

## **DISPERSED ALLIANCE AND TERMINOLOGICAL CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA**

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IN a previous publication (Parkin 1990), I suggested a new way in which the conventional division of kinship systems in India between north and south might be viewed. At first sight this division seems radical, opposing as it does the prescription of the south with the non-prescription of the north. I argued that previous attempts to minimize the difference by such figures as Barnett, Carter and above all Dumont were unsatisfactory, principally because they viewed the system synchronically and neglected the diachronic dimension. Synchronically, the two systems could only be brought together by invoking extra-kinship factors—especially caste and certain ritual observances connected with it—or by comparing like with unlike, for example northern address terminologies with southern reference terminologies in Dumont's attempt (1966) to prove that the former were as classificatory as the latter. I advocated instead a diachronic approach that sought to find in the past the correlations lacking in the present. The argument was cast in the form of a chain of possible transformations and took advantage of the fact that the logically possible number of terminological patterns is quite limited.

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Using just material from north and south India, this might have seemed simply an abstract academic exercise of limited or no ethnographic relevance. What saved it as a potentially useful hypothesis was the existence of a number of apparently intermediate systems in central India, at various stages of transition from, or dissolution of, prescriptive systems. They occur principally among groups who for present purposes can be called tribals and with whom I have been concerned for a number of years. What I want to do here is to develop the theoretical arguments a little and to show that other parts of south Asia have similar systems locally, whether actually or in embryo. Although in my definitions of prescriptive systems I generally follow Needham (e.g. 1973) in seeing kinship terminology, rather than declared rules and preferences or behavioural trends, as denotative of prescriptive systems, I shall also be discussing affinal alliance and its relation with terminology in these groups.

I begin, however, with the typical north Indian terminology and its possible theoretical significance. What strikes one particularly about it is how, using separate terms, north Indian isolates kin types that would be united together under a single term in south India. Thus the typical Dravidian equation  $MB = FZH = EF$  is split into three terms in standard Hindi, the equation  $FB = MZH$  into two (I ignore relative age here). A glance at Vatuk's account (1969) is enough to show that the Hindi terminology is classificatory in that virtually all terms are applied to collateral equivalents too. However, it is not classificatory in the sense that lineal kin are regularly merged with parallel kin, nor is it prescriptive even residually. In the +1 and -1 levels, the primary or nearest cognatic kin types all receive separate terms, as do affines, except that there is no distinction between husband's kin and wife's kin. In ego's level, husband's and wife's kin have individualizing terms, but the cognatic part of the terminology is generational or 'Hawaiian'. Although the +1/-1 isolating pattern and the 'Hawaiian' pattern of ego's level differ radically in opposing the utmost distinction of terms to their utmost conflation, they are similar in that they allow no distinct internal groupings of cognatic kin to emerge. Broadly, there are two kinds of such groupings, following once again Needham's labels: the lineal, including the prescriptive, which distinguish cross kin from lineal and parallel kin; and the cognatic, which distinguish lineal from cross and parallel, i.e. from all collateral kin, as well as cognates from affines. Despite their differences, the north Indian and Hawaiian patterns are alike in that both are both non-prescriptive and non-cognatic—they present no differential internal patternings. What precisely is their significance?

Most of those authorities who accept the possibility of terminological evolution would also accept that prescriptive terminologies give way to cognatic ones rather than vice versa, but it is not easy to envisage the process happening in one step—e.g. for  $FB$  to switch suddenly from the terminological companionship of father to that of  $MB$ . No doubt the dissolution of lineal-parallel equations is an early step in the process, but there are still  $MZH$  and  $FZH$  to take into account, not to mention affines. One possible outcome is that they too all come to receive separate terms, as has largely happened in north India. Alternatively, the cognatic

categories at least may be conflated under one term, as with Hawaiian or generational terminologies. Here, what seems to happen is that the lineal-parallel terms take over the remaining cognates (i.e. cross kin), and the cross-parallel terms become simply affinal. In both cases, the prescriptive terminology becomes non-prescriptive and arrives at a neutral halfway house from which a cognatic pattern might emerge subsequently.

A further possible halfway house is 'Crow-Omaha', which, like Hawaiian, copes with the extra kin types that result from the break-up of prescription by remerging or realigning categories, but does so vertically rather than horizontally. The characteristic of these terminologies is such that they can be described as lineal but non-prescriptive. They are hardly relevant for south Asia, as Szemerényi has shown in great detail (1978). None the less, vertical terminological equations can certainly be found in south Asian terminologies. They are rarely of classic Crow-Omaha type, apart from some Himalayan examples: particularly common in terminologies from tribal areas, in both middle India and the Himalayas, are equations involving affines, i.e. between EP and EeG, and between their reciprocals, CE and yGE. Such equations occasionally find their way into north Indian terminologies, but vertical equations of any sort are much less common in what I would call more conservative south India, except for ones between PosGD and ZD where ZD marriage is a regular option. We may suggest provisionally that if the Crow-Omaha idea is broadened out into a generalized notion of vertical equations, it may more easily retain its significance as a possible phase in diachronic change: the label is problematic, but the phenomena it purports to describe are genuine enough. My claim essentially at this point is thus to suggest that north Indian, Hawaiian and Crow-Omaha terminologies are all transitional in terms of global patterns of terminological change, however solid they might appear to be to the peoples whose views of kinship they actually govern.

However, my basic reason for discussing Crow-Omaha in relation to south Asia is to introduce the notion of dispersed alliance with which it is often associated. This will be very relevant to my account, even though the terminological reflexes that can be identified for it in middle India are quite different from Crow-Omaha. A distinction must be introduced immediately between the various ways in which alliances may be dispersed. It is well known that in societies with positive marriage rules, groups of same-sex siblings are often broken up so that each is married off to a different alliance unit, perhaps only the eldest normally or jurally marrying according to the rule. Instead, same-sex sibling groups may even be kept together in each generation, and the dispersal comes from banning the renewal of such alliances for a number of generations, so that new alliance partners must be sought in the intervening period.

It is mainly the latter that is at issue in central India, something that makes these tribal systems resemble in a general way Crow-Omaha alliance systems without Crow-Omaha terminologies. As I have done before, I choose McDougal's data (1963, 1964) on the Juang of Orissa as the fullest and clearest account of such a system. I shall have to be very brief and concentrate on essentials. Although

the Juang have patrilineal clans or *bok* and lineages or *kutumali*, the units in affinal alliance are what McDougal calls 'local descent groups'—effectively, agnatically defined villages intermediate in size between the two. There is a clear distinction among local descent groups between *kutumb* or agnatic ones and *bondhu* or those of potential and actual affines, but it is a relative distinction, i.e. there is no dual organization. There is also a vertical dichotomy between *bhaiguli* or sets of alternate generations in such a way that the set formed of +2, -2 and ego's generations is opposed to the set of +1 and -1. Put together, this creates a fourfold structure not dissimilar to the Kariera four-section model, except that there are no named sections and the system is again relative. The system none the less has both ritual and alliance significance: in particular in the present context, one's spouse should be a *bondhu* relative of one's generation moiety. However, it is not enough to say this, since a number of categories within the marriageable quadrant are banned as spouses to ego, including cross cousins, and the relative age of alter and of certain link relatives is also important. The primary preferred category for a male ego is a *saliray*, basically eGEyZ, and for a female ego an *inibou*, basically eGEyB. Added to this is a rule or preference dispersing alliances among several villages-cum-local descent groups. This is done not by splitting up the sibling group but by allowing repeated marriages between any two local descent groups within any one generation and prohibiting them in the following three. Hence the formula eGEyG: all but the first of the sibling group marry, in a classificatory sense, the yG of the E of their own eG, as the two diagrams in Fig. 1 make clear.

We can set aside the question of relative age here in uncovering the significance of such a preference and can generalize it as one for GEG. The Juang terminology is recognizably symmetric prescriptive in the +1 and -1 levels but has separate terms for the direct affines, i.e. EP and CE (see McDougal 1964: 329). Ego's level is generational, with terms for G-cum-PGC being opposed to various terms for affines. The Juang exclusion of cross cousins in marriage is therefore reflected in the terminology—they are classificatory siblings and, like real siblings and parallel cousins, they are banned. This ban is also reflected in the rule of delay of three generations in repeating alliances, since this rules out egos repeating the marriages of their parents. The WB of one generation becomes, of course, the MB of the next, but his son does not succeed to his position: MBS is never WB, and MB never WF, hence the regular terminological separation of direct affines and cross kin. There is, of course, a similarity between cross cousins and GEG as preferred marriage partners in that each represents a situation in which groups of siblings intermarry. The difference is that while genealogical paths to cross cousins can readily be traced through previous generations, paths to GEG categories must be traced back four, given the rule of delay in repeating alliances—supposing the system to work regularly, GEG categories combine with the three-generation rule to produce fourth cousins such as FFFFZSSSD as marriage partners. This may not be too difficult for the analyst, but it is something the Juang's shallow genealogical memory does not allow them to conceive readily. From their point of view, one marries *salirays* and *inibous*, not 'cross cousins' or

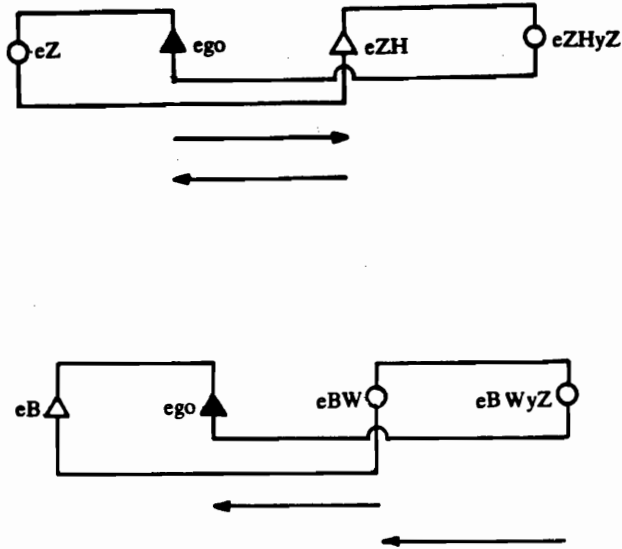


FIG. 1. Models of Affinal Alliance with eGEyG Categories

even siblings' spouses' siblings, both of which are essentially *our* analytical terms and categories.

I leave aside here the thorny question of whether systems like that of the Juang are to be regarded as truly prescriptive. The terminologies, though recognizably prescriptive in part, are compromises, and the status of the generational delay and of GEG preferences as rules is unclear for most groups, though Yamada (1970: 385) on the Munda is rather less unequivocal on this point. None the less, the Juang system is clearly transitional, a symmetric prescriptive system in process of decay, preserving original features in the +1 and -1 cognatic terminology, but losing these in ego's level and with separate affinal terms in all three medial levels.

There are many similar examples from middle India, as I have shown in previous work (Parkin 1990, 1992). This areal contiguity is to be expected, but there is also evidence from other regions, both north and south. A recent book by Martin Gaenszle (1991) shows the presence of all the essential elements among the Mewahang Rai of east Nepal. Here, there is no marriage to first or second cousins, and alliances between specific groups can only be renewed after the lapse of three generations. Gaenszle gives the genealogical category involved as FFMGDDD. However, to the people themselves this probably has less meaning than the specification GEG, for which the term is *yoksini*, the term for the preferred marriage category. As a preference, it accounted for only a minority of all marriages, one third together with WyZ, i.e. junior sororate. More than half of all marriages are with a classificatory sister, which here clearly includes all sorts of cousins. Again, there are separate terms for EP, and G shares terms with PGC

in a terminology that is evidently a shade less prescriptive than the Juang one overall. No doubt similar Himalayan examples would be uncovered if one ransacked the ethnography with that in mind.

The similarities of these alliance systems with dispersal through the well-known four-*got* rule of the Jat and other groups of north India, which forbids marriage if any of the four grandparental *got* or patrilineal descent lines of the prospective bride and groom coincide, is obvious. Despite the delay in the renewal of alliances this imposes, there is often a desire or tendency to repeat alliances between the same groups within the same generation, as with the Juang or Munda (see Tiemann 1970). Unlike the Munda, however, there is no hint of a rule or preference, and the terminologies are normally entirely non-prescriptive north Indian. Here, therefore, we have dispersed alliance systems statistically or preferentially but not jurally similar to the Juang one, but with no vestiges of terminological prescription. If we return to central India (Bihar) we find the immediately prior stage in at least two tribal societies—Malto and Malpahariya—that apparently have Juang-type alliance systems but prescriptive terminologies in an advanced state of decay towards north Indian. Broadly speaking, the prescriptive pattern concerns parallel kin types in +1 only, perhaps the last part of the terminology to break up.<sup>1</sup> Cross kin and affines, even in this level, have individual terms in the manner of north Indian, though there is some redundancy, as can be seen from Table 1. Despite many uncertainties as to how they operate in detail, these two systems are especially significant for the overall hypothesis being put forward here.

The evolutionary paradigm I am suggesting for south Asia therefore looks like this. The first stage would, hypothetically, be tetradic society (Allen 1986), i.e. a Dravidian system with thorough alternate generation equations (I leave aside complications of relative age and gender distinctions here). Such alternate generation equations certainly survive in middle India and sporadically in the south. The second stage is the Dravidian system we are all familiar with, from Morgan onwards, where these equations have largely disappeared. The third stage is the Juang-type system, which retains some prescriptive features terminologically and has a system of dispersed alliance with a preference for GEG categories rather than cross cousins, but with the expectation of renewal in the long term—i.e., in the fourth generation. The fourth stage, obviously intermediate, is represented by the Malto and Malpahariya—similar to the Juang, as far as we know, in alliance, but with the terminology poised between the last vestiges of prescription and individualizing north Indian. The fifth stage is the Jat system, terminologically

1. In the typical three-line or asymmetric prescriptive terminology, while cross equations such as MB = FZH divide, parallel ones such as FB = MZH logically can and actually often do remain untouched. The +1 level is often the least resistant to change in a prescriptive terminology.

## Malpahariya

<i>jetha</i>	FeB, MeZH; but also FeZH	<i>mama</i>	MB
<i>kaka</i>	FyB, MyZH	<i>mami</i>	MBW
<i>jethi</i>	MeZ, FeBW; but also FeZ	<i>pisi</i>	FyZ
<i>kaki</i>	FyBW	<i>pisa</i>	FyZH
<i>mosi</i>	MyZ		
<i>mosa</i>	MyZH		

## Malto

<i>pipo</i>	FeB, MeZH; but also FeZH in some dialects
<i>dada</i>	FyB, MyZH; but also FyZH and FeZH in some dialects
<i>peni</i>	MeZ, FeBW
<i>kale</i>	MyZ, FyBW; but also FyZ in some dialects
<i>moma</i>	MB
<i>momi</i>	MBW
<i>chacho</i>	FeZ; also FyZ in some dialects
<i>pinso bnarha</i>	FeZH in some dialects

TABLE 1. Malpahariya and Malto +1 Kin Terms  
(Cognates and Affines of Cognates)

north Indian, with the four-*got* rule ensuring dispersal, but with at least a statistical tendency towards eventual renewal. The sixth and final stage is standard north Indian terminologically with no particular tendency to renew alliances at any stage. One might be able to identify further, intermediate stages at greater levels of detail, but the above seem basic, apart, perhaps, from the clearly unstable fourth.

Least familiar will probably be stages three and four, i.e. the Juang and the Malto/Malpahariya. What they have in common is that data on the terminology is backed up by data on the alliance system. Otherwise, separate terms for affines and for cross kin might signal just the development of individualizing terms for one or the other without specific alliance implications. This is clearly the case for Kodanda Rao's (1973) data on Andhra Pradesh fishing communities, where genealogical MB, for instance, is distinguished from other *mama* by the prefix *mena*.<sup>2</sup> This example is useful, incidentally, in reminding us that the development of terminological distinctions between cognates and affines is often provided for not through realigning terms, as with Crow–Omaha and Hawaiian, but through such innovations as the above, and sometimes by borrowing, in order to provide

2. *Mama* is an especially common term in India for the MB/FZH/EF nexus—here, it just means EF when used alone.

the extra term needed. The question then arises, which category retains the original term, and which is forced to innovate or borrow? Mostly, it seems—as here, and also normally among the Munda—it is the newly isolated affinal category that retains the original term. This may seem odd at first sight, but for ego there is continuity in the sense that the same terms continue to express the most radical contrasts in kinship from his or her point of view—i.e. between cognate and affine, where before it had been between lineal-cum-parallel and cross-cum-affine.

Finally, let us turn briefly to Sri Lanka, where Juang-type systems can occasionally be found, to judge from material published by Stirrat (1977). Sri Lanka is, of course, generally associated terminologically with the south Indian area. Stirrat worked in a village to which he gave the name 'Wellagoda', on the coast some fifty miles north-west of Colombo, where a deviant terminology is to be found, intermittently penetrating also inland from a stretch of coast sixty to seventy miles long north of Colombo. It is also reported in pockets of Colombo itself, and Negombo, another urban area. Stirrat's group were Sinhalese-speaking, Catholic Karavas, mostly fishermen, but some Tamil Paravars also seem to be affected. Again, the deviant terminology is basically symmetric prescriptive, but with separate affinal terms for EF, EM, DH and SW. In ego's level the term *massina*, meaning cross cousin in many parts of Sri Lanka, here covers the affinal specifications that a prescriptive system would put with it, namely ZH, WB, BWB, though also included are the parallel equivalents WZH, ZHZH and WBWB. The terms for EF and EM are clearly derivable from those for +1 cross kin, but Stirrat's informants had no hesitation in distinguishing them from one another. DH and SW are clearly distinct even lexically and cannot be derived from those for osGC. In fact, in -1 all collaterals share terms with own children, just as in ego's level all cousins are classificatory siblings.

These terminological peculiarities find a parallel in the affinal alliance system. Alliance units are *pavula*, elementary families. There is said to be no prescriptive category, and indeed both first and second cousins are banned except by Church dispensation. Possibly the Church is responsible for the ban itself, but Stirrat does not tell us. There is no FBC marriage, and strong patrilineal ties replace the bilaterality of descent elsewhere on the island. Marriages of groups of siblings, whether of brother and sister to brother and sister, or of two brothers to two sisters, are also banned, though not, says Stirrat, by the Church. The two sets of restrictions are clearly distinguished indigenously, the first being *le naeaeakaema* or blood relationships, the second being *vivaha naeaeakaema* or marriage relationships. Stirrat also says, presumably of the first sort of rule, though he is not entirely clear: 'the result is that marriages should not be repeated within a span of three generations' (ibid.: 282). Alliances are thus dispersed, as with the Juang: indeed, the above rules mean that they are dispersed in both senses, i.e. through the splitting up of sibling groups as well as through the generational delay.

Stirrat sees no obvious reason for the change in terminology: 'Even the marriage regulations could co-exist with the Dravidian terminology with



genealogical proscriptions overlying a system of categorical prescription' (ibid.: 283). There being other examples on the island, no correlation can be made between this system and either caste or religion. Following Bloch (1971), Stirrat rests his explanation on the different meanings, the different moral or ideological values, that different groups of social actors give to their kin terms, and he goes on to associate the deviant terminology with the individualism that is encouraged by urban environments and by the particular form of fishing by which the villagers of Wellagoda live. This view derives support from the fact that when some of them moved inland to farm they reverted to the old terminology, which other fishermen, who work more collectively, still continue to use. These can only be local explanations at best: the Juang are not noticeably more individualistic than Tamils, after all. The immediate cause of the deviant terminology must none the less be that, as with the Juang, if egos no longer marry their cross cousins, there will be no continuity of alliances even categorically, and fathers-in-law will no longer be mothers' brothers. Cross cousins become classificatory siblings to bring them within the orbit of marriage prohibitions; and since brother and sister no longer swap children in marriage, the children of the one will no longer be the CE of the other.

Stirrat's example may seem aberrant for the Dravidian part of the south Asian area, but it is still recognizable within that area. Much depends on what one considers the norm. Certainly nothing in the Dravidian area (speaking terminologically) has the regularity and coherence between terminology and alliance of Allen's tetradic model (Allen 1986). Alternate generation equations are mostly though not entirely absent; the symmetry of the terminology is not matched by those affinal alliance systems that have unilateral preferences; and eZD marriage, which Good (1980) regards as standard rather than exceptional in south India, violates the strict separation of generations that tetradic theory envisages. In addition, evidence is emerging that in south India too the phenomenon of separate affinal terms is by no means absent from terminologies that are otherwise symmetric prescriptive. This is true, as Rudner (1990) has recently shown, even of Dumont's own fieldwork data on south India (1957). What was lacking was any particular alliance attributes of these terminological characteristics, but perhaps we have here another intermediate stage, i.e. the first glimmerings of a shift from standard Dravidian to the Juang-type system.

In this sense, the Juang and the villagers of Wellagoda represent just another deviant path. If the tetradic model is accepted as a possible evolutionary starting-point rather than just a typological base line, then not only middle India but south India and Sri Lanka offer plenty of evidence of moves away from it. One can argue that their north Indian cousins, so radically different when seen through direct comparison, only differ in an evolutionary sense in the *extent* of remove, something that intermediate systems like those of the Juang, Malapahariya and Jat enable us to see more clearly.

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