

expression among others of the values involved in the relationship between *lor* and *haratut*, two concepts which define this particular society. In Tanebar-Evav ideology, the sea is not considered as separating islands but rather as linking societies to one another. Thus when we say that the sea is an important element of Tanebar-Evav culture, we indicate that this society has relations with other countries, other islands, other peoples and cultures. It may thus be said that in a culture where land and sea are strongly bound together, the sea is an external reference as well as an internal component for that society.

The expression *lor-haratut* means 'the village society of Tanebar-Evav',<sup>1</sup> but each term used separately also means 'village society', although each refers to a different level of Tanebar-Evav ideology. Indeed, though they are sometimes specifically employed in different contexts, they may be used and differentiated in the same context, in which case they refer to a different ordering of values.

In this paper, I will show how the hierarchical organisation of values in Tanebar-Evav society is expressed in specific combinations of meanings attached respectively to *lor* and *haratut*. The analysis of the relation between *lor* and *haratut* thus defined requires the identification of the different relevant ideological levels. For this purpose, I will give a brief account of the main aspects of these values and show how they operate in the society's most significant ritual. Then, in relation to the same values, I will analyse the repeated comparisons of the entire society with the sailing-boat, which is an image of the 'whole'.

Initially, however, it must be stressed that the two values organize in a specific hierarchical order the institutions that structure the relations between people as well as the elements of the supernatural world. Moreover, although one of the values may be dominant in a specific institution, the other is always present at a subordinate level. It is only the ordering of the values that varies according to the level under consideration in the ideology, not the values themselves.

### *Haratut*

*Haratut* has no translation other than 'society'. It means the community formed by the living and the dead, considered in relation to the origin of the society and to the sacred Masbaït Mountain,<sup>2</sup> centre of the village and of the island. This mountain is said to enclose the law transmitted by the ancestors. There is a saying that Masbaït Mountain contains Tanebar-Evav Island, its wealth, its products, its people and its laws. *Haratut* is related to the Sun-Moon God, and is considered the 'child' of God. Its main expressions are found in fishing, hunting,

1. Tanebar-Evav is the only village located on a small island of the same name in the Kei archipelago. The latter consists of two main islands, each containing about forty villages, and a number of smaller islands like Tanebar-Evav.

2. Actually, there is no mountain; this name refers only to the fact that the central place in the village is considered the centre of the world.



and war, that is 'going out' to chase something in a violent manner. The society is specifically called *haratut* when its members gather for certain ceremonies in the centre of the village or perform collective rituals addressed to God.

The smallest social unit, the house, is related to *haratut* values. As members of the houses, villagers regularly bring offerings of turtles or of other large animals harpooned in the sea to the nine pairs of ancestors who protect the houses. Each house is related to and protected by one of these nine pairs, and groups of two or three houses constitute nine units called *ub-wadar*, which taken together represent the society as a whole. The offerings are called *wad-met*, the same name as that given to prisoners of war. All social relations and institutions involved in the existence of the houses, such as marriage alliance relationships and marriage exchanges, village social subdivisions and ritual offices held by a small number of initiated elders, are related to *haratut* values.

Most of these elements are associated with the image of a boat. The house, as a physical structure, is considered a female figure and seen in certain respects as representing a boat. The main cross-beam, located in the middle of the floor parallel to the front wall, is identified with the keel. It separates the public front-section of the house, available for guests, from the private section at the rear where the head of the house sits when receiving guests. If someone has broken a rule during the boat-building rituals, offerings 'for the keel' must be placed on this beam. A different subdivision is made when looking toward the front door from within the house. The right and left side are then opposed: in some contexts, they are called respectively 'the older brother' and 'the younger brother', in others they are named 'the captain' and 'the watchman'. The house as a whole is not compared to a boat.

Asymmetrical alliance is practised in Tanebar-Evav society, and marriage exchanges take place between houses. In olden times the wife-takers would give a sailing-boat together with an object from the sea (a shell) and an object from the land (an opossum's tail) as the brideprice. Nowadays, a cannon<sup>3</sup> called 'the keel and the first plank of the sailing-boat' and a gong called 'the oar and the pole of the boat' are given. In the context of such exchanges, they are classified as masculine goods. The wife-givers will give dishes and textiles along with certain other goods, all of which are classified as feminine. In some expressions, the husband is said to be 'captain of the boat', while certain proverbs compare him to a piece of flotsam looking for an island (the wife) on which to run ashore.

Marriage exchanges are the expressions of *haratut* values. The wife-giver is superior to the wife-taker since he represents a category of the wife-taker's ancestors, called 'God-the dead', who are greatly feared by the wife-taker. He is a kind of intermediary between the wife-taker and God, and as such is feared for his ability to inflict death on or give life to the wife-taker's house. The origin and creation of each house of the village goes back to the first woman given as spouse to the founder of this house, that is, to a pre-existing relationship with the wife-giver's house. A myth says that the first three houses were founded by the three

3. The Dutch rulers left behind many such cannons which are commonly used in exchanges all over the Moluccas.

'first ancestors' who came from the sky. The cannons, gongs and other objects used as money and given as bridewealth, are also said to have come from the sky, in the form of a tree that settled on the top of the sacred Masbaït Mountain in the centre of the village. Thus marriage alliances, marriage exchanges and houses reflect *haratut* value.

Most of the heads of the houses (there are twenty-three houses in Tanebar-Evav) participate in the village elders' organization which is structured around the ritual cultivation of millet. Each post in this organization is seen as belonging to a house and not to the individual who fills it and who must go through an initiation ceremony on the death of his predecessor. This office cannot be transferred to another house, and if there are no heirs, a man or a young boy must be adopted from another house in an exchange similar to the one practised when a woman marries. Once founded, a house cannot remain empty.

The elder's initiation ceremony is a kind of rebirth, a washing away of any misdeeds, especially sexual ones, that he may have committed since his birth. He is then taught the severe rules that he must henceforth follow, in particular, prohibitions concerning food and extra-marital relations. These prohibitions are defined in two categories: 'sea' prohibitions (certain fishes and sea-food) and 'land' prohibitions (all women except his own wife). Once initiated, he becomes one of the guardians, that is, a servant of the laws contained in the sacred Masbaït Mountain.

Each elder has his own specific part to play in the millet ritual. Three elders, who bear special titles, have particularly significant roles. The two Lords of the Land, or Tuan Tan, who conduct most of the main rituals, are called 'Land Boat-Captains'; another important office is held by the 'Sea Boat-Captain' who is considered superior to the Lords of the Land and who has specific duties in relation to war. The other secondary elders are called 'watchmen and carvers'—those who carve up and distribute the shares of the catch (*wad-met*) after collective fishing or hunting.

We note, in the first place, that the elders can bear more than one title, the one used depending in each case on the context in which it is employed. Furthermore, and most important, the titles used constantly reflect the opposition sea/land: Lord of the Land v. Boat-Captain (a maritime office); Sea Boat-Captain v. Land Boat-Captain (in the latter case, the land itself is seen as if it were a ship, requiring a captain). There is evidence here of the superiority of sea over land at the *haratut* ideological level. Under the guidance of these elders, the society as a whole is compared to a sailing-boat with its captain, its crew and its inhabitants.

The elders' primary task is to take the lead in the different stages of millet cultivation, making offerings to the spirits and to other guardians of the island throughout the sacred period, which begins with the clearing of garden plots and ends with the harvest. The collective rituals are explicitly intended to help the King of the Sacred Mountain in his task: to grow the millet for *haratut*. Part of the crop will be stored for years in the village's communal granary, located in the house to which the Sea Boat-Captain and one Land Boat-Captain belong. Just before the harvest, the elders offer wild pigs killed during a hunt to the spirits, to

the dead and to God in the name of *haratut*.

On other occasions, at the biannual change of the prevailing monsoon, for instance, when serious illnesses sent by God are ritually expelled back towards the sea, the offerings to God are prepared in four parts. Three are made by the three *yam* (large social units encompassing the same houses as the nine *ub* already mentioned and like them representing the society as a whole. These units no longer refer to the nine pairs of ancestors, but to the three first ancestors of the village). The fourth part is made in the name of *haratut* by one of the elders of the central part of the village, where Masbaït Mountain is situated. This elder clearly acts in the name of the whole society, given the traditional close relation of his house with the sacred mountain.

These short illustrations are intended to show more explicitly how the values of *haratut* order the various supernatural beings (the houses' ancestors, God and all the spirits related to the village site and to the island), as well as the social groups (houses, *ub*, *yam*) which altogether constitute, in different ways, the village society. Clearly we are confronted here with 'a' whole where the value *haratut* is dominant, yet it is not 'the' whole but one ideological level in which the other value, *lor*, is not absent and appears in a subordinate position, as we shall see later.

### *Lor*

We must now introduce the other value, *lor*. Like *haratut*, *lor* is translated as 'society', but it has different meanings as well, in connection with the sea or with the outside world. Furthermore, in contrast with *haratut*, the relation of *lor* with the outside is not violent. 1) *Lor* means 'whale', an important animal in Kei society as well as in many other regions of the Moluccas. Famous local tales have as their theme the death of whales which have run aground, celebrated events in these islands. 2) *Lor* is a kind of inedible fruit which does not grow on Tanebar-Evav Island, but is gathered on the beach when it is washed ashore by ocean currents and has a ritual use in the marriage ceremony. 3) It is an edible cucurbitaceous vegetable, which has a part in the harvest ritual. 4) Finally, in the Kei archipelago, *lor* designates a multi-village social unit ruled by a *raja*. The whole of Kei society is thus divided into two coalitions called '*lor* five' and '*lor* nine', names which refer to the myth recounting the introduction of rules and rulers from Bali. Each coalition groups together a number of *raja* who were traditionally wartime allies.

With respect to the supernatural world, *lor* in its meaning of 'society' describes the community of the living with the spirits, who are the intermediaries between God and the living. Three of these spirits, who brought a new law, are said to have run aground on Tanebar-Evav island after a long journey from village to village. Two of them bear names of Arabic origin, Adat and Hukum, which were introduced by Islam and reflect the strong influence of outside cultures. The

third is named Wilin, 'rudder' in the Kei language, and is believed to act as a rudder for the two others as well as for the entire society. Adat and Hukum are considered elder and younger brothers. All three together punish the villagers when they break the vital rules concerning incest, adultery and murder. If incest occurs, particularly the gravest incest between brother and sister, the village society as a whole must gather to cast the guilty couple out of the island. Traditionally, the couple themselves were cast into the sea to drown, but at present they are replaced by a cannon, a gong and other valuables which are thrown into the sea. There follows a purification ceremony for the society, which is held in front of Hukum's house, not in the middle of the village, as is the case when *haratut* is involved. This ceremony is called *sob lor*, the prayer for *lor*. In contrast to our own ideology, which views incest, adultery and murder as individual actions to be punished as such, in Kei they are considered to affect the society as a whole. A proverb concerning incest states: '(Sea-)water sweeps into the hold of the boat, (rain-)water drips from the ridge-pole of the house'. The whole society, compared here to a boat or to a house, is destroyed in case of such misconduct.

Finally, everything washed up by the sea—wrecks, flotsam and jetsam of all sorts, dead bodies, dead fish and sea-animals—is said 'to belong to *lor*'. These objects are divided into two categories: *lor mas tomat* (*lor* gold and human being) and *lor balanun* (*lor* poison). If someone wishes to gather these objects, he must first inform Hukum by offering a small amount of money, intended to 'welcome' the object onto the island. Otherwise the worms, which 'belong to *lor*', would destroy the millet gardens. When a substantial number of objects are washed ashore, normally at the time the monsoon changes, a ceremony assembling all the villagers is held in Hukum's house, where drums are beaten and songs sung from sunset to sunrise, in a sort of collective welcome. This ritual is intended to purify the village of all kinds of pollution, those brought by the sea as well as those caused by the villagers' misdeeds. Indeed, while each individual transgression must be redeemed by an appropriate compensation given to the spirit Hukum, collective redemption is always necessary to purify the society from individual misbehaviour. Thus when an initiated elder commits adultery, he may no longer play his part in the millet ceremonies for *haratut*, and the entire society is prevented from carrying out its essential rituals. But after the elder gives a payment to Hukum, he may be initiated again, and the ritual process can continue.

It must be noted here that, although the ideas attached to *lor* may seem to define at first sight a mode of relation to the external world and to the sea, they are actually the evidence of an external interference in the internal order of *haratut*, which acts as a kind of guarantee of *haratut*'s elements and of the rules that constitute it. Not only is *haratut* protected by the law of *lor* but, as we shall see below, it is nourished by *lor*. Clearly, *lor* as society can only be understood in its relation to *haratut*, and the reverse is also true. In a way, *lor* lives on *haratut*'s sins, but at the same time restores its integrity.

*Various Aspects of the lor-haratut Relationship*

We have noted that in the marriage exchanges which refer to the *haratut* ideological level, the wife-taker is classified as masculine and related to the sea, while the wife-giver is feminine, related to the origin of the society and to the land. The former are considered foreigners and inferior, while the latter are landholders and superior. When the houses and their perpetuation are involved, *haratut* appears as the dominant value, while the subordinate position attributed to the wife-giver corresponds to that of *lor*. Although *lor* is never mentioned in this context, it seems clear that the wife-taker classified as 'foreigner' or the husband compared to flotsam, both representing the inferior masculine side in the opposition wife-taker/wife-giver, has the subordinate position and has to do with *lor*. Other examples could be given to show how, when one of the values is dominant at a given ideological level, it continues to be related to the other placed in a subordinate position.

The relationship between the spirits Adat and Hukum further exemplifies the association of *lor* and *haratut* in Tanebar-Evav ideology. Both of these spirits stand for 'the arms (of the body) of God' or for 'the weapons of God', and punish persons whom God wishes to castigate. But in the cases of incest, adultery or murder, the more important part is played by Hukum, the 'younger brother', who receives the payment, while only a small amount of money is given to Adat, the 'older brother', just to 'tell him' about the sin. Yet of all the supernatural beings who form part of this society, Adat is the most important. He is revered like a god and receives offerings in one of the most sacred places, a prolongation of the centre of the village. After the *haratut* ritual hunting of wild pigs for the harvest, Adat receives his share of a pig, while Hukum does not. The initiated elder who is the servant of Adat has, together with the Captains, one of the heaviest responsibilities in the millet rituals. Indeed, as regards these two spirits, one may say that Hukum is completely involved in the society *lor*, while the position of Adat is less clear, which indicates that he pertains to both *lor* and *haratut*. Although associated with Hukum and *lor*, Adat plays a more important part in *haratut* framework.

Without trying yet to order these facts hierarchically, one can observe with respect to the older-younger relationship which unites Adat and Hukum that Adat has the dominant position when *haratut* is involved, in the millet ritual for instance, while Hukum has the subordinate position. But, although he keeps his 'status' of older brother, Adat has the subordinate position when *lor* is involved, in the punishment of incest for instance. We note here an inversion in the respective position of these spirits, which indicates a shift in the value reference implied in each case, and thus a change of ideological level.

We shall now present a completely different example, where a particular context shows how *lor* and *haratut* are associated at the same ideological level, and how the analysis must deal with this fact.

When a sea-turtle is caught while laying eggs on the beach, that is, neither harpooned at sea nor washed up on shore, both *lor* and *haratut* are concerned. One specific portion of the turtle is prepared for the houses' nine pairs of

ancestors in the name of *haratut*, while another is offered to Hukum in the name of *lor*. The first offering is called *haratut ni*, 'it belongs to *haratut*', the second *lor ni*, 'it belongs to *lor*'. Since the turtle has been found on the shore, it cannot be offered in its entirety to the houses' nine pairs of ancestors (*ub*), who usually receive a share when an animal is killed at sea (when *haratut* is involved). At the same time, neither can the entire turtle be given to Hukum, for it has not really run aground, though it seems to have done so. Hukum does claim his share, however, since the animal has been caught on the beach and, we recall, all objects washed up on shore 'belong to *lor*'. Furthermore, the turtle is cut up outside the village, since carrying it into the village whole would be an offence to Hukum, who has not yet been told of the event.

Neither the values of *haratut* nor those of *lor* prevail in this context. On the contrary, the fact that they are both associated, and apparently at the same ideological level, indicates that we may here be nearer to the 'whole' than above, when we were dealing with a 'partial whole'. The intermediate position of the turtle between the sea and the land, between life (itself giving birth to new lives) and death, between masculine and feminine (turtles are protected by the male prophet Adam in the sea, while pigs are protected by the female figure of Awa-Eve) implies that the turtle partakes of both, and that it may consequently refer to the whole. I shall return to this point in the conclusion.

### *The Millet Ritual*

An analysis of the ritual cultivation of millet may give us further insight into the operation of *lor* and *haratut*. As noted above, the aim of the ritual is to help the King of Masbaït Mountain in his task of growing the 'millet *haratut*', to be stored in the communal granary of the Tanebar-Evav village. The explicit objective is to bring about the King's rebirth—that is, the rebirth of the millet itself, subject and object here being confounded in one—so that the King's name, Masbaït Mountain, which also identifies the village, will be renowned throughout the archipelago and beyond. This collective task is described by the metaphor of a sailing-boat putting out to sea in the formula: 'May the sea be calm and the winds propitious for the journey.'

While gardens for other plants usually consist of small fenced plots scattered throughout the island, the millet gardens are located in one large plot cleared in the forest, inside which individual unfenced pieces of land are usually cultivated by members of a single house. The cycle proceeds as follows:

- 1) The work, from the clearing of the forest to the harvest, is led by the Lord of the Land who starts his garden first, followed the next day by the other villagers.
- 2) Each step of the gardening begins with ritual acts performed by the elders in various places on the island, in the village or in the forest. Offerings are given to God, to Mother Earth, and to the spirits Adat and Hukum and to a category of supernatural beings called the 'disappeared', all of whom are asked to protect

the society and to bring good luck, millet and pigs (for the ritual hunt) from all over the outside world.

3) The 'disappeared' are the spirits of persons 'lost' either at sea or in the forest. Our prior work leads us to conclude that they are the wandering souls of drowned or guilty persons whose sins are answerable to Hukum, and thus related to *lor* values, and perhaps also a part of the souls of ordinary dead. If these spirits were not honoured, worms and other small animals and parasites which 'belong to *lor*' would destroy the crops, and the villagers would say that *lor* had already taken its share and that nothing was left for the others.

4) Just before the sowing the Lord of the Land must make an offering in the forest, in order to 'replace' the animals, trees, stones, land, and anything else that may have been destroyed during the clearing operation and which is considered as having been 'murdered' by the villagers. This is a *lor* offering, comparable to the one made to Hukum as replacement for a murder victim.

5) At the same period a rain ceremony is held by the villagers. The King of the 'disappeared' is requested to ask the winds to blow and bring the rainfall required for the sowing.

We note here again that *lor* intervenes, bringing from the outside world the (male) rain water needed to fecundate the (female) seed in the earth's womb. The word translated here as 'seed' is the one usually employed to speak of the female principle associated with the male 'water' or semen in the conception of a child. We recall that the growing of millet is considered the King of the Mountain's task, he himself being reborn each year in the form of millet *haratut*, which also represents the rebirth of the society.

6) When the gardens are ready to be harvested, a ritual hunt, which may be compared with the waging of war, and which lasts at least three days, is held in the forest. Seven wild pigs must be killed, to be offered to five village spirits (but not to Hukum), to God and to the dead. The hunt is led by the Sea Boat-Captain in the forest outside the village, while the two Lords of the Land or Land Boat-Captains keep watch inside the sacred house where the village millet is stored. All adult men participate in the hunt, while the women remain outside the village walls and are forbidden to work.

When offering the pigs, the elders pronounce a prayer requesting the continued protection of each of the five spirits, of God, and of the dead, so that this ritual honouring them may be repeated in the future, year after year: 'May the crop be excellent and thus may the name of Masbait Mountain [i.e. the village society (*haratut*)] become great and famous among the villages of the archipelago [i.e. the entirety of Kei society (*lor*)].'<sup>4</sup> A parallel may perhaps be drawn with childbirth. Before a new-born child is given a name, his father must kill turtles or fish to be offered to the elders and to his wife-giver in a ceremonial meal. There is a saying that the father seeks the name in the sea. During the ceremony, the child is carried to the threshold of his house for the first time, and there presented to the whole society of which he now becomes a member. In a similar manner, the society's name becomes famous throughout the archipelago

4. *Lor* is employed here in its widest sense, embracing the whole Kei culture.

(*lor* five and *lor* nine) after the successful hunting of seven wild pigs and a plentiful harvest. Indeed, what is vital for the village is the renown obtained in victorious wars, which constitutes the sacred force of the village enclosed in the central mountain and made visible in the harvest derived from its sacred land.

It is of course impossible to explain fully in a few pages a ritual cycle which comprises dozens of offerings to a great number of supernatural beings in numerous places around the island, which lasts about eight months—beginning with a divination to choose the appropriate plot and ending with the collection from each individual of his share of millet to be stored in the *haratut* communal granary—and which involves an increasing participation of the members of the society. My purpose is only to stress that although the whole ritual cycle is related to *haratut* values, it is at the same time enclosed within the values of *lor*. *Lor* protects (restoring *haratut*'s integrity) and punishes (e.g. through worms which may eat the crops), plays a part in the fecundation of the earth (the rain sent by the 'disappeared') and finally appears as the ultimate reference for the society which seeks renown among other societies. Here we reach the highest value level, where Tanebar-Evav society is taken as a whole; that is, where the relation between *lor* and *haratut* takes the form of the encompassment of *haratut* by *lor*. Neither *lor* nor *haratut* in themselves can define a society as a whole; they are interdependent, even though *lor* is the encompassing principle bringing life and death from outside. One must remain aware, however, that when speaking of *lor* and *haratut*, I am not describing two entities related to each other, but one single entity, the society, founded on the hierarchical relationship between the opposing principles and values of *lor* and of *haratut*.

### *The Sailing-Boat*

I shall now examine in more detail, with reference to *lor* and *haratut* values, the parallelism already noted between the society and the sailing-boat with its occupants. I include the words 'and its occupants' intentionally to counteract any tendency to think of a sailing-boat or of a house as mere objects, usually 'symbolic' objects, which they are not in Tanebar-Evav ideology: while in a sense they represent the society, they also 'are' the society. When a boat-builder measures out a keel, he always counts out an odd number of cord lengths and then adds one more to include a human presence. An even number of cord lengths always results, representing the whole. (The same kind of measuring process also occurs in the construction of a house.) The whole thus consists of a boat plus mankind.

While the house is considered a female human body, the sailing-boat is considered both a male and a female human body. The hull is called the body, the keel is called the backbone, and other planks bear the names of different bones and arteries. The keel consists of three parts: the central one is female and bears the heart and eyes, while the bow and the stern are male parts. The



tenoned joints of these three parts are called 'the interstices between the penis and the vagina'.

A parallel may be drawn between the building of a boat and childbirth: the three main logs on which the keel rests during construction are called 'the mother' of the boat, and receive offerings of food at the time of the launching ceremony, when the mother is to be separated from its child.

At *haratut* ideological level, when speaking of marriages and of houses, the 'keel of the sailing-boat' (the name applied to the cannon given as part of the bridewealth by the wife-taker to the wife-giver), which 'replaces' the woman in marriage exchanges, is considered a masculine good. In boat-building, we note an inversion: the keel is feminine and is associated with two male parts. The inversion indicates that we are no longer at the same ideological level.

Finally, one of the planks of the hull, indicating approximately the ideal water-line, is called 'the junction between the dead and the living'. In the same way as the shore (situated between sea and land) and the village walls (situated between forest and village), this plank marks the frontier between two worlds, that of the living (usually the island), and that of the dead (the sea). The capture of the turtle alive on the shore was seen to be a reference to the whole, while the body of the boat is *in itself* a whole enclosing both what is above and what is under the sea.

Boat-building is usually a collective concern. Although there is an owner who takes the decision to build a boat, from time to time the whole village gathers to help him, the men shaping the logs, the women cooking for the assembly. Moreover, the entire village must participate in a ritual which is held several times at various stages of the boat's construction.

A myth refers to this ritual. A young woman dances the war-dance in the sky near God, and while dancing her blood falls down upon the earth. A man on the beach, an orphan, is building a boat, and the blood falls inside his earthenware pot (one which is used for cooking, but is also employed to hold the foetus resulting from a miscarriage). The next morning, the man hears a noise in the pot, opens it and finds a little boy crying for his mother. They then decide to climb up to the sky and seek the mother. When they arrive, the mother recognizes her child and marries the man. In order to replace him on earth, they send two children, a young boy and a young girl with a message: 'when a boat is launched, the boy shall go on board to "feed" the boat during the journey, while the girl shall stay in the house to keep watch'.

During the ceremony the pair, boy and girl, are represented by small figurines carved out of sago palm wood. They are offered food which is prepared in two parts. The men cook a kind of stew—made of chicken (considered to be the husband) and bananas (considered to be the wife)—which bears the name of an offering consisting of a pig and a gold jewel, and made to the spirit of the house at the time when a woman marries and must follow her husband to his house. At the same time, the women prepare a conically shaped rice-pudding together with seven small rice-balls ('the children of the pudding'), called respectively 'the captain and the crew'. Three of the 'children' puddings are given to the logs which are the 'mother' of the boat, two to the 'interstices between the penis and

the vagina', and two to the boy and girl figurines. The rest of the food is eaten exclusively by the men, sitting inside the empty hull. During this ceremony, it is strictly forbidden for women to enter the boat or to eat any of the food.

We have omitted here many details of the myth and of the ritual, but this short summary is comprehensive enough to allow us to note a number of inversions which are interesting to analyse. We observe immediately that the fecundation process described in the myth contrasts sharply with that for the conception of a child, where impregnation is brought about by the wife-taker's semen, as well as with that represented in the millet ritual, where rain sent by the 'disappeared' spirits fecundate the land. Here, on the contrary, female blood (obviously menstrual blood) drops from the sky into a pot which is usually employed as a kind of coffin to contain the remains of an unsuccessful birth, that is, a miscarriage. In fact, we are dealing here with the birth of a boat, but it is clear that it is not the kind of birth to which we are accustomed when *haratut* is involved. While usually the earth is classified as feminine, in the myth the man on earth receives the blood for the conception of the child.

The men prepare and eat the stew, which consists of elements representing the husband (chicken) and the wife (bananas), while the women prepare but do not eat the food called 'the captain and the crew' (who are always men) or 'the children of the pudding', part of which is offered to the figurines representing the two young children, guardians of the boat. Here again, we recognize the wholeness of the boat, which is also that of the society, since male and female principles are united both in the form of figurines (obviously brother and sister) and in the male and female food. The male principle seems to encompass the female one, since only men are allowed to sit inside the hull and to eat the ceremonial food.

A complementary observation may further illustrate this last point. The maiden voyage of a boat is the occasion for a long, important ritual which lasts until the boat returns or until the purchase money for it is brought back (if the boat was to be sold). Its most striking aspect is the ceremonial part played by a young boy and a young girl (representing the children of the myth) who act as guardians of the boat and of the voyage. The young boy goes on board the boat where he must sit in a specific place and must not move for the entire voyage. The young girl must similarly remain seated in a specific place within the house to 'keep watch over the taboo' and assure the success of the voyage. Each of them keeps in his possession one of the wooden figurines, as well as one of two black stones about which a peculiar story is told. They are said to have fallen from the sky after a violent copulation of the thunderstorm with the earth, and are considered to be the testicles of the tornado, which is itself called 'the penis of the rain'. These stones are composed of a mineral unknown on the island, although they were found on it. In the ritual, they are considered husband and wife. We note that here again the male principle encompasses the female one: the tornado, penis of the rain, is obviously male, while his testicles, by nature also male, are considered to be one male, the other female, indicating that a contradictory female principle is enclosed in the male principle, which, simultaneously, is male and female.

These stones also have another ceremonial use. In the middle of the marriage ceremony, a woman from the wife-giver's group hangs around the bridegroom's neck a small basket containing, among other objects, one of the two black stones, half a betel leaf, and a small vulviform fruit called *lor* collected on the beach, where it has been washed up. The black stone is said in this context to be the husband, while the fruit is the wife. We recall that marriage is related to *haratut* values, and we observe that here, at the level of *haratut*, only half of a whole is involved: one of the two stones, half of a betel leaf. A sort of complementarity in the male/female opposition is achieved with the aid of a 'female' fruit washed up from outside the island. We observe an inversion of the ordering present in marriage exchanges where the male element, associated with the wife-taker, is related to the outside world—the husband who is washed up on shore like a wreck—while the female element, associated with the wife-giver, is related to the land. Specifically as regards the stones, we may say that marriage, where only one stone is employed, pertains to a 'partial whole', while the boat, where both stones are employed, refers to the 'whole'.

The myth and the rituals connected with the boat demonstrate that the opposition male/female plays a very important role in Tanebar-Evav ideology. The preceding example, where a 'husband and wife' (the stones) are cared for by a 'brother and sister' (the boy and the girl), probably conveys the idea that two ideological levels operate here, the brother-sister relationship being placed at a level which encompasses the subordinate level, where the marriage relationship is situated.

### Conclusion

Finally, it must be stressed that within the limits of a short paper the resources of the kind of analysis used here cannot be fully deployed. To study 'the whole', one must take into account *all* the elements comprising it, which are numerous and related to one another and to the whole in such a complex way that a complete description would have to be extremely lengthy.

My purpose has simply been to present the principal values of Tanebar-Evav society and to show how at different levels they order its social institutions as well as its rituals. *Lor* and *haratut* are simultaneously expressions of 'partial wholes' (Dumont 1971: 25) and of the whole because they define a single society at different ideological levels. *Lor* cannot be explained without *haratut* or vice versa, any more than the left side can be understood without an implicit reference to the right side, and *at the same time* to the whole body. The relationship between the partial wholes is a hierarchical one, because one of the values is dominant and the other subordinate in reference to the whole.

In the case of Tanebar-Evav society, whatever the value level we deal with, a reference to the sailing-boat (i.e., a boat and its inhabitants) at sea—that is, to the whole—is always to be found. The true nature of this society is to be a boat sailing on the sea.

The sailing-boat cannot be classified exclusively at one level or another. It is neither caught by the society *haratut* like big sea-animals nor is it flotsam belonging to *lor*. It is not a wreck destined to come to rest on an island. It is an entirely independent whole, sailing where it wants to under the guidance of its Boat-Captains. It is simultaneously on the surface of, below and above the sea, that is, like the turtle laying eggs on the sand, an intermediary between different components of the society: the living and the dead, masculine and feminine, the 'disappeared', the spirits and God.

Indeed, the relationship between *haratut* and *lor*, as a combination of sea and land, can be understood as a circulation within the society. *Haratut* expels illnesses, the dead and sins from the island, and receives in return from *lor* everything which is washed up on the shore, as well as the rain, the millet and the pigs. In a way, the 'lost souls' of the 'disappeared' are reintegrated in *haratut*, when they are honoured during the millet ritual and their King is asked to bring the rain. It means the transformation of death into life again, which the boat also indicates by the plank called the junction between the dead and the living.

In conclusion, we may say that the boat, which represents the whole, does not belong either to the *haratut* or to the *lor* level of values. We have already seen how *haratut* is only a partial whole. But to assert that the boat refers exclusively to the *lor* level of values because of its relationship with the outside world, because it is a potential wreck or because it metaphorically sinks as the result of incest, would also be incorrect. The sailing-boat does not refer to one ideological level or another; it is the ideology, the society as a whole, made up of the hierarchical relationship of two values, *lor* and *haratut*.

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SIMONNE PAUWELS

## **SOME IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS OF MARRIAGE ALLIANCE: TANIMBAR, INDONESIA**

SPEAKING about the societies of eastern Indonesia, van Wouden writes in *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (1968: 2), 'The preservation and continuation of everything is ensured by the interaction of human and cosmic powers in the ritual.' In this paper I subscribe to van Wouden's idea and elaborate on this 'interaction of human and cosmic powers'. 'Interaction' is a vague term, suggesting that there is a dialectical relation between cosmic and human powers. The purpose of this contribution is to show that this interaction can only be understood within a hierarchical model, the interaction present in the rituals being ordered according to different levels. My demonstration will be made through an analysis of various rituals in a south-eastern Moluccan society of the Tanimbar Archipelago. For the purposes of this analysis I include the ancestors and the local deity, Ratu, as partners in the rituals and actors in the cosmology.

By way of an introduction, I would like to give an example of the manner in which the distinctive oppositions met with in these rituals can be hierarchically ordered. Usually, in the ritual exchanges of Tanimbar, prestations consist in particular foods and specific valuables. Both the food and the valuables are offered as prestations to Ratu and given in exchanges between affines. It is clear that in the ritual exchanges between affines, for instance at marriage ceremonies, the prestations of valuables are decisive for the success of the ritual, while the prestations of food, though present, are secondary. Conversely, in the offerings to Ratu all the prestations including the valuables are treated as though they were food. For example, when food is lacking during an epidemic, people can decide to offer valuables to Ratu to avert disaster. These valuables

are then called 'biscuits' (Drabbe 1940: 246). They are offered provisionally, pending the time when adequate food can be found for the offerings. Here there is a reversal of the relative importance of food and valuables. According to Dumont (1979a: 811), 'the reversal of an asymmetrical opposition is significant...it is evidence of a change of level'. In my example this reversal depends on the principal relation established through the ritual, which may be either the relation between affines or the relation with Ratu. I accept that these two types of relation are located on different levels and intend my analysis to situate these levels according to a hierarchical ordering.

This paper presents the results of two years' research into social organization and exchange in Tanimbar in preparation for field research, which was made possible by the rich literature available for this area. Van Wouden bases his discussion of Tanimbar on three articles by Father Drabbe (1923; 1925; 1927) published before 1935. However, in 1940 Drabbe enriched his ethnographic data with a monograph—and it is the unpublished manuscript of this book, which contains many more expressions and quotations in the language of Yamdena Island,<sup>1</sup> that I have used as the principal source for this paper. My research focuses on Yamdena, where Drabbe spent sixteen years.

I shall now review those aspects of Yamdena society that are relevant to the analysis of its rituals. The society is thought to consist of 'houses'. Each house identifies itself through its relation to two ancestors: one is the ancestor who founded the house, where his patrilineal descendants cluster; the other is the ancestor who gave the first wife to the house. The terms used between two houses linked by a marriage are the following: *nduan*, which I translate as 'master, the one who is responsible', designates the wife-giving house, while *uranak*, 'sister-child', designates the wife-taking house. This relational terminology is actually used for all the exchanging units, from the largest (the 'house') to the smallest (the nuclear family), as well as the members of these units. There is a third relational term designating the members of an exogamous unit: *merwan-awajar*, 'men-brothers'. The exogamous unit is called *trjame-matan*, literally 'source of food'. It contains a variable number of 'houses', *das*, issued from the same ancestral founder and whose members are agnates related as 'elder and younger brothers'.

This society practises matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, but it also allows marriage with other women. There exist therefore two types of marriage. The first is called the marriage with a *bat nduan*, a 'nduan woman'. In such a marriage a man marries a woman of a house with which his ascendants already have a relation of alliance. The repetition of such a marriage at each generation is not requisite, but at each generation the prestations implied by the alliance continue. The second type of marriage is called the marriage with a *bat waljéte*, a

1. This manuscript can be found at the library of the Dutch missionaries of the sacred heart at Tilburg, the Netherlands, and is actually the version Drabbe wanted to publish. Since Drabbe was in Tanimbar, Father Geurtjens edited the manuscript and on his own authority discarded some expressions and quotations in the language of Yamdena Island.

'stranger woman'. In this case a man marries a woman who is neither a *nduan* woman nor a sister, real or classificatory—that is, a woman of a house with which his ascendants have not yet established a relation of alliance. Prestations are exchanged for both types of marriage. In the second, the prestations from wife-taker to wife-giver are called *béli*, 'bridewealth'. The prestations from wife-giver to wife-taker are said to be the 'adornment'. The prestations circulate in the following ways. Passing from the *uranak* to the *nduan* are male earrings, breastplates, elephant tusks, swords, meat (pork), fish, and palm-wine. Circulating from the *nduan* to the *uranak* are female earrings, necklaces, bracelets, sarongs, loincloths, and vegetable foods (rice).

The former prestations are all called 'ivory-gold' or 'fish', while the latter are all 'bracelet-necklace' or 'vegetables'. This double set of names seems to permit emphasis on either the prestations of valuables or the prestations of food, referred to above; the fundamental importance of this distinction will become evident later. In the case of marriage with a *nduan* woman there are also prestations during the ceremony, but these are considered neither as bridewealth in the one direction, nor as adornment in the other. Nevertheless they are part of the usual circulation of prestations between the two partners of the alliance. The wife-giver is a rightful claimant; he receives here the 'ivory-gold' gifts he was expecting independently of the fact that he gave his daughter to his wife-taker. Likewise he is expected to give 'bracelet-necklace' valuables to his wife-taker. These prestations are emphasised by the gift of a woman, preferably his own daughter. In such a marriage the married couple is defined in advance by an alliance which concerns not only the individual partners, but all the members of the two houses and also their wife-takers and wife-givers. The prestations circulate on account of this alliance and not because of the contracted marriage.

There is another difference between the two types of marriage. In the case of a marriage with a *nduan* woman, the woman, if widowed, will marry her husband's brother. In marriage with a stranger woman, the widow leaves the house of her husband. If she marries again the new husband must pay bridewealth, and she breaks all genealogical ties with the first wife-takers.

A marriage with a *nduan* woman, however, ensures that through the obligatory funeral prestations of the wife-takers, the wife-givers become ancestors to their wife-takers. They are called *mangmwat'enar*, 'dead-mothers', and are represented by named statues on the altar of the dead in the house. These 'dead-mothers' are important for all that concerns fertility and growth. At paddy planting their help is requested by means of a fan on which are spread a sarong and a necklace. These objects belong to the category 'bracelet-necklace', and are worn by the wife during planting. The 'dead-mothers' come down to her, and the people in the field ask them to make the rice grow. The relation between the house and its 'dead-mothers' is essential to the existence and the permanence of the house. But another kind of ancestor, also important for the house, can be distinguished: these are the patrilineal ancestors, who are usually represented by their vertebrae. Just as the 'dead-mothers' are 'ancestors-givers-of-rice', the 'ancestors-vertebrae' are 'ancestors-givers-of-pigs'; and

hunters appeal to them to help them kill pigs. 'Dead-mothers' and 'ancestors-vertebrae' are integral to the house.

The house acquires food through the relation between the living and their ancestors. The two categories of ancestors correspond to the two ancestors of a house, namely the founder, who is an 'ancestor-vertebrae', and the ancestor who gave the first woman, associated with the 'dead-mothers'. It should be noted that the wife-takers are absent in this definition of the house.

The main activity of the house is making offerings to Ratu. In local terms offerings consist in 'nourishing' the god, who will 'eat' the offerings. The living thus preserve themselves from being 'eaten', that is, they protect themselves from disease and death. These dangers occur either occasionally, due to a transgression—when the threat proceeds from a malediction such as 'may Ratu eat you'—or they are inscribed within the life cycle (birth, construction of a house, etc.). All these critical situations are resolved by rituals in which food is given to Ratu. Now in many cases these offerings cannot be made without the participation of the affines, from whom the house organising the ritual receives prestations. These include food, of which a great deal is consumed and redistributed, while a small amount is offered to Ratu. The participation of the wife-takers *and* the wife-givers is essential in so far as their prestations are specific: wife-takers give pigs and wife-givers give rice. Now the pre-eminent offering is made up of the two kinds of food, animal and vegetable. In these rituals we discern the two levels of relations I have already mentioned. On one level there are the prestations between the partners of an alliance, which take the shape of an oriented circulation of valuables and food: what is given in one direction is redistributed in the other. On the other level a proportion of all the previous food prestations is set aside as offerings to Ratu.

Let us consider some rituals in more detail and start with the ceremony of 'coming out of the house' of a newly born child. It is a ritual which invokes the relation of a house with its 'dead-mothers' and Ratu. The ritual is called *luri*, or 'feast of the "dead-mothers"', and takes place in a house some time after the birth of a child. The rituals call upon the participation of the agnates and their affines. The men of the house collect rice, hunt pigs and cut down some sago trees. Then they summon their wife-takers, who bring pigs, fish and palm-wine, and their wife-givers, who bring rice. The feast consists of a ritual meal where all the partakers consume rice, pork and sago. One part of the rice is given to the wife-takers, and one part of the pork is given to the wife-givers. But another part of the ritual requires the levying of a portion of rice, pork and palm-wine to be used in offerings to the 'dead-mothers' and Ratu. These offerings are intended to assure that the god and the 'dead-mothers' protect a child's growth and life span,<sup>2</sup> which accordingly are the result of the prestations of the agnates and their affines.

We can explore the value of the offerings to the god by returning to the distinction between animal food and vegetable food. We may then infer that this

2. The distinction here between life span and growth derives from the consideration that the gift of life does not entail that life will have duration. The span of life is a separate gift.



same value applies to the prestations coming from the ancestors and practised between the affines. Ratu gives life, Yamenda people say. 'Ratu makes the child come down in the belly of the women.' 'Ratu is making us men.' Ratu also gives death; it is he, they say, who 'eats man' when he dies. The ancestors have an intermediary role in this control over life and death. They can urge Ratu to give death, but they can also give to the living the means to obtain a life span or growth. For this purpose the 'ancestors-vertebrae' give pigs, which are used as offerings, and the 'dead-mothers' give rice for the offerings. The two kinds of ancestors intervene with different gifts. To determine the value of the pigs and the rice we shall examine a situation where they appear alone. In the case of disease, and therefore the peril of death, one promises a pig to Ratu in exchange for a life span. The value of the rice is also explicit in the following example. When about to cut down a sago tree from an unused clump, men first sow rice around the roots, so that, as they say, 'Ratu makes the clump grow and multiply.' Thus by giving pigs the 'ancestors-vertebrae' are giving the means to obtain a span of life from Ratu, and by giving rice the 'dead-mothers' ancestors are giving the means to obtain growth from Ratu. In the same way, when the wife-takers give pigs to the wife-givers they give them the means to obtain a life span from Ratu; and when the wife-givers give rice to the wife-takers they give them the means to obtain growth and life.

Ratu does not represent the differentiation we find among the ancestors: he is at the same time giver of life and of life span. He is also called *Limnditi-Fenréu*, 'Woman-Man'. This double name of Ratu reminds us of the two types of ancestors, of which one, the 'dead-mothers', has a female connotation and the other, the patrilineal 'ancestors-vertebrae', a male connotation. Elsewhere, the inhabitants of Yamdena classify their oriented prestations also as female and male: for the wife-givers, the woman, *limnditi*, is the most valued prestation; and for the wife-takers, the tusk is the most valued prestation. The tusk and the man, in the ritual language, are called *fenréu*.

Having seen that wife-givers are also rice-givers and that wife-takers are also pig-givers, we can ask whether their prestations are always necessary for the relation of the house to Ratu. In the example of the feast of the 'dead-mothers' on the occasion of the coming out of the new-born child, we saw that the wife-takers and the wife-givers both participate in the offerings. On the other hand, in the case of disease only the wife-takers participate by giving pigs. The rice is collected by the inhabitants of the house and is not brought by the wife-givers. This practice is in keeping with what we have said about the respective values of pigs and rice, namely, that this ritual is chiefly destined to obtain a prolongation of life from the god. Consequently the important participants of the ritual are the wife-takers and not the wife-givers, the prestation of rice being subordinated to that of pigs.

In a contrasting way, it appears that in funerary rituals the prestation of one particular wife-giver is more important than that of the wife-takers. There is also a second important fact about the funerals: there are no offerings of rice and pigs. The deceased himself, as they say, has been 'eaten' by Ratu. Therefore he becomes himself the object of the offering. From the point of view of the

prestations, the main point of the ritual consists in placing the prestations of the affines together on the corpse. The first prestations are those of the wife-givers, who give bracelets, sarongs and loincloths: the bracelets are put on the eyes and the mouth of the departed 'so that he can see and speak in the world of the dead'. Afterwards follows a period where they stay up for the dead until the day of the funeral. On that day the eldest daughter of the dead brings a pig which, they say, is the back of the dead and which revives him. The second daughter of the dead gives a sword which is used to cut up the pig and an earring which is used 'to string up' its most important part, the jaw. The other daughters of the dead and the wife-takers bring pigs, and the latter also bring earrings. The wife-givers bring bracelets, sarongs and loincloths. One part of these prestations is said to follow the departed to the world of the dead; another part is taken from the set of gifts to be redistributed between the wife-takers and the wife-givers, according to the orientation of the prestations within the alliance. These are the minimal prestations for funerals.

It behoves the principal wife-giver of the house, that is, the one who represents the original wife-giver of the house, to turn this funeral into a great ritual event by making a particular prestation. He gives a group of valuables consisting of bracelets and a necklace which is suspended above the head of the deceased. These objects constitute, they say, the 'ladder of the dead'; they prefigure his future 'coming-downs' when the living who possess them will appeal to him to request his help. Afterwards all the bracelets and the necklace are received by the two eldest daughters of the departed. The principal wife-giver receives the jaw of the pig, which he hangs up in his house and which he will point out each time he receives the children of the dead, saying, 'You will never be able to deny that you are my wife-takers because there hangs the back of your father'. The sword and the earring given by the second daughter are also for the principal wife-giver, but he will give them to his own wife-givers. We can distinguish here prestations which are registered in a general exchange circuit, such as the earrings, the bracelets and the loincloths, and one particular prestation, namely the jaw of the pig. This jaw remains as the token of a relationship and stresses certain rights of the wife-giver over his wife-takers. From the viewpoint of the exchange, the only token which is equivalent to the jaw in the house of the wife-giver is the gift of a woman to the house of the wife-taker.

In the rituals we have already considered, we find the two levels of relation visible in the prestations: on the one hand the oriented prestations between affines, and on the other hand the offerings from men to Ratu. In the funerals, only the relation between affines is present. Ratu has, they say, 'eaten the man'. But a prestation from the wife-takers to the wife-givers seems to indicate that during the funeral the wife-givers substitute themselves for the god and 'eat' the departed. In fact the pigs of the wife-takers, including the 'pig of the back', are cut up and their skins are dried on bamboo frames. These skins are given to the wife-givers who 'eat' them. We can see in these gifts of skins, representing some aspect of the dead, a kind of return of the gifts of women. So the prestations of the affines at the funeral allow the deceased to become an ancestor and become integrated in the world of the dead together with the valuables. Furthermore,

they permit some reciprocation of the gifts of women and the reaffirmation of the alliance, which is visible in the circulation of the valuables between the living. The creation of an ancestor with the help of one's wife-takers and wife-givers goes beyond the ritual outline of the funeral: it connects the ritual framework to the existence of the ancestors who are providers of pigs and rice, permitting prestations between affines and also permitting them 'to nourish' Ratu.

The marriage ceremonies and funerary rituals have in common the stress placed on the participation of the affines and on the circulation of the valuables. The creation or the perpetuation of the alliance is at each time the centre of the ritual. If we consider all of the rituals, we see some in which the relation to Ratu is central and some in which the relation to the affines is central. As Dumont says (1979b: 402), the hierarchical relation 'cannot be true from one end of experience to the other...for this would be to deny the hierarchical dimension itself, which requires situations to be distinguished by value'.

In this paper I have insisted on the opposition between food and valuables, and I have shown that, while in the relation between the affines, typically in the marriage, the valuables subordinate the food, the opposite is the case in the relation of the living to Ratu. Here we have seen the reversal. I have also laid stress on the distinction between wife-giver and wife-taker, associated with the distinctions between rice and pork, female and male, and multiplication or physical growth and life span. I showed further that, if in the relations between the living we find stress on one pole or the other, in the relation of the living to Ratu, there is a conjunction of the two poles. Within the entire configuration, we observe the two central relationships of hierarchy: inversion and totalization. I demonstrated too that the two levels do not refer to two different contexts, but on the contrary, that they form a unity, since the offerings are levied from the prestations between the living.

I will conclude with a consideration of mythical material emphasising the superior character of the relation with the god and his totalization. The god is the giver and the taker of life. He is called 'Woman-Man'. This name implies that he is wife-taker and wife-giver, at least when we consider him in the sphere of social relations. Mythology effectively represents Ratu as a marriage partner, either as a wife-taker or as a wife-giver. When myth represents him as a wife-taker, he pays bridewealth, but in the relevant myth the separation of the married couple takes place before the payment of the adornment. When he is wife-giver, he adorns his daughter, but the separation from his wife-taker takes place before the payment of the bridewealth. In both cases the living remain in a position of debt toward Ratu. This debt could find its expression in the fact that Ratu 'eats' the living, or gives death. But the marriages with Ratu as partner have another consequence. Each time he marries, the child of the couple has no wife-giver following their rupture with Ratu. The child whose father is heavenly has no maternal uncle in so far as he becomes his son. The child whose mother is celestial has his maternal uncle in heaven and relations are broken. This absence of wife-giver has given rise to the creation of a closed alliance circle between all the houses which had the god as a marriage partner. That is, there is in Tanimbar a 'circulating connubium' of thirteen houses which explain their

presence in the circle by a myth similar to those I have mentioned. All these houses claim a status of equal nobility on the basis of a marriage with Ratu. This equality subordinates the hierarchical relation between wife-givers and wife-takers within the circle. On the social plane, this circle neutralizes the asymmetry between affines; simultaneously, on the mythological plane the nobility is associated with a symmetric relation to Ratu, that is, a relationship of both wife-giver and wife-taker. The problem of status in this society is not linked to the asymmetrical wife-giver/wife-taker relationship, but is linked to a particular relation to the god. The enclosure of the alliance circle between nobles can be seen as a manifestation of the completion of exchange. It is here that the alliance comes closest to the relation with Ratu, in that it synthesizes two operations of exchange which are usually separate in ordinary alliance practice: the giving of a woman and the receiving of another. Ratu, 'Woman-Man', acts in the same way, giving and taking life.

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## CASTE IN INDIA AND BALI: LEVELS OF COMPARISON

ALTHOUGH Bali is often designated a caste society and although its religion is regularly referred to as 'Hindu', there is as yet (with the partial exception of Lekkerkerker 1926) no systematic analysis of the similarities and differences between India and Bali with respect to these social and cultural domains. Most Dutch writers have failed to address the question at all: the Geertzes devote one paragraph of their 1975 monograph to it whilst Boon discusses the problem in only two pages (1977: 147-9). It should be said, however, that Hobart (1979), though not treating comparison as an analytic question in his thesis on Bali, does draw explicitly on models constructed to deal with Indian data, and thereby emphasises the connection between the two cultures.

Since the regions with which the comparison is to deal are many thousands of miles apart, are enormously different in size and, for the last 1500 years or so, have shared neither a historical, political nor economic background, the purpose of the present essay should not be seen as an attempt to provide definitive answers to what are, obviously, very complex issues. Rather, it should be viewed as an exploratory incursion designed to register some tentative remarks concerning caste in India and Bali, in the hope of stimulating further debate. Another primary aim is to demonstrate that simple assertions that Bali is or is not a caste society are largely unhelpful, since different conclusions can be obtained by focusing on data drawn both from different aspects of the culture, and from different levels of abstraction. Consequently, the following analysis will concentrate in turn on conceptual, institutional and interactional data although, it hardly needs to be added, no hard and fast distinctions can be made between these different orders of abstraction, since in reality they interpenetrate in complex ways.

It is Dumont's opinion that the essential and defining feature of caste is the disjunction between status and power epitomized in India by the *brahman/kshatriya* relation (1972: 260). If this relation can be shown to exist in Bali, then perhaps it can justifiably be said that Bali possesses caste.

The presence of a status/power disjunction in Bali, however, is somewhat problematic because of the nature of kingship in that island. Certainly kings were all of the *satria warna* (these being the Balinese spellings) and did not themselves perform any religious ceremonies; these were conducted for them by *padanda* priests of the *brahman warna*. Moreover, *padandas* have long been very active in the traditional Balinese law courts, and as authorities on all religious matters (Korn 1960; Swellengrebel 1960). On the other hand the king was a divine king of the Southeast Asian variety (Swellengrebel 1947), and according to Geertz (1980: 126) priests are, or were in the nineteenth century, merely a part of the king's regalia. It remains then to ask whether Indian kings had magico-religious functions, even though they were representatives of temporal power. Dumont (1962: 61) contends that the developed relation between *brahman* and *kshatriya* was only attained when the magico-religious aspect was stripped from the notion of kingship, and Geertz (1980: 126) asserts that this did not occur in Bali. Moreover, Tambiah (1976: 83) argues that the Brahmanical formula of *rajadharma* (in which the *brahman* sanctifies kingship) was transformed into the conception *dharmaraja* (in which *brahmans* serve as subordinate functionaries) in the states of Indic Southeast Asia which, of course, includes Java and Bali.

The position seems to be that the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, fundamental to Dumont's version of caste, is to some extent contaminated in Bali by the Buddhist notion of divine kingship. Against this it can be argued that in Bali *brahman* priests were never, at the normative level at least, subordinate to kings in religious and judicial matters. Furthermore, though Geertz denies the existence of the *brahman/kshatriya* relation in Bali, Boon (1977: 148-9) asserts that it is, in fact, present. In short, at this level of analysis the data is at best equivocal and at worst contradictory, and given the inadequacy of reliable and relevant information it does not seem possible, for the time being anyway, to resolve the conflict in the evidence. However, by focusing instead on village Bali a rather different picture emerges for, it can be argued, the *brahman/kshatriya* relation is only one manifestation of the status/power disjunction. In other words, it is not necessary to restrict the investigation to kings and priests in order to determine whether the relation is present; a case, no doubt disputable, can be made for examining the structure of ideas in more localised spheres such as the village.

Lowland villages in south, west and east Bali are inhabited by people possessing titles which, in specific but variable circumstances, can function as the basis for the formation of caste-like social groups. In such villages there are usually representatives of the *satria warna* with titles such as *cokorda*, *déwa agung*, *anak agung*, *pradéwa*, etc. Such titles (*soroh*) are hierarchically ranked, and usually the highest ranking family is glossed in the literature as that of the local princes or local lords. But I, at least, can find no information in the ethnographic record which ascribes to these lords any sort of magico-religious nature or function.

Often no *padanda* priests reside in these villages, in which case many family and village ceremonies must be conducted by *padandas* brought in from other villages. Other ceremonies are performed by priests of a different kind and standing, and I shall have something to say about them shortly. Such an organisation in no sense provides conclusive proof but, nonetheless, at the village level this is the kind of situation one might expect if the Brahmanical, as opposed to the Buddhist, definition of the *brahman/kshatriya* relation were present. There is other evidence, though, which is perhaps more interesting and more germane to the problem.

In Pujung, the village in which my own fieldwork was carried out, there is a significant and constant conceptual distinction between two important institutions, the *krama désa* and the *krama banjar*. Both are organizations of people and they have an overlapping membership. The *désa* is constituted by one man (and his wife or other female relative, such as mother, sister or daughter) from each of the compounds built on the consecrated village land (*karang désa*). In some sense these men have a religious authority over the ground on which their house is constructed, and they also have total rights of usufruct on its products. They do not own this land (it cannot be sold privately or in any other way alienated) and are allowed to live and build on it only by virtue of permission from the village gods, though in practice compound land is inherited without any undue fuss. The point to remember is that membership of the *désa* is defined by a religious criterion, to wit, the holding of authority, on behalf of the gods, of a piece of sacred village land.

The *banjar*, on the other hand, is composed of all married men in the village together with their wives (or other female companions, as mentioned above). On marriage a couple is compelled to join the *banjar*, though in practice, again, all those with whom I discussed this were enthusiastic to join. Now partly because of the acknowledged commencement of regular sexual relations, marriage is considered a stage in the life-cycle at which people are at the nadir of their ritual purity (cf. Howe 1980: ch. 6, for fuller details), and so it can be argued that marriage is a comparatively secular criterion for membership.

These two organizations have very different statuses and perform very different functions, and the main contrast, in keeping with their respective membership criteria, is that the *désa* is concerned with religious affairs whilst the *banjar* takes responsibility for secular, village affairs. For example, the monthly meetings of the *désa* association are held within the precincts of a temple, and the main point of the meeting is to engage in a communal meal with the god or gods of that temple. It is said that the god consumes the invisible essence of the food whilst the members eat what is left over ('what is asked back', in the local idiom). Members often have informal discussions about all sorts of topics, but these are not part of the formal proceedings. *Désa* business is generally conducted at the end of work periods, when the *désa* is engaged on temple repair work or preparations for a temple festival. Finally, formal *désa* meetings are held every full moon.

In contrast the *banjar* meets every 35 days according to a very different calendar, and it gathers in the *wantilan*, a non-religious building most regularly

used for cock-fighting, rehearsals and drama performances. At these meetings all outstanding local village issues are debated and government legislation is announced and explained. Whereas no overt politicking goes on at *désa* meetings, the *banjar* is the principal arena for such activity (Hobart 1975).

The distinction between the *désa* and the *banjar* is also strongly evident in the contrast between their respective officials and priests. *Désa* officials obtain office by virtue of holding certain hereditary titles; they are unpaid and serve for an indefinite period. *Banjar* officials are elected, paid by government, and serve for no more than five years in any one term, though they can be ousted before their appointment has terminated. The principal *désa* official must undertake a purificatory ceremony (*mawinten*), but this is optional for the *banjar* leader.

The *désa*, as I have already mentioned, is primarily concerned with temple affairs. Each temple has a resident priest. The *banjar* also appoints priests, but their status and functions are, in many respects, quite different. Temple priests must wear white and/or yellow, though all the priests I ever met wore white on the upper body. White is the pre-eminent symbol of purity and divinity and comes at the top, literally, of the colour hierarchy. *Banjar* priests may wear white but to wear all white is considered presumptuous, and it is thought far more appropriate to wear black on the upper body. Black is, in other contexts, associated with night, with witches and with the genitalia.

Temple priests conduct services to the gods, whilst *banjar* priests conduct life-crisis services for the living and for the partly purified dead. It is, in fact, polluting for a temple priest even to be present at life-crisis ceremonies. Moreover, whereas both types of priest have to undergo the purificatory ceremony or *mawinten*, the one for the temple priests is conducted at a higher level (i.e., with more offerings) than that for the *banjar* priests, and in a different temple. As a consequence temple priests are credited with a higher level of natural purity, and in funeral processions their remains take precedence over those of *banjar* priests. The superior status of temple priests is also indicated in language use. The Balinese language, as is well known, contains several lexical levels, hierarchically ranked, for about 1500 to 2000 key words. In general, it is always more appropriate to speak to all priests in a more refined version of the language than is used amongst equals. However, this injunction is expressed more emphatically for temple priests than for *banjar* priests, and indeed the latter should, and do, use higher levels of Balinese to address and refer to temple priests than to *banjar* priests. Such prescriptions apply more strongly in religious contexts than in secular ones. Finally, temple priests are selected by some form of divine revelation, and are therefore often young, whilst *banjar* priests are elected or appointed by the *banjar* after having shown themselves worthy, and they are thus almost always quite old.

That part of village law which has not so far been superseded by the national legal code is enshrined in books known as *awig-awig*, and in this particular village the *awig-awig* is kept in a temple shrine. The village legal code is based on religious values, and certain contraventions are considered an affront to the village gods, the place where the infringement took place becoming polluted. This legal code, enshrined in a *désa* temple, is also the legal code for *banjar* affairs.



Though far from complete, this evidence seems to point to the conclusion that there is an asymmetric conceptual contrast between spiritual authority and temporal power in the contexts described, and such a contrast, if not identical to the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, nonetheless appears analogous or, perhaps better, structurally equivalent to it. To bolster the argument slightly, evidence can be adduced from other parts of the archipelago where such a contrast seems to exist.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the demonstration that such a distinction may have general relevance for eastern Indonesian societies, which no one would dream of designating caste societies, would seem to indicate the possibility that the relation between this distinction and caste is entirely contingent. Such a conclusion would appear premature, because it is not completely clear that the *brahman/kshatriya* relation is a simple derivative of the distinction between spiritual authority and temporal power. If the former is not merely a more concrete expression of the latter, but is essentially different it is, nonetheless, difficult to see in what this difference consists.

In concluding this section, which has used Dumont's criterion of the disjunction between status and power as a focus for comparison, it can be said that there are grounds for classing Bali as a caste society. Moreover, the adoption of such a standpoint enables us to see some of the significance of two central Balinese institutions. Unfortunately, the picture is more complicated than I have so far indicated, because Dumont's version of caste has been severely criticized in the last few years. Of course, *Homo Hierarchicus* has been at the centre of debate ever since it was published, but in recent years a number of books and articles have appeared which all bring into doubt some aspect of the theory. Thus Das (1977) bases Hinduism within a framework of relations (of equivalence, opposition and parallelism) between four major categories: *brahman*, king, *sanyasi* and a residual category of 'householders'. The relations between these categories are not determined solely by an opposition between the pure and the impure, which is what Dumont avers, but rather by this opposition in conjunction with the notions of rank and separation seen as independent of one another. Burghart (1978), on the other hand, atomises Hinduism into three incongruent systems personified by *brahman*, king and ascetic based on three independently and differentially coded hierarchies which in turn are embedded in three dissimilar domains of action. Both Fuller (1979) and Parry (1980) place doubt on the Dumontian version of caste by providing data on the relation of priests to god and priests to sin and pollution respectively, relationships which tend to subvert the clearly bounded categories which Dumont perceives. Finally, both Burghart (1978: 524) and Fuller (1983) contest Dumont's view that Indian kings had no magico-religious aspect.

A point has been reached, then, where depending on the level at which the analysis proceeds, it is difficult to decide unequivocally whether or not Bali exhibits the developed relation between *brahman* and *kshatriya*; and even if a

1. See van Wouden for eastern Indonesia generally (1968: 29-30, 63-5, 133-4), Schulte-Nordholt for Timor (1971: 371-4), Fox for Roti (1971: 40-1, 48), and Barnes for Kédang (1974: 89, 92).

decision could be made, there is the added complication that the so-called defining feature of caste is itself of doubtful use and validity. But the situation is perhaps worse still; for even if the complications should be ignored (though there is no good reason to do so), and Bali be described as a caste society, there is still sense in the following question: if Bali is a caste society in terms of Dumontian theory, why does it 'look' so different on the ground? Only a small number of relevant ethnographies have to be consulted in order to reveal just how different the two places are,<sup>2</sup> and it is worth pausing to examine some of these differences.

According to Dumont (1972: 81), Bouglé's three principles of caste structure can be reduced to a single 'true' principle, namely, the opposition between the pure and the impure. In Bali, though, the picture would appear to be somewhat different. To begin with, Bouglé's first principle, gradation of status or hierarchy, is obviously present in the Balinese *warna* scheme which, unlike the situation in India, does have a social, as opposed to a purely cultural, relevance. But the title groups which compose each *warna* are not nearly so preoccupied with status ranking as are the Indian *jat*. The upper three *warna* in Bali, collectively known as the *triwangsa* and constituting less than ten per cent of the population, are much more concerned with ranking than those title groups which make up the *sudra warna*, for most of whom ranking is largely irrelevant in most contexts. Secondly, and in accordance with what has just been said, rules concerning the separation of title groups (Bouglé's second principle) are few and lax for *sudras* but more restrictive for *triwangsa*. Next, the division of labour (Bouglé's third principle) is largely absent in Bali. Finally, even the opposition pure/impure is not as dominant in Bali as it is in India, for the simple reason that other conceptual oppositions are relevant for the analysis of stratification. Perhaps the most widely used is that of *alus/kasar* (refined/coarse) which, although it can substitute for the pure/impure distinction in some contexts, is probably appropriate in a wider range of circumstances than is the latter (cf. Howe 1984).

There are many other differences, some of the most important of which may be listed as follows:

- 1) The absence in Bali of the concept of untouchability, and the absence of any notion concerning the accumulation of pollution for those at the bottom of the hierarchy who, in India, have to deal with grossly polluting substances.
- 2) Whereas in India *brahman* priests rank lower than non-priestly *brahmans*, in Bali the situation is the opposite.
- 3) Balinese religion is perhaps more aptly described as an ancestor cult than a peculiar version of Hinduism (cf. Geertz and Geertz 1975; Boon 1977; Howe 1980).
- 4) While Balinese society does display patrilineal descent groups practising preferential endogamous marriage, by no means all Balinese are members of such groups. In general, kinship institutions and marriage practices in Bali are very different to those of India, which in any case exhibit such tremendous

2. On India, see as examples Dumont 1957; Mayer 1960; Parry 1979; on Bali, see as examples Geertz and Geertz 1975; Boon 1977; Hobart 1979.

variation that comparison at this level poses numerous problems.

5) Whereas in India sub-castes are generally corporate groups, in Bali people holding the same title form groups only under specifiable conditions (Geertz and Geertz 1975). As often as not those with the same title, even though living in the one village, are no more than aggregates of 'similar' kinds of people. The Balinese word for 'title', *soroh*, has the same range of referents ('kind', 'species', 'sort') as does the Hindi word *jat*.

6) The Balinese have a predilection for forming functionally specific, voluntary social groups, which persist for varying lengths of time, are open to all to join, and are, *de jure* at least, based on the democratic principle of one man, one vote. Organs of local government in village Bali are similar sorts of organizations, though membership is often compulsory and much more permanent. India, it would seem, does not possess social formations of this character.

There are, then, numerous differences between the two societies, and it is the substantial nature of some of these which should caution against any dogmatic assertion that Bali constitutes a caste society. Just as there is a good deal of disparity between the conceptual and institutional forms of the two countries, so there are also many reasons which account, in one way or another, for the dissimilarity. First, the available evidence points clearly to the fact that it was Sanskrit culture rather than Hindu social structure that was adopted by the Balinese and Javanese, and that this was brought to Java both by Hindu *brahman* priests and by Indonesians who travelled to India (Bosch 1961; van Leur 1967). Secondly, such a culture eventually arrived in Bali through Javanese intermediaries. Thirdly, it is probable that Bali already possessed a fairly well-developed ancestor cult and ranked status titles on which this suitable culture could settle, and it is worth noting the complete absence in Java of any kind of caste-like groups now and in the past. Fourthly, whatever was the nature of the culture adopted, there were significant strains of Buddhist influence within it. Fifthly, there probably existed in Bali, prior to the advent of Hindu culture, a system of family, village and regional temples with its associated ritual and ceremony. Sixthly, and most importantly, it is likely that there already existed the practice of wet-rice cultivation and the associated organization of irrigation (Swellengrebel 1960). All of these factors are undoubtedly crucial in providing Balinese hierarchy with its own particular flavour, and obviously none of them can now be researched in any depth because of the exiguous nature of the historical sources, whether documents or material artefacts.

Summarizing so far, it seems possible to conclude that 1) by focusing on conceptual criteria, for example the *brahman/kshatriya* relation, Bali could conceivably be characterized as a caste society; 2) concentrating on the institutional make-up of the island, at least one set of institutions, the *désa* and the *banjar*, seems to embody this notion at a fairly concrete level; but that 3) other institutions, such as those concerning marriage, the nature of title groups, the extent of ranking and the absence of a *jajmani* system, argue quite strongly against it; and 4) the emergence of recent critical assessments of Dumont's theory of the Indian caste system considerably complicates the picture.

So far, however, the argument has centred on criteria of either a conceptual or institutional type, and I have, in essence, been comparing forms, ideas and cultural products. There is, of course, a third way of tackling the problem, and that is by focusing on social processes. But before this can be done it is necessary to provide some further data on titles and ranking.

As has already been said, the Indian *varna* system is present in Bali, although there is no equivalent of the untouchable castes. All four *varna* are represented, but the major sociological divide is that between the *triwangsa* and the *sudra* titles. *Brahman* and *wesia* titles are only found in some villages, and the further north one goes in southern Bali the more the villages tend to be composed entirely of people holding *sudra* titles.

People who share a title form corporate groups only when they build temples for the communal worship of their cremated and deified ancestors. In such groups, known as *dadia* or *pamaksan*, endogamy is usually practised to a greater extent than within the uncrystallised title aggregate, and the members may often hold land in common (Geertz and Geertz 1975).

Ranking within the Balinese *warna* is really only important for *triwangsa*, especially for those holding *satria* titles, amongst whom marriage contracts can be fraught with relative status considerations. Preoccupation with ranking is, moreover, relevant in a number of other contexts, for example concerning the amount, type and level of ritual paraphernalia, language use, physical posture (in terms of relative head-height), restrictions on commensality, and so on.

As far as *sudra* titles are concerned, it is generally agreed that the *pandés* (smiths) rank highest and that the various *pasek* titles follow. Below that, little attention is paid to ranking and, in contrast to what Geertz (1966) has to say, I would argue that interaction between villagers in almost all contexts is quite relaxed. Thus, for instance, there is virtually no bar to marriage between holders of different *sudra* titles, and very little trouble, if any, concerning the giving and acceptance of food. The problems that exist concerning language use are related, not so much to relative rank, but to degree of acquaintance and to whether a person is a priest or other type of religious or respected public official.

On the other hand, interaction between members of different *warna*, especially between *triwangsa* and *sudra*, is much more restricted by rules like those found in India, in form if not in content. Hypergamous marriages do take place, but have some significant social disadvantages, and hypogamous unions result in the outcasting of the woman and, in previous times, even her death. Furthermore, relative head-height, language use and commensality are heavily standardized, and therefore limit freedom of interaction to levels more reminiscent of the Indian caste system. In short, it can be argued—although it is something of a simplification to do so—that ranking is a preoccupation only when *triwangsa* are involved, and it is this circumstance which lends Bali the appearance of an attenuated caste society.

The last remark is a simplification, not merely because the rules relating to ranking may be manipulated for political and economic ends (cf. Hobart 1979), but also because even in villages composed entirely of *sudras*, ranking may still be a significant aspect of social relations in certain contexts. In Pujung there are

only three titles (all *sudra*) represented—*pandé*, *pasek gelgel* and *pasek batuan*—but these account for only 24 of the 93 village compounds. Those who have no title, to whom I shall return below, are designated as *jaba* (outsiders). The status ranking of these aggregates is rarely a topic of conversation, but when questioned villagers almost unanimously place *pandé* at the top, *gelgel* and *batuan* just below on an equal level, and *jaba* at the bottom. This ordering is constant, irrespective of the title of the person providing the information. The only contexts in which status is a significant issue are a very small number of inter-title marriages (disapproved of by the family of higher rank), the types of ritual accessories at major life-crisis rites (tooth-filing, marriage, cremation) and the sorts of terms used to address and refer to other people, those of higher status being accorded respect by the use of terms from more refined (*alus*) levels of the language. What this seems to indicate is that this village, at least, displays a rank system rather than a caste system. According to Barth (1960: 113), 'caste...is characterized by the simplicity of its basic schema, and its comprehensiveness', while 'systems of rank, though single in the scale which each defines, are generally restricted in their fields of relevance.' In short, if status considerations are confined to a rather narrow range of contexts, as they seem to be in this village, then there is no need for elaborate rules to govern social interaction in other contexts, and to that extent it may be doubted that Bali has a caste system.

This argument is by no means conclusive because, as already mentioned, only a minority of the village's population acknowledge that they possess a title at all. The rest of the population either confess to possessing no title or, though having one, prefer not to divulge it because, they attest, titles are unimportant and the less said about them the better. Indeed, there is a significant body of opinion, from both title-holders and those without titles, which holds that an excessive interest in titles, and in the consequent inevitable disputes over ranking, would have a deleterious effect on the apparently egalitarian ideology of the village, which is well established in village origin myths, in rituals enacted during annual temple ceremonies, and in certain other contexts, all of which are avidly and proudly pointed out by villagers from different title groups (cf. Howe 1980: chs. 1 and 15). That being the case, it could be argued that the seeming suppression of titles and title-ranking is something of a deliberate strategy, and that therefore this village is inappropriate as an example on which to base the kind of arguments being advanced in this essay. In fact, there is some evidence that the situation here may be changing into one in which titles are likely to assume greater significance (Howe 1984). However, two points need to be added. First, the evidence for such a change is scanty and equivocal; and secondly, even in villages further south, although status ranking appears to be more important, it is nevertheless confined to the same kinds of context as it is in this village. In other words, granted that a change is taking place in the direction of a greater emphasis on status considerations, this does not necessarily imply that these will find application in a broader range of contexts than is at present the case; an intensification of the interest in ritual status will not inevitably signify a qualitative change in the character of the hierarchy. If these arguments are valid, then there is no reason to characterize this particular village as

exceptional. Indeed, many of the surrounding villages to the west, north and east appear to be even less interested in status and ritual ranking than Pujung. In villages such as these, while notions of rank order relations between holders of different titles in only a very weak way, ranking is nevertheless important in other contexts, such as the asymmetrical oppositions between right and left, *désa* and *banjar*, god and demon, above and below, etc. (cf. Howe 1980, 1981, 1983). In short, for some parts of Bali (the villages nearer the mountains), analysis in terms of rank seems most appropriate. In other areas (the lowland, more prosperous villages, in many of which live holders of *triwangsa* titles), analysis in terms of caste might prove more profitable, because the presence of *triwangsa* considerably increases the pressures towards more standardized forms of social interaction.

Perhaps it is possible to take the analysis a little further, at least as far as Pujung is concerned, by focusing on an institution which is not present in Bali, namely the *jajmani* system. Most writers who have had anything to say about caste in Bali and its relation to caste in India have made only passing reference to the absence of such a division of labour. Usually it is merely enumerated as one of several differences, and because it is not present it seems to be thought that there is little of interest to say about it. However, there would appear to be grounds for arguing that it is the absence of a *jajmani* system which has resulted, to some degree, in the lack of the kind of status differentiation which is to be found in India. Of course, an explanation of the absence of one phenomenon which is based on the absence of another is not the usual way in which anthropologists proceed, but in this particular case there are good reasons for following such a course. Bali does seem to differ from India, as far as caste is concerned, in terms of institutions and social processes which are curtailed or absent in the former but present or emphasised in the latter, and indeed this is why I have already referred to Bali as an attenuated caste society.

With regard to the *jajmani* system, part of the difference between India and Bali depends on land ownership. Villages in India are often characterized by the presence of a dominant caste of landowners. Some of these work their own land, others hire wage-labour, and still others let out their land to tenants. Landowners receive services from various other castes, some of whose members pursue traditional occupations. In return for their services they are paid partly in kind on an annual basis, and partly in cash. Ranking of castes is, to some extent, determined by such traditional occupations, since these are themselves ranked in terms of both purity and prestige (Mayer 1960). It should be added that in many cases members of service castes also own land, so that the degree of concentration of land ownership by the dominant caste varies widely over India (cf. Parry 1979: 57; Mayer 1960: 80).

The distribution and cultivation of agricultural land (mostly wet-rice land) in Pujung provides quite a contrast. Only six per cent of families own no land at all (though a majority of these are nevertheless well off), four per cent own a good deal (I do not have accurate data on the holdings of these families, as much of their land is scattered in different villages), and fully 90 per cent own between a half and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres. In short, in Pujung, and probably in Bali as a whole, land is

distributed far more evenly across the whole population than in India.

In regard to the occupations which people follow, while in India there is a strong ideological and practical link between traditional occupations and both *varna* and caste, in Bali the link is evident only at the *warna* level. In Bali, it is true that smiths generally pursue their particular trade, but many of them are also farmers. As far as can be ascertained, no other title group has a linked traditional occupation, although certain religious and public offices, such as *bendesa*, for example, do tend to be restricted to one or two title groups. In fact, the vast majority of Balinese are farmers. However, because of the relatively small amounts of land owned, farming does not consume too much time (except at certain stages of the rice cycle), and it is therefore in their interest for the Balinese to engage in other, money-making, activities. Indeed, most villagers are constantly on the look-out for such opportunities. It should also be emphasised that these undertakings are embedded in a cash/market nexus, and consequently individuals do not have a stable, traditional clientele. Services such as hair-cutting, basket-making, rope-making, production and distribution of palm and rice wine, carpentry, musicianship, tailoring, shop-keeping, bus- and taxi-driving, carving, building, etc. are therefore open to members of all and any title. So far, then, it is possible to conclude that neither the ownership and distribution of land nor the distribution of occupations, except in one or two isolated and untypical cases, is linked to ritual status as indicated by title.

Systems of rank may also be based on wealth and power, so it is worth pausing a moment to document some facts concerning the correlation of these with ritual rank. First, in Pujung at least, it would seem that land ownership is correlated with wealth and power only at the extremes of the distribution, and sometimes not even there. Thus there are a number of landless families which are poor and politically impotent. However, there are also a number that are quite prosperous, their wealth being founded on other, business, activities, especially statue-carving, transport services and retailing. Secondly, of those with large holdings of land only some are politically powerful in the sense that they have an organized faction active in village politics. Other families with equally large holdings, while powerful in terms of their ability to provide employment, tend to have little influence in village affairs. Moreover, certain individuals with small holdings have, for one reason or another (intelligence, integrity, accredited supernatural power, etc.), become prominent in these local arenas. Thirdly, the *pandés*, who are undisputedly at the summit of Pujung's ritual hierarchy, are nevertheless some of the poorest in the village and, as a group, politically insignificant. Finally, for only two families can it be said that large land holdings, wealth, and political patronage are united. These two families are respectively the heads of the *pasek gelgel* and *pasek batuan* title groups. In comparison to the rest of the village, they enjoy enormous wealth and with it a dominant role in village (and, in the former case, supra-village) affairs. Notwithstanding these two cases, however, the general trend is that ritual rank, wealth and political power are at the most only contingently related.

The point of this descriptive exercise is to show that whereas in India certain statuses and practices are combined and ordered in a particular way within a

single institution, namely the *jajmani* system, in Bali they are, to a very significant extent, independent of each other. The evidence seems to indicate that, for the Balinese, statuses associated with title-group membership, occupation, land ownership, wealth and political power are not closely correlated, nor do they cluster together in a manner reminiscent of Indian castes. In Barth's terms (1960: 144) these statuses are freely combined, and according to him this combination results in what he calls a complex system, quite different from a caste system, in which 'each position is characterized by a cluster of statuses relevant in different sectors of life and frameworks of organization', and in which 'incumbency of one status also necessarily implies incumbency of a series of other statuses forming the cluster....' In other words, in a caste system high-caste rank, wealth, land ownership, political patronage and prestigious occupation all tend to cluster together as do low-caste rank, poverty, possession of little land, political clientship and despised occupation. In India, then, caste status is all-embracing and manifests itself in a wide variety of contexts, whilst in Bali (taking the village of Pujung as an example) the influence of ritual rank is, generally speaking, confined to a relatively small number of contexts, and in particular does not appear to affect statuses determined by land ownership, wealth, occupation or political influence. However, it must be pointed out that whilst the ethnographic record on Bali is now very extensive, a great deal of it is not entirely relevant to the present discussion, and there is thus a pressing need for modern studies of village social organisation. In the absence of such comparative material it would be unwise to proffer any definitive conclusions concerning the relationship between the rank orderings based on the various statuses discussed above. The issue here does not so much concern the range of application or significance of ritual rank, which would appear, from available evidence, to be much the same all over southern Bali, but the extent to which these orderings are or are not correlated into clusters reminiscent of the Indian caste system. It could well be, for example, that in villages containing large concentrations of *triwangsa* title-holders strong positive correlations between the different rank orderings might be found, but even then it would still have to be determined whether such correlations were based on contingent and situational factors, or on ideological ones.

In conclusion, the principal finding to emerge from this essay is that the problem of whether Bali does or does not constitute a caste society is something of a red herring, since an answer to the question depends crucially on the particular aspects of the society one focuses on, and at what levels of abstraction the comparison is conducted—different outcomes result from different starting-points and from different perspectives. Moreover, within any one position it is still debatable as to whether it is an 'answer' that arises out of the analysis. More accurately, it may be said that the results produce only further questions, and indeed these questions are often far more interesting than the one which prompted the exercise in the first place. In other words, it is quite evident that societies (especially those, like India and Bali, which differ in so many respects and which, geographically, are so far apart) cannot be compared at such a global level without seriously distorting the data, and therefore general



questions of this kind must first of all be broken down into more specific, and hence more manageable ones. Once this has been done, however, the original question tends to lose its initial significance, as the analysis proceeds along paths which, while not at the outset well signposted, prove in the end to be much more fruitful.

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ANDREW DUFF-COOPER

## HIERARCHY, PURITY AND EQUALITY AMONG A COMMUNITY OF BALINESE ON LOMBOK

*All things are double, one against the other.*

Ecclesiasticus 42: 25

*Opposition unites. From what draws apart  
results the most beautiful harmony.*

Heraclitus

### I

THIS paper considers the three concepts mentioned in the title, viz., hierarchy, purity, and equality, although it does not deal with each in quite the same way. To some extent the differences in the approaches adopted are corollaries of the fact that two of the concepts—hierarchy and equality—have no direct equivalents in Balinese, although they can be inferred from what the Balinese do and from what they say about what they do. Purity, by contrast, is a concept which is Balinese.

Purity is concerned with what the Balinese term *suci*. *Nirmala* also refers to purity, but the state to which it refers is not one which any person, however

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elevated his status, can attain during his material and visible life on earth. Only when he (or she) is what we call dead (one rendering of which status in Balinese is *lepas*, free) could a person possibly be termed *nirmala*. This state, however, is not a consequence of death, so that death is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for a person being termed *nirmala*. *Sukla*, further, refers to the pure in such expressions as *kamben sukla*, a sarong which has not been worn since its manufacture. This is stored high up in the house, on the top shelf of the cupboard which many houses contain. Gold, jewellery, and money (the god *Sedana*) are similarly stored high up. *Sajen sukla*, offerings which have been made but have yet to be given to the gods, are likewise placed high off the ground (on a table perhaps) until they are needed for prestations. These facts are in accordance with notions which link what is cleaner and purer with what is physically higher and ideationally superior.

Baturujung is one of the villages which comprise the administrative *lurah* Pagutan, in western Lombok, the region in which most of the Balinese on the island live. The village consists of about 350 people, all of whom can trace relationship to one another through either males or females and who are loosely divided into five localised groups, each of which is descended from one man. The Brahmana of the Gria Taman, a large compound some two minutes away through the gardens to the west of Baturujung, have traditional relations with most villagers in Baturujung. Villagers are *sisia* to the Brahmana Surya. This relationship means essentially that the Surya performs certain mystical tasks for the *sisia*, who have certain rights in relation to their Surya, and certain obligations to fulfil also. I lived for about the same length of time in the Gria Taman and in Baturujung.

It has been said (Hobart, personal communication) that the account (Duff-Cooper 1983) upon which this essay is based is a Brahmanaical view of Balinese society. It is true that lower estates (*warna*) are not supposed to know the metaphysical doctrines (*sarwa-surya*) upon which much of what follows is premised, but these doctrines, known or not (and *pace* Forge 1980: 223–5), pervade Balinese life more or less directly. It should not be thought, therefore, that there is anything idiosyncratic about what follows. Indeed, I would claim that were a learned Balinese asked to expatiate about the levels (*undag*, or *pangked* in high Balinese) in his society, he might well adopt the approach which is followed below—which attempts, in Barnes's words, 'to follow the lines of greatest fluency' (1974: 1). If his account were to be at all complete—a condition for which the Balinese would probably strive, since that which is complete is, in Balinese thought, superior to what is not complete<sup>1</sup>—he would surely have to address the matters which are taken up below.

1. Cf. Howe (1983: 145) who associates odd numbers, i.e. incomplete numbers, with life, and even numbers, i.e. complete numbers, with death. Even numbers are also associated in Howe's analysis (*ibid.*) with that which is *embet*, closed. A being who becomes *embet* becomes ill or dies, unless expert assistance is called in (*ibid.*: 155). In Baturujung, I was constantly told by villagers that rites associated with the dead are the most important rites.

## II

Hierarchy has, of course, been the subject of a great deal of work in social anthropology. The work of Professor Dumont immediately comes to mind in this connection, as does that of Professor Needham, although Needham's work on such notions as polythesis and its use in social classification (Needham 1975; 1978: 33, 41, 43, 67) has perhaps been less obviously directed at the topic. However, Needham's important 'Analogical Classification' (1980: 41-62) addressed the matter head on.

It is Needham who has pointed out (*ibid.*: 41-4) that hierarchy has long been taken for granted as the proper, indeed as the only, form of classification and that this assumption permeates the work of such scholars as Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl. This fact has implications for the very topic of hierarchy, for it is not obvious that there is anything about 'hierarchy' which should lead some social anthropologists to ascribe it the favoured status which it seems to have achieved in their work. If, indeed, it is merely one mode of classification, then it might be wondered why it has been accorded the pre-eminence which it has in social anthropology, with some social anthropologists spending so much time and expending so much effort in considering the topic.

Be that question as it may, thinking about this mode of classification, which has long been known in formal logic as the Tree of Porphyry—a name which is perhaps less tendentious than 'hierarchy'—is justified by the work of Professor Dumont and his congeners at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

It is not clear, though, that Dumont's work on India, particularly *Homo Hierarchicus* (Dumont 1970), is applicable to the Balinese social formation which they call the *warna*. Dumont, after all, has contended (1970: 213-4) that caste can only truly be said to be present where there is a complete disjunction between status and power. He has further contended (*ibid.*: 215) that nowhere in Indonesia can this be found because 'nowhere in Indo-China and Indonesia has the king been dispossessed of his religious prerogatives', so that he avers that India only exported quasi-caste. Lekkerkerker (1926: 1) thought that the caste system of British India was completely unique (*inderdaad uniek*). It must be a question, therefore, whether the results of Dumont's analyses can be applied directly to this Balinese social form or whether the results need to be qualified.

Still, the four great classes which comprise the Balinese *warna* and which are termed Brahmana, Ksatria, Wesia, and Sudra are related to one another in different ways. Brahmana, I was told by one or two old men, do not exist on Lombok. Villagers consider, though, that Baturujung and other parts of Lombok where Balinese perform the rites and otherwise live properly are a part of the former kingdom of Karangasem on Bali. For analytic purposes it would be enough that there are Brahmana in Karangasem. This is, of course, similar to India where there are regions without any Brahmins although they are present, so to say, ideologically. But in any case those who told me that there were no Brahmana in the village had a slightly eccentric view of the matter. There are, in Pagutan, people who are termed Ida (a Brahmana appellation), who live in *gria*,

the name of a compound belonging to a local descent group which is Brahmana (cf. Swellengrebel 1950: 125), and who say of themselves what is said of them by others, that they are Brahmana. These Brahmana also become Pedanda Siwa and Pedanda Boddha, statuses open only to Brahmana.

These people are of the Brahmana *warna*, but for the most part they are of the *raga keksatryan* (*raga*, body); that is, they are allowed, minimally, to get angry, to fight, and to have fun (*mecanda-canda*), like Ksatrya. Brahmana who have attained the highest Balinese status on earth through the rite termed *mediksa* (from *\*diksa*, rosary), the status of Pedanda, and who are true or complete Brahmana, should do none of these things (cf. Hobart 1979: 415). Ksatrya are the younger brothers of Brahmana.

There are three kinds of Pedanda in the village: Pedanda Siwa, Pedanda Boddha, and Pedanda Resi. The first two are always Brahmana, the last Ksatrya. The former are distinguished from the latter in the spread of their competence: they have (in theory) full access to mystical knowledge and may, within certain limits, use it anywhere on Bali and on Lombok (cf. Forge 1980: 224). The Ksatrya is confined to a part of the knowledge which is accessible to a Brahmana Pedanda and may use it only for himself and for his close relations, probably only for his local descent group. A Pedanda Resi always faces west when seated with a Brahmana Pedanda, who sits facing east, and in many other ways a Brahmana Pedanda is superior to a Resi.

Pedanda Siwa, however, are related to Pedanda Boddha as males are related to females, and as the male (*purusa*) is related to the female (*pradhana*). The male, in Balinese metaphysics, is logically and temporally prior to the female and therefore, as in so many other places, where what is male is superior to what is female, the Pedanda Siwa is superior to the Pedanda Boddha (cf. Friederich 1959: 29; van Eerde 1911: 9ff; Rassers 1959: 90; Swellengrebel 1960: 38). This relation of male to female is evidenced in very many aspects of Balinese life. A striking example is the fact, as I was assured by villager friends of mine, that women never get on top in sexual intercourse; and grown women also should<sup>2</sup> never ride on the front seat of a horse-drawn carriage while men sit behind: people organize their sitting positions so that this does not occur.

Pedanda deal with the mystical, and more particularly with that aspect of the mystical which is high, white, and to the right. Should Pedanda be required to officiate in the temple of death in the south—which is opposed to the north and the direction of the mountain Rinjani (*kaler* on Lombok) and to the positions and their associated qualities just mentioned—then in Pagutan a female Pedanda officiates. Brahmana who are not Pedanda also deal with the mystical these days as teachers of *agama*, very broadly religion and ethics, in national schools, or as officials in the regional offices of the Department of Religion, or, more traditionally, as helpers (*ulaka*) of Pedanda.

Ksatrya, as the estate from which the traditional kings came before the office was abolished by the Dutch, are even today associated with the jural, often

2. This and similar uses of the conditional derive from the fact that what should happen in the village most often does happen. Villagers are very good Balinese, as I was often told by others who had no apparent reason for not saying what they truly thought.

becoming military men or Government officials. Balinese Brahmana and Ksatria are clear examples of dual sovereignty: the forces to which men are subject are divided into a diarchy defined as jural and mystical (cf. Needham 1980: 70–1). Its two aspects are complementary and opposed in the situation described above and in other situations, even where Ksatria become Resi. Pedanda are to kings as elder is to younger.<sup>3</sup>

The Pedanda is not a hermit; he lives with his local descent group, he has a wife, either living or dead, and he may have children. He has traditional relations (as I have mentioned) with his *sisia*. Should there be a death within his local descent group, a Pedanda may not become *sebel*, that is, barred from many mystical activities, although he will not make *palukatan*, a type of holy water, nor will he go to temples to make offerings, apart from his own family temple. Other Brahmana become *sebel*, as do Ksatria. Brahmana and Ksatria are, as older to younger, opposed to all others, and this is demonstrated in the etiquette appropriate to them.

Brahmana, Ksatria, and Wesia, the third estate, are the insiders (*dalem*) in contrast to the fourth *warna*, the outsiders (*jaba*). Belo (1936: 12) writes that the contrast distinguishes those who claim descent from the Hindu-Javanese invaders of Majapahit who conquered Bali in the fourteenth century (insiders) from the indigenous population (outsiders) on whom they imposed their rule. Hooykaas writes (1978: 214) that on Bali the word *triwangsa*, meaning three castes, excludes *jaba*, the Sudra who do not partake of the privileges of the other three estates. Geertz (1967: 51) writes that 'the main status distinction is between the djero and the djaba, the "insiders" and the "outsiders" signifying those who live inside a "palace" and those who live outside.'

'Wong Majapahit', people of Majapahit, was not an expression which I ever heard anyone, *triwangsa* or not, use in Pagutan to refer to *triwangsa*. It may also be that the *triwangsa* have 'privileges' which others do not have, of the kind referred to, for instance, by Dumont (1970: 109), but I doubt that the *triwangsa* are considered privileged, especially as the privileges to which Dumont refers are now covered by national laws which tend not to treat one or more *warna* exceptionally. If, moreover, Hooykaas is referring to language and to forms of etiquette, then my doubt is stronger, for these conventional approaches to *triwangsa* are merely the proper ways of behaving. They are no more privileges than are the facts that, for example, men wrap their sarongs from right to left, and that women wrap their sarongs from left to right.

Geertz is essentially right: 'palaces'—*gria*, *puri*, and *jero*, the compounds of each of the three estates which comprise the *triwangsa*—possess characteristics relative to one another and to non-*triwangsa* compounds which, rather like the inside court of a temple and the inside of the house, are that much closer to a particular centre. In my view, *dalem* and *jaba* refer to the fact that *triwangsa*, like the compounds in which they live, are through birth, through etiquette, through language, and through function, relatively closer to a mystical centre than the

3. This is unusual in many parts of Southeast Asia, where the mystical is often associated with the younger brother and the jural with the elder brother, although this does, of course, vary in different parts of the archipelago (cf. van Wouden 1968: 30, 115; Barnes 1974: 30, 163).

outsiders. These are matters of fact, and not privileges, i.e., deviations from a norm, if only because there is no one norm in Balinese thought, unless it be Ida Sang Hyang Widhi, the high god of the Balinese.<sup>4</sup>

A different but related view might wish to argue that the *triwangsa*, as twice born (*dvijati*), are admitted to the ritual, while the Sudra are excluded (cf. Dumont 1970: 109). In Balinese custom, however, all are admitted to the ritual to a greater or lesser extent, and all similarly 'participate in initiation' (ibid.). All villagers may in principle order a sacrifice, and all, with only minor conditions, may perform it (cf. ibid.: 107), so long as the sacrifice is not one which concerns marriage or death.

A Pedanda Siwa told me that only those who become Pedanda and who die and are reborn in the rite re-creating the individual as a Pedanda are twice born. I suspect that this fact might also apply to kings, or at least that a king would most likely say that it did. It would not in my view, however, be applied to Wesia, who although *triwangsa* are lower than Brahmana and Ksatrya and correspondingly less well considered in my experience than the two higher *warna*.

Non-*triwangsa* Balinese are the Sudra. *Anak Bali*, Balinese people, is the appellation most often used in the village and in the Gria Taman to refer to the fourth estate and to the people who constitute it. *Anak Bali* may be classified together or separately according to the criteria chosen, which classify people as being closer to or more distant from the particular centre in relation to which it is wished to classify people. Which centre will be taken as the centre of reference naturally depends upon the circumstances.

*Anak Bali*, however, may also be of two kinds according to the criterion of whether the person derives from a union between a male and a female after the couple have been through the rites of *ngantèn*, held at least ten days after a male has taken or stolen a female for his wife. These rites cleanse the union (cf. Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp 1961: 25), making it fertile and prosperous like the rice fields. A person who is born to parents of any *warna* who have not been through *ngantèn* is *astra*, that is, the same as an illegitimate Balinese of the lowest *warna*. This lack of status is shown by rules of commensality which deny the *astra* access to communal meals at all events outside his local descent group and outside compounds where his relations are such as to override the disability imposed by his birth. *Astra* are also disadvantaged in relation to their legitimate co-heirs by the rules of inheritance.

*Warna* and the statuses of Pedanda, king, *astra*, and so on (cf. Hooykaas 1976a) are all determined by birth, but are not necessarily inherited in the direct agnatic line. The functions of the statuses run hand in hand with birth: only Brahmana may become Pedanda of universal competence, only Ksatrya may become kings and lesser Pedanda. If one is Wesia, then one should deal in the produce of the work of the Sudra, whose *dharma* it is (basically) to work in the fields and to husband livestock and fowl to provide revenue for the kings to support the Brahmana and the realm.

4. Everything derives from Ida Sang Hyang Widhi, and is contained in him.



Each estate is essential to *dharma*, the Balinese way of life, and each is related to the others in a series of oppositions of greater and greater generality, to the point where all Balinese of whatever status are opposed to all other human beings at different removes. This fact is shown when Balinese of different *warna* climb to the top of Rinjani: the different statuses which are marked in polite society by the use of language levels, i.e. finer or coarser language, are minimised to the point at which it is thought that to use any form of Balinese at the top of the mountain or on one's way up the mountain, near the top, will lead to mists descending and to men losing their way and plunging to their death down the side of the mountain.

As long ago as the early 1890s, Robertson Smith recognised (1894: 50) that in regard to the concepts of holiness and pollution the integrity of the categories depended upon restrictive rules. As Beidelman comments (1974: 63), without such rules and through 'contagion', social and other moral qualities become blurred and thereby jeopardised. In the system of the Balinese *warna*, however, the rules at once separate the categories from one another and draw them together into a system, for all the rules are relative. In fact, they are relative to such an extent that without one of the *warna* the others could not exist, at least in their proper form. The dependency of one *warna* upon all the others is stressed by villagers, and it can only be fully demonstrated by a holistic account of Balinese life (e.g., Duff-Cooper 1983), for the dependency is shown in all aspects of that life. I shall address just one aspect of it here, that concerned with purity.

Purity, it has been suggested (Hobart 1979: 404), is a notion which in Balinese ideology is descriptive, substantive, and evaluative. Relative height and relative position are extremely important notions in Balinese thought as many (for example, Swellengrebel 1977: 89, 92) have pointed out, more or less directly. The centre of the island is the mountain Rinjani, which is combined ideologically with a section of Gunung Agung on Bali and with a section of Mount Semeru on Java, and which is the Mahameru of the Balinese on Lombok.<sup>5</sup> Rinjani is a temple where all, except of course Muslims, dress in white, and it is the home of the gods, the eight at eight of the major points of the Balinese compass, with Siwa or Bhatara Guru at the centre and slightly higher. Siwa is placed higher in the *sanggah*, the construction in which offerings are placed for the gods of the compound (where there is always at least one *sanggah*), or for the gods of the temple in which the *sanggah* is situated. Wisnu is placed to the right of Siwa and to his north and Brahma to his left and south.

That which is low is also that which is closer to the sea and to the south than to the mountain and to the north and east. In Baturujung, the temple of death and the cemetery are situated south in relation to the other two temples of the *lurah*, as it is in many other Balinese villages (cf., for example, Goris 1960: 84), and south of all the living quarters of the Balinese. The ashes of those who have been cremated are disposed of in the sea (cf. Crucq 1928: 117) to the west of the village. The area between the sea and the land harbours such harmful beings as

5. The Mahameru is thought of as a triangle made up of three horizontal segments. The top segment consists of that part of Gunung Agung, the middle segment consists of that part of Gunung Rinjani, and the bottom segment of that part of Mount Semeru.

the *grèbèk* (beautiful woman at the front, rotting carcass at the back) and *turis* (tourists or Caucasians) who, among other things, are red and hairy and immoral. Red is the colour of Brahma (cf., for example, Swellengrebel, op.cit.). Hairiness suggests comparison with the beings in the forests to the southwest of the island—‘the southwest, kelod-kauh, is the most inferior direction’ (*la direction la plus inférieure*) (Berthier and Sweeney 1976: 29). These beings speak only in grunts, are afraid of fire, and are barely human. Comparison may also be made with *raksasa*, giant ogres, whose business it is to disturb the proper (peaceful) order of things. The temple of death is also one of the haunts of witches (*léak*), usually very ugly women who do everything in the wrong order (cf. De Kat Angelino 1921: 23 n. 15; Howe 1983: 152, 154) or else backwards (cf. Mershon 1971: 55). Witches always only have evil intentions. The black arts which they and other evil beings practise are called *pengiwa*, a word derived from *kiwa*, ‘left’.

In Balinese thought ‘up’ is associated with the north, northeast, white, cleanliness, the right, and order. Down, the south, west, darkness, sullage, the left, and disorder are also classed together. There are, exceptionally in Balinese classification, witches of all colours and directions.

Pedanda and kings sit higher and further to the northeast than all others; no one should allow his head to be on a level higher than the heads of people of these statuses when associating with them. No Sudra should allow his head to be higher than that of a *triwangsa* in similar circumstances (cf. Freijss 1860: 502). All should address those who may sit higher than themselves (excepting non-*triwangsa* pre-pubescent) in high, fine Balinese (Swellengrebel 1950: 124, 127, 128; Kersten 1970: 13–25). Those lower by *warna*, unless *triwangsa*, can expect to be addressed in language which is appropriately less fine and lower. The highest, finest language, which is Sanskrit and which is ‘imperishable’ (Hooykaas 1964: 37), is reserved to those who are the highest and the finest, the gods (cf. Lévi 1926: 10).

The gods should always be approached with what is highest and cleanest: refined language, offerings made as perfectly as possible, cloths, plates, drinking vessels and other utensils reserved to their use, all of which is stored higher than what is used by others. Balinese should be in an untroubled state of mind when meeting the gods, for anger and such like is caused by *raksasa* and by other beings associated with the low, which render a person ‘hot’, like fire, with which Brahma is associated.

A Pedanda and a king should similarly be approached formally, in demeanour and in dress, and should be spoken to (and about) in the highest Balinese. A Pedanda uses special crockery, which is kept higher than that used by others. His clothes are kept to be worn only by him, have been cleansed with *mantra*, and are washed separately. A Pedanda is a learned man (cf. Hooykaas 1976b: 242) in continual contact with the goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of knowledge and beauty, and he daily becomes a seat for Surya, as Siwa, who enters his body and makes holy water which among other things is used to cleanse the soul (cf. Goudriaan and Hooykaas 1971).

Only a Pedanda may serve this function on Lombok. He keeps himself clean by a complicated toilet, which is accompanied at each step by *mantra* (see, for

example, Pudja 1971: 67, 71, 73), by never getting angry, by not eating certain foods, especially domestic pig, and by not taking certain drinks. He may not flirt with women (although he may have sex with his wife on all but the most important days, so long as offerings are given to the god of love, Semara), and he may not gamble.

A Pedanda's way of life is in marked contrast to that of Sudra, who almost without exception have a passion for gambling (especially on the cockfight, a blood-offering to spirits which are associated with the low), who eat pig and drink when they can afford to, and who flirt with women if they can (unless, of course, they are women or transvestites, in which case they flirt with men) until, like Pedanda and kings, they are old. Most importantly, perhaps, *anak Bali* speak low, coarse Balinese and their work in the fields and with animals renders them literally dirty.

All should try to keep as clean as they can within the limits imposed by their *dharma*, but all of any estate may go through a rite appropriate to their station through which they are rendered to a state in which they can deal with the gods in their temples—other than those in family temples where, we have mentioned, all who know how may give offerings to the gods, so long as only minor conditions be satisfied. The rites render a man that much more appropriate for dealing with the gods than his peers; that is, he is made cleaner and finer (more knowledgeable), which is an aspect of purity.

The Pedanda is the most *suci*, and his function and the etiquette and restrictions which I have mentioned—and there are many more—are what render him such. Inasmuch, therefore, as the behaviour appropriate to and for each *warna* define the *warna*, purity is a descriptive notion.

Is purity a substantive? The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that of an immaterial subject, 'substantive' means that the subject is possessed of the quality of an independent existence or status, and that the subject correlatively is not dependent upon or subsidiary to, or referable to, anything else.

The first point to notice is that, as I have pointed out, there is not one purity, as it were, but different relative purities, each of which is dependent upon the others for its existence. It is true that all are aspects of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi, but since Widhi is (among other things) inconceivable, it would be odd to say that purity is therefore a substantive in this sense. The only way purity can be known is through its social forms and these are not independent of one another.

The *OED* also says that, of persons, 'substantive' refers to the quality of independence. Perhaps this is where purity is a substantive, i.e., in the sense that the social facts which combine to create relative purities inhere in persons, and that persons are independent of one another. It is not necessary to go further into this interpretation of the meaning of 'substantive' to say that it does not apply to the Balinese case (cf. Lansing 1974: 4–5; Gerdin 1981: 33 n. 2). The Balinese would also strenuously deny that a true Balinese could be independent in any important sense; and Balinese ideas concerning procreation, birth, sex, character, and emotions all support this contention. Purity is not, therefore, a substantive.

Is 'purity' evaluative? In the sense that there are people who because of their

functions, etiquette, and the other conventional behaviour associated with them are cleaner and higher and more unsullied than others, the notion of purity evaluates people. This, however, should not be taken to imply that those who are purer are better, in the sense of being more worthy, than those who are less pure. Indeed the Balinese aver that they are all the same, in the sense that each is as worthy *qua* human being as any other, i.e., they compose a *soroh*, a natural kind (Hobart 1979: 400). Nor does more or less purity imply more or less power, in the sense of having political authority and control of economic resources.

In the Balinese case, and in so far as power is concerned, the Brahmana is normally *sakti*; that is to say, he is brought close to the gods by his life, because of his status, and he therefore has mystical efficacy. Other factors determine how far a person is *sakti*, but however prominent a Brahmana's reputation, his domain is the mystical. This is one kind of power.

The authority of the king is concerned with the jural. Here, if anywhere, might be found institutionalised inequality. Both the Pedanda's mystical power and the king's jural authority, however, are ontologically of the same kind. Both derive from Ida Sang Hyang Widhi and are aspects of him. The mystical and the jural are of a different level, but derive from the same point, as Balinese metaphysics teaches.

The jural, it has already been mentioned, is subordinated to the mystical as younger to elder, and the former is less pure than the latter. In Pagutan the *puri*, the compound of the local descent group who would if circumstances were different still be the kings of Pagutan, faces west, while the *gria* of the Brahmana who used to service the kings as Petirthaan, a kind of private Pedanda, faces east. This subordination, however, does not imply (what would be false) that the superior is economically and authoritatively in stronger circumstances than the inferior. This fact is particularly well shown today where *anak* Bali are often far wealthier than both Ksatria and Brahmana.

The system of *warna* is not correlated with any systematic social deprivation or injustice. The situation in the village is as follows: those with jural authority are less pure than those who as a matter of ideology should not use force. These latter are the Brahmana, who should not get angry and should not fight. The response of Brahmana to someone who has done wrong should be to teach that person what is the right way. Brahmana should not indulge in business activity (i.e., work to accumulate *artha*, goods and money) and indeed should not look for any material gain from their way of life. They are often very poor, and are admired for their holiness should they not wish to alter the material circumstances of their lives. Further, villagers say that it was the Ksatria who used to own the people and the whole realm. Although van der Kraan does not accept this interpretation, he reinforces the point that there is no systematic correlation between the *warna* and deprivation when he writes that 'the Balinese kings never were the proprietors of all the land within their realm' (1981: 7). Ownership of the land within the village territories was vested in the village communities, in institutions (temples, *subak*, regulators of the fields) and in private persons. However, only men, not women, were allowed to own land (*ibid.*: 15).

The Balinese way of life also includes as a living but invisible reality gods and

spirits. It is the gods who have ultimate power to grant such things as wealth or poverty, children or childlessness, good harvests or famine (cf. Hobart 1978: 74, 80), indeed life and death. The system of *warna* includes the gods and spirits. From the Balinese point of view this total system constitutes the unquestioned order of things (cf. Needham 1981: 76–7). Questions of injustice would be as out of place in Balinese thought as a red-hot poker would have been in the mysteries of Demeter and of Bacchus (cf. Lang 1884: 33).

There are, of course, villagers who know that in present-day Indonesia some have more sway and are wealthier than others. That these persons are sometimes Muslims is, in villagers' view, a reversal of the proper order of things. They are also usually thought to be *pegawai*, officials in the administrative hierarchy. The closer to the centre that the officials work—be it the national, the provincial, or a subordinate centre—the more sway and the wealthier these officials are likely to be. Some have achieved authority and wealth through position. This circumstance is not taken to be proper by villagers, although it is not the authority and the wealth which they dislike so much as the manner in which the authority and the wealth are used by those who possess them. *Pegawai* are generally thought to be conceited and arrogant, and generally uncongenial. Villagers often think them stupid and generally know more about agriculture, for example, than the officials who try to tell them how to run their agricultural affairs.

Others have achieved a position through knowledge; and they may also have achieved a position through wealth, accumulated through diligence. This achievement, like the traditional authority of the kings, may not be much liked, but there is no question of it being unfair. Wealth is a gift from the gods. It is as appropriate to those who have it and who gain position through it as the traditional authority of the kings is to Ksatrya.

This description of the Balinese *warna*, which for reasons of space has been greatly truncated, has shown that the *warna* system consists of a series of dyads of increasing generality. Within each dyad, of whatever generality, relative purity in the forms it variously takes in social life defines the terms of which each dyad is composed (cf. Dumézil 1948; 1958; Dumont 1970: 106). There is no correlation between the four estates, their relative purity, the jural authority they exercise, and the economic resources which each of the four estates, in the forms of local descent groups, 'families', and empirical individuals,<sup>6</sup> controls. Consideration of the above matters, further, suggests that equality is a principle which is stressed in Balinese thought, and which is apparent in various aspects of Balinese life, as it is in Pagutan (cf. Parry 1979: 315).

6. For the constitution of the family among the Balinese, see Duff-Cooper (in press—*a*). For the notion of what an empirical individual consists of, see *idem* (in press—*b*). For other areas of social life in which the principle of equality is apparent, see *idem* (in press—*c*).

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SIGNE HOWELL

## EQUALITY AND HIERARCHY IN CHEWONG CLASSIFICATION

I WISH to take as my starting point for this paper two quotations from a recent article by Dumont, entitled 'On Value'.

Yet it is only by a perversion or impoverishment of the notion of order that we may believe contrariwise that equality can by itself constitute an order (1982: 238);

and,

What I maintain is that, if the advocates of difference claim for it both equality and recognition, they claim the impossible. Here, we are reminded of the American slogan 'separate but equal' which marked the transition from slavery to racism (ibid.: 239).

My purpose will be to test the validity of the foregoing statements by reference to a particular society, the Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia, whose ideology is, I shall argue, dominated by a concern with both equality and recognition; hierarchy, when it does occur, does so at an inferior level in the ideology, being an inversion of the dominant value and ordering principle of equality. As will become clear, the Chewong do not themselves lay stress on equality, but on recognition, separation, 'difference'. Equality emerges as a value, or ordering principle, only by virtue of the absence of hierarchy, together with this emphasis on recognition.

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Before presenting the main body of the argument I wish, however, to question Dumont's assertion of a 'Western aversion to hierarchy', which he claims interferes with contemporary anthropological studies, preventing the anthropologist from taking account of indigenous values. He states, 'As moderns we tend to put everything on the same plane. If it were possible, we would have nothing to do with hierarchy' (1980: 244). This, and similar statements to the same effect, I have always found very baffling, as they do not correspond with my own impression from the anthropological literature. More specifically, the collection of essays which discuss the symbolic significance of right and left (ed. Needham 1973) is singled out by Dumont as a pertinent example of studies of binary classification in which the elements of each pair are presented as complementary and of equal value (Dumont 1979: 807). But is this really so in all cases? A casual reading of the essays reveals that in at least two instances the authors are not only aware of unequal value being attributed to right and left in the ideology under study, but furthermore, that these relative values are conceptually linked to a whole.

In his essay 'Order in the Atoni House', Cunningham states that the pertinent point in Atoni symbolism is that of the conflicting concerns of unity and difference, and that they are continually being interpreted and re-interpreted. The method most commonly employed is that of dual oppositions, and in this the right/left opposition is one that carries much symbolic loading. He provides a detailed explication of Atoni dual classification in which he groups together, for example, female, left, inside the house, land, etc. as opposed to male, right, outside the house, sea, etc. He thereby implicitly asserts an arrangement of ordered pairs (see below), i.e. a set of dyadic oppositions, in each of which the ordering of the elements is relevant. He also discusses the superordination and subordination of the elements in different contexts, and suggests that 'a conceptually subordinate pair is opposed to a superordinate unit' (1973: 219); and later, when considering reversals in the order of some elements, that the 'apparent inconsistency [of reversal in value] can be understood...by viewing other Atoni social categorizations and the contexts in which superordination is expressed' (ibid.: 226).

In another paper in the same collection, Littlejohn specifically draws attention to a relationship pertaining between the elements and the whole: 'Since there is no such thing as left and right "in space", these regions being relative to the direction an individual faces, the ground of distinction must first be sought in the human body' (1973: 289). This point is reminiscent of one made later by Dumont in his criticism of the essays: 'What is lacking here is the recognition that the right-left pair is not definable in itself but *only in relation to a whole*, a most tangible whole, since it is the human body...' (1979: 810; original emphasis). Littlejohn proceeds to present an analysis of Temne symbolic use of right and left showing, despite initial impressions to the contrary, how left is in fact the dominant value. He seeks his explanation in Temne ritual behaviour (1973: 297).

All I wish to demonstrate by the above two examples is that anthropologists, far from having an aversion to hierarchy, find it hard to avoid employing it in

their interpretations. However, I would agree with Dumont that the *full* implications in *his* sense of the concept have not been explored by other writers. Since the above quotations are representative of much of my anthropological reading before going to the field, my dismay may be appreciated when, among the Chewong, I was unable to establish similar orderings. In their social organization, their cosmology, their ritual, and their classification, the Chewong displayed a perverse tendency to ignore all implications of differences. While insisting on distinctions being made between things or ideas, they did not attach social or symbolic significance to such distinctions. It is the implications of this that I wish to explore in this paper.

I must begin by a clarification of the terminology I shall be using. This, it will be seen, is largely derived from Dumont. The concept of hierarchy is one that he has taken great care to define, stressing again and again that it is an abstract notion, one that informs us about abstract relations—in essence, the relation is one that involves the encompassing of the contrary (1979: 809; 1982: 239). As such, it must not be confused with social stratification. Such a confusion, he claims, has led to much misunderstanding of his work by those who are subject to a 'modern tendency to confuse hierarchy with power' (1982: 221; see also Dumont 1971).

What I am concerned with is something in contradistinction to hierarchy, which I shall be calling equality. Equality in my usage can be seen as the obverse of hierarchy. It will be used as an abstract concept concerned with the relations between things, people, or ideas. Like hierarchy it must be regarded as an ordering principle of elements. However, contrary to Dumont's claim (as expressed in the two quotations at the outset), I suggest that equality can imply recognition. In other words, the differentiation of a whole gives rise to parts which must be recognized, but the relations between these parts may be ones of equality. Just as hierarchy is not concerned necessarily with social stratification, so also equality in my sense is a concept expressing abstract relations of a particular kind, and egalitarianism is only one possible manifestation of it. (I should note here that Dumont may perhaps have fallen victim to the opposite error to the one he rightly attributes to many Western anthropologists by which they link hierarchy with power. It seems to me that his refutation of equality may be based on a confusion of the term equality with a *lack* of power.)

My suggestion will be that the Chewong ideology is one in which the dominant value is recognition. The difference between elements is stressed, but no hierarchical ordering is imposed on the relation between them, which is therefore necessarily one of equality. The term 'dominant value' is also derived from Dumont, and by using it I am not suggesting that Chewong ideology lacks value, but that equality as opposed to hierarchy is the main structural principle in their ideology.<sup>1</sup> Distinction, separation, and juxtaposition are concepts

1. I suggest that it would be incorrect to divorce the dominant ordering principle of an ideology from their value system. Dumont himself has made the important point that we must not separate value from idea, nor from fact, although his emphasis in making the point is slightly different from the one I am making (see Dumont 1979: 813–14; 1982: 219–23).

related to those of recognition and equality, and I shall be using these as well in my exposition.

In order to prove my case, I would need to demonstrate that although Chewong society and constructions are ordered, they are not ordered on hierarchical principles. To prove an absence of hierarchy presents methodological problems, but we may begin by identifying the means by which the *presence* of hierarchy might be recognised. To do so, I would suggest that a distinction is drawn between expressive and implicit evidence. Expressive hierarchy may be manifest in social relations, in the construction of classificatory categories of 'things', in cosmological conceptions, and in ritual performances. Implicit evidence of hierarchy, in the present context, is to be found in structural analysis and the listing of binary pairs. I will examine each of these in relation to the Chewong.

I first turn to an examination of Chewong ideology. I shall be arguing that a concordance can be discerned in Chewong representations between the social and the symbolic, but that this concordance is expressed on an abstract level in terms of the structural principle of equality, whereby the elements are recognized and juxtaposed, rather than placed in hierarchical relationships.

### *Expressive Evidence*

#### (i) Classification of humans

Chewong social organization is marked by an absence of stratification and even an absence of permanent group formations. Thus there are no lineages, clans, or other formal groups. The kinship system is cognatic, and the terminology—on the whole—specifies genealogically close rather than classificatory relations. Marriage rules are negative with no theoretical or actual preferences. The chief social unit is the nuclear family, several of which usually live together in a settlement, but the composition of residential units changes frequently, and there are no structural principles that underlie the formation of any group or individual social relationships. Furthermore, there are no leaders of any kind; the nuclear family is a self-sufficient, self-determining unit which works alongside other such units. The only category of persons constituting a specialisation, and thus in one sense transcending the order just described, is that of the 'shaman',<sup>2</sup> to whom I will return towards the end of the paper.

2. The Chewong word *putao* is here loosely translated as 'shaman'. However, in their usage, it is not so much a noun as a qualifier to a noun or a verb, as when they say, 'he is a *putao* man' in the same way as they would say 'he is a strong man'. Furthermore, almost every adult Chewong, male or female, is to some extent *putao*, by virtue of having at least one spirit guide. I have suggested elsewhere (Howell in press) that this may be more usefully regarded as the last stage in an individual's cognitive development. There are, however, some persons who display a keener interest in acquiring esoteric knowledge, and they are accordingly accepted as more proficient. But it must be noted that this does not give them any special status, or power, outside the specific context of the séance.

The task of maintaining and re-creating society as a whole rests ultimately with the individual, whose behaviour is informed and regulated by a number of prescriptions and proscriptions which govern individual conduct and social intercourse. The transgression of these rules always leads to repercussions in the form of disease and mishap administered by non-human beings—never to punishment from other Chewong.

This emphasis on the individual is further enhanced in Chewong naming practices. Rather than employing kin terms in addressing and referring to each other, they always use personal names. All children are given their personal name shortly after birth. Later, they may be given a nickname as well, but this is dependent upon individual idiosyncratic circumstances, not on socially agreed ones such as the occasions of major life-crises. Furthermore, it is explicitly forbidden to give a child the same name as someone else—alive or dead. No distinction is made between male and female names, nor are any of the sources of the names (beings, objects, or locations in their environment) thought more suitable for either boys or girls. Thus it can be seen that all Chewong—men, women, old and young—are individually and uniquely identified, named, and juxtaposed. They are not placed in any relative order according to some schema or other. There is no way of telling a person's actual status from his or her name.

This fact leads me to the question of the relationship between the sexes. While the physiological differences between men and women are of course recognized, these are not made the basis for further symbolic orderings. Although certain activities tend to be carried out by men, and others by women, both may, and frequently do, participate in all. Relative status is not associated with any particular task. Whenever gender-based differences in abilities are manifest, such as in child-bearing or superior physical strength, these do not carry any value beyond their particular context. Furthermore, there is a virtual refusal to acknowledge differences in abilities within the same activities, and an accompanying absence of competition in matters of achievement. All adults are said to be equally proficient in their performance of the various traditional tasks, and instances of manifest superior competence, including hunting, are conspicuously ignored. Children's games are co-operative or parallel. There are thus no means by which individuals or groups can achieve prominence *vis-à-vis* the rest. All the examples given so far do, I would argue, display a consistent preoccupation with distinguishing persons and activities, while at the same time refusing to order these in terms of relative value.

## (ii) Classification of non-human beings and the environment

I have argued elsewhere (Howell 1984) that at one level of discourse, Chewong society is co-extensive with their cosmos. I am referring here to the numerous non-human beings to whom consciousness is attributed, all of whom are said to be 'our people' or 'people like us'. Humans maintain permanent or short-term relationships with these beings, drawing them into most of their activities, and

feeding the relationships through processes of exchange. As a result, no useful distinction can be drawn with regard to Chewong society between sacred and profane activities (or ritual and mundane; cf. Bloch 1977), a fact which from the point of view of formal analysis can be taken as further evidence for a reluctance to create hierarchical oppositions.

Although there are many different kinds of these non-human beings, we again find that each is named and juxtaposed alongside the rest, rather than being organized and classified according to relative importance and/or status, or to the qualities attributed to them. Each is allocated a particular place in Chewong cosmology, and they are not compared with each other in any way. The 'self' of each category is perceived as identical to that of humans, and identical motivations, intentions, as well as constraints on actions are attributed to all of them. However, the actual manifestation of the attributes of the self may in some cases differ. For instance, each species of conscious non-human being has eyes, but the quality of these differ according to the species. The result is that each perceives reality, or parts of it, in ways different from the rest; that is, they look at the same object, but perceive it differently. The following example should elucidate the point. When human beings look upon a monkey, they perceive it as potential meat. When *bas* (a species of harmful non-human beings) look upon a *ruwai* ('soul', 'vital principle'), they see this as potential meat. Thus both humans and *bas* have to eat, and they both go out hunting for their meat. It is only what they perceive as meat that differs. This particular example has further ramifications, for when *bas* hunt for *ruwai* it is the human variety that is likely to be caught—an occurrence which results in illness and sometimes death. However, whenever this does occur *bas* are not described as evil, or bad; rather their activities are acknowledged as being 'natural' from the point of view of *bas*. To avoid the attack of *bas*, or other potentially harmful non-human beings, humans have at their disposal various rules prescribing behaviour.

Again, each rule is linked to specific species of non-human beings and activities, which in turn are juxtaposed, rather than clustered according to perceived shared attributes. The breach of any rule is potentially fatal, and so a classification according to severity is not made. Concomitantly, no grading of helpful beings is made either, and the distinction between who is helpful and who is harmful is often dependent upon specific contexts. It would not occur to a Chewong to suggest that any one being, or category of beings, is more important than the rest. They are simply not compared with each other. Rather, they all fulfil roles external to the narrow confines of Chewong human society, but internal to the wider social universe of humans and non-humans.

At this point a brief mention must be made of the organization of the Chewong cosmos. Conceptually it is centred upon the human world. This is the yardstick whereby each of the non-human worlds is described.

The spatial orientation of the cosmos is simple. There is an above/below axis, and to a lesser extent an east/west one, but these do not form a nucleus for a further set of dichotomies, nor are they incorporated into other such sets. Within the cosmos numerous different worlds are identified, each being associated with a different species of non-human beings, as already mentioned. There are also

several different worlds inside the human one, but invisible to the human inhabitants. My attempts at establishing a pattern of correlations between the various beings (their attributes and activities), their worlds, and their location in space, were unsuccessful. (For details of this analysis, see Howell 1984.) Rather than thinking of these different worlds and beings in terms of relative value or status, the main concern discernible in Chewong ideology is that each is kept separate from the rest—that is, from all that is deemed different. Uncontrolled crossings of boundaries between them invariably entail catastrophe. As long as each different species remains in its allocated place, harmony obtains in the human world. For instance, should the so-called Original Beings from the world above decide to come down to have a look at life on the human earth, they would bring with them terrible storms which would cause havoc to human existence. Should the Original Snake underneath the human earth move, water from below would flood the earth and drown everyone. Thus the continued maintenance of order in the human world is dependent upon sustaining the separateness of the different worlds and beings. However, such crossings of boundaries only take place if humans have failed to observe particular prescriptions or proscriptions. It is only when this is done that the beings directly associated with the rule are activated, as it were, and interfere with humans, as in the case of *bas* referred to above. All Chewong carry a heavy load of responsibility with regard to their own and the society's well-being. Whenever order is upset, it is imperative upon humans to restore it by returning objects and/or beings to their correct location. I return to this point later.

An examination of some of the rules which govern Chewong behaviour revealed that what is most forcefully forbidden is to mix elements which are said to be different. For example, no two different species of edible animal may be cooked over the same fire or eaten at the same meal. The explicit reason given for this is that they are 'different' (*masign*). This factor brings us to Chewong classification of natural species. It will probably come as no surprise to be told that the Chewong tend to enumerate and juxtapose the natural species (animal and plant) of their environment, rather than classify them into taxonomic pyramids. There is, for instance, no overall word for animal, and with the exception of bird, fish, and snake, I could find no other category word which was used as a labelling device for denoting the clustering of different animals somehow perceived to share common attributes. In the three exceptions mentioned, the ensuing pyramid is extremely shallow, constituting just two levels, e.g. 'bird' at the top with all the different kinds individually named underneath.

This situation is directly analogous to the classification of non-human beings. Furthermore, I would suggest that these examples are also analogous to the way in which social relationships are classified. In all these instances there is an absence of hierarchical ordering. Instead, the Chewong tend to separate ideas, 'things', animals, beings, and humans by naming each, whether as individuals or groups; and instead of placing them in some organized way which can be interpreted as representing relative value, they simply juxtapose them. This method of ordering calls into question the validity of the famous statement of

Durkheim and Mauss in their essay *Primitive Classification*, in which they propose that among the 'essential characteristics' of both symbolic and scientific classifications is that 'they are systems of hierarchical notions' (1963: 81). As I have shown, this is not borne out by the Chewong situation. Here the emphasis is on maintaining relationships of distinction, but without employing the principle of hierarchy. I do not, however, wish to suggest that as a result Chewong society is to be understood in terms of a static model. Social relationships of all kinds (in this instance including cosmological ones) are dynamic relations, and they have to be re-created by all those concerned. Exchange relations re-create and feed the cosmological life-giving order. Order thus indicates a coherence of ideas and values. It must be understood that it is within this context that I am suggesting the Chewong make distinctions without allocating value.

### *Implicit Evidence*

In what follows I shall be examining in some detail the question of dual classification, since this is one that Dumont frequently uses to demonstrate his notion of hierarchical relations. Leaving aside for the moment the possibility of the encompassing of the contrary, the question which arises is the following: is it possible to have binary pairs which are not necessarily in a hierarchical relationship such that one element is superior, the other inferior? My first point is that to name something in a dual fashion does not necessarily establish an unequal relationship between the two concepts. I would argue that naming right and left as the only two directional points with reference to the body does not in itself entail an interactive relationship. It is only by loading one as opposed to the other that value enters, and right and left acquire the capacity to be used symbolically as vehicles for other ideas. Right and left are not *inherently* value-laden concepts, although they are named. Even when they are value-laden, their order is manifest only when one can elicit from the society under study other pairs whose relationship entails analogous relations. Thus a pair cannot stand meaningfully on its own. A relation man/woman is not one which produces reverberations unless another pair is placed next to it, e.g. left/right.

They are thus radically different from another pair, also referred to by Dumont as an example of a hierarchical opposition, namely that of good and evil (1982: 224); or from another commonly found in the anthropological literature, auspicious and inauspicious. Such terms, I would argue, are of a different kind, being in themselves value terms. They do not require a symbolic application for this dimension to be manifest.

To return to the first kind of dyadic pair. If we are to accept that some such pairs are value-laden, we must agree with Dumont that their relative positioning is not arbitrary. Thus, the relation a/b is not necessarily the same as the relation b/a, and the kind of meaning generated by the dyadic pairs



man : woman  
right : left

is not identical to

woman : man  
right : left

nor is it identical to

man : woman  
left : right

An abstract relation  $a/b$  may be not simply a pair, but an ordered pair. A dyad such as right/left may generate meaning, and as such its order must be consistent. I think that one must in such instances accept the introduction of value.

The two elements of a pair may be of unequal value when embedded in a social situation. If this were not so, no further or new meaning would be created. My argument with regard to the Chewong is that while they make distinctions, which can sometimes be presented as binary pairs, such as male/female, older/younger, they are not vehicles for meaning beyond themselves. Thus to link them all into a long table of pairs would be at best uninformative, at worst, misleading. My claim is therefore that a binary opposition can be a vehicle for symbolic thought by virtue of its being value-laden, that is, because the relation between the two elements is asymmetrical. However, if a dyadic opposition is symmetrical, while not conveying meaning with respect to the actual elements and their relationship, it can nevertheless be said to convey a different kind of meaning, namely that of equality as defined earlier. Thus a list of symmetrically opposed dyads can be said to communicate the principle of equality.

It will be noted that I have been using the term asymmetrical rather than hierarchical. Dumont's definition of hierarchy as 'the englobement of the contrary' is *one* example—perhaps the most powerful—of an asymmetrical relationship. I prefer to use the term asymmetrical here, a term I suggest is somewhat wider than, but not in contradistinction to, hierarchy.

A list of dyads may be seen as a list of relationships. Each relationship is necessarily one of distinction, possibly but not necessarily asymmetrical distinction. Where the distinction is asymmetric the order in which the dyad is presented is necessarily material ( $a/b$  differs importantly from  $b/a$ ). Where the distinction is symmetric, the order is immaterial. Let us suppose for a moment that a long list of dyads is drawn up and divided into two shorter lists, the first containing the asymmetrically-related dyads and the second the symmetrically-related (non-value-laden) ones. In the first list, the first column will contain the element of each dyad which is, in most contexts, more highly valued. It will therefore be entirely correct to say that all the elements in this column have something in common, namely that each is more highly valued than the corresponding elements in the other column. There need be no other common factor between them. The list is thus a list of asymmetrical relations, each presented in the order 'more valued/less valued'.

What of the second list? It is of course theoretically possible that it is empty. I suggest, however, that it is almost inevitable that a number of dyads are recognized in a society without the relationship between them being value-laden. Such a relationship, of recognition without hierarchy, would therefore be one of equality, contrary to Dumont's expectations. This second list of relations would, therefore, simply have in common the fact that each is not value-laden. Thus, paradoxically, they are in effect manifestations of equality as a value.

Whereas I fully accept that in many cases, perhaps in the majority, the important ideas of a society can be presented in terms of the subordination and superordination of values in a dyadic fashion, I would claim first, that the degree to which this occurs varies between societies, and secondly, that the degree to which a correspondence of such manifestations can be elicited at different levels of the symbolic and social order also varies—finding its most extreme expression in some societies with prescriptive marriage systems, as can be found in Eastern Indonesia. I would also suggest that there are societies where value-laden oppositions exist, but that these are not necessarily representative of the dominant value of the ideology. One such society is the Chewong. As will become clear, there is one instance where asymmetrical oppositions can be found, but I shall argue that these are not representative of the main ordering principle of the ideology, which is that of equality.

### *Hierarchy as Inversion*

The question which immediately presents itself is whether the fact that at least one asymmetrical relation does exist refutes my claim that equality constitutes the dominant ordering principle and value. I suggest that Dumont's own theoretical framework provides the answer and contradicts this apparent refutation. Of course, Dumont may consider that I am misunderstanding the point that he is making. Nevertheless, my own interpretation of his theory has provided me with the tools I needed for coping with the conundrum of the Chewong situation to my own satisfaction.

The key concept that I shall be focussing upon is that of inversion, or reversal, to whose analytical significance Needham, among others, has also drawn our attention (e.g., 1973; 1983). Within the context of his discussion of hierarchical relations, Dumont makes the point with regard to non-ordered pairs (or symmetrical opposition) that

...a symmetrical opposition may be reversed at will: its reversal produces nothing. On the contrary, the reversal of an asymmetrical opposition is significant.... If the reversed opposition is encountered in the same whole in which the direct opposition was present, it is evidence of a *change of level* (1979: 811; original emphasis).

Of course, I have already suggested that the reversal of symmetrically opposed pairs can produce something, namely the *value* of symmetry, i.e. equality.

However, the pertinent point for the moment is that when reversals are encountered in the same whole we confront a change of level. From this I shall suggest that not only is equality the main ordering principle within Chewong ideology, but also that this is in itself a meaningless statement unless one can show that its opposite, in this case hierarchy, can also be found to be present. The one is only significant when viewed in relation to its opposite. Equality and hierarchy as abstract relations between 'things' then stand in asymmetric opposition, with equality being the dominant of the two. It is then perfectly consistent for the inferior value to become in some contexts the superior, but following Dumont's argument, when this occurs, it would be at an *inferior* level.

There are many examples in the ethnographic literature of what may be said to be the inferior value becoming in some contexts the superior. It can be found for instance, in those society where the left and the right hands are used symbolically as vehicles for thought, as I mentioned at the beginning of the paper. What Dumont argues is that when the normally inferior value appears as the superior one, it does so at a different, and subordinate level. This is an economical way of indicating that the level encountered in a situation of reversal is clearly to be regarded as different from the others in the indigenous ideology. To coin a phrase, inversions are good to think. If we accept Dumont's argument, both in the specific case of asymmetric dual classification and in the general one of the total value system, then we may be able to account for the instances of hierarchical orderings that do occur in Chewong ideology.

There is one distinction made by the Chewong in which relative value is present, and emanating from this are several other oppositions, generating analogous value relations. This is the distinction hot/cool. Except for one instance, to be returned to below, cool is superior to hot. The cool state is associated with health and curing. It is epitomized by certain categories of non-human beings, mainly those on Earth Six above the human earth, and by the leaf people of the forest, both of whom are immortal and associated explicitly with the cool state. Their food consists exclusively of cool dew and fruits, their blood is cool, and their worlds are cool, due to the presence of cool suns. In all these respects they are contrasted with humans, whose diet consists of meat, a hot food, whose blood is hot, whose eyes are hot, and whose environment is hot due to the hot sun. Human existence is characterised as hot, and there is a direct link between this and human mortality and susceptibility to disease. At times when human frailty needs to be explained, the various hot properties of the human condition are contrasted, derogatorily, with the cool ones of the inviolable beings.

Whereas the leaf people become spirit guides of individual Chewong (men and women), the people of Earth Six do not. (It must be stated that many other categories of non-human beings, not associated with the cool state, also become spirit guides.) The people of Earth Six are said to abhor the hot state of the human earth to such an extent that they refuse to descend. Heat can thus be seen as contagious, and the inviolability of these beings can only be maintained if they do not come in contact with heat. In this sense their inviolability is not absolute. They are, however, willing to act as initiators of those individuals who

wish to further their esoteric knowledge. These fly up to Earth Six where they are transformed by its inhabitants into one of themselves. This is done by slashing at the shaman's wrists to let all the hot blood run out, and so replace this by cool blood. The person is now immortal. His (her) eyes are also changed to cool ones, as a result of which the shaman is able, in all the different non-human worlds that he (she) travels to in trance or dreams, to 'see' in the identical way to each world's inhabitants. This is an enormous asset in the shaman's quest for lost 'souls' (*ruwai*) during healing ceremonies, as they can see the various non-human beings in their true form, and can also see through any deceptions the latter may erect against them. They can also see the true nature of objects, animals, and plants in their own environment, many of which are conscious beings. When such shamans die, they remove themselves, in conformity with their transformation, from the world of the living, but do not go to the Afterworld of the majority; rather, they join other such shamans of the past and keep a benevolent eye on the living.

As I stated above, the cool beings cannot contact the human domain for fear of being adversely affected. Whenever humans wish to make contact with the leaf people, the 'dead' shamans of the past, or the people of Earth Six, they must first make every effort to create a cool environment. They bathe in the fast-flowing rivers (said to be cooler than the small streams), they refrain from sexual intercourse, they 'bathe' the face and body in special 'cool' incense smoke. If a healing ritual is being performed, the patient is also cooled in the incense smoke. In some cases the house is abandoned and the ritual performed in the forest, a place said to be cooler. As a result of creating a cool state, the meeting between different categories of beings does not lead to disaster, as I suggested normally occurs following the crossing of boundaries. By making themselves and their environment cool the Chewong are symbolically drawing the different worlds together, eliminating that which sets them apart.

In summary, the hot/cool opposition is clearly value-laden, and capable of bearing symbolic meaning in certain situations. At such times other oppositions analogously become value-laden; they become ordered pairs. In what situations does this occur? The answer is in times of crisis, and crises occur when the cosmological order is somehow upset. It will be remembered that this is caused by illegitimate crossings of boundaries, in other words, when the various elements are not kept distinct. At such times the elements cease to be equal, and they stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other. Order can be restored only by emphasising the hierarchy, and hence a reversal in the ordering principle is introduced. It is introduced, however, as a response to an actual situation. Beings, who when all is well should not be able to tamper with human existence are, through human omission in observations of the rules, allowed to interfere detrimentally in human affairs. They thus *acquire* the ability to harm humans, and as a result, the ideal state of equality is upset. In order to re-establish this state, other unequal relations are invoked. Health (a major manifestation of 'order') can be restored only by an inversion of values, by the symbolic manipulation of asymmetry. It is thus only with reference to particular contexts, those in which the life-giving order no longer pertains, that

hierarchical relations are dominant. The employment of hierarchical principles can in itself be interpreted as a demonstration of the abnormality of the situation.

Within this discourse of asymmetry, it is interesting to note that one finds what may be termed a double inversion. Not only is the equality/hierarchy relation reversed, but the specific relation hot/cool is similarly reversed. Whereas cool is, in the contexts described, always superior to hot within the human/non-human relationship, we can find one example when hot is regarded as superior to cool, thereby introducing a change of levels within the particular discourse. At times of birth, the new-born child and its mother must be exposed to heat. They spend all their time lying next to the house fire, they remain within the house, they wash in heated water, and they are covered in cloth. These conditions are all representative exclusively of the human domain. Coolness, being the symbol of the inviolable non-human world, is nevertheless available to humans, albeit to a limited degree, but sufficient at least to establish productive contact with other worlds. It represents the meeting point of all the different worlds within the wider social universe. The hot state, by contrast, is not accessible to the various non-human beings associated with coolness; or rather it is destructive to them. Thus by exposing the new-born child to the human domain only, the Chewong emphasise a single part of their social universe: the human one at the exclusion of every other. The child is incorporated into the human social world. One may conclude that by reversing the usual order of the asymmetrical hot/cool dyad, the Chewong are conveying a different message. The reversal indicates a different level, one which can be said to be inferior in so far as it concerns only one part—the human—of the total social universe.

My concern in this paper has been to provide a case study to demonstrate that 'equality can by itself constitute an order' (see Dumont quoted at the start of this paper). Equality, I have suggested, can be both a structural principle for ordering relations, and a value. I have shown that from a formal point of view dyadic pairs, as elicited from an ideology under study, can be either symmetrical or asymmetrical. Furthermore, I have suggested that symmetrical dyadic pairs may in themselves generate the abstract value of recognition without relative value. Or, to put it another way, equality as opposed to hierarchy may be the principle on which relations are organized. The Chewong represent one example of people who hold such an ideology. The emphasis throughout is on recognition, separation, juxtaposition. However, if 'to posit a value is at the same time to posit a non-value' (Dumont 1979: 813), then the opposite of these principles, in this case hierarchy, should be expected to be present, and I have shown that in particular contexts a hierarchical ordering of relations does indeed become the dominant one. However, when this does occur, it does so at a lower level in the total discourse of Chewong ideology.

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CHRISTIAN McDONAUGH

## THE THARU HOUSE: OPPOSITIONS AND HIERARCHY

A CENTRAL aspect of Dumont's ideas concerning hierarchy is their emphasis on a holistic approach. To avoid 'atomisation', and in order not to decompose the original relations of elements, Dumont (1982: 222) urges us to reassemble the contexts or oppositions we encounter by relating them back to the whole of which they are parts. In this way we will be able to see more clearly the dominant principle or principles which are at work. Barnes has suggested<sup>1</sup> that the existence of the hierarchical opposition in which one part stands for the whole at a superior level is an empirical question, and one which it is necessary to study and verify in each particular field. This paper is a preliminary attempt to apply Dumont's notion of the hierarchical opposition to a body of ethnographic material. I shall argue that in this case we are able to point towards something like the hierarchical opposition wherein one part stands for the whole.

Beginning with the Tharu house and then moving outwards to touch on Tharu cosmology we shall meet various oppositions, but in the main the discussion will concern the opposition between north and south.<sup>2</sup> In fact, however, this opposition is an asymmetric one, and I shall accordingly concentrate on the north. This may seem to give us a somewhat one-sided view

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1. R.H. Barnes, 'Hierarchy without Caste', in the present volume.

2. It must be made clear that the terms north, south, east, west, are translations of the Tharu words for the cardinal points, *uttar*, *dakkin*, *purub*, *pachiun*, which derive from the Sanskrit, *uttara*, *dakṣiṇa*, etc. In this context, therefore, the cardinal points do not present the problems to analysis encountered elsewhere, as for instance in Barnes 1974: 78–88.

of the Tharu scheme, but nevertheless I think that this is the correct line of approach.

The literature on the Tharu as a whole is limited. One sub-group, the Dangaura Tharu, with whom this paper is concerned, has been described by several ethnographers, to whom I owe much. Especially useful have been the reports of Rajaure<sup>3</sup> (1978; 1981a; 1981b; 1982), while Macdonald (1969: 71) had earlier noted the north-south orientation of Dangaura Tharu houses and villages. This fact was later used as comparative data in an article on Thulung classification by Allen (1972: 87), and this article, together with one by Sagant on the Limbu house (1973), have stimulated me to look into the subject of the Tharu house and to explore further the significance of its north-south orientation. The detailed description of the Tharu house by Milliet-Mondon (1981) does not examine the questions I am concerned with here. Of the literature outside the specifically Nepalese context, the collection of essays in *Right and Left* (Needham 1973), and particularly Cunningham's contribution on the Atoni house, have directed me towards the present analysis.

The Tharu are a tribal people who inhabit the Terai districts along the border between Nepal and India. Geographically the Terai forms the boundary between the vast North Indian plain and the foothills of the Himalayas. It is very flat, but inside the outer foothills there are some long and broad valleys which comprise the Inner Terai, and which though slightly cooler share many of the characteristics of the Terai proper. Although the land is fertile, in the past the heavy forestation and the prevalence of malaria have tended to keep the people of the surrounding plains and hills out of the Terai. Recently, deforestation and the eradication of malaria have brought considerable change.

Altogether people called Tharu number some 500,000. They are broadly divided into several named groups, which are distinguished by the territory they occupy, by differences in certain cultural features, and by language. They speak a number of largely mutually unintelligible languages, which are structurally related to, and to a great extent based on, the surrounding north Indian languages, including Nepali. The Dangaura Tharu form one of the largest groups and speak a distinctive language. They take their name from the long Dang valley of the Inner Terai of western Nepal. The term Tharu here, therefore, refers only to the Dangaura group.

The Tharu live in fairly compact nucleated settlements. The village is an important unit, being the focus for much activity and having a bounded and defined territory. Villages are situated a couple of miles apart on average, and range in size from around 150 to 600 inhabitants. The Tharu differ from the surrounding peoples in many respects, three of which are particularly notable. First, their villages exhibit a high degree of communal organization, which centres on the village headman. Secondly, they live in large joint-family

3. I also wish to thank Drone Rajaure for his advice and help in the initial stages of fieldwork.



households, some of which can contain up to eighty or ninety people. The third difference is the unique style and appearance of the traditional house itself.

Apart from the village and the household, the most important unit in the structure of Tharu society is the clan. The society is divided into an indefinite number of exogamous patrilineal clans. The clan has no overall corporate identity. Its primary function is to provide the negative rules bearing on marriage.

The Tharu are sedentary agriculturalists, cultivating rice, maize, and wheat as staple crops, and some mustard and linseed, which are sold into India so as to buy salt, cloth and other essential commodities.

The house (*ghar*) is the fundamental social, economic and ritual unit of Tharu society. This is reflected in the manner in which the house is ordered directly by certain principles, which do not relate to the village, and only in certain specific contexts to other houses in the village. The house constitutes a kind of template or blueprint for ordering and relating certain ideas and social positions. Genealogies, in so far as they are reckoned at all beyond the household, are spoken of in terms of the house. The most closely related local households of a clan are termed *ghar phutlak*, which means 'of the broken house', that is, they came from the same original house when it divided. Genealogical links are often reckoned in terms of houses, in that the pattern of house-splitting over time and therefore the links between houses can be remembered, while the individuals involved are soon forgotten. In addition the word *konti*, which is the word for one of the rooms in a house occupied by a man and his wife and children, can also be used to refer to a lineage (Rajaure 1981b: 24). Thus the language of social structure derives from the house.

The composition of a joint household consists of a man and his married sons, but often there is more than one man in the senior generation, and so two or more groups of sons in the junior level. The norm of jointness is highly valued in Tharu ideology, particularly that between a father and his sons. When a house divides it will most commonly do so after the death of the men of the senior generation, the link between the remaining brothers being weaker than that between father and sons. Nevertheless we do find instances of brothers remaining together.

Within the household a crucial aspect of the relations between father and sons and between brothers is ranking according to generation and relative age. The seniority of the father is fundamental, and this carries over to relations between brothers, an elder brother being senior to a younger brother, who should obey and respect his senior. This ranking of seniors over juniors is clearly expressed in the rules of food pollution. A younger is able to eat food remaining on an elder brother's plate, but not the other way round. The seniority of elder brothers is also expressed in the customary forms of greeting. The term used for someone older is *barā*, which also means 'larger' or 'greater', while correspondingly *choṭi* means 'younger' and also 'smaller' or 'lesser'. Of several brothers the eldest, who will become the household head, is called *barkā*, while the youngest is *choṭkā*.

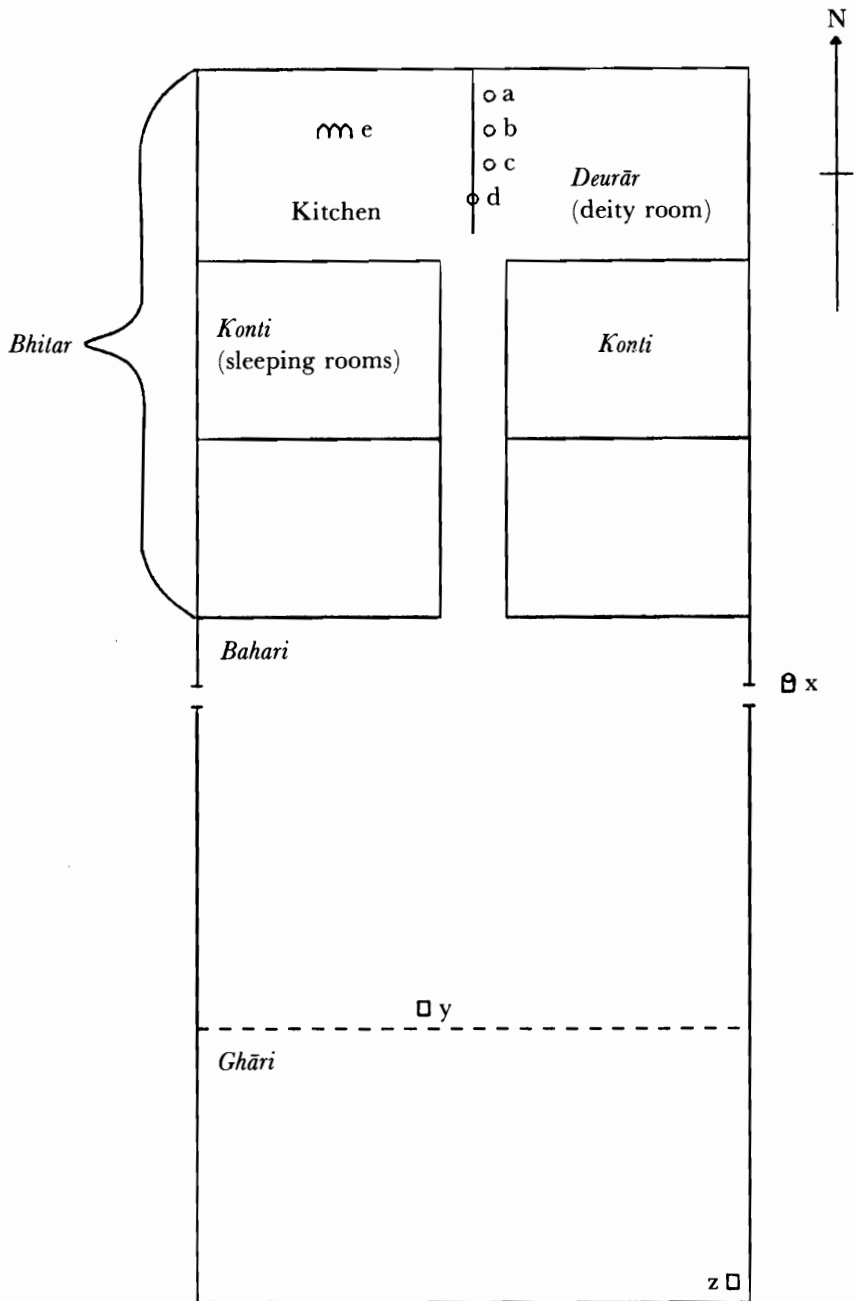
In considering the orientation and layout of the house, the first point to note is that all Tharu houses, as already mentioned, are oriented along a north-south axis. In fact it may be more accurate to say that they are oriented to the north.<sup>4</sup> Most commonly, villages are made up of houses built in two lines also running north-south, on either side of a central village lane.<sup>5</sup> The internal layout of the house does not vary except in the size and number of rooms. The location of the kitchen and the deity room does not vary, so in addition to the north-south axis we find a constant distribution of features on the east and west of the house.

From north to south the house is divided into three sections (as shown in Figure 1). The southernmost area, the *ghāri*, is reserved for cattle and sheep at night. The next section, the *bahari*, is a semi-public area. The northern section, called *bhitar*, contains the *konti*, that is, the sleeping rooms, the kitchen, and the deity room (*deurār*). The terms *bahari* and *bhitar* are derived from words which have the more general meanings of 'outside' and 'inside' respectively. This is understandable, since in a physical sense the *bhitar* section is the furthest inside the house, in that to reach it one has to pass through the *bahari* first. The *bahari* thus forms a kind of barrier separating the inner part of the house from the outside (Milliet-Mondon 1981: 24). The *bhitar* is entered via a doorway situated in the middle of the northern wall of the *bahari*, which gives onto the central corridor. The two northernmost rooms, the kitchen and the deity room, are the 'innermost' rooms of the house, and are thus in the part of the house which is the most private and separate from the outside world.

The main household deities are located in the northeastern room, along the central partition separating this room from the kitchen. These deities face east. There are also deities located in the centre of the fence separating the *ghāri* from the *bahari*, in the southeastern corner of the house, and in the eastern courtyard (see Figure 1). These last three deities are not always all present, but when they are their location is always the same. They are all connected with cattle or sheep, and are not permanently sacred and protected by restrictions as the inner deities are. The inner deities are hedged around by rules restricting access to them and sometimes the deity room may be closed to outsiders. They are the most important deities, and it is in the deity room that most household rituals are performed. They are crucial in two further respects. First, these deities identify the clan affiliation of the household, each clan having its own deity or unique configuration of deities; and secondly, the presence of these deities identifies a house as such. Without them, the building is not a proper house at all for the Tharu. Such buildings exist, but always as part of a joint household. In fact, houses lacking deities are equated with *goth*, which are temporary structures

4. The houses are not oriented to true north, but are roughly at right angles to the mountains, which lie west by northwest and east by southeast. The houses are therefore oriented to the mountains, but for the Tharu this also means the north.

5. Most villages consist of two lines of houses, but a few consist of three or four. It seems that when a new village is built, as occurs in the far western Terai districts to which the Tharu have been migrating, first one line of houses is built and then a second line is built to the east of the first. Obviously local topography affects the location and layout of villages to some extent.



Key: a, b, c—'Main' deities; d—House post (*mannik khamba* or *dulāhā khūṭā*); e—Hearth; x, y, z—Other deities

Figure 1. The Tharu House

built for cattle in the village or for grazing near the jungle. When a household divides, one of the first tasks of the new household heads is to make and install new sets of deities for themselves, each being made in the name of the new household head.

We have then for the house an orientation along a north-south axis, with distribution of kitchen to the west and deity room to the east. This layout does not vary.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in terms of its internal space the house is not oriented to other features such as rivers, the village lane, or other houses.

When a new house is built it is erected in a few days on a level piece of ground, which forms the floor. Wooden posts are raised in lines, with a central line of posts called *dhur* and two or occasionally three or four lines of shorter posts in descending height on either side. These posts support a large sloping thatched roof which reaches down over the low outer walls, themselves made of wattle and daub. The inner rooms are divided up by partitions consisting of large grain storage containers joined together by thin walls.<sup>7</sup> The only part of house-construction which is marked by ritual is the fixing in place of the northernmost post that falls inside the area of the house. This post is called the *mannik khambā* or *dulāhā khūṭā*, meaning 'the post of Man' in the generic sense, or the 'bridegroom post'.<sup>8</sup> It is the first of the central line of posts to be erected, and both its setting-up and the foundation ritual are carried out near the start of construction. This ritual is quite short and simple and is performed by the head of the new household with some assistance from his wife. The north, therefore, is stressed, marking the start of the process of construction, and singling out the northernmost of the central posts as distinct. This is also, at least in one appellation, a male post. In certain ritual contexts this post is treated as a deity and is assimilated to the other household deities.

The main feature of the sleeping pattern is that the household head sleeps either in the deity room itself, or just next to it, in the room directly to the south, on the same side of the house. According to some informants the full traditional sleeping pattern for the other married men follows in order of seniority down the east side of the house, and then begins again at the north on the west side, descending through that side. I never met a house where this pattern was rigidly adhered to, and the only constant feature is the location of the household head in the deity room or the room just to its south.<sup>9</sup>

6. There are four clans whose houses are built in reverse order to all others. The *bhitār* lies to the south and the *ghārī* to the north. It is only the north-south order which is reversed, since the deity room remains on the east side of the house and the kitchen on the west side. The name of these clans is *ulthāwā*, meaning 'opposite' or 'reversed', which reflects this feature of their houses. There is no evidence, however, that this reversal reflects a hierarchical inferiority for these four clans.

7. For details of the dimensions of these storage containers, and of other parts of the house, see Milliet-Mondon 1981.

8. I also heard this post referred to as *jethā* or *barkā khambā*, which means the 'eldest post'.

9. The household head's location in this part of the house was once or twice referred to as the *sir* or 'head' of the house. The term *sir* was also frequently used to describe the northernmost of the shrines in the deity room.

When the household splits, the brothers may each build their own houses, or divide up the original building. In the former case, the eldest brother remains in the original building and keeps the deities, and the new households have to make and install their own deities as one of their first tasks. On the other hand, when the house is divided walls are built east to west across it, splitting it into equal sections, each of which is made into a smaller-scale replica of a proper house, with *bhitar*, *bahari* and so on. The eldest brother keeps the northernmost part of the deities, and usually these do not move. Again, the other brothers have to make new sets of deities.<sup>10</sup>

To sum up so far, there are four main points. First, the house is divided into an inner area and an outer area, the former being to the north, and the more private. Secondly, brothers are ranked on the basis of age order. This ranking is manifested or worked out in spatial terms in the house, with the eldest brother or household head being associated with the north, and the junior brothers situated to his south. Thirdly, the northern post in the house is ritually marked, and represents a starting point or beginning in relation to which the rest is built. This part of the house is fixed and not usually moved. Fourthly, the north is also the location of the main deities, whose room is the most sacred area. These deities are the main focus for ritual, and they protect and support the household. Their very presence defines a house as such. There are two further points. First, among the deities in the deity room is a centrally placed group which includes the principal characters in the Tharu myth of the creation of the world. Secondly, the spirits of the dead ancestors are ritually seated or given a place in the deity room alongside the other deities. So this is the location not only of the living head of the household, but also of his ancestors.

In an obvious sense the household head supersedes the other members. As master he has certain responsibilities, but equally he has privileges; if sufficient labour is available he need not do some of the heavier agricultural work, and he acts as host for entertaining guests. He represents the household in the outside world, and is also the main ritual officiant from within the house. More than anyone else he stands for the household as a whole, as is suggested by his name, *ghardhurryā*, or 'house-post'. As already noted the central line of high posts supporting the ridge of the house is called *dhur*. Like the house-posts he is the pivotal support of the household, and just as the house is oriented in relation to the north, so the other men of the house are ordered in relation to him.

There is a similar pattern in the context of the village. The village headman (*mahaton*) has various functions, including officiating in rituals at the shrine of the village deities. This shrine consists of several carved wooden boards and pegs, one of which is called *murāhā mahaton*, which means 'headman peg'. This

10. There was one particularly striking example of the right of the household head to the north part of the house and the deities. A household had decided to split and for various reasons it was decided not to divide up the original house with internal walls. Instead, the house was cut in half and the northern half dismantled and carried to a new site, where it was used for building a new house for the original household head, who also took the deities.

peg is changed whenever the headman changes, and in some villages is the northernmost part of the shrine.<sup>11</sup>

There are, then, a series of ideas and entities which are clustered around the northern end of the house, or which are ordered in relation to the north. Oppositions we have met are senior:junior, inside:outside and north:south, and we have also touched on east:west.

It is true that I have traced only one element, the north. These oppositions are asymmetric—senior:junior inherently so, of course. One element is usually superior, and among the configurations of oppositions that between north and south seems to emerge as dominant. It may be that we can see what it is about the north that lends it superiority more easily than we can for other positive elements, and there is no space here to go into the inferior elements of these oppositions. Let us continue to trace this orientation to the north, and explore its dominant role in articulating other oppositions. After all, we must ask why it is that certain deities, the ancestors, and the senior in rank order are all linked with the north.<sup>12</sup>

Let us recall that the ranges of the Mahabharat mountains rise steeply to the north of the Tharu areas, while to the south lies the vast plain. For the Tharu the north means the mountains and is obviously also 'up'. In a general way in the village this is reflected in the terms *tikra* and *tara*. When one walks northwards in the village and its surrounding fields this is described as going *tikrawar* or 'upwards', and conversely to move south is to go *tarawar*, 'downwards'.<sup>13</sup>

Certain deities and the ancestors dwell in the house, but they can also be in other places, especially *harikabilās*. The ancestors in particular are in *harikabilās*, since usually they do not have their own shrines in the deity room. They come once a year during the *dasyā* festival, when they are fed with a fine feast carefully laid out for them in the deity room. The deities seem to be more evenly distributed between this world and its houses on the one hand and *harikabilās* on the other, and this is because they have fixed *thān* or places where they are fed on a regular basis. Notions concerning *harikabilās* are vague. It is a nice place, sometimes described (through the image of a flower garden) as bright, beautiful, light, and sweet-scented. More significantly, it is situated somewhere to the

11. I was told in my base village that this peg was made from the same tree that was used to make the northern house-post of the headman's house.

12. Space does not allow discussion of the fact that the kitchen, with its close association with women, is also located in the north of the house. This would have to be included in any fuller analysis.

13. The terms *tikrawar* and *tarawar* respectively mean 'upwards' and 'downwards'. Within the village they were used to describe movement northwards or southwards, even where at first sight there was no obvious slope to the land involved. This is understandable when we bear in mind that the whole valley floor slopes from north to south, and that the village land as a whole does so, though the gradient is slight. On a wider scale the association of north with upwards and south with downwards holds good because the mountains lie to the north and the plain to the south. Where, however, local topography conflicts with this general pattern the terms can be used in their literal meaning, so that when going up the low hills which lie to the south of the valley one moves *tikrawar* or 'upwards', even though one is at the same time actually going southwards.

north and up in the mountains. Obviously this is a version of Mount Kailās in the Himalayas, important for Hindus and Buddhists alike as the abode of the gods.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship between men and deities is complex. The deities belong to the *sat jug*, the 'age of *sat*', which in the Hindu context corresponds to the *satya* or *kr̥ta yuga*. This was an age of power and purity, when the world was created and the deities lived in the world. Men now live in the *kal jug* (in the Hindu scheme the *kali yuga*), which is the present imperfect age in which the deities have retreated from the world, though they still sustain and protect men. From certain points of view the most important deity is *guru bābā* who created the world and who now presides in *harikabilās*. He came first in the order of things. It is not surprising, then, that *guru bābā*, represented by a small leather figure of human shape, hangs separately above all the other deities arranged on the small platforms on the floor of the deity room.<sup>15</sup>

The deities, then, dwell at least in part in *harikabilās*, to the north, up in the mountains. They came first with the creation of the world and are the source of support and protection for men today. The ancestors of men are also assimilated to these deities. Men interact with ancestors and deities through their shrines or *thān*, which appropriately lie in the north of the house.

This orientation to the north is, therefore, far reaching. The north:south opposition always seems to be asymmetrical, and through several different situations we have gained an idea of what the north stands for. It is at once various things, but in cosmological terms it is the direction of *harikabilās*, the abode of deities who created the world, who came first, and who are powerful and superior to men. This pattern is also significant within the house. The north is the location of the household deities, including as already mentioned the main deities of the creation myth. It is the point which marks the core of the house, the point which is fixed, and in relation to which the house extends southwards. It is also the location of the household head, who is at once master of the establishment and the ritual officiant from within the house.

It is not so easy to discuss the south as a pole. Points to the south are appropriate for juniors, for inferiors, and for things of the outside—but this is so only in relation to the north. Perhaps this is a situation similar to that which Dumont has described as the kind of hierarchy wherein the superior pole is coterminous with the whole, and the inferior pole is determined solely in relation to the former (1982: 225). In contrast to this type Dumont refers to the articulate type of hierarchy, where we see reversal and chiasmus clearly manifested, such as that

14. Two educated Tharu informants explicitly identified *harikabilās* with Mount Kailās. It is interesting to note that *dhāmi*, ritual specialists of Bar-khang village in north-west Nepal, address a deity called *kabilas*, 'le maître du kailash' (Bancaud and Macdonald 1982: notices 59–62).

15. Literally *guru bābā* means 'teacher-father'. I hope to discuss the hierarchy of the deities and their inter-relations elsewhere.

between priest and king or purity and power. In the former type this chiasmus may be obscured, or manifest only at the empirical level. The Tharu scheme is close to this former type, but does not coincide with it entirely.

There are, in fact, certain situations which are marked by reversal. In most ritual contexts the right is superior to the left, and regarding the hands this is true in a general way.<sup>16</sup> In the majority of rituals the right is the place of the senior priest. The officiants face west towards the deities, who face east, and in these situations the right and north coincide. Some situations are marked by reversal so that left becomes dominant. There are also other kinds of reversal, with rituals for household members—normally performed inside the house—being performed outside. In two such contexts it is arguable that there is an assimilation or reconciliation of these reversals by the north, in particular in relation to the deities and ancestors.

First, death itself is marked by numerous reversals. The body is laid out north-south in the *bahari*, the opposite of its usual sleeping position in the *bhitar* section. The corpse is stripped completely naked, wrapped in a shroud, and buried in a grave oriented north-south, with the head to the north.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the associated rituals the left hand is used, and so on. Eventually, in the course of subsequent purification rituals, the new ancestor is led back into the house and is seated along with the other ancestors and deities in the deity room. In a sense the initial reversals have now been superseded through the deity room in the north of the house. Perhaps we have crossed levels in the process.

Secondly, a similar form of assimilation appears in relation to women. A woman enters her husband's house on marriage, but her full incorporation is a long-term process. For the first year, and at frequent intervals thereafter, she spends time in her natal home on a series of visits. Even after she has had her first children the woman will continue to visit her natal home, though as she gets older her visits will become increasingly rare. For the Tharu the deities of the woman's natal household, of her mother's brother's household, and of her mother's mother's brother's household in some sense continue to follow and affect her. This is the explanation for a ritual which is performed twice every year in the marital house for the woman's fertility and well-being and for that of her children. Since this ritual concerns the deities of clans different from her husband's it has to be performed outside the house. More than this, part of the essential ritual equipment is kept hanging in the southwestern corner of the house, either inside or outside. The ritual is actually carried out on the ground, outside the house and near its southern end. This is in direct contrast to other household rituals, which take place inside the house, usually in the northeastern room.<sup>18</sup> Women marrying into the house come from different clans and are still

16. The right:left opposition does not seem important in relation to the house, but this would have to be discussed in the context of rituals.

17. Burial is the commonest form of disposal, but sometimes the body is cremated.

18. This ritual for women, called *rath lausarnā*, is performed outside the house and at what we may call the 'back' of the house. This is the side which adjoins the fields. The 'front' side of the house, with its large open courtyard, faces towards the village lane. This means that for houses on the west side of



affected by the deities of those clans, so they are to an extent separated from the husband's household and clan deities. If, however, we again follow the sequence of this relationship between a woman and her marital household, we see a kind of progressive incorporation. At death the woman, like any other ancestor, is seated with the other ancestors in the northern deity room. She is finally brought in and finds her place inside and in the north, in a position befitting her final transition to an absolutely senior status.

We have seen two situations which are set apart and marked by reversals, but which in turn are transcended by an overriding organising principle. These contexts are being ordered for us in relation to this principle, and so we can speak of '...different levels hierarchised together with the corresponding elements' (Dumont 1982: 225). Within the oppositions encountered, I cannot assign to the elements values which are intrinsic and invariant in all contexts. Nevertheless one can say more about the positively valued elements and in particular the north. North and south are only definable in relation to the whole, and, like right and left in relation to the body, they do not have the same relation to this whole. At one level they are opposed, but at a higher level north transcends south. They are, then, hierarchically opposed, and north is more important in relation to the whole (Dumont 1979: 810). I cannot say if at the highest level north will always be dominant, since there are further situations and elements to consider. North is associated with seniority, male, inside, ancestors, the deities, and *harikabilās*. Among further aspects to be considered are purity and fertility. By distinguishing hierarchical levels, however, I have begun to draw 'the main lines of organization of the ideological whole...' (ibid.: 813). Perhaps the number of value-ideas clustered around the north may suggest that we are in the 'zone' where 'the fundamental idea, the mother of all others...is hiding' (ibid.: 814).

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the village this ritual is performed to the west of the house, and for those in the eastern line of houses it takes place to the east of the house. The relation of the house to the village lane, therefore, although making no difference to its internal layout and orientation, seems to affect the spatial location of rituals performed outside the house. We might then have to include in any further discussion a further opposition between 'back' and 'front' sides of the house. This is also suggested by the fact that when a corpse is carried out of the house, for those houses to the west of the central lane it leaves by the western doorway, while in those to the east it leaves by the eastern doorway. In both cases, then, it leaves by the 'back' door, on the side facing away from the village lane.

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G.E. CLARKE

## HIERARCHY, STATUS AND SOCIAL HISTORY IN NEPAL

THIS paper explores some potential applications of Dumont's notion of hierarchy to the social history of a people of Tibetan Buddhist culture from the High Himalaya of Nepal.<sup>1</sup> In general terms, the main problem I consider is the contrast between idealist and empirical modes of explanation. I argue that important insights are to be gained from Dumont's notion of hierarchy; but at the same time I point to some major limitations of such an idealist approach, if used alone to characterize an observed society.

One early natural-language meaning attached to the word 'hierarchy' is that of a 'divine order' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This is one main sense in which the term has been used by Dumont: with it, he contrasts a traditional and holistic world-view to a modern, discontinuous, and domain-specific, perspective.

There is another major sense that the term 'hierarchy' has in English, namely that of a system or series of terms of successive rank used in classification. This is the sense in which it is used in natural science and logic. In as far as he analyses the 'divine order', that is, hierarchy in terms of concepts such as level, segmentation, and other formal notions, Dumont can be seen as creating a

1. For reasons of space I am assuming some familiarity with Dumont's theoretical notion of hierarchy, and the associated ideas of encompassment, reversal and the link between fact and value in the 'idea-value'. An exposition of these ideas can be found in Dumont's work listed in the references below. This paper concerns the possible relation of these ideas to certain Himalayan ethnographic data, and of course interpretations and emphases other than those of this paper can be derived from his ideas. The only comment I wish to make here at the purely theoretical level is the following. In places in Dumont's work, hierarchy is at one and the same time characterised as a traditional concept, and also as our analysis of that concept.

hierarchic system in this second sense of the term.<sup>2</sup> But here, bar one further preliminary exception, I shall be using the term 'hierarchy' only in the first sense of a 'divine order'.

### *Hierarchy in Helambu*

This other meaning of the term in English is that of 'priestly domination'; there is also the related sense of a collective term for an organized body of clergy. These senses bring together power and priestly status, and aptly characterize the people of Tibetan Buddhist culture looked at here.

These are known, quite simply, as the Lama People, and they live in a part of the Nepalese Himalaya known as Yolmo or Helambu. They are the dominant group of the region, whether this dominance is looked at from the viewpoint of religious status, or economic or political power, or as an all-encompassing valuation. They are a married priesthood, and are at once householders and religious officiants: they are anything but a community of world-renouncers.

Their economy depends to a degree on their own direct farming activities, but their wealth derives from their ownership of tenanted landholdings, long-distance trade, and work outside the region. While the Lama People live in villages tightly clustered around temples high up the hillside, their sharecropping tenants live in open settlements down the valley, set in the fields which they farm. These latter people are often known as Tamang, which is an ethnic label. This contrast between Lama and Tamang, and the significance of the dominant term 'lama', is the focal point of application of Dumont's notion of hierarchy as 'divine order' in this analysis.

They all, both Lama and Tamang, speak related Tibeto-Burman languages or dialects. Apart from the superimposition of Tibetan Buddhist culture on or by the Lama People, the two groups share the same material culture. Both Lama and Tamang have patrilineages, some of which are recognised as being the same groups: hence the lineages cut across this ethnic divide. But these lineages have little corporate existence beyond the local lineage of any one village, and mainly act to define the exogamic group. The kinship nomenclature of both Lamas and Tamangs conforms to the Dravidian or 'two-line symmetrical' form, with similar terms. In a simple sense, they practise cross-cousin marriage combined with a value for hypogamy: for both groupings the 'wife-givers' are generally thought of as higher in rank than the 'wife-takers'. Hence in a broad sense Lama and Tamang peoples in Helambu are related groups.

2. This point applies to any such model which does more than just mirror the data. But it does not follow from this that hierarchy is necessarily the same thing as taxonomy: the number and type of formal mathematical arrangements available is in principle open-ended. For example, there are distinctions between taxonomies, paradigms, keys and stress according to various criteria, such as static or sequential, inclusive or exclusive, symmetrical or asymmetrical, labelled or unlabelled; and this list, of course, is not exhaustive.

The Lamas are the dominant group. But at the present day their society does not have the high degree of division of labour and separate spheres of activity that one associates with the monk and layman of 'High Buddhism'. Rather, their society appears as a primitive condensation of Tibetan Buddhism into a more homogeneous social form, a 'total classification' in which the spheres of kinship, religion and economics and that of nature itself are rendered homologous. It can be shown that this total classification, as a hierarchy in Dumont's sense, is based on the contrast of 'above' and 'below', with the former, the notion of above or 'superior' as the dominant pole.

In this sense, Lama and Tamang are an aspect of a total hierarchy, namely a natural, social and moral order in which altitude, wealth and virtue are linked together. The people 'above' are said to have ample food, wood, and water, to be fully clothed, to have Buddhist temples and to keep their word. The people 'below' are said (by those 'above') not to have enough food, wood or water, to walk around without trousers, to slaughter animals for sacrifice and to be untrustworthy.

For a person 'below', that is, one who does not include himself with Lamas, the term 'lama' has the sense of a person who lives on top of the hillside in a village with a temple, a wealthy landlord who does not himself carry out manual labour but who uses his time and energy for Tibetan ceremonial. The culture above is usually seen from the outside as a unitary whole, an amalgam of authority, wealth and religion.

From a categorical perspective, it is the contrast between the two terms Lama and Tamang which is of importance, with the accent on the former: both are used in a relative, contextual and 'weighted' manner. There is no simple absolute sense in which a place is 'above', with a line between it and those 'below'. Rather, this classification is just one way of looking at things in certain contexts by some people: one person's Lama can be another's Tamang. Empirically, it is not the case that half-way down the hillside people start to refer to themselves as immoral and untrustworthy Tamangs. Certainly there are places where people claim to be both poor and Tamang; but they are far more likely to explain their poverty by the fact that they do not own the land, rather than that it forms, along with 'immorality', part of their nature.

Often people put themselves in the upper rather than the lower category, include themselves with people up the hillside, and place the dividing line of the contrast below them. Together with this pattern there often goes some justificatory juggling with ethnic labels. People, especially those up the hillside, can give an elaborate picture of status differences in an ethnic idiom. They may place themselves at the top as Lama, have Sherpa below, Tamang below them, and Hindu peoples at the bottom. Others lower down will contrast Lama or Lama-Tamang to Hindu alone. But to the observer, though the contrast between a village at the top and bottom of the hillside may appear to epitomize the cultural contrast of Lama to Tamang, there is at the empirical level a continuum up and down the hillside.

It appears that the ethnic constellation up and down the hillside can be viewed as a segmentary 'Great Chain of Being' (a representation of the universe

as a linear hierarchy in Western thought), with infinitesimally small rungs between each step of the divine ladder, which are a feature of hierarchy in this sense (Dumont 1982: 227). At the same time we have to note that there are conflicting representations: one can argue that it is only to the extent that those who proffer an ideology of Lamaism are in some way dominant, be it only by virtue of being the interpreters of the ideology, that this hierarchy gives a clear representation of the local status differences. If this is so, then to explain the dominance in terms of this ideology alone would be circular. Such a circularity is interesting as an indigenous classification. But it is not self-evident that it can contain, rather than explain away, other orders and perspectives, whether these are indigenous ideologies or observer's analytical models.

### *Fundamental Value*

To what extent can this hierarchy be characterized, in Dumont's terms, by a 'fundamental value' or 'idea-value' (Dumont 1977: 19–20; 1979: 814; 1982: 224)?<sup>3</sup> 'Lama' is a candidate here, but I shall argue that its wideness of use clearly represents not so much a single coherent value, as a multitude of senses which have a historical link. 'Lama', as introduced so far, is a status category used to refer to a member of a Lama village, as superior up the hillside. At its widest in the Tibetan cultural area the term 'lama' (Tibetan *bLa-ma*) has the sense of priest or ecclesiastic, as it does in this part of the Himalaya too. However, here it can also carry one literal sense of the root *bLa*—that of 'higher one' or 'superior'.

In some villages, rather than 'lama' with its manifold reference, another term, *cho-wa*, is used for priest. This is the Tibetan term *chos-pa* 'a religious man, a divine, a monk'. The root *chos* is the Tibetan literary translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, which is often glossed as 'religion' or 'religious work'. In Helambu as in Tibet it has the connotation of moral doctrine, custom, religion and Buddhism; a more apt gloss from our perspective would be the 'proper order', which by its very nature would be sacred or divine.

The local conception of *cho* implies a cosmology, and moreover one ordered vertically in layered worlds with a descending hierarchy from the upper to the lower levels. From the relative viewpoint of the individual there are levels that are up or 'above' him, his own level, and levels that are down or 'below' him. This ego-centred classification is possibly the basis for the absolute division into a

3. One understanding of Dumont is that a basic, fundamental, or idea-value possesses this quality because of its property of 'encompassing the contrary'. This posits it, not only in opposition to, but also at a superordinate and inclusive level to the subordinate term. This, in turn, indicates a core significance to the culture concerned. There are particular problems with some aspects of this formulation, which are mentioned in notes 2 and 8. The main logic of the idea-value derives from this 'hierarchical opposition', which is discussed more fully (in the context of the Lama People) in the next section, and also elsewhere in this volume, as well as in Dumont's cited works themselves.

three-layered 'heaven, earth and hell' that characterizes much popular Tibetan thought (Stein 1972: 211).

This classificatory order is, of course, the same hierarchy as before: above is to the ridge and north, towards the snow and Buddhist temples; down is to the river and south, towards the fields and trade. The hierarchy is presumed within the order which is *cho*.

The same weighted binary distinction for relative rank is carried through within the village itself, into areas that from an absolute perspective would serve to mark ever finer gradations of difference and distinctions of context. Whether in the temple, the village square, a household or a field, relative rank is shown in seating positions, in the sequence of making offerings or of being served food, and other signs of attention. The ranking that results applies as much to divinities, spirits, animals—all beings—in their relations to men and each other, as to the relations between men themselves. If context is put to one side, then there is a hierarchy in the sense of a 'great chain of being'. *Cho* is an all-encompassing order.

However, at least in social contexts there are rotations of position of superior and inferior which reflect or create a discrete and egalitarian order that contrasts with hierarchy. Of course, equality and hierarchy must combine in some manner in any social system (Dumont 1977: 4, following Talcott Parsons). And these exchanges, which imply an equality, closure and even competition at any one social level, may be viewed in some sense as 'contained in' a more general social hierarchy in the region as a whole. For example, all Lama villagers may be seen as equals together, in contrast to the lower level peoples. But it is not clear exactly in what sense this equality may be subsumed within an all-embracing hierarchy, that is, an order based on difference. Moreover, given the significance of relations to outsiders in state-wide contexts, there is a sense in which, if not equality, then at least unity in opposition to outsiders contains hierarchy both in ideological terms and at an empirical level. I will return to this last point presently.

Although *cho* can be translated as 'morality' or 'correctness', it is not just the religious order in the modern sense. Indeed, the problem of translation here epitomizes precisely the contrast that Dumont introduces between traditional total thought and modern atomizing or individuating areas of discourse. *Cho* is the proper order which stands behind all aspects of nature, behind all possible worlds. If there is a landslide, if there is a storm, if a person is sick, if a building collapses, if trade is bad, the answer ultimately is in *cho*. In village as in doctrinal explanations everything is finally reducible to one and the same: there is no separation into separate technical areas of discourse, as in Western thought. *Cho* is a unitary overarching intellectual schemata.

The idea of *cho* as a Buddhist order is implicit, and all customs associated with Tibetan Buddhist culture are from this ideological perspective expressions and instruments of *cho*. An individual, as an individual, may be willing to accept that there is such a thing as a Muslim or Christian *cho*. As one might expect, a people who engage in trade are quite aware that what is 'truth one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other' (Pascal). In their travels they make offerings to gods of

different localities who may not be Tibetan or Buddhist, much as they do to rulers or officials through whose territory they pass.

The view can be taken that these variations of practice are all subject to, if not incorporated within, the order of things that is *cho*. But this viewpoint, whether it is put forward by a local theologian or a Western theoretician, is a higher level analysis: the everyday pattern of thought does not make a coherent intellectual schemata, so much as reflect a contextual variety of senses.<sup>4</sup>

The theory of *karma* or of just returns for one's actions, together with the associated idea of 'accumulation of merit', almost by definition stands as the dominant ideology of this Buddhist culture. However, there is no simple sense in which it can explain all actions, even those customarily viewed as religious. First, the idea of 'merit' may not always be present in the minds of the actors. For example, motivation is often more directly economic. Second, though all villagers may agree that a term such as 'merit' conveys an important idea, different people understand different things by this term. The concepts of a shepherd and a retired monk are not one and the same: hence public unity is often based only on a common nomenclature, rather than on a commonly held substantive understanding of a term. In many ways this is a society held together by common words and practices, rather than by unitary collective representations.

However, in the dominant cultural ideology, namely a popular form of Buddhism, the explanation of the position of the individual is justified as follows. It is seen as an expression of his 'accumulation of merit' that extends beyond the moment and beyond any one lifetime. While there may be a temporary imbalance in this order, ultimately it asserts itself. For example, if an individual appears to have a financial success beyond his religious position, this can be put down to meritorious works in a previous lifetime, or to a pact with non-benevolent deities which will ultimately have bad repercussions. It can be seen that the schema is not in principle falsifiable: these concepts can generally be invoked as secondary elaborations to explain away the differences between fortune and the expected norms of the hierarchy.

A tenant farmer may be well aware that the direct cause of his misfortune is economic, and that he cannot make offerings at the temple because he has no surplus. But from the viewpoint of the ideology the explanation is in terms of a deficit of merit, with the rider that the best way to improve one's position is to act according to the local interpretation of Buddhist precepts—namely to support the lama landlord. Hence the delivery of crops by a tenant is not only a legal duty, but a reflection of a divine order and an opportunity for the sharecropper to raise his status by acquiring merit. And while in strict Buddhist terms a landlord could make gifts to his tenant, he would be well advised, like the tenant, to give to his 'superior'. In terms of this proper order, *cho*, he should give, quite literally, to the *bLa-ma* (Tibetan), the 'higher one'.

4. The extent to which a mode of thought should be represented by culture or ideological value, as well as by a cognitive psychology, is an open question.



Hence this ideology, in which spiritual progress, status and material wealth are not just analogous to each other, but stand as fundamentally interconnected spheres, provides the Lama People with a justification of the social order and the reasons for good and bad fortune. In these terms, as health and material success are the lot of those who live up the hill, so sickness and poverty belong to those below.

It is not so much lama alone, as lama and *cho* together which give the key to this ideology. This link poses some analytical problems. Dumont advises us that in certain cases there will be no single overt term for an 'idea-value', merely a plethora of terms in the 'zone' where it is located (Dumont 1977: 19; 1979: 814). Certainly such an argument covers the situation where we have linked ideas such as lama and *cho-wa*, and others such as *karma* and merit. It is in any case a useful methodological directive.<sup>5</sup>

### *Insights from Holism*

Beyond any representation of the dominant local ideology, the holism of hierarchy can give fresh analytical insight into this data. To recapitulate, the relationships up and down the hillside would be as Lama to Tamang, priest to client, landlord to tenant, and wife-giver to wife-taker, all as expressions of a basic underlying and unitary hierarchy. Women and blessings travelling down the hillside as material goods flowed up would correspond to the empirical expression of this hierarchy.

Certain practices take on a new significance in this holistic framework. For example, the practice of women at the bottom of the hillside going to work in India as 'maids' now has an explanation beyond mere economic necessity. If women move down the hillside from Lama to Tamang, then it would follow—simply from the characteristics of a transitive and non-cyclical regime of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage—that there would be an accumulation of women at the bottom of the hillside without men to marry. Hence the structure of the kinship relations would reinforce the economic pattern.

Conversely, that men at the top of the hierarchy prefer their sons to become monks rather than marry takes on a new value. This preference comes not just

5. One well-known case of this would, of course, be the classic example of the Inuit (Eskimo), with many terms for types of snow, but without a generic term for snow, following the analysis of Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956: 216). However, such an argument does not accord well with Dumont's own emphasis on coming closer to indigenous modes of discourse. Nor does it fit that well with the notion of an idea-value significant to the degree that it can encompass its contrary and stand as the dominant term of a hierarchical opposition. What does it mean to have an encompassing term which is not overtly expressed but is implicit in a 'zone'? One would need some independent index of dominance. These might exist—for example, certain psychological measures such as 'clustering in free-recall' or repertory grid analysis would be ways of finding such independent indices. However, these would be expressed in an analytic language separate from that of the culture itself.

from a concern for virtue and merit, nor even does it appear just as an emulation of the priestly founding lineages from Tibet. The avoidance of marriage by sons also avoids the unfavourable status implications that would come from living next to 'wife-givers', given a hypogamous ideology.

Another example comes from the middle levels of the hillside. The practice of Tamang cultivators lodging a son as a servant up the hill in the house of a lama villager is not just an economic necessity, but also an expression of this basic status hierarchy.

Hence the notion of hierarchy in the sense of an all-embracing divine order not only represents an important concept of the people, but also gives a unitary insight into exchanges and practices that, from a discontinuous, atomistic perspective, belong to different domains.

### *Empirical Variations and a Historical Order*

The problem still remains of whether or not such an ideological perspective is capable of containing and giving an account of the people as a whole that allows for patterns of order behind historical and other empirical variations.

In the above account I have not concentrated on the indigenous idea-value so much as taken the idea of coherence, in order to look for links between hierarchic aspects from the spheres of kinship, economics and religion. For example, an analysis in terms of hypogamy and cross-cousin marriage derives from kinship theory. While it is reinforced by the notion of a total hierarchy, it does not come from the indigenous idea-value of lama or *cho*.

These technical spheres of kinship, economics and religion may profitably be considered as aspects of hierarchy. Yet by pursuing the analysis in terms of these separate, 'outsider' spheres of knowledge, further insights are achieved. As I show below, these compound insights are particularly relevant when empirical variations and historical changes, both of the people, and in the general region, are taken into account as part of the 'whole' to be explained. Here the underlying order cannot be found simply in terms of the 'divine order' of hierarchy.

The ethnogenesis of the Lama people themselves is an example of one such historical development. A brief and idealized outline of this development is as follows (for a more detailed account see Clarke 1980a, b, c; 1983). Under conditions of economic growth, Tamang tenants from the valley made donations to the (lama) priest's temple up the hillside, and sent their sons to study there. These sons intermarried with the priest's daughters, and eventually settled at the temple as subordinate priests, with their erstwhile relatives remaining on the land below, now as their tenants.

In the village, in the first generation, there was an asymmetrical reinforcement of a status hierarchy from superior to subordinate, through hypogamy combined with uxorilocal residence. In the next generation there was a new local lineage in the village and hence virilocal residence, and all male villagers could be priests. This change negated the former asymmetries of rank. Eventually this resulted in the rise of an egalitarian ethos and institutions, with rotation of offices and positions as priest or client in the temple, and FZD rather than just MBD marriage.

In some ways the historical growth of such villages follows the same process as that of the Kachin described by Leach (1961). The above analysis derives from a structural insight in general kinship theory. It applies across cultural regions, and does not in itself come either from the indigenous idea-value of hierarchy, or from a general analytical notion of hierarchy. This theoretical development derives from the distinction between 'harmonic' and 'disharmonic' regimes, as identified by Lévi-Strauss in his account of the change from generalized to restricted exchange (1969). Here, there would be a break-up of hypothesized long, integrative chains, which empirically would accord with this 'divine order' of hierarchy.

Another example is given by social changes under conditions of economic decline, in which not just women, but men and whole villages move down the hillside, as the people are forced onto the soil for their livelihood. Then the ceremony of the temple is largely forgotten, and a lama is just another local lineage of farmers. This development too can lead to the rise of egalitarian developments within the village unit.

Yet with respect to all these changes the hierarchic schema is indeterminate. From the viewpoint of hierarchy the movement of women down the hillside is the same thing as the movement of men up the hillside. Yet the difference between the two is crucial in understanding the common forms and differences in the social history of the Lama and Tamang villages in the region.

An explanation of these changes involves more than just a consideration of the relation between hierarchic and egalitarian social forms, or even of the relation between these and local economic processes. The influence of the state and the world beyond play a part in these changes. For example, in the above historical account, the fixed and non-cyclical aspect of the social differentiation between Lama and Tamang, and its encapsulation within economic class, has occurred under the influence of outside forces. Changes in the form of land-tenure by the Nepalese state, partial monetization of the economy, and subsequent changes in prices on world markets after the First World War were major factors that led both to the creation of wealth separate from labour and goods, and to rural indebtedness. Capital wealth in turn ossified, if not further exacerbated, the distinctions of status between superior and inferior which existed prior to the existence of such economic classes. At some periods, it was the rise of labour and land as commodities that could be bought and sold, and the link to an externally driven cash economy, that were the central aspects of social change, rather than the pre-existing hierarchic ideology. Such socio-economic processes have their own pattern, which is best understood in their own technical terms. Hence a

process such as a progressive cycle of rural indebtedness would not easily be contained in the fixed order of hierarchy.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult to see how the notion of hierarchy, however useful it may be in coming to grips with the peoples' own notions, can fully accommodate these wider patterns of order that cut across it, in space and time, at an empirical level.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Hierarchical Opposition*

One theoretical motif behind the all-embracing notion of hierarchy is the hierarchical opposition (Dumont 1979: 810–14; 1980: 139–245).<sup>8</sup> In what way does the hierarchical opposition account for the use of the term 'lama' in Helambu? Can we recast the dominance of 'lama' in this idiom; and if we can, then in what sense does this salience actually come from a dominant position in a hierarchical opposition?

I will look at the data with regard to the setting and the multi-levelled use of terms, focusing on the ethnic contrast of Lama to Tamang. Here I have already pointed out that we can see Lama as the superior pole, a weighted contrast to Tamang. Is there a higher level in which Lama subsumes Tamang?

6. Dumont's work, of course, allows that the rise of economic ideology, or the encompassment of all that went before it by economics, was the main characteristic of culture contact or modernization (1977), and his work would allow the same to individualism (1982: 239). But recognising the rise of individualistic and economic ideology is not the same things as containing the regularities and patterns of these orders within hierarchy.

7. In his work Dumont does not emphasise the working-out of the factors behind particular encompassments as part of a social history. Instead there is a rapid movement to a comparison of ideologies and the history of ideas, which is more a contrast of ideal types than a study of changes in any particular time and place.

One of the main historical progressions that he details—apart from the rise of individualism itself—is the differentiation of the political and the economic from the categories of the social and the religious (1977). In looking at this in the context of the rise of individualism in modern thought, what we see is the encompassment of that which went before it by the economic, which is the *last* term of the series. In another case, namely the oft-quoted example of 'Adam and Eve', we see the opposite, the *first* term of a series englobing that which follows.

Hence encompassment is bi-directional: in itself it gives us no clue as to which will be the dominant 'idea-value' of a sequence. It follows that we will need another set of rules to allow us to work out which term will become potent in this manner. This lack in itself is no great weakness: but it implies that encompassment is indeterminate with respect to seriality. Hence alone it does not have much to tell us about history or the form of social change.

8. Dumont's mathematical models for the derivation of the hierarchical opposition may well not be all that they appear to be: there are problems arising from contradictions that result from a term holding two positions within one system. It may well be more constructive to see this logic as a mirror to popular discourse and thought that operates by a 'logical slippage of level' of a term, rather than as itself a formal mathematical analysis of such a process.

In terms of empirical reference this is so. Whereas inside the region people may be differentiated as Lama and Tamang, outside they may all be included as one, as Lama, in contrast to Hindus. These settings may be large-scale political or religious meetings where the people, as a whole, are linked to the Nepalese polity and contrasted to Hindus (referred to as 'Brahmin-Chhetri and the like' by the Lama people). But is this a matter of level, or one of contrast by opposition to outsiders in a wider empirical context? Is this a higher-order encompassment within a single ideology, or is it a contrast that has come about from political circumstance? And if it is both, then how are these areas of analysis related?

The incorporation of Tamang within Lama is not solely a matter of internal ideology, nor a result of any endogenous factor alone. To a degree it relies on the association of the two terms Lama and Tamang within the wider Nepalese polity, with which the people of Helambu have had an interchange throughout their history (Clarke 1980a, b, c; 1983). In Nepal, Lama is often a polite epithet for Tamang. Traditionally, in this context the term Lama is dominant because of its association with the Buddhist religion of Tibet which, though it may not be Hindu orthodoxy, is at least superior to the religious ways of the non-literate Tamang. Tamang is often subsumed because of the low position of this ethnic group in the Hindu caste-ranking of the state of Nepal, in which they rank as an unclean 'drinking caste' just above slaves (Sharma 1977).

If one widens the area of analysis to include culturally cognate and genetically related peoples close to Helambu, the picture becomes more varied. In the region immediately to the east of Helambu the people refer to themselves as Lama-Tamang or Tamang-Lama. Indeed, this is quite a common appellation in many areas of eastern Nepal. Lama-Tamang is used in relation to state-wide interactions, in which the 'negative' term Tamang may here be dropped; and Tamang-Lama or Tamang is used in the local ethnic context, where the valuations are other than those of Hinduism, and all people are recognised as being in some ethnic sense Tamang.

The reasons for the difference between these other regions and Helambu can be understood by a historical comparison. In Helambu the early dominant group were Tibetan priests who received land-grants from a Hindu king. As outlined earlier, they later intermarried with local Tamang who adopted their culture, giving rise to the Lama People. By contrast, to the east there was a later *de facto* recognition of land-grants to Tamangs by the state, who only latterly adopted the cultural practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

In some contexts, it is not so much the particular state-wide associations between Lama and Tamang, nor their internal contrast, which is the issue. Rather it is the general contrast of these non-Hindu peoples to Hindu peoples. In places the term 'Sherpa' rather than Lama is now used to make this contrast.

In the present generation, the Lama People of Helambu themselves have begun to use the term Sherpa instead of Lama in state-wide contexts. The Sherpas are a people of a cognate Tibetan culture and origin from even further to the east, with whom the Lama have had frequent contact and cultural interchange; indeed they now intermarry with them. However, to understand

the force of this ethnic equation one has to look at the context of the Nepalese polity as a whole, not solely at Helambu. Because of their economic success and international reputation, the Sherpas have been accepted into the 'caste' hierarchy of a modernizing Nepal at a superior level to Tamang lamas. Sherpa lacks the slight taint of Tamang that attaches by association to the term Lama: hence the Lama People, in their concern with rank and status, have quite deliberately associated with them, and are now known in Kathmandu circles as 'Helambu Sherpa'.

Within the region there is now a contrast that follows on from this state-wide rise of Sherpa, namely one of Sherpa Lama to Tamang Lama, with Sherpa having the higher value. In this case one could regard the term 'lama' not as an ethnic label, but as having the sense of a priest of Tibetan culture; but in popular thought it would be a mistake to see these various senses as dissociated.

These are not solely externally-induced changes in nomenclature but also depend on meaning, which of course is linked to both ideology and practice. The term Sherpa has an egalitarian connotation which it would be difficult for the term Lama, with its sense of 'superior', to carry in Helambu. The contexts where the term Sherpa is used are spheres where equality and co-operation are stressed, such as the case of a landlord and a tenant working jointly over the apportionment of the crops. Of course, the same landlord may refer to the tenant as a Tamang back in his own Lama village, when he is complaining about the harvest.

To summarize, the people referred to as Lama, Tamang and Sherpa are evidently part of the same broad Tibeto-Burman-speaking cultural milieu, and often have direct historical links. But the exact relationship between term and people differs in different areas. We may in all cases have the ideas of 'inferior' and 'superior' as accessible modes of local thought: but in culturally and genetically cognate areas the terms that carry these weightings differ, and the terms that carry the contrast in one area may be associated, if not equated, elsewhere. The ideological subordination of Tamang to Lama is not something that is the same throughout, nor does it come from internal factors alone.

Similar variations of labelling exist for other directed contrasts in which the term 'lama' is used. To summarize these as a list, they are: founding lineage versus other village priests; temple owners versus other villagers; male villagers literate in Tibetan versus non-literate male villagers; village member versus an itinerant; landlord contrasted to tenant; and male household-head in contrast to other male members of the household. In a number of these instances, the subordinate term is not well-defined. In some cases the equivalent dominant term may be other than lama itself, but there would be a general association to lama, as with the term *cho-wa* considered earlier.

Circumstantial and external as well as ideological factors are behind the present-day use of one of these terms rather than another, such as the substitution of the term Sherpa for Lama, and the particular differentiation and contrast of the terms Lama and Tamang in Helambu. Ideology, especially where there is contact with a 'great tradition', can also be seen as an external factor. The point is that if the variation in labelling or nomenclature reflects

varied political and economic history, then whatever the formal structural isomorphisms, it is difficult to see how these contrasts may be encompassed within a single hierarchical opposition.

If each such case were seen as a single type, then there would be the strange situation of links being denied between cognate peoples and influences, with a vast number of separate hierarchical oppositions and their attendant 'idea-values'. If there is only a limited number of cases, then we have no single opposition, but a structural notion of dominance and a logical slippage in certain cases.

Furthermore, this slippage or variation in the meaning of terms is not always worked out in terms of the contrast and the higher level subsumption of the contrary of the hierarchical opposition. Within the same cultural area, even between intermarrying villages on two sides of the valley, the standard mode of logic can change. In one village there may be this structured, hierarchic use of the term; in another the relations of the levels might be taxonomic, with 'lama' used solely as the label of the higher-order category. And though at times there may be some unintended local confusion, worldly individuals take this village context into account in interpreting what is meant in any instance.

A relative and contextual, rather than absolute, sense to the term 'lama' is apparent in much of its use in Helambu. It is the very move from the particular case to a general framework which may be responsible for 'logical slippage'. Not all lamas are landlords, neither are all lamas priests, but many are both. Hence a generalization from such an individual may create this linking together of phenomena from different categories that appears as the logical slippage of the hierarchical opposition.

Contrast and association dependent on context appear as relatively standard processes of popular thought here. In brief, the present-day salience in thought of the term 'lama' comes from its presence as a dominant term in many differing contexts or spheres. People play with the multi-dimensional connotations of the term in much the same way as they play with other ambiguous terms. This variation in emphasis of meaning of the term 'lama' occurs in many Himalayan parts of the Tibetan cultural area. It can be seen as the cumulative result of such alterations by different developmental transformations and progressions from an original common starting-point. Of this history the hierarchical opposition tells us little.

### *Conclusions*

In institutional terms there is a marked variation in social form from village to village, as there is historically within a single village. One might refer to these as variations on a theme or themes, but they can only be explained fully by reference to different kinds of factor: ideological, institutional, and economic. Moreover, these factors have to be considered in a particular historical sequence

if they are to explain the present pattern of a single community. The main progression in Helambu, from ecclesiastic to founding lineage to ethnic group, is particular and contingent on other factors, besides the solely ideological.

Hence both the local constructs and analysis are marked by heterogeneity. If a multitude of factors have to be considered in historical context in order to ascertain which is dominant in any particular case, then it is not clear that any one is dominant in any holistic or principled sense.

This complexity is perhaps not unexpected. Dumont's original notion of hierarchy was culturally specific, dependent on the Hindu value of purity. One of the areas where this idea is least able to cope is on the peripheries of the civilization, both in the geographical sense and in the sense of relations to non-Hindu tribes. It is not at all clear that 'purity' encompasses power in such interactions, at least from the viewpoint of the 'tribal' groups prior to 'sanskritization'. It is also reasonable to entertain reservations on the utility of the notion of reversal between purity and power, and between an ideological and empirical order, as being capable of explaining such interactions.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Lama People, and of the High Himalaya generally, the problem is compounded by their situation on the periphery of two civilizations—Tibetan Buddhist as well as Hindu.

One important fact highlighted by this complexity is the degree to which we tend to simplify situations in our societal explanations, that is, to make *ceterus paribus* assumptions. In his early work on India Dumont quite rightly draws attention to the fact that in the centre of Indian civilization structural-functional theories act themselves out against a constant backdrop of Hindu culture, that is, an ideology of status based on purity rather than power. In these situations we can quite usefully regard hierarchy as the general case which encompasses the particular. Here we invoke structure as an explanation, but have to recognise that culture or ideology is 'in the order of things'.

However, perhaps we should equally well guard against the reverse, that is, an implicit assumption of structural-functional, economic or even ecological factors as a constant backdrop, and invoking ideology alone as the superordinate explanation. For example, if we compared two Himalayan

9. In the normal type of hierarchical opposition looked at here the superior pole is coterminous with the whole: reversal is seen to occur 'only on the empirical level—and thus not within the ideology proper' (Dumont 1982: 225). Here the empirical is implicitly taken as subordinate to the ideology (or as one might say as the submerged pole of a hierarchic opposition).

Dumont introduces another type of hierarchic opposition known as the articulate type. Here, there is no clear superiority or dominance of one logical domain over another. He gives the example of the priest and king in medieval Europe, each with his own sphere of influence. It is difficult to see precisely what is gained by the notion of reversal of dominance between the two spheres here. If we can label any situation where there is no clear superior level a situation of reversal, then under what conditions is the schema falsifiable? There is a danger of creating an indeterminate intellectual schema which is capable of dealing with any objection by the *ad hoc* introduction of new levels and reversals. It is reasonable to make an Occamist objection to this extension, unless there is some independent evidence for these levels and reversals. For example, what is to be gained, other than the idea of a cultural link which is already evident, by seeing Sherpa equality as a subordinate pole to a Lamaist hierarchy?



valleys, identical in all these factors bar that of ideology, we might well run the danger of missing these general factors, which act as a continual backdrop to our ideological explanation. The point is that the 'other-things-being-equal' assumption tends to make us look at only a part of an explanation, to ignore the backdrop which is an essential part of a holistic explanation at a societal level. This criticism applies to approaches based on the dominance of ideology as much as on any other single factor or dimension. And here it is possible that the notion of context implies that we can view a theory from perspectives other than those given by itself, and can consider its relation to data other than that which it contains itself.<sup>10</sup>

It may well be that such complex areas are not amenable to being characterised in any such clear-cut ideological terms.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps hierarchy tends more to the analysis of ideal types, and particular examples of ritual, than to the complex area of multiple social relations over time in different contexts. It is one thing to detect or work out the logical holism of an ideology; it is quite another to follow, in a holistic sense, the cumulative pattern of ideas or changes that affect a people or region.

One analytical alternative might be to admit this difference, to take by definition the hierarchical valuation as the conceptual unit, and to incorporate the empirical variations as required within it. Though such a procedure is more a theological apologia, perhaps, than a characterization of any observed society, it is a way of putting forward an abstraction for further comparison in some model.

But if we wished to look at the whole which is the society, rather than contrast the properties of ideal symbolic orders, then we would have to integrate the picture from one particular ideology with those from other local ideologies. We would have to take account of circumstantial factors and patterns at a structural and economic level, and this would again give rise to the thorny problem of context and frame of reference.

Certainly some valid redaction of the social—including empirical—variation can be achieved in terms of such ideal types. It is almost a necessity to do so for symbolic comparisons, and we do so whenever a simplification such as 'the Sherpa believe...' is made. But to do so ignores both the holistic form of the society itself, and parallels at the levels of form and process between societies with different orders. We also have to be capable of subsuming the idealist view within an empirical order. Possibly Dumont is referring to this double

10. Dumont sees context as being inscribed in the ideology. One important sense of context is being able to descend with a theory to the level of a descriptive account, rather than to consider it purely in its own terms. Hence one problem with having contexts inscribed in an ideology, or in any theory, is that one then may need to resort to a 'context of contexts' to make kinds of contextual statements other than those allowed by that analytical framework itself. In treating context Dumont introduces a further notion, namely bi-dimensionality. It is not clear to me whether this refers to a local change of dominance by reversal in a hierarchy, or to a separate plane for contexts apart from, yet dependent on, the hierarchy (1982: 225).

11. Possibly these complex cases are where *Gesellschaft* intrudes onto *Gemeinschaft* (see Dumont 1979: 294; 1982: 218, 233).

standpoint in the concluding paragraph of *On Value*, with his distinction between 'practical forms of integration' and ideals (1982: 239).

In practice, we may have to go in both directions at the same time, that is, to consider both the symbolism and the ideology from the insider's perspective, and the empirical and historical relation of this order to economic and other outsider's theoretical perspectives. Without the latter, one has not so much holistic analysis as a redaction from a single point of view. We may appreciate the aesthetic ideal of seeing the world in a rose: however, in reconstituting the whole, one has to account not just for a rose or even a world of roses, but for a very mixed garden and at times a veritable undergrowth.

In this paper important insights have come from seeing how cho and 'lama', constituting together a central 'idea-value', represent the dominant local cultural perspective. And by allowing these ideas to order the data, a coherent level of analysis in terms of this indigenous ideology has been achieved. However, I have also shown that an attention to empirical and historical variation, and the notion of dominance itself, requires that this and other data be capable of being viewed from other perspectives. I have also suggested that in this region of the Himalaya, at any rate, regularities in societal wholes are likely to be found at a complex level of process rather than in terms of ideological or structural form, and that an open-ended notion of context involving more than one perspective is important to such a holistic account.

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**CONTEXTS AND LEVELS: Anthropological Essays on Hierarchy**  
Edited by **R.H. Barnes, Daniel de Coppet and R.J. Parkin**

*Contexts and Levels* consists of a collection of papers commenting on the theories of Professor Louis Dumont concerning the problems of hierarchy and hierarchical opposition. These theories arose through his work on the nature of Indian society, and its subsequent comparison with Western society. The papers are based on those delivered to a Conference held in Oxford in March 1983, and are by both French and English anthropologists. Most of them approach the question through the ethnography; the areas covered include the Solomons, New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Africa. Two other papers look at the linguistic notion of markedness and the philosophical notion of context, and general theoretical issues are discussed in one further contribution. The volume should appeal to all those interested in anthropological issues of hierarchy, ideology and ethnographic analysis.

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