

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.

Fieldwork among the Chewong was conducted between September 1977 and June 1979 and from August to November 1981. Funding was received from the Social Science Research Council; Equipe de Recherche d'Anthropologie Sociale: Morphologie, Echanges (C.N.R.S.); and the Susette Taylor Travelling Fellowship, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

The following have read and commented upon earlier drafts of this paper: Alan Campbell, Anthony Good, Professor J. Littlejohn, and Desmond McNeill, as well as staff and students of the Anthropology Department at St Andrews University. I am grateful to them all.

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.¹ 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',² 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.

REFERENCES

- BLOCH, M. 1977. 'The Past and the Present in the Present', *Man* n.s., Vol. XII, pp. 278-92.
- CUNNINGHAM, C. 1973. 'Order in the Atoni House', in Needham (ed.) 1973, pp. 204-38.
- DUMONT, L. 1971. 'On Putative Hierarchy and some Allergies to it', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. V, pp. 58-81.
- . . . 1979. 'The Anthropological Community and Ideology', *Social Science Information*, Vol. XVIII, no. 6, pp. 785-817.
- . . . 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- . . . 1982. 'On Value' (Radcliffe-Brown Lecture 1980), *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. LXVI, pp. 207-41.
- DURKHEIM, E. and M. MAUSS 1963. *Primitive Classification* (transl. Rodney Needham), London: Cohen & West.
- HOWELL, S. 1984. *Society and Cosmos: The Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- . . . in press. 'From Child to Human: Chewong Concept of Self', in I.M. Lewis and G. Jahoda (eds.), *Ethnographic Perspectives on Cognitive Development*.
- LITTLEJOHN, J. 1973. 'Temne Right and Left: An Essay on the Choreography of Everyday Life', in Needham (ed.) 1973, pp. 288-98.
- NEEDHAM, R. (ed.) 1973. *Right and Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- . . . 1983. 'Reversals', in *Against the Tranquility of Axioms*, Berkeley: University of California Press.