The Hill Madia of central India: early human kinship?¹

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Introduction

Allen has been developing a tetradic model of early human kinship over the course of twenty five years now (1986, 1989, 2000, 2011), the main features proposed for it being alternate generation merging and bilateral cross-cousin marriage. Dziebel disagreed with this model because he argued that superreciprocal terminologies and the bifurcate collateral pattern are the most archaic features of human kinship and that these are always associated with unilateral alliance rules and never found in a society with bilateral cross-cousin marriage (Dziebel 2007: 249). Others like Barnard (2011) have questioned the historical priority of tetradic structures. This paper has two aims: a) to present the FZD rule as a viable ethnographic fact and as the sole rationale for the kinship system of a central Indian tribe; b) to present a structural paradigm for the social organization of this people. The author hopes that this ethnographic case study will offer a new perspective on debates on early human kinship, or at least produce new questions.

Hill Madia Kinship

The Hill Madia are an endogamous ethnic group, conventionally called a tribe, belonging linguistically to the Central Dravidian group of central India. They are alternatively known in the literature as the Hill Maria, the Madia or Maria Gond or (from the range of hills from which they claim to originate) the Abujhmaria.² I present the Hill Madia kinship terminology in the table below and use it as the starting point for the discussion; I have included both reference and address terminologies and have followed the kinship notations listed by Parkin (1997: 9). I have provided the foci and sometimes the sub-foci for each kin type, following the example of

¹ I would like to thank N.J. Allen for his helpful comments on an early draft of this paper, Robert Parkin for help in refining my English and Sherwood Lingenfelter, my research advisor, for encouraging me to publish my findings.

 $^{^2}$ These are not terms that the Madia normally use for themselves. They prefer to call themselves the *Gaitha* or *Koithor*.

Scheffler and Lounsbury (1971). As the table shows, although all of the Madia kin types have address terms, not all of them have reference terms. The relatives in G + 2 are the only grand-kin who have reference terms. All address terms have been given in quotation marks to distinguish them from the reference terms, even when they are formally identical to the latter.

The kin terms presented here were collected from the Bhamragad and Etapalli regions of Maharashtra State in 2008. Grigson had collected terms from the Orchha region in the Abujhmar Hills, adjacent to the Bhamragad region, in the present-day state of Chhattisgarh. His list provides thirty-four Hill Madia reference terms, though terms for HeB, EeZ and yZHws are missing (Grigson 1938: 308-9), and he questionably applies the term for eBW to FeBD, and the term for yB to yZws. While Grigson's list does show the presence of the cross dimension in the terms for grandkin, which is a uniquely Madia feature, it does so only for the terms used by male speakers for their G-2 relatives, whereas the female speakers use the identical term *wandŏ* for SS, SD, DS and DD. This appears dubious since my own data show that female speakers too distinguish between parallel and cross grandkin. The only major difference between his list and mine is that I have included the address terms, which he did not collect. Besides, my system of transcription differs from his, having been devised in consultation with my linguist husband, Dr Chris Vaz (cf. Vaz 2005).

<i>jīva</i> (parallel)		<i>putul</i> (cross)		G
male	female	male	female	-
FFF, MMF ' <i>pēpi</i> '	FMM, MFM 'ātho'	FMF, MFF 'māma'	FFM, MMM 'pēri'	+3
EMFF, EFMF ' <i>pēpi</i> '	EFFM, EMMM 'ātho'	EFFF,EMMF:	EMFM, EFMM:	
		'māma'	'pēri'	
thādho (FF, EMF):	kāko (MM, EFM):	ako (MF, EFF) 'ako'	bāpi (FM, EMM):	+2
'dhādha'	'kāko/aka'		'bāpi/sango'	
thape (F) 'bāba'	ātho (FZ) 'ātho'	māmal (MB) 'māma'	thalox (M):	+1
<i>pēpi</i> (FeB) ' <i>pēpi</i> '			ʻava/yaya'	
kākal (FyB) 'kāka'			pēri (MeZ) 'pēri'	
			kūchi (MyZ) 'kūchi'	
EGO	EGO	<i>maryox</i> (FZS/MBS):	mandari(FZD/MBD)	0
dhādhal (eB) 'dhādha'	akal (eZ) 'aka'	ʻsangi'	'sango'	
thamox (yB) 'thamo'	ēlaŗ (yZ) 'ēlo'			
mūryal (HeB) 'dhādha'	pōrar (HeZ,WeZ) 'aka'			
aglal (WZHe) 'dhādha	exayar (HBWe) 'aka'			
aglal (WZHy) 'thamo'	exayar (HBWy) 'ēlo'			
max (S/BSms):	mayar (D/BDms):	max (S/ZSws):	mayar (D/ZDws):	-1
'bāba/pēpi/kāka/pēdu ³	'ava/pēpi/ātho'	'bāba ⁴ /māma'	'ava/pēri/kūchi/pēdi'	
anemax (BSws):	anemayar (BDws):	anemax (ZSms):	anemayar (ZDms):	
'bāba/kāka/pēdu'	ʻātho'	'māma'	'māma/ava'	
(SSms) 'thamo'	(SDms) 'ēlo'	DSms 'ako/sangi'	DDms 'sango/ako'	-2
(DSws) 'thamo'	(DDws) 'ēlo'	SSws ' <i>pēka⁵/sangi</i> '	SDws 'sango/bāpi'	
SSSms 'pēpi'	SSDms 'pēpi'	SSSws 'māma'	SSDws 'pēri'	
DDSms 'pēpi'	DDDs 'pēpi'	DDSws 'māma'	DDDws 'pēri'	-3
DSSws 'kāka'	DSDws 'ātho'	DSSms 'māma'	DSDms 'māma'	
SDSws ' <i>kāka</i> '	SDDws 'ātho'	SDSms 'māma'	SDDms 'māma'	

³ The terms *pēdi* and *pēdu* mean 'little one'.
⁴ The terms *bāba* and *ava*, when applied to one's children or any young man or woman, are used as terms of endearment.

⁵ The terms $p\bar{e}ka$ and *pila* literally mean 'boy' and 'girl' respectively, but when these are used by and for affinal relatives, they are proper kin terms.

<i>ermi</i> (affinal)			
male	female	-	
		+3	
-	-		
		+2	
-	-		
māmal (FZH,WF,HF) 'māma'	ātho (MBW, EM) 'ātho'	+1	
hāto (eZH) 'hāto'	ange (eBW) 'ange'		
kōval (yZHws) 'lāmane/pēka'	koyar (yBWms) 'pila'	0	
ermthox (WeB, yZHms) 'ermthox'	kōkaŗ (yBWws, EyZ) 'pila'		
exundi (EyB) 'pēka'	muthe (W) X		
<i>mujo</i> (H) X ⁶			
pāri (CEFms) pāri'			
anemax (HZS, WBS) 'pēka'	anemayar (HZD,WBD) 'pila'	-1	
ane (DH) 'ane/lāmane'	koyar (SW) 'pila'		
-	-	-2	
-	-	-3	

 $^{^{6}}$ The kintypes H and W do not have address terms but only reference terms

Some observations about the Madia kinship terminology

(1) The vocative nature of the Madia terminology. Understanding the role of the address terminology as the indigenous way of classifying kin was the first significant breakthrough in my analysis of Madia kinship. While it is acceptable to address very young people by their first names, it is improper to do so with classificatory relatives who are closer in age. Using the personal names of older relatives and, generally, of married people is taboo unless the relative is one's own child or grandchild. Affinal relatives do not use each other's names even in reference. When one does not know the appropriate address term, age-appropriate parallel kin terms are safe to use. The Madia reference terms stand for the kin types (i.e. those based on genealogical positions), and the address terms stand for presumably wider social categories. The 37 kin types (with the exception of F, M, H, and W) are grouped together to form a lesser number (about twenty) of social categories. Seeing the rationale for such groupings became the key to understanding the Madia kin classification.

(2) Three kin classes. In the above table, the address terms (or social categories) are further grouped together into what are commonly known as kin classes, which in the Madia language are three: *jīva*, *putul*, and *ermi*. These terms correspond to the parallel, cross and affinal relatives respectively. Note that a few of the kin types that are generally classified as 'cross' in Dravidian kinship (Trautmann 1981) are classified in the Madia terminology as either parallel or affinal. The reason for the threefold classification is the distinction the Madia make between the cross relatives and affines. MB and FZH are equivalents terminologically but not structurally. The term *māmal* has primary and secondary meanings; MB is the focal type of this category and is distinguished in the Madia language as *putul māmal* or *nena māmal*, where *nena* means 'proper' and *putul* means 'place of origin or birth'. A man's sister's children are his *putuli*, meaning 'born of' or 'born from' their MB, and a man's sister's children refer to him as their '*putul māmal*'. The same is not true of FZH, who is essentially an affinal relative because he has taken ego's FZ as a wife. The distinction between MB and FZH is clearly shown in the Madia reciprocal terms used by each of them to address ego. Though ego addresses both MB and FZH as 'māma', in the case of the MB the term is self-reciprocal, a defining characteristic of consanguineal relationship terms. FZH, however, reciprocates with *pēka/pila*, 'young man/woman', *pēka* and *pila* being essentially

affinal terms used for affinal relatives (yZHws, EyB, yBWms, EyZ). Likewise HF and WF, who are also addressed as *māma*, reciprocate with terms like *ane* and *lāmane*, which are purely affinal terms. All these examples show that, from the perspective of ego, there are three kinds of men, as is shown in the three kin classes, *jīva*, *ermi* and *putul*. If in G +1 they are F, MB and FZH/EF, in ego's level they are B (*dhādha* or *thamo*), MBS/FZS (*sangi*) and ZH/WB (*ermthox*). The tripartite terminology is basic to the Madia kinship structure.

(3) Sibling pairs. It is the reciprocal terminology of address that helped me see that the sibling pairs (F & FZ and M & MB) belong together in the same kin class. For example, $BSws = FyB = k\bar{a}ka$, a parallel term.⁷ The position of FZ is entirely distinct from that of the other $\bar{a}tho$ (MBW and WM), who only address male ego as *lamane* or *ane* ('son-in-law') and never as $k\bar{a}ka$ (FyB). The same argument goes for M and MZ, who are cross kin because they address their S or ZS as *māma*, the term for MB. Therefore it makes perfect sense in the Madia terminology that siblings belong together and that F and M belong to different kin classes, otherwise how could they marry?

(4) Transgenerational crossness. A unique feature that stands out in the above table of the Madia terminology is what I call transgenerational crossness, whereby relatives at all generational levels are distinguished for crossness, implying that this distinction remains a constant, that is, it applied in the eternal past and will do so in the eternal future, so to speak. The cross/parallel distinction for grandkin (like FF = EMF = MBWF \neq MF = EFF = FZHF) seems to be an archaic feature because it is not found in any other Dravidian terminology (Trautmann 1981).

(5) Superreciprocity. The most striking feature is, of course, the merging of the address terms for alternate generations in the parallel- and cross-kin classes, and this too is most archaic (following Dziebel). We see that relatives in alternate generations can use self-reciprocal address terms. Terms in G +1/-1 show relative-age distinction, but those in G +2/-2 and G +3/-3 generally do not. Terms such as *ako*, *māma* and *pēpi* are self-reciprocal even to the point of neutralizing the sex distinction because these male terms may be applied to females as well when used reciprocally. We see that the polar categories are perfect examples of superreciprocity.

⁷ Though the FZ 'refers' to her brother's children with terms that denote them as potential children-inlaw, how she 'addresses' them shows that the FZ is really a parallel kin type.

The challenge of the prescriptive equation

The following are the equations and discriminations found in the Madia kin terminology (reference as well as address terms are taken into consideration here):

- 1. Superreciprocal equations (like FFF = FeB = SSSms)
- 2. Bifurcate collateral in G+1 level (like $F \neq FeB \neq FyB \neq MB$)
- 3. Bifurcate merging in G0 level (like FBS = MZS \neq MBS = FZS)
- 4. Sibling merging (like BSms = BSws, ZSms = ZSws).
- 5. Siblings through affinal equations (like WZH = HBWB = B)
- 6. Two anomalous sibling equations (HeB = B, WeZ = Z)

What is missing is this list is a prescriptive equation. What we find in the Madia terminology is simply this:

$MBD = FZD \neq W.$

But this is not a prescriptive equation equating spouse and cross-cousin. From my observations during the past decade of my life with this tribe I can say that FZD is the preferred bride among the Madia. Grigson was the first one to point this fact out, though he was misinterpreted by the few who referred to him later:

It has already been said (page 234) that a very high proportion of marriages are crosscousin marriages, and that such unions formed 54 per cent. of the Hill Maria marriages into which I enquired. [...] Such marriages are considered the most seemly, both because the family which has given a daughter to another family in one generation should have this obligation repaid by getting her daughter back as a wife for a son of the next generation, and because such family arrangements obviate the necessity of paying the much heavier bride-price required for getting a bride from a new and unrelated family. Such marriages are known as *gudapal* or 'tribal-milk' marriages. The commonest form is marriage between a daughter and her mother's brother's son (brother being again used in the extended sense). But it has also been extended to cover marriages between a girl and her father's sister's son and a son and his mother's brother's daughter. (Grigson 1938: 247) After stating that 54 percent of Madia alliances are cross-cousin marriages, Grigson clearly states that the 'commonest form' is the MBS-FZD alliance. The remaining 46 percent Grigson describes as 'new affinities', where the bride is neither FZD nor MBD: 'Of 105 Hill Maria marriages investigated, fifty-seven were marriages between cross-cousins; it is not so easy to check the remaining 46 per cent. in which the marriage marked the start of new affinities' (Grigson 1938: 234). The fact that nearly half of all marriages are 'new' alliances supports the existence of the FZD rule and is not in opposition to it. This is because it is in the very nature of FZD alliance that it can last for only two or three generations (for demographic reasons); but it is this very reality which necessitates that *newer affinities* be made in order to initiate other short cycles of FZD alliance. This explains why the FZD rule in Madia society cannot make up a large percentage of all marriages, and why there will be an equally large percentage of new alliances that cannot be described as either patri- or matrilateral. This is probably true of any society practicing the FZD alliance rule.

Furthermore, the presence of the MBD-FZS form of alliance in Hill Madia society, which Grigson detected and which I myself can testify to, does not in any way disprove the FZD rule. Madia men may take their MBD as wife, but they generally do so when no FZD is available. In any case, the preference for FZD as a bride involves mainly an avoidance of direct sister exchange (or bilateral alliance), but not necessarily of MBD alliance, as it is the former that would cause the FZD rule to become ineffective but not the latter⁸ (see point c in the section below). The occasional MBD (matrilateral) alliance is reoriented to an FZD alliance from the very next generation and thus reworked to fit the patrilateral rule. This, I believe, is exactly what Grigson meant when he described Madia MBD marriage as an *extension* of the FZD or 'tribal milk' rule (see the last sentence in the above quote).

Grigson's text was misunderstood by later writers, who took it to mean that the Madia had a bilateral alliance rule (Trautmann 1981; Parkin 1988). This misunderstanding may be rooted in what seems to be a general idea that an FZD rule implies a ban on the MBD as a bride. Trautmann had found it incredible that in Madia society the classificatory relatives MF and DD could actually marry. (It is true that such marriages can take place when the two are close in age.) Nonetheless he got it almost right when he stated that 'the peculiarities [i.e. alternate generation merging] of the Maria terminology are rendered intelligible by the

 $^{^{8}}$ As can be expected, this is not the reason Madias quote for their reluctance to engage in bilateral exchanges. Rather, it is the belief about ill luck that is given as the reason; in direct sister exchanges, one of the two couples would suffer misfortune or death.

particular form that the Dravidian marriage rule takes among them: One shall marry an opposite-sex cross relative of one's own or of an alternate generation' (Trautmann 1981: 199). He did not see this marriageability between MF and DD as merely a corollary of the MBS-FZD rule. DD and MM belong to one and the same category and they are like sisters (see table above), and therefore if one of them is marriageable to ego, so is the other.

Evidence in Madia culture for MBS-FZD alliance

The following are some of the cultural clues to the existence of an FZD alliance rule among the Madia, but due to constraints of space, these can only be presented briefly:

(a) *The concept of* putul, '*origin/source*'. This is a dominant cultural concept and the best clue to the society's FZD rule. When I ask a Madia the question, 'Where were you born?' he/she invariably refers to his/her MB and his clan, and never to the F or F's clan. The native way of asking the above question is 'whose milk did you drink?' It is believed that every person received life (*jīva*) from the father but the womb he/she originated from belongs to the MB. This is the reason why the MB and his clan is ego's *putul* or 'place of origin'. And if the mother's womb belongs to the MB, so does her milk. All of this points to the special ontological connection between ego and MB. This perception becomes the rationale for male ego to make a claim on his FZD (referred to as *putuli pila* 'the girl born from or unto' us), a claim he does not have on his MBD. This is also the reason why the MBS-FZD alliance is referred to as ""tribal-milk" marriages' (Grigson 1938: 247).

(b) *Brideprice to the MB*. At a Madia non-MBS-FZD wedding, it is not only the bride's father who is given a brideprice but also the bride's MB, who receives it as *māma-vari*, a kind of tax or tribute given to him in compensation for taking what rightfully belongs to him.

(c) *Dislike of direct exchange and of FZS-MBD alliance*. Traditionally, sisterexchange is avoided because people are aware that it can confuse the *putul* principle. When two men exchange sisters, they both end up having the *putuli* right over each other's daughters, and it can become confusing as to who should be given priority in staking a claim to the FZD in situations where both have sons and daughters. In Madia weddings the MB, who takes his ZD as the bride for his son, plays the *putul* role, and the one who gives the bride remains the *eqmi* (wife-giver), but sister exchange opens such role-play to men on both sides, which leaves a space for potential disputes. There is also a general resistance to giving a girl as a bride to her FZS. Such alliance proposals brought by a girl's FZH are usually turned down with words to shame him: 'You had come to us asking for a wife, and now you come again to beg for a daughter-in-law too?'

(d) *Madia god-group system*. The whole of Madia society is divided into four godgroups, each group having a certain number of gods ranging from four to seven (Grigson 1938; von Fürer-Haimendorf 1979). The phratry structure is a symbolic representation of the MBS-FZD rule, which requires four exchange partners. Why the FZD rule requires four alliance partners is described in the next section.

The above are clues to the existence of a patrilateral cross-cousin marriage rule in Madia society. I now move on to showing that MBS-FZD alliance is the single rationale for every structural phenomenon observed in Madia kinship.

FZD alliance and Madia kinship terminology

The FZD rule is the single organizing principle of Madia kinship and social structure, as is proved by how the six terminological equations mentioned earlier in the paper are all based on or facilitate this single alliance rule.

First let us consider equations 2, 5 and 6, which are related. Madia FZD alliance requires four exchange partners. If A gives a wife to B but cannot take a wife from B because bilateral exchange is to be avoided, and if B gives wife to C, who must become a 'brother' to A as a wife-taker's wife-taker, then A can only take a wife from D. The quadrilateral partnership is illustrated in the diagram below, in which each letter can be taken to represent a lineage. The arrows mark the direction in which the brides move, and the parallel lines show the parallel kin connections that are created through the alliance exchange.



Fig. 1. The quadrilateral FZD alliance partnership

We see here that A and C as well as B and D are siblings through affinal alliances (equation 5). Thus every alliance relation creates a parallel relation. This kind of quadrilateral exchange explains the bifurcate collateral in equation 2. How? It is a stringent rule in this society that those who take a group's sisters or daughters as brides should never take the same group's widowed wives too, because of the principle that the alliance partners of one's alliance partners become one's parallel kin (an ermi's ermi is a jīva). If a woman goes as a bride from group A to group B and becomes widowed in group B, she could not then marry into group C because she is like a sister to C (since A and C have become parallel kin through the quadrilateral alliance, even if they were not parallel kin already through the clan or cultgroup organizations). But nor could the widowed woman marry into group D, as that would amount to a bilateral exchange, since group D is a wife-giver to group A and therefore could not also be A's wife-taker. Hence it is very important in Madia society that a widowed woman be inherited by a suitable man from within the same group that she had originally married into (if not the same family or lineage, at least the same clan.) Now, it is the wife of an older brother that is more likely to be widowed first, and hence the rule in Madia society that HyB is a joking relative and a marriageable category, while HeB is strictly an avoidance category, makes perfect sense. It is because of this that HeB and WeZ are tabooed in marriage, which is expressed in the anomalous sibling equation (6). I think the bifurcate collateral equation (2), namely $F \neq FeB \neq FyB \neq MB$, exists primarily to show the age distinction among siblings and to facilitate the appropriate practice of widow inheritance that serves to uphold the quadrilateral alliance partnership required by the society's FZD rule.

Let us now turn to the three remaining equations, 1, 3 and 4. Equation 3 (bifurcate merging in G0) is simply an expression of the dimension of crossness, in other words, PosGC are cross, and they must be distinguished from PssGC, who are parallel. But equation 4 (sibling merging like BSms = BSws, SSms = DSws) is there to facilitate the superreciprocal

terminology (equation 1). How and why this is so will become clear in the course of the following discussion.

The superreciprocal equations are one of the interesting features of this kinship system, and they have structural significance, but these too are simply an effect of the FZD rule. It is common knowledge that the FZD marriage rule involves a *reversal* in the direction of the alliance in every generation, which means that male and female ego are *repeating* the marriages of FF and MM respectively, thus *replicating* the kin relations two generations above them. This is how ego's adjacent generations are distinguished terminologically, but the generations that are two levels above and below are merged into ego's own. What causes or motivates the reversal in the direction of the alliance and thereby effects such equation and discrimination across the generational levels is the delay by a generation in the reciprocal alliance, which is the very essence of the FZD rule. The delayed reciprocity is perhaps the best explanation for the merger of relations in alternate generations. The assumption of a continuous working of the FZD rule is the very basis of the kinship system which has the superreciprocal terminology.

What has the above to do with equation 4 (sibling merger)? Cross-generational selfreciprocity means that the crossness dimension is maintained in all generational levels, as is shown in the four distinct types of grand-kin and great grand-kin in the Madia terminology. The alternate generation merging of all categories, including the G +3/-3 super categories, is what makes the Madia terminology superreciprocal. Superreciprocal equations (like FMM = FZ = BDws = DSDws = SDDws) would not have been possible if the sibling pairs (like F & FZ, M & MB) had not belonged in the same kin class.

In the light of all that has been said, I conclude that MBS-FZD alliance is the basis for all the equations and discriminations observable in the Madia kin terminology, even though this rule itself does not show up as a prescriptive spouse equation. Allen, working with the basic assumption of a bilateral alliance rule, realized that this marriage rule alone would not do for his model; he said that 'the rules of our simplest imaginable human society will need to cover not only "horizontal" relations (marriage) but also "vertical" relations, for which "recruitment" is a convenient general term' (2008: 99). But the Madia case shows that FZD alliance is the single rule that covers both the horizontal and vertical kin relations, as we shall see later in this paper. In Dziebel's case, it was mainly because he had tried to work with Allen's basic assumption of a bilateral rule for early human kinship that he was frustrated in

his attempt to build a proto-kinship model. The FZD rule was not considered in such model building because of the general assumption that it derived from the bilateral form and is a variant of the latter, and perhaps also because it had long been rejected as unviable.

Having established the FZD rule as a viable ethnographic fact and as the sole rationale for the Madia kinship system, I now turn to describing the social organization of Madia society based on kinship.

Madia social organization

The terminological merging of alternate generations can be illustrated with a double-helix. In



Fig. 2. Alternate generation merger

MBS-FZD alliance, the wife-taker (*putul*) in one generation must become the wife-giver (*ermi*) in the next. Because of this, the two practically become combined into a single class known generally as *ermi* to mean 'alliance partners'. The two strands in the double-helix, the $j\bar{v}a$ and *ermi*, are depicted engaged in an FZD exchange showing the delay in reciprocity by a generation. This appears as the simplest dual structure, but the complex inner workings that create this helix are discussed in the following section.

Madia kinship in egocentric view

The figure below is a $k\bar{o}lam$, the south Dravidian art that women in south India make in their front yard at dawn to welcome the new day and receive the blessings it brings.⁹ I have used the conventions of $k\bar{o}lam$ art here to illustrate the structure of Madia kinship which represents one that is built on FZD alliance.



Fig. 3. A structural paradigm for kinship based on FZD alliance

⁹ I learnt this art as a child from my mother and sister.

The above $k\bar{o}lam$ represents the most basic functional unit of the Madia kinship system. It consists of two identical halves or 'strands', each of which has four 'rungs'. Each rung is made up of three kin types, where two of them are spouses and the third one is a parent of one of the other two. The parent occupies a position at an elevated level from the child, showing the generational distance between them. We see that there are only two generational levels represented in this unit (egos' parents and grandparents) and this is because of the superreciprocal quality of the Madia terminologically. If we construct a sequence of several units by replicating the one shown in the $k\bar{o}lam$, which could represent a Madia lineage consisting of a few generations, then we would see that the polar categories *ako* and *thādho* alternate endlessly.

The four kin types basic to this unit are found stacked at the centre, namely F, FZ, M and MB (who are the parents of male ego and female ego, i.e. MBS and FZD, because it is kinship based on the MBS-FZD rule that is illustrated here) and these four kin types are connected, through their respective spouses, to the four polar social categories, namely MF, MM, FM and FF, or *ako*, *kāko*, *bāpi* and *thādho* respectively. These polar categories include not just the genealogical grandparents of the male and the female egos, but also the classificatory ones such as FZHF/EFF, FZHM/EFM, MBWM/EMM and MBWF/EMF; but I included only two of these in the illustration so as to keep the diagram from becoming too unwieldy.

Male and female ego themselves (MBS and FZD) are not shown in this diagram, but being the very rationale for the way in which the kin types are stacked and bonded, they are implicitly present. We see that the respective relatives of male and female ego (the two strands) are placed in juxtaposition, but they 'run' in opposite directions to so as to facilitate complementary bonding between them (I will return to this point shortly).

Overall, this paradigm serves as a fairly accurate illustration of the Madia kinship structure in the egocentric view. It presents the kinship structure from the perspectives of both male and female ego. Besides, it represents the female kin types FZ and M, and not merely their male counterparts F and MB, thus giving a more complete or truer picture by including both genders. Because the female kin types M and FZ are two of the four main bases, I decided that it is only right to represent MM and FM (*kako* and *bapi* respectively) in the polar categories alongside their spouses, MF and FF (*ako* and *thādho* respectively).

We see that in the egocentric view Madia kinship is quite an intricate structure. I mentioned that this framework is built on the FZD alliance. What are the pointers for that? One is the distinction between wife-giver and wife-taker. Ego has three male relatives from G+1 level represented in this diagram: F, FZH and MB (though there are four base-pairs in each strand, ego's F appears twice, and so the men are only three in total). These three 'men in the middle' represent the *jīva* (F), *ermi* (FZH) and *putul* (MB). But then, the matrilateral alliance system too is known for its distinction between wife-giver and wife-taker. The answer lies with the G+2 level relatives, the grandparents. The unmistakable pointer for an FZD alliance system is perhaps the distinction of the two grandfathers (FF \neq MF), something that does not seem to exist in other cross-cousin alliance systems.¹⁰ Transgenerational crossness is a unique feature of FZD alliance, and is therefore the second indicator here that this framework is built on this form of alliance.

Perhaps the most significant observation to be made about this structure is its density. There are two dozen relatives in this unit. (This is a stark contrast to Allen's simple quadripartite structure.) However, the relatives in each of the two strands are bonded in such a way that ultimately there are only two categories in ego's social world, represented by FF and MF respectively. What happens when the two egos' social worlds are brought together though marriage alliance and how could the two strands bond? These two strands are identical, and unless they run inversely they cannot bond. In FZD alliance, the cross/parallel distinction is extended to cover ego's spouse's relatives: one spouse's parallel relatives become the other spouse's cross relatives, and one spouse's cross relatives become the other's parallel relatives. This I would call the complementary bonding of categories on the horizontal level, and it works in such a way that it creates the twist in the double-helix structure. I explain this below.

Complementary bonding and the twist

The alternation of generation takes the form of a rather a simple and uniform merging of the vertical levels of relations leading to superreciprocity (this is equation #1 discussed above). But the merger at the horizontal level is a bit more complicated, as it is not uniform. In level G+2 we find only two categories:

¹⁰ Trautmann's (1981) samples show that this distinction is not found in any other Dravidian kinship system except in Gommu Koya, which is one of the Gond group of tribes.

$$FF = EMF = MBWF = 'dh\bar{a}dha' \neq MF = EFF = FZHF = 'ako'$$

In G+1 level the rules of complementary merger (or bonding) are applied only partially and to certain relatives:

EMB = FB = $k\bar{a}ka$ or $p\bar{e}pi$ (where spouse's cross relative becomes ego's parallel kin)

 $EFB = MB = m\bar{a}ma$ (where spouse's parallel relative becomes ego's cross kin)

But the same may or may not apply to the relative EFZH, who is ego's spouse's relative's spouse, and because it has to take into account more than one alliance, such an equation is contingent and not necessary. Therefore the complementary bonding at this level is not total as found in level G+2.

In ego's generation it applies even less because ego's cross kin and affines are kept distinct and the number of relations that merge are very few (as seen in equations #5 and #6). Thus the middle section of the lineage (G0) is the widest, with numerous categories, because the horizontal merger of relations is the least in this level and it becomes narrower towards the top and towards the bottom. This dissimilarity in size between the generational levels can be an explanation for the skewing in the double-helix structure.¹¹ This idea may be illustrated with a ribbon. If a ribbon is stretched leaving regular intervals, it would tend to twist at those intervals. This is to I suggest that the cognate-affine distinction in the three medial levels (or simply the tripartite terminology) is the rationale behind the twist in the double helix. Besides, the bonding of ego's FF and EMF would require some skewing too. The complementary bonds described above are so complex that they could not be shown as such in the *kolam* in Fig.3.

In summary, we see that the vertical relations in Madia kinship are merged through alternation, the horizontal relations are merged through the complementary bonding of relatives of ego's spouses.¹² The relations fold up, as it were, both ways: top to bottom and side to side. This collapsibility, so to speak, renders the Madia kinship a dense and compact structure.

¹¹ Allen has also presented a 'double-helix' model as one of his several approaches to conceptualizing a *tetradic* society (1989: 49). Our models are fundamentally different, not least because I am using the double-helix to exemplify a *dual* organization.

¹² In a bilateral alliance system, the horizontal merging of relations is possible, but not their vertical merging. If this system has a few terms that show alternation, these would be vestiges of an earlier stage in which there was FZD alliance.

Madia kinship in sociocentric view

If, in the egocentric view the Madia kinship system is a dual organization, what is it like in the sociocentric view? It follows that it should look like the end-on view of the double-helix. I present this structure again, using the conventions of Dravidian *kōlam* art.



Fig. 4. FZD alliance in sociocentric view

The above structure resembles a snowflake. All the four polar categories belonging to the G+2 level are shown here, and if the gender criterion is ignored, there are only two social categories or two domains of relative: $th\bar{a}dho$ and ako. Therefore we may conclude that the organization is dual in the sociocentric view too.¹³

What is striking about this illustration is its symmetry. The beauty of its form and structure is in the way it seems to hold in balance the binary oppositions such as male and female, parallel and cross, and, by implication, the very concepts of descent and alliance. I cannot but wonder at what I see – a single rule of delayed reciprocity in marriage alliance could create such exquisite structures! Is this not the one that is supposed to be a mere 'procedure' and not even worth calling a 'system'? Is it not 'self-destructive' for a society to

¹³ That the Madia have a dual social organization (*ako-māma* versus *dhādha-thamo*) is attested in the previous literature both on the Hill Madia tribe and on the Gond tribes in general (Grigson 1938; von Fürer-Haimendorf 1979; Jay 1970; Deogaonkar 1982; Russell and Hiralal 1906).

have the FZD rule, as it would cause 'sheer confusion'?¹⁴ Did we not hear that it is 'mechanically unstable' and 'precarious', 'premature' and 'stunted' as a cycle, 'crude' in application, 'fragile' in structure, 'artificial' in the unity it creates, 'less ambitious' and 'less adventurous' as a transaction, and so 'Cheap-Jack'?¹⁵ Something that was never expected to achieve a total structure seems to be excelling in doing so.

Madia's tetradic social structure

What is the connection between Madia kinship and Madia social structure? I have already mentioned that MBS-FZD alliance requires four exchange units. This quadrilateral alliance is the cultural ideal which is mirrored in the four god-group (or phratry) structure in Madia society (Grigson 1938; von Fürer-Haimendorf 1979). The god-group structure can be understood as a symbolic representation or an actualization of the tribe's mental model of FZD exchange (following Lévi-Strauss and Needham). The Madia originally had a moiety structure (Vaz 2011), and their folklore refers to a time in the past when the cult of the four god-groups was instituted (or more exactly, expanded from the earlier two god-groups system) at a point of time in their history when they began dispersing from the Abujhmar hills¹⁶ down to the western plains. The historical primacy of the moiety system is also attested to by the presence of a small group who live north of the Madia region¹⁷ and who call themselves *Gaitha* (the same name by which the Madia call themselves), claim that they are the most original tribe of the region and live as a moiety society consisting of just twogod groups, with a preference for MBS-FZD alliance and with a kinship terminology very similar to that of the Madia. This fact, combined with the Madia's own oral history, lead me to believe that this tribe was once a moiety society. Therefore the congruence between their kinship system and their social structure is a thing of the past. However, the original dual social organization based on FZD alliance continues just the same, even in the present-day tetradic social structure.

¹⁴ Needham 1962: 108-19.

¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss 1969: 445-52.

¹⁶ These hills are located in what is today Chhattisgarh state. As already noted, one of the names for this tribe, Abujhmaria, is associated with the name of these hills.

¹⁷ This people live in and around the Kurkheda *tehsil* of Gadchiroli District in Maharashtra, north of the Madia region.

The institution of the four god-groups structure and the god-group exogamy was probably meant to ensure the survival of the society's FZD exchange rule in the face of the pressures brought about by the dispersal, especially since the Madia were a small tribe (even today they are probably not more than 150,000). Adherence to the FZD rule with the original moiety exogamy would have become difficult owing to distance and poor communications, and a four-phratry system certainly allowed 'for a wider range of choice'¹⁸ for alliance partnership than was possible in a moiety system. Under the present tetradic structure, each and every one of the hundred or more Madia clans has a particular number of *pēnk* or 'gods' (4, 5, 6 or 7) and thus falls under one of the four phratries known as *pēnmul* or 'god-group'. By requiring that these four god-groups be exogamous, the *pēn* cult connects all the men of this patrilineal society through a 'fictive' kinship where those who have the same number of gods are considered potential alliance partners.

Summary

The Madia tribe has a tripartite terminology and a dual social organization. The tetradic social structure is a reflection of the ideal of quadrilateral alliance partnership between clans, and it was introduced to serve the dispersed clans by increasing the number of potential alliance partners. The FZD alliance rule generated the structures. FZD alliance creates the vertical and horizontal mergers of relations, making the kinship dense, compact and symmetrical. The Madia kinship clearly represents the earliest Dravidian system because the south Dravidian kinship systems that are based on bilateral and matrilateral forms of alliance evolved from the unfolding or diffusion of a dense and compact kinship system of which the Madia is an example (Vaz 2011). I have wondered if the Madia also represents the earliest human kinship system, or what Barnard calls the 'earliest full kinship' (2011: 240). And that leads to a few questions.

Should we require that the earliest kinship system be the simplest? If so, should that 'simplicity' be defined in terms of a minimum number of kin categories? Or, could it be defined on the basis of a minimum number of rules or principles needed to generate a system? We have seen in the Madia case how the entire system is generated by FZD alliance.

¹⁸ Grigson cites this as the reason for the origin of phratry system among the Bison-horn Madia (1938:240).

Through a complex bonding or interlocking of numerous kin categories, a single rule created a dual social organization, and not a few analysts have proposed that dual structures are the simplest and the earliest. In the light of the Madia evidence, I suggest that the early human kinship system be defined in terms of, and identified by, its density and symmetry rather than simplicity. It is on the basis of an original density and symmetry that the idea of a 'Big Bang for human society'¹⁹ sounds logical.

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¹⁹ Allen 1986.

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