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THE ANALYSIS OF DUAL ORGANIZATIONS: A METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE.

Professor Lévi-Strauss has for many years concerned himself with the study of societies in which various forms of dualism are to be found. Indeed it would be fair to say that his many stimulating contributions are now indispensable reading for anyone who wishes to carry out research in this field. As a tribute to the importance of the theoretical issues which has raised and which he ultimately discussed in *Les organisations dualistes existent-elles?* (1956), I wish here to examine the arguments set forth in that paper. My critique aims to demonstrate, on ethnographical and methodological grounds, what seems to be the weaknesses of his analysis.¹

Les organisations dualistes existent-elles? is at once an attempt to elucidate the structural principles of so-called "dual organizations" and an essay in comparative sociology. Lévi-Strauss shows himself to be aware of the dilemma in which scholars find themselves when they wish to apply the comparative method in social anthropology. He writes:

"....ou bien les données qu'on se propose de comparer sont si voisines, par la géographie et l'histoire, qu'on n'est jamais sûr d'avoir affaire à plusieurs phénomènes, et non à un seul, superficiellement diversifié; ou bien elles sont trop hétérogènes et la confrontation devient illégitime,...." (1956 p. 99).

He therefore proposes the comparative analysis of data taken from American and Indonesian societies as one way out of the difficulty. As a demonstration of how this could be done he sets out to examine the "organisation généralement connue sous le nom de système dualiste" (1956 p. 99) in its American and Indonesian forms.

This vague definition of his subject matter reflects, unfortunately, a similar lack of precision in the subsequent discussion. Lévi-Strauss

¹ My own contribution to the study of dual organization — a comparative analysis of the social institutions of the Gê tribes of Central Brazil — which will present my field data from the Akwê-Shavante, is in process of elaboration.

makes no working distinction between the terms *organisation dualiste*, *système dualiste* and *dualisme*, which is the source of much confusion in his argument. I will return to this point in sections III and IV of the present paper, which are devoted to a discussion of the theoretical implications of his analysis. First, since any sociological analysis must depend on and be intimately connected with the data on which it is based, I wish to consider the ethnographical foundation of Lévi-Strauss' remarks.

I

THE WINNEBAGO. Lévi-Strauss makes the starting point of his analysis an interesting discrepancy in the descriptions of village lay-out, given by Winnebago informants belonging to different phratries (Radin 1923 pp. 188—9). Many older Winnebago described the spatial organization of their aboriginal villages to Paul Radin as shown in fig. 1, while others insisted that it had been as shown in fig. 2. Those who gave

Fig. 1.

Plan of village according to Thundercloud, of Thunderbird clan.
(Radin 1923, p. 189, fig. 33).

the first description were invariably members of the bird clans, i.e. of the upper phratry. The alternative description was given by members of the Bear clan and generally by members of the other clans of the

lower phratry. Lévi-Strauss argues from this that, so far from ethnologists having to select one of these arrangements as authentic, the apparent contradiction may be understood sociologically as two conceptualizations of the one structure, which is too complex to be reduced to a single model. He goes on :

“Le désaccord des informateurs winnebago offre ceci de remarquable que les deux formes décrites correspondent à des arrangements réels. Nous connaissons des villages qui sont effectivement distribués (ou qui conçoivent leur distribution idéale) selon l'un ou l'autre modèle. Pour simplifier l'exposé, j'appellerai désormais la disposition de la fig. 1 : *structure diamétrale*, et *structure concentrique* celle correspondant à la fig. 2.”² (1956 p. 102)

An examination of Radin's material shows that it is, in fact, highly probable that we are here dealing with two views of the same thing

Fig. 2.

Plan of village according to John Rave of Bear clan. A, Lodge of chief of tribe (Thunderbird clan). B, Lodge of chief of Bear clan. C, Lodge of Warrior clan. D, Lodge of Buffalo clan (Radin 1923 p. 189 fig. 34).

² Also fig. 1 and fig. 2 in this paper.

and not with an irreconcilable discrepancy in the data; but Lévi-Strauss' analyses of these views in terms of diametric and concentric structures, on which the rest of his discussion depends, is questionable in several respects.

The "diametric structure" in fig. 1 shows the spatial aspect of the relation between two social groups. The "concentric structure" in fig. 2 shows the spatial relation between society *in toto* and the non-social world. In fig. 1 the lay-out of the village corresponds closely³ with the division of Winnebago society into two exogamous groups. In fig. 2 the village proper is not so divided. It would seem from this that the members of the lower phratry were denying that the duality of Winnebago society was reflected in the arrangement of the village. As they did not consider the dual division to be contextually relevant their diagram schematically emphasizes the unity of Winnebago society. This is explicable on the basis of Radin's data, for he states that the Bear clan (and it will be remembered that Bear clansmen tended to reconstruct the Winnebago village as in fig. 2) was the most important in the tribe after the chief's (Thunderbird) clan (1923 p. 226). There are also indications that clans of the lower phratry may once have held the chieftainship, or at least shared it (Radin 1923 p. 241). According to our hypothesis the informants of the lower phratry therefore rejected a village plan, which clearly set off the closely related bird clans (including the chief's clan) as a superior phratry. Further, fig. 1 is designed to show the spatial aspect of a social relation and does not therefore include the cleared ground and the timber line simply because they were not relevant. If required, the village in fig. 1 could be "located" geographically in the same way as in fig. 2 (compare figs. 3 and 4). This would show clearly enough that what Lévi-Strauss compares as two forms of dual organization are really two incomparables — a segmented society on the one hand and an unsegmented one on the other.

It is therefore difficult to see what use could be made of the term "*structure concentrique*" in any typology of dual organizations. Nor do the examples of such structures given by Lévi-Strauss establish the meaning of the term with any more precision. We have seen that among the Winnebago the concentric structure was an expression of a social: ecological relation, divorced from the dualism of the social

³ Not absolutely, for the Buffalo clan belonged to the lower phratry — a contradiction which Radin notes and discusses (1915 pp. 32–33) but finds himself unable to explain satisfactorily.

Fig. 3.

A, Lodge of the Thunderbird clan.
C, Lodge of the Warrior clan.

B, Lodge of the Bear clan.
D, Lodge of the Buffalo clan.

system. Among the Minangkabau, on the other hand, the concentric structure is expressed *through* the social structure in the division between *kampung* people and *bukit* people, where *kampung* means the built-up village area and *bukit* the outlying hill district (de Josselin de Jong 1951 pp. 79—80). It is an entirely symbolic antithesis, having no formal expression in the lay-out of the village or in any "concentric" ceremonial patterns. Similarly, among the Bororo the concentric structure is a symbolic one but it does not correspond with the dual organization of Bororo society, which is diametric in Lévi-Strauss' terms. Finally, in the Trobriand Islands, which furnish Lévi-Strauss' most important example, the concentric structure is reflected in the symbolic antithesis between centre/sacred/male.... and periphery/profane/female...., without any corresponding dualism in Trobriand society at all. If the village of Omarakana is to be quoted as an example of an "*organisation dualiste*" (Lévi-Strauss 1956 pp. 102—4), this implies a revision of the meaning of the term, which is commonly used to

Fig. 4.

A, Lodge of the Thunderbird clan.
C, Lodge of the Warrior clan.

B, Lodge of the Bear clan.
D, Lodge of the Buffalo clan.

connote a bisection of a total society.⁴ Yet, as we have already noted, Lévi-Strauss claims to be discussing what are generally known as dual organizations.

It follows too that when Lévi-Strauss says that villages are actually arranged in concentric structures he is usually referring to the reflection of symbolic values in the village lay-out rather than to any concentric dualism, involving the segments of society. These social segments are introduced in his parenthesis, where he points out that villagers may only *conceive* of an ideal, concentric village pattern. It is understandable therefore that he devotes much space to showing that certain diametrically arranged societies think of themselves as concentric. These arguments are discussed below.

⁴ Cf. Lévi-Strauss (1949 p. 87): "Ce terme définit un système, dans lequel les membres de la communauté — tribu ou village — sont répartis en deux divisions, qui entretiennent des relations complexes...."

THE BORORO. 1) The north-south axis cutting across the Bororo village figures prominently in Lévi-Strauss' analysis, yet it is ethnographically a doubtful quantity. The existence of such a division may originally have been implied by Colbacchini (1925)⁵, but in a later publication (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942 pp. 31—5) it is made clear that the terms *xobuguingue* (upper) and *xebeguingue* (lower) do not refer to a pair of moieties but are subdivisions within each clan. Upper is associated with East and Lower with West, so that the upper subdivision of each clan will occupy the most easterly part of the clan segment in the village circle and vice versa. Since this east-west division exists within each clan, there can be no question of a north-south axis dividing the upper groups from the lower. The only other evidence in support of such an axis comes from Lévi-Strauss himself (1936 pp. 271—2), who described the Bororo of the Rio Vermelho as being divided into upstream and downstream moieties, located respectively to the east and to the west. Since he designated these moieties by the terms *čābōge* and *čēbege* we must conclude that they were equivalents of the social divisions mentioned above by Colbacchini and Albisetti. Albisetti takes this view, when he confirms the accuracy of his analysis with Colbacchini and specifically rejects Lévi-Strauss' interpretation (1953 pp. 628—9). Lévi-Strauss has always been modest about the accuracy of his field data from the Bororo, among whom he was only able to spend two months, and has accepted Colbacchini and Albisetti's interpretation of *xobuguingue* and *xebeguingue* on various occasions (1952, 1956). It seems therefore that we must either accept the Salesians' data and rule out the north-south axis altogether or we must insist on replacing them by Lévi-Strauss' field data. In the latter case we would be faced with alternative problems of analysis, depending for their solution on the connotations of *xobuguingue* and *xebeguingue*. If these terms do not denote clan subdivisions, then we must revise our estimate of Bororo marriage regulations as described by Albisetti (1948) and reject the analysis of Bororo endogamy proposed by Lévi-Strauss (1952). What is inadmissible, however, is to accept both explanations simultaneously as Lévi-Strauss has done in this treatment.⁶

⁵ I am unable to consult this work, which is unavailable in Oxford.

⁶ I. Slamet-Velsink has suggested (1958 p. 298) that the triad of endogamous groups among the Bororo is a later development, which has come to co-exist with the original dual organization within the social structure. This view, about which, in the absence of historical data, it would seem profitless to speculate,

2) The analysis of Bororo society is continued with the proposition that in addition to the localized exogamous moieties and the supposed upper and lower groups a third form of dualism is to be found (Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 111). This hypothesis relies on the fact that the two Bororo clans, which are arbitrarily designated by the numerals 1 and 4 in fig. 5, may, in contravention of the rules of exogamy, contract

Fig. 5.

marriages with clans 2 and 3 respectively. Accordingly we have four *relations de voisinage*, where clans who are neighbours in the village circle may contract marriages with each other (expressed by plus signs in fig. 5) and four such *relations*, where marriage is prohibited (expressed by minus signs in fig. 5). Lévi-Strauss writes that

“....cette nouvelle formulation dualiste de la loi d'exogamie exprime la réalité aussi bien que la division apparente en moitiés.” (1956 p. 111)

a statement which begs so many methodological questions that it cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged.

is put forward in connection with her general thesis that dual organization is a potentially hierarchical system, where a temporary balance exists between contending parties — a suggestion, which seems to indicate that she is unfamiliar with the literature on the structural analysis of dual organization.

a) The dualism of two exogamous moieties is not of the same sociological order as the dualism of two contraposed sets of relationships.

b) The fact that 4 of these relationships are positive and 4 are negative is formally interesting but devoid of sociological significance, unless there is ethnographic evidence to support the formal demonstration. I have been unable to find such evidence in the literature on the Bororo and Lévi-Strauss cites none.

c) It is equally possible to postulate a triadic "system" on formal grounds. Thus clans 1 and 4 may marry both neighbours. Clans 2, 3, 5 and 8 may marry one neighbour only. Clans 6 and 7 may marry no neighbours. Such a triad is, similarly, only formally significant but this analysis has at least some sociological support in that it would take into account the privileged position of the chiefly clans 1 and 4.

d) A sociological analysis, starting with the assumption that the breaches of moiety exogamy were prerogatives of chiefly families, would at least partially explain the system and would have the advantage of corresponding with known ethnographic facts. Thus:

(i) Clans 1 and 4 are known to be privileged.

(ii) Not all the members of clans $1 + 2$ and $3 + 4$ are permitted to contract intra-moiety marriages. One family in clan 1 may marry one family in clan 2 and the same with $3 + 4$ (Albisetti 1948 pp. 8—9), which makes nonsense of the concept of "*relations de voisinage*" but lends support to the theory that intra-moiety marriages are the special prerogative of two or four privileged families — possibly the chiefly families.

3) When Lévi-Strauss discusses the privileged clans he once again misinterprets the data. He writes:

"Dans chaque moitié: 1 à 4 et 5 à 8, deux clans occupent une situation privilégiée en ce sens qu'ils représentent, sur le plan social, les deux grands héros culturels divinisés du panthéon bororo: Bakororo et Ituboré, gardiens de l'Ouest et de l'Est. Dans le schéma ci-dessus, les clans 1 et 7 personnifient Bakororo, les clans 4 et 6, Ituboré" (1956 p. 112).⁷

This information was taken from Colbacchini and Albisetti; but they wrote that the clans which correspond to numbers 1 and 4 in fig. 5,

⁷ The numerals correspond to those in my fig. 5.

both belonging to the *exerae* moiety, are now those of the chiefly families and are respectively the guardians of the West and East (1942 pp. 34—5). Formerly the chiefs belonged to the *tugaregue* moiety and to the clans 7 and 6, which were at that time West and East (1942 p. 136). It is not therefore correct to say that two clans in each moiety represent the two legendary heros of the Bororo. Two clans belonging to one moiety now do and two clans belonging to the other moiety once did. We lack any real information as to how this change came about⁸ or as to where in the village clans 6 and 7 were located when they held the chieftainship. In the absence of such data it is impossible to draw conclusions from the relative positions of the chiefly clans or even to consider clans 6 and 7 chiefly at all in a synchronic analysis. Lévi-Strauss, by ignoring the dynamic aspect, poses the problem of the anomalous location of clans 6 and 7 and proposes as its solution the fragile hypothesis that the Bororo wish to keep the chiefly clans (two of which are not, in fact, chiefly at any given moment) in contact with two axes (one of which is of doubtful existence).

4) The second “anomaly”, which Lévi-Strauss’ theoretical treatment is designed to account for, is equally of his own making. He points out that if we read off the clan subdivisions from west to east round the northern half of a Bororo village they read thus: *Clan 1* upper — middle — lower; *Clan 2* upper — middle — lower.... *Clan 4* upper — middle — lower. If we continue reading round the circle we have: *Clan 5* lower — middle — upper.... *Clan 8* lower — middle — upper. From this he concludes that, because the subdivisions do not read continuously round the full circle, the Bororo do not think of their village as

“...un seul objet analysable en deux parties, mais plutôt comme deux objets distincts et accolés.” (1956 p. 112)

This would seem to be a *non sequitur*, for the arrangement is symmetrical as it stands and could be argued merely to show that the

⁸ The only “explanation” given by Albisetti (1953 p. 625) seems to be no more than a legendary rationalization after the event:

“Dalle leggende sappiamo che, anticamente, i capi appartenevano alle famiglie degli *aróroe* e degli *appiborégue*, ma poi furono *baaddogebbágue* perchè il capo *appiboreguéddu*, *Accarúio Borógue*, prima di partire per un lungo viaggio, cedette il potere ad *Accarúio Boccoddóri*, dell’attuale famiglia dei *baaddogebbágue*, che sono *exerae* ed ai quali rimase, perchè *Accarúio Borógue* più non ritornò.”

Bororo are conscious of the division in their society, which is not, for all that, dichotomized into two separate units. The simultaneous awareness of the division and the unity of society is common enough in conjunction with dual organizations and might be said to be the fundamental problem in their analysis. In this case, however, there are also strong ethnographic grounds for rejecting Lévi-Strauss' interpretation. In the preparation of his diagram he accidentally reversed the juxtaposition of the clan subdivisions (1956 p. 111). Reading from west to east they are not arranged in the series "upper — middle — lower" but "lower — middle — upper". The point is important for it now becomes clear that the location of the clan subdivisions is dictated by the Bororo system of symbolic classification. Clan 1 is West and its name, literally translated is *Lower chiefly families*. Clan 4 is East and its name, as we might expect, means *Upper chiefly families*. There is thus a constant correlation between West and Lower, between East and Upper, so that the upper subdivision of each clan must be to the east of the lower subdivision of the same clan (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942 p. 31).

THE EASTERN TIMBIRA provide perhaps the only convincing adumbration of a concentric structure that Lévi-Strauss brings forward (1956 pp. 114—6). He distinguishes, on the basis of Nimuendajú's data (1946), four systems of moieties in *Ramkokamekra* society, each of which regulates different activities and functions on different occasions. The exogamous moieties each occupy one half of the village circle and two of the other pairs of moieties are "diametrically" sited, when they appear in ceremonial. The fourth system divides the *Ramkokamekra* into *ka* (centre) people and *atuk* (outside) people. Although this antithesis is not reflected in the village lay-out there is a ceremony, which Lévi-Strauss does not mention, where it is acted out symbolically and spatially (Nimuendajú 1946 p. 86). Here the *ka* people gather in the centre of the village and the *atuk* assemble outside it before coming together for the ceremony known as the "viewing of sisters' sons". This is the kind of correspondence between symbolic dualism and social dualism, between spatial relations and social relations, of which Lévi-Strauss offers us so many tantalizing glimpses but with which his analysis never seems to come to grips. He points out however, with justification, that a formal analysis of Timbira society would be exceedingly difficult on the basis of the available data. Yet he permits one symbolic contradiction, which is vital to his thesis, to pass unnoticed.

Associated with the *ka/atuk* division is a series of antitheses of the type already familiar to students of dual organization: east/west, sun/moon, day/night, dry season/wet season and so on. On the other hand he quotes Nimuendajú as saying that, during the dry season, ceremonial activity is confined to the "boulevard" (the peripheral path on which the circle of huts is located) and, during the wet season, is restricted to the central "plaza" of the village (Lévi-Strauss 1956 pp. 115—6). We are therefore left with the unresolved contradiction that the *ka* people are associated with the centre and the dry season,⁹ during which all ceremonial is peripheric; while the *atuk* people are associated with the outside and the wet season, during which all ceremonial is central.

II

The use of models in comparative sociology is of such methodological importance that I propose, in this section, to end my ethnographical critique of Lévi-Strauss' data with an examination of the models he compares. He writes (1956 pp. 121—2):

"... nos trois modèles: winnebago, indonésien et bororo sont formalisables dans les trois diagrammes ci-dessous, qui sont de même famille et donc chacun illustre toutes les propriétés du système correspondant. Les trois diagrammes ont une structure identique...."

The models seem, at first sight, to be diagrams of marriage systems. Each one, however, is labelled as a representation of a social structure. Presumably the assumption underlying this diagrammatic equation (social structure = marriage system) is that the social structure of each society under consideration may be formally represented by a model of its marriage system. This may well be so in a society where prescriptive marriage entails enduring connubial relationships between groups of kin. It is clearly not so in all societies, as we shall see from the two American examples quoted by Lévi-Strauss. Similarly, an acceptance of this assumption would exclude from models of social structure such details as were irrelevant in a consideration of the cor-

⁹ There is a suggestion (Nimuendajú 1946 p. 86) that originally the *ka* people actually regulated all ceremonial during the dry season, while the *atuk* enjoyed ceremonial ascendancy during the rains. Nowadays this dual system functions only during the rainy season, during whose opening weeks the *ka* are masters of ceremony while the *atuk* fulfil this function during the rest of the period.

responding marriage systems; yet Lévi-Strauss includes such features in two out of his three models. In fact, an inspection of his models shows them to be ethnographically unreliable and sociologically misleading.

THE WINNEBAGO (fig. 6, after Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 121 fig. 8)

"Le village winnebago comprend 12 clans répartis en 3 groupes, à raison de 2 groupes de 4 (respectivement "terre" et "eau") pour la moitié d'en bas et d'un groupe de 4 ("ciel") pour la moitié d'en haut." (Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 122).

1) This arrangement does not seem to be very firmly established. Radin's data on the subject are as follows:

"The functions of the Water-spirit clan¹⁰ were, in former times, exceedingly important. Almost all the informants were agreed that a chief was selected from that clan, but the exact nature of the chieftainship is not clear. One informant, himself a member of the Bear clan, said that the Water-spirit clan was the chief of the lower phratry: that the clans were arranged in three groups, one over which the Thunderbird clan ruled; another over which the Water-spirit clan ruled; and a third over which the Bear clan ruled. He insisted, however, that just as the Thunderbird clan rules over the whole tribe in a general way, so the Water-spirit clan ruled over the clans of the lower phratry. Other informants claimed that the Water-spirit clan originally ruled over the entire tribe and that its place was subsequently usurped by the Thunderbird clan. It might be best to regard the function of the Water-spirit clan as akin but subsidiary to that of the Thunderbird clan" (1923 p. 241).

The division of Winnebago society into three groups of four clans seems, therefore, problematical at best; and the designations *ciel*, *eau* and *terre* have apparently been arbitrarily assigned to them on the basis of the names of the dominant clans in each supposed group (Thunderbird, Water-spirit and Bear). In fact, a glance at the list of Winnebago clan names will show that, while the four "upper" clans all

¹⁰ The Winnebago clans were divided as follows: Upper phratry — Thunderbird, War-people (Hawk), Eagle, Pigeon. Lower phratry — Bear, Wolf, Deer, Water-spirit, Elk, Buffalo, Fish, Snake (Radin 1923 pp. 190—1).

WINNEBAGO

Fig. 6.

Schéma de la structure sociale winnebago.

had bird names, it would be difficult to select four of the "lower" clans which could be classed nominally as being *de l'eau*. This triple division cannot even be defended on the grounds that it corresponds with the Winnebago idea of the structure of the universe, for they divided fauna (and by implication the universe too) into "earth animals, sky animals, empyrean animals, aquatic animals and subaquatic animals" (Radin 1923 p. 186).

2) Even if the triad of "sky", "water" and "earth" groups of clans were firmly established ethnographically, it would be irrelevant in a consideration of the Winnebago marriage system. The "sky" clans (upper phratry) did not contract marriages with two other groups of clans, as it appears from fig. 6.¹¹ They simply married into one undif-

¹¹ The model also gives the impression, in contravention of the data, that the *eau* and *terre* groups are joined by a possibility of marriage, though this is plainly not Lévi-Strauss' intention.

ferentiated group — the lower phratry. This example shows that the one model is inadequate to illustrate simultaneously two systems, one triadic and the other dyadic, which function in the one social structure though in different contexts.

3) If the village circle is included as an element which is pertinent in this representation of the social structure, then surely the NW - SE axis, the spatial referent of Winnebago dualism, may not be omitted.¹² On the other hand it is difficult to see why the village circle should be at all relevant in a diagram of Winnebago marriage relations, as Lévi-Strauss claims it is (1956 p. 126). Winnebago clans and phratries were not local groups. They were subdivisions of Winnebago society, taken as a whole (Radin 1915 pp. 19—20), so that the relations between them do not need to be "located" in the village as in done in fig. 6.

INDONESIA (fig. 7, after Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 122 fig. 9).¹³

1) As it is not possible to attach any precise meaning to the phrase "Indonesian type social structure", it is unfortunate that Lévi-Strauss did not specify at least one Indonesian society, considered for analytical purposes as typical, of which it could be said that this model was an illustration of its social structure.

2) The crux of Lévi-Strauss' demonstration from the Indonesian data seems to be that:

"L'association d'un système de mariage asymétrique (de type préférentiel, avec la fille du frère de la mère) et d'un organisation dualiste, semble avoir été très répandue en Indonésie" (1956 p. 121).

Yet this concurrence of the logically triadic asymmetric marriage system with the dyadic moiety system is mentioned only for Amboyna

¹² It is possible to argue that, in the light of the conflicting reconstructions of the Winnebago village, it is not clear exactly how the dual organization was reflected in the village structure. In this case we admit an important gap in our data and consequently any model based on them will be invalidated for certain comparative purposes.

¹³ I am extremely grateful to Dr Rodney Needham of the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford, who has clarified various points of Indonesian ethnography for me and has given up much of his time to the discussion of issues that have arisen out of this paper. He bears, however, no responsibility for the views expressed here.

(1956 p. 107) and enters neither into his analysis of the "Indonesian" material nor into the model which is intended to represent it.

3) The only dualism which appears in fig. 7 is the dichotomy between the sexes. This, in itself, is not a peculiarly Indonesian feature, but Lévi-Strauss makes the point that it is emphasized in asymmetric marriage systems, where men and women circulate in different directions (1956 p. 123 and p. 127), and that it is because of this emphasis within

Fig. 7.

Schéma d'une structure sociale de type indonésien.

the system that Indonesians are conscious of the male/female antithesis to the extent that their dual organizations invariably consist of male and female segments (1956 p. 123). There is, however, an objection to this interesting suggestion. It is only diagrammatically that men and women "circulate". The well known antithesis between wife-givers and

wife-takers in the asymmetric marriage systems of South-east Asia indicates that, in the native thought, it is only women that circulate.¹⁴

4) Since there is not, in fact, a binary circulation in these marriage systems, we are left with the opposition between wife-givers and wife-takers and the dichotomy of the sexes, as the only examples of Indonesian dualism discussed in Lévi-Strauss' analysis; and neither of these could be called "dual organizations" in any useful sense.

5) Finally, the tripod in fig. 7, indicating the separation of the sexes, is superfluous and misleading. It gives the impression that the sexual division in each marriage class is a unifying feature of the social structure. Now, these classes do not belong to one society because they all contain men and women, but because they are related to each other by marriage and (possibly) because they are regrouped together in other social units, such as moieties. The first factor is already included in the model; the second, as we have noted, is not.

THE BORORO (fig. 8, after Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 124 fig. 10).

1) The Bororo village is not relevant in a discussion of Bororo marriage and Lévi-Strauss has presumably omitted it from his model on these grounds. However, we have already seen that it is of considerable structural importance as the spatial expression of clanship and of many of the symbolic antitheses in Bororo society. Yet in this model of Bororo social structure neither the clans nor the village appear at all.

2) Alternatively, if we are to consider the model for what it really is, namely a diagram of the Bororo marriage system, then the non-exogamous N - S axis is not pertinent.

3) The E - W axis,¹⁵ which is the expression of the marriage regulations, does not appear in the model at all. As a result of this the model

¹⁴ I am grateful to Dr Rodney Needham for pointing out to me that in certain cases, e.g. among the Belu of Timor (Vroklage 1952 pp. 248—50), it is the men who circulate. This does not, however, alter my point that there is no question of men and women circulating in different directions within a single system.

¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss calls this the "pseudo-exogamous axis" on the grounds that breaches of moiety exogamy are permitted. Structurally, however, it remains the referent of the principle of exogamy, breaches of which are the exceptional privilege of only four "families".

supposes a sociological absurdity, as Lévi-Strauss himself points out (1956 p. 125), namely that the three endogamous groups in Bororo society are united by an impossibility of marriage. This in turn leads

Fig. 8.
Schéma de la structure sociale bororo.

Lévi-Strauss to deduce from his model the exceedingly weak hypothesis that Bororo society relies for its very existence as a unified structure on the N - S axis, which in all probability, as we have already seen, owes its inclusion to an error of ethnography.

4) This argument affords an illustration of the dangers of basing any analysis directly on a model rather than using the model as a conceptual aid to facilitate analysis of the data. Bororo society is divided into three endogamous groups, but does not therefore disintegrate, because these groups are redistributed through clans into moieties. This dual grouping — on the one hand a pair of moieties and on the other

a triad of endogamous groups — can only with difficulty be effectively demonstrated in one model.¹⁶

To summarize, then, the results of our examination of these models:

1) They are constructed in such a way as to be sociologically misleading.

2) Two of them are based on ethnographic misconceptions. If these were corrected, then it could no longer be said that the models were of identical structure.

3) This identity of form is, in any case, misleading; not only on ethnographic grounds, but also because the features included in the models conform to no common principle of selection such as might establish a valid basis for comparison of the three configurations.

4) In view of this and of the fact that these features have admittedly dissimilar functions in the various models (Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 122) it would seem that the only inference that may be drawn from a comparison of the models is that disparate elements drawn from these societies can be represented in identical patterns. But this formal identity of the models has no sociological implications.

Indeed the results achieved by the comparative use of these models are not impressive. We have seen how the inferences drawn with respect to particular societies have sometimes been erroneous because of the inadequacy of the models themselves. On the other hand, the only comparative point that emerges from a consideration of them is that a dyadic and a triadic system are combined in each social structure. This point is made with much greater clarity in the discussion preceding the demonstration by models. It could even be argued, as I have tried to show in this section, that the models merely served to confuse the issue.

This points a methodological moral. Social relations cannot be formally represented by symbols in the same way as mathematical relations can. Accordingly, sociological models are not manipulable in the sense that mathematical equations are. Conclusions drawn from such models or from a comparison of such models without a simultaneous consideration of the data from which the models were constructed run a serious risk of error.

¹⁶ Even if the E-W axis were shown in fig. 8 (and it could easily be made to replace the tripod indicating marriage prohibitions) the model would still give the misleading impression that Bororo moieties were trisected by the endogamous groups into disconnected segments.

Lévi-Strauss' errors of interpretation are of this kind. This is doubly unfortunate because such a demonstration of the use of models by one of the leading structural anthropologists of to-day cannot help but provide ammunition for those who criticize both the structural approach and the methods and ambitions of comparative sociology. Moreover, the inadequacies of such a demonstration are a serious weakness in a paper whose avowed intention is to give new direction and impetus to the comparative method in social anthropology.

III

We are now in a position to examine the core of Lévi-Strauss' argument. He formulates the problems, with which his paper is concerned, as follows:

Dual organizations have a double aspect

"tantôt conçu, semble-t-il,

comme résultant d'une dichotomie symétrique et équilibrée entre des groupes sociaux, des aspects du monde physique et des attributs moraux ou métaphysiques: c'est-à-dire — en généralisant un peu la notion proposée plus haut — une structure de type diamétrale; tantôt au contraire, conçu dans une perspective concentrique, avec cette différence, alors, que les deux termes de l'opposition sont nécessairement inégaux, sous le rapport de prestige social ou religieux, ou de tous les deux à la fois."

The elements of a diametric structure may be, indeed usually are, unequal. They frequently correspond to antitheses such as superior/inferior, older/younger, noble/common, strong/weak and so on. However, this inequality in diametric structures

"n'existe pas toujours, et de toute façon, elle ne découle pas de leur nature, qui est imprégnée de réciprocité."

Concentric structures on the other hand are always asymmetric and "l'inégalité va de soi, puisque les deux éléments sont, si l'on peut dire, ordonnés par rapport à un même terme de référence: le centre, dont un des cercles est proche puisqu'il le contient, tandis que l'autre en est écarté."

We have, then, in the first place to establish:

- 1) The nature of diametric structures.
- 2) The nature of concentric structures.

- 3) Why the majority of diametric structures have an asymmetric character as if they were medians between the rare diametric structures that are utterly symmetric and the concentric structures, which are invariably asymmetric.
(Lévi-Strauss 1956 p. 106).

Let us examine the meanings of the terms "diametric" and "concentric" in these contexts. It will be remembered that Lévi-Strauss originally defined a diametric structure as being of the type illustrated by the arrangement of the Winnebago village, as shown in fig. 1. We now have it re-defined as a symmetric dual organization; its nature is "impregnated with reciprocity". At the same time, we are told, a diametric structure may be asymmetric, in fact usually is. Now, if a diametric structure is defined as being the village lay-out in societies, where moieties are localized in opposite halves of or along the opposing segments of a circular village, then such a structure cannot also be held to correspond with symmetric dualism. The Bororo are an example of a society, whose moieties are so located and are yet unequal politically and symbolically. Numerous other examples of this concurrence could be quoted. On the other hand, if a diametric structure is defined as being that of a society where symmetric dualism obtains, what meaning is it possible to attach to the assertion that diametric structures are frequently asymmetric?

Similarly, a concentric structure was originally defined as being of the type illustrated by the arrangement of the Winnebago village in fig. 2. We now have it re-defined as an asymmetric dual organization. We noted above that the first "definition" did not establish any precise meaning for the term. The terms of the concentric opposition in fig. 2 are ecological not social. At the same time it would be illusory to deduce from fig. 2 that any Winnebago conceptualized their village as being concentrically arranged, in the sense that one moiety was centrally located while the other was peripheric. Furthermore, the social "anomalies", which led Lévi-Strauss to put forward the hypothesis that the Bororo, by a complicated mental operation, sometimes thought of their village in just such "concentric" terms proved on examination to be no more than misunderstandings of the ethnography. Thus, Lévi-Strauss does not succeed in demonstrating that any society has its villages arranged, conceptually or actually, in a concentric pattern. Therefore whenever he uses the term "concentric structure" he is usually referring to societies where there is a symbolic antithesis

between the centre of the village and the periphery. Such an antithesis may entail as a consequence that certain people (chiefs, unmarried men etc.), who are contextually sacred, may dwell in the centre, which is forbidden to others (commoners, women etc.), who are contextually profane. But these socio-symbolic divisions are not of the same order as the division of the total society into two moieties. To class Trobriand society with Bororo society as examples of dual organization, because in the Trobriands the chief was set apart from the commoners and might build his hut in the centre of the village, would be to deprive the term of any useful significance. From this it follows that the term "concentric structure" is not specifically applicable, nor specifically applied by Lévi-Strauss, to dual organizations.

It seems then that, if we are to avoid contradiction, we must restrict the meaning of the term "diametric structure" to a village pattern, such that two moieties are located on opposite sides of the village circle. At the same time we must take the term "concentric structure" to apply only to societies where settlements are arranged on a circular pattern and there is a symbolic antithesis between the centre and the periphery. In this case the analytical usefulness of the terminology would be open to question. Lévi-Strauss does not, as we have seen, use these terms in such a restricted sense. Consequently his introduction of such imprecise concepts into his analysis of dual organization creates inevitable confusions.

Firstly, since dual organizations cannot be divided into diametric and concentric structures, these terms cannot serve as criteria for establishing types.

Secondly, diametric and concentric structures do not correspond with symmetric and asymmetric dualism unless they are made to by definition. Such a duplication of terms is plainly not Lévi-Strauss' intention and would offer no analytical advantage.

Finally, Lévi-Strauss shows, by geometry, that a circle bisected by its diameter may be formally analysed as an even (dyadic) system, while a figure consisting of a circle and its centre may be analysed as an odd (triadic) system. But he fails to establish any connection between this formal demonstration and his sociological analysis. He is unable to show, on the one hand, that his geometrical figures correspond with village arrangements or, on the other, that there is any correspondence between the geometry of these figures (and of the putative villages) and the symmetry or asymmetry of the symbolic antitheses.

Consequently the introduction of this distinction between diametric

and concentric structures into his final hypotheses concerning the nature of dual organization renders these hypotheses sociologically meaningless. Seemingly more useful and certainly more stimulating are those of his suggestions that do not depend on this distinction.

In *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* Lévi-Strauss developed the thesis, out of a comparative analysis of the features of symmetric and asymmetric alliance, that there is an essential difference between dyadic and triadic systems. In *Les organisations dualistes existent-elles?* he advances a contrary view: that dyadic systems are, and could very well be studied experimentally as limit forms of the triad. *Ex hypothesi* then one would expect to find triadic elements in dual organizations because absolute dyadism would be an ideal limit, of which an empirically verifiable example may never even have existed (1956 p. 117). This argument, if accepted, would do away with the distinction between dyadic and triadic social systems, which has characterized previous analyses. To emphasize that he no longer regards the features of dyadic systems as intrinsically different but merely as resulting from a special set of circumstances, Lévi-Strauss stresses the possibility of linkage or *passage* between one type of structure and the other. Such passage would be effected by a concentric dualism, which is dyadic like one limit form (diametric dualism) and asymmetric like the other (triadism).

He himself feels the need to lend ethnographic support to his demonstration, which proceeded, as we noted above, by a geometrical analysis and which he admits "certains jugeront sans doute excessivement théorique" (1956 p. 119). Once again, however, it is the ethnographic basis of his hypotheses which turns out to be the weakest part of his argument.

He argues that the trinomial character of "concentric dualism" is clearly shown by the need of a third term in descriptions of concentric structures. Thus the opposition between the central circle and the outer circle demands the concept of the "bush" or "forest", which surrounds them both and which is essential to their definition, since the centre is defined by reference to the periphery and the periphery by reference to the surrounds. We have already shown (p. 3 also figs. 3 and 4) that this is not a valid point. The surrounds are no more pertinent in the sociological analysis of a "concentric society" than they are in that of a "diametric society".

We have, similarly, rejected the grounds for the hypothesis that the Bororo sometimes thought of their village as a concentric structure (p. 7).

Therefore the only part of the evidence adduced in support of the concentric — triadic analysis, which still stands, is that in which Lévi-Strauss shows, with admirable subtlety, that many of the apparently dyadic antitheses which are to be found in conjunction with dual organization are logically heterogeneous oppositions of the type state/process. Such oppositions may be formally represented by a point and line and thus considered analytically as triads not dyads. But it is not enough to show that such oppositions may be treated as triads in a formal analysis. The question we have to consider is: Do these antitheses have triadic significance in the societies where they form part of the symbolic structure; and, if so, how may this be reconciled with the dualism of the social structure? Or, to put the question another way: Is it the logical dualism of the opposition or its triadic structure that is sociologically significant? I shall explain below why it is equally plausible to hold that these antitheses are sociologically significant simply as oppositions and irrespective of the nature or structure of such oppositions.

IV

I have tried to show in the preceding sections how the theoretical value of *Les organisations dualistes existent-elles?* is seriously impaired by methodological weaknesses. To sum up:

- 1) Much of the argument is invalidated from the start by errors of ethnographic interpretation.
- 2) Lack of precision in the definition of terms leads a dissertation on dual organization into a discussion of disparate dualisms,¹⁷ with

¹⁷ The following dualisms are, in the context of Lévi-Strauss' discussion, treated as examples of dual organization: the moieties of the Winnebago, the Bororo and the Timbira; the opposition of Winnebago society to the non-social world around it; the two sets of *relations de voisinage* in the Bororo village; the symbolic antithesis between centre and periphery in a Trobriand village; the dichotomy of sexes in Indonesian marriage classes; the two directions in which men and women respectively "circulate" in Indonesian prescriptive marriage systems; the opposition between *kampung* and *bukit* among the Minangkabau; the opposition between the Coast and the Interior among the Negri-Sembilan; the opposition between rice-fields and palm groves on the one hand and mountains and valleys on the other in South-east Asia. He suggests further that the opposition between wife-givers and wife-takers in the asymmetric prescriptive marriage systems of Indonesia and the Chinese opposition between *t'ang* and *piao* kin might be considered in conjunction with the oppositions already cited for comparative purposes.

the result that not only does Lévi-Strauss compare incomparables but he includes societies in his discussion where no dual organization, in the accepted sense, exists.

3) One of the fundamental analytical problems in the study of dual organization is that of the relation between social and symbolic dualism. Lévi-Strauss, by ignoring this distinction, confuses rather than clarifies the issue.

4) He fails to establish any adequate basis for his comparative analysis, although his paper was written with the intention of showing how this could be done.

We are therefore obliged to reject Lévi-Strauss' specific hypotheses along with the evidence on which they are based. But the broader theoretical framework of his argument is of considerably more importance. One of the purposes of his paper was to suggest a way in which the reciprocity characteristic of dual organization could be reconciled with the hierarchical superordination and subordination so often found associated with it. It would seem, however, that the problem itself is created by Lévi-Strauss' formulation of this apparent paradox and that an alternative approach to the analysis of dual organization would automatically resolve the contradiction or rather would avoid it altogether.

Dual organizations are held by Lévi-Strauss to be expressions of the principle of reciprocity (1949 p. 88 and p. 107). He considers reciprocity to be a symmetric relationship, presumably on formal grounds, for it is clear that, once the content of a reciprocal relation is taken into account, then it may equally well be asymmetric. However his meaning seems to be clear, namely that he regards dual organizations as institutional expressions of what may be called, to avoid ambiguity, symmetric reciprocity. Therefore there is an apparent contradiction in hierarchical (asymmetric) dual organization, which Lévi-Strauss attempted, in our view unsuccessfully, to resolve by means of the diametric = symmetric: concentric = asymmetric analysis.

It would seem to be a more economical and at the same time more fruitful hypothesis to consider institutionalized reciprocity of the type found in dual organizations to be a function of the bisection of society.¹⁸ Dual organization would then be thought of not as the social expression of a principle of reciprocity but of a universal tendency to think in

¹⁸ This would fit in very well with Lévi-Strauss' previous analysis of prescriptive marriage systems (1949). In a system of n marriage classes, then, reciprocity would be a function of $n = 2$.

antitheses. Examples could be quoted to show how the members of every human society organize their thinking to a certain extent by dividing concepts into antithetical categories. Although in some societies this "polar" thinking is of greater significance than in others, its incidence in some form or other seems to be universal.¹⁹ The problems formulated for this type of analysis would be how and why conceptual antitheses receive institutional expression in dual organization and why dual organization is mainly found in more "primitive" societies.

Acceptance of this approach has the advantage of offering a theoretical framework for the understanding of social facts which might otherwise remain as anomalies. For example, the symbolic dualism found in societies which lack a dual social organization may be explained in terms of this basic categorization of thought; whereas any explanation in terms of reciprocity must, as Lévi-Strauss hints (1956 p. 106), involve the postulate of a hypothetical stage, when the society in question was divided into moieties, which have subsequently, for some reason or other, disappeared (without a trace?) leaving only the corresponding dualism of the symbolic structure.

Similarly, if we accept that dual organization is the social expression of a way of looking at things, which classifies all phenomena antithetically, then we are enabled to understand the inequalities, which are so frequently associated with it. Antitheses are rarely symmetric except in the formal, tautological sense that they are antitheses. It is difficult to think of pairs of opposites which do not have evaluative connotations of the type good/bad, superior/inferior and so on. From this it would follow that one might expect the moieties in societies where dual organization obtains to be, more often than not, associated with a superior/inferior opposition (where these terms are used merely to sum up an inequality of evaluation). Further, oppositions of the type state/process, associated with the moieties of the social division, would be sociologically significant because they were antitheses (and therefore conceptual poles) not because of the formal characteristics of the type of antithesis.

¹⁹ Cf. Hertz 1928 pp. 106—109, whose study was a specific elaboration of ideas already implicit in Durkheim and Mauss (1903). Lévi-Strauss seems at times to incline towards this view, as when he writes that, in order to understand dual organization "il faut s'adresser à certaines structures fondamentales de l'esprit humain..." (1949 p. 96). But, in general, as may be seen from the same chapter, out of which the above quotation was taken, he maintains that dual organization is a *mise en forme* of the principle of reciprocity.

Nevertheless, one interesting suggestion emerges from Lévi-Strauss' demonstration: that in a society where dual organization is to be found the features of the social structure may not always be rigorously dyadic and symmetric; and that future research should investigate the possibility of a sociological as well as a formal link between dyadic and triadic structures. Those scholars who find it profitable to pursue such a line of enquiry may come to reject Lévi-Strauss' hypotheses on specific topics, as we have done here. They will remain, however, constantly indebted to him, as we are, for his pioneering work in the development of structural analysis.

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