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THE PART OF WOMEN IN THE MARRIAGE TRADE: OBJECTS OR BEHAVING AS OBJECTS?¹

In his book *Structures élémentaires de la Parenté* Cl. Lévi-Strauss has cogently argued that in the different forms of marriage trade prevailing in a large majority of traditional societies it is the women who circulate between groups of men. Setting apart the small number of societies practising matrilineal marriage where conditions are different,² and leaving the case of modern marriage institutions out of discussion altogether, any student of Asian, African or Australian societies has to admit that women do circulate between groups of men. The evidence is overwhelming and, up to an extent, we cannot but agree with Lévi-Strauss when he states, "Traiter la filiation patrilinéaire et la filiation matrilinéaire, la résidence patrilocale et la résidence matrilocale, comme des éléments abstraits qu'on combine deux à deux au nom du simple jeu des probabilités, c'est donc méconnaître totalement la situation initiale, qui inclut les femmes au nombre des objets sur lesquels portent les transactions entre les hommes" (Lévi-Strauss 1968 p. 136). I have no difficulty in subscribing to the hypothesis that patrilocal residence is more fundamental and takes precedence over matrilineal institutions. Neither do I deny that women are included among the objects transferred by and between men. Yet, I must raise a question here. Are women simply objects, as has repeatedly been stated by Lévi-Strauss (cf. *inter alia* op. cit. pp. 38, 43, 73-76, 135) or do they agree to be objects, i.e. subjects willingly agreeing to behave as objects?

¹ The present article is the English version of an address delivered at the conference organized at the University of Utrecht in september 1970 to honour Professor H. Th. Fischer on the occasion of his retirement.

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² Umar Junus (1964 pp. 303, 312, 318) presents evidence that in the matrilineal and matrilineal society of the Minangkabau it is sometimes the groom and not the bride who is given away.

The difference is important and there is no evidence that Lévi-Strauss has ever considered the possibility that the object-role of the women in the marriage trade, instead of being a matter of passive submission to the orders of the males, could be the outcome of some form of female preference, in other words, an actively chosen role and not an attitude thrust upon the women. Lévi-Strauss does not deny that women are persons; he even emphasizes this point in his *Anthropologie Structurale* (pp. 326 ff.). Structurally, however, he defines their role in the marriage trade as one of values exchanged between groups of men and in this respect his approach clearly has a male bias. We need not blame him for this, as other famous theories (those of Freud, for instance) are not a whit better in this respect. The male point of view dominates in various social theories. Although a theory which does not pay much attention to the female point of view is not necessarily wrong, its bias certainly gives ample reason for critical reflection. In the case of Lévi-Strauss's theory of marriage the fact that women are treated as objects necessarily raises the question why the women do agree to be objects, and, if the question is assumed to be unanswerable, whether it is feasible for women to be turned into objects without their agreeing to it.

It is not a simple question of yes or no. We have to admit that the low social position of women in many traditional societies is highly suggestive of the assumption that they simply are at the mercy of the men who know how to bully them into submissiveness. A well-documented case of contemptuous and oppressive treatment of women is that of the secret rituals celebrated in Australia and New Guinea. Every time the men wish to celebrate a religious ceremony the women are chased away by the frightening sound of the bullroarers. Nevertheless, everywhere we find proof that all the time the men depend on the active co-operation of these very same women and, what is more, that they are well aware of this. Structurally the women cannot be dispensed with in the ritual. The importance of the ritual is based on secret knowledge and there is no secret unless there be a category of uninitiated. The terror of the gods, symbolized by the shrieking of the bullroarers and supported by frightening stories told to the uninitiated (primarily the women), requires the terrorized. The impressive show staged by the men needs an admiring public. The magnificent masks exhibited at the end of the Orokelo *hevehe*-ritual would lose all their value if the admiring women were not there to meet the performers when, at last, they descend from the men's house (Williams,

1940, ch. 22-24). The fright of the women, combined with their absence from the execution of the secret episodes of the ritual and their respectful, admiring presence on the occasion of its public stages, are structural prerequisites to the secret ceremony. What is true structurally is also true psychologically. By letting themselves be frightened and running away, but yet remaining near enough to witness those aspects of the ceremony which they should behold, the women contribute substantially to the psychological effect of the ritual, confirming the men in their belief that what they are doing is something very important. It is hard to imagine what would happen if the women, instead of being terrified, called out "boo" at the moment when the sound of the bullroarer warns them that now it is time to be afraid, or if the women should refuse to prepare the festive meal or to co-operate at the right moment in the sexual disorder which is part of the celebration. Fortunately, the women do co-operate. They always do, but why? Is it because they are frightened, expecting to be beaten if they do not comply?

The fact that their fright makes part of the show which depends both structurally and psychologically on exactly these negative forms of co-operation belies the assumption that fear of the men is the main motive for the women in their faithful role-fulfilment. Their negative collaboration is a case of active co-operation, not of mere submission. The men depend on it and if the women refuse, the men are nowhere, and by no means in the case of ritual only. Female co-operation is most obviously needed in the case of marriage. A woman who runs away from her husband jeopardizes the relations between two groups, perhaps even between three. If an angry woman refuses to collect food, her husband goes hungry, and it would be an easy thing for women collectively to withdraw their co-operation if in their highhandedness the men should overstep the mark.

The case of the women is not really such a weak one as is often surmised, certainly not under more primitive conditions, such as those prevailing in Australia (Berndt, 1964, pp. 94, 104 ff.; Meggitt, 1957, p. 143). They collect all the vegetable food as well as the mites of animal food such as insects, shells and so on. If we make up the balance of the contributions made by each of the two sexes to the daily board in Australia, the men are decidedly the losers. The activities of the two sexes and their share in the provisions for the life and welfare of the community have been tabulated below. The enumeration clearly shows that the women excel in economic activities, the men in ritual ones. The table mirrors the division of labour between the sexes, but

we can also conceive of it as a survey of a system of perpetual exchange of goods and services between the sexes. In this particular context the economic contribution made by the males, confined to the provision with game, is of specific interest. The game caught by the males is not simply a contribution to the common board of their own household; a choice part of the meat always goes to the wife's relatives. In other words, the division of labour between the sexes is indeed at the same time a system of exchange between the two sexes, the economic contribution by the males functioning also as a payment for the services rendered by the vegetable-food-providing females, a payment presented to the fathers and brothers who kindly relinquished them to their present husbands.

MALES	FEMALES
animal food (30 % of the calories)	vegetable and lesser animal food (70 % of the calories)
protection, warfare, fighting	procreation of children, preparation of daily food, care of all members of the family
ritual performance	minor services to ritual performers; mourning and bewailing the dead
sex	sex

TABLE 1.

Provision of goods and services by each of the sexes.

The Australian case should not be unduly generalized, though there are a good many tribes outside Australia among whom the female contribution to the economy does not fall far below the Australian standards. The really important fact is that it is exactly in Australia, where women are excluded from ritual and their role as objects in the marriage trade is uncommonly evident, that the economic contribution of the females is such a substantial one that it is impossible to ignore their services as the main providers of food and care. It is obvious that men who exchange women between them, exchange the most valuable goods imaginable. Women are more productive than men, in other words, economically men are more in need of women than women are of men. For men to do without women is more difficult than it is

for women to do without men. Therefore it is also natural that men are more persistently in search of women than women are of men. Under such conditions it is more probable that men will exchange women between them than that women exchange men. When all is said and done, women — also procreators of children — are more valuable than men. Apart from all this, it is questionable whether a system of groups of women exchanging men between them could work at all. The main pragmatic contribution of the males being game and protection, a system of close inter-male co-operation is a primary condition for a successful fulfilment of these tasks. Certainly in warfare the men should be able to act in solidarity, an extremely difficult if not impossible charge for a group of mutually unrelated men originating from a variety of competing groups who must derive their common bond from the fortuitous circumstance that they have been picked by women belonging to one group.

There are other arguments to explain why women do not exchange men, but those presented here suffice to demonstrate that women are the most precious goods which can possibly be exchanged between groups and that — if persons have to be exchanged between groups — it must necessarily be women and not men who, in the process of the exchange, lose the better part of their ability to fulfil their proper roles. All this, however, does not imply or explain that women must be exchanged as objects, almost as objects among other valuables. There is no real evidence confirming that they are. On the contrary, all the evidence we have tends to confirm that they are exchanged because they agree to be exchanged. Actually, it is their great asset and merit that they do. By agreeing to be exchanged a sister enables her brother himself to marry. By agreeing to be married off she renders her brother an important and lasting service, lasting at least as long as her marriage endures. In terms of the gift, this implies that by her consent to be married off the sister creates a claim on her brother for the full duration of her marriage. It is a claim for the brother's protection to be given to her and to her future children.

By consenting to being married off, the sister, physically the weaker, secures for herself a strong position. Her claim on her brother's protection for herself and her future children implies that her brother must have the right as well as the duty to intervene in the affairs of the family she is going to establish as a result of her marriage. It is exactly the kind of claim her position allows her to make. She avails herself of the weak position of her brother, who is her debtor, vis-à-vis herself,

as well as of the weak position of her husband vis-à-vis her brother (or initially, her father who in due time will be substituted as head of the woman's family of origin by her brother). Her husband, being as the bride-taker the debtor of his wife's brother, is not in a position that he can refuse the latter's intervention (or, as it is put euphemistically in family circles: his co-operation) in family matters. The husband has to accept his wife's brother's authority. By the simple act of agreeing to be given away in marriage to a man of another group the woman, wife to the one and sister to the other, has manoeuvred herself into an intermediary position allowing her to manipulate. Two men protect her. The one owes a debt to the other and the other owes one to her (cf. fig. 1). Her strength is that her position allows her to manipulate. It is exactly what she needs because, apart from physically being the weaker, she is also going to be a mother.

FIG. 1.

upper arrows: protection
lower arrows: indebtedness

The woman's prospective motherhood is a point of fundamental importance, so fundamental as to make it seem commonplace to make mention of it. However, it is not commonplace at all, it is a fact which because of its plain evidence is altogether too often taken for granted and consequently ignored and forgotten. Motherhood is not a woman's accidental fate, it is the very essence of her existence. Margaret Mead cogently pointed out that in traditional society every woman knows that she is going to be a mother (Mead, 1949, pp. 81 ff.). Women are mothers or preparing themselves to be mothers, and motherhood conditions their behaviour and gives shape to their ways of life and their

outlook. It is only the blessed myopy caused by their vanity which prevents men from perceiving that women are always mothers, also in their relations with men. The women cannot help it, neither can the men be blamed for failing to note this. The terrified women running away when the bullroarers sound, the proud women holding torches aloft to make their beautifully adorned males show off in their glory during the nocturnal dance, the indulgent women participating in sexual promiscuity, the ambitious women encouraging their husbands to stand for parliament, they are all mothers, each in turn patting her husband's (or — as the case may be — her lover's) shoulder, ensuring him that he did excellently when all went well, giving him the comfort that it was not his fault when it all turned out wrong. It is a mother's job to encourage, as everybody knows who ever took time to observe a mother with a toddler making his first steps.

My eulogy of women should not be misunderstood. There is nothing sentimental in it; actually I am only trying to define the role of women in human society. The recognition that, basically, motherhood is its core leads us back from considerations mainly of a psychological nature straightaway to the structural argument. Motherhood is the basis of all kinship and in a structural analysis of kinship women necessarily must be seen in the perspective of motherhood, because it is this which lays the foundation for the permanence of the intergroup relations commonly referred to as kinship. A father is expendable, but there is no kinship without motherhood. Therefore, a further reconnaissance of the mother-role is in order. Mothers provide for succour, food, care, comfort and emotional security. The mother-role implies a liberal measure of other-directedness, an other-directedness primarily focused on her own children, but easily extended to other persons: a husband, a lover, a brother. We can dismiss the question whether some such thing as a mother-instinct does exist. The process of a girl's growing up, her education and early conditioning concur to prepare her for a mother-role. It is enough for us to know that here we are moving in the uncertain borderland where nature and culture merge. The two points of real interest to us are, first, the tremendous importance of women not only as bearers of children but also as providers of motherly care and succour. They are, indeed, the most valuable goods a group can bestow on the members of another group. In the second place, the focal position of motherhood in a woman's life explains why women, when agreeing to co-operate in the marriage trade, identify themselves with their offspring and, claiming protection for themselves by their

brothers, make this claim for their children as well. For a girl marriage means motherhood. The two are inseparable. As a married woman she is going to be a mother and the contemplation of marriage is necessarily the contemplation of future motherhood. The brother who is indebted to his sister for her willingness to be married off, is naturally indebted to her children as well, because these children are, to the sister, part of herself. Actually, these children are the *raison d'être* of the whole transaction.

The argument expounded here finds strong support in the pivotal position allowed to the brother-sister relationship in a wide variety of kinship systems, and in the strong emphasis given to the mother's brother-sister's child relationship in an equally large, or perhaps even more widely spread number of divergent societies. The brother is the protector of his sister; in societies stressing the value of premarital chastity he even becomes the guardian of her honour. There is hardly a more astonishing and contradictory mystification than this romantic quality in a woman, her honour. Her honour is the glory of the family and its loss is felt as the most serious misfortune which can befall the group. In spite of the lofty phraseology glorifying the girl's honour, its material locus is a minute and contemptible part of the body which has no other function than to perturb poor girls when it is not as unimpaired as convention prescribes. If something is said or done to the detriment of their sister's honour, brothers in various societies react with an over-sensitiveness bordering on madness or even worse. It is not only the medieval nobleman who goes berserk at an injurious remark concerning his sister's behaviour. The Murngin brother — little interested in chastity generally — feeling that his sister's honour is affected by a casual outburst of erotic abuse, reacts like a madman (Lloyd Warner, 1958, pp. 66, 110 ff.³); and the Maccassarese girl who realizes that she has lost her honour has to flee to save her life (Chabot, 1950, p. 213). Examples could be cited from many parts of the world; the point is that the girl being the best, the most valuable, the most enduring present any family can make to another, is necessarily her family's most exquisite property, its pride and glory. In societies observing strict norms of sexual behaviour, the girl's glory easily becomes associated with her virginity which should be kept untainted until the

³ The subject was re-investigated and discussed by Hiatt in 1964. His comment led to a renewed discussion between Makarius and Hiatt (1966), and recently to a structural interpretation by K. Maddock (1970).

moment that she is handed over to the bridegroom whose first task is to accomplish defloration.

A brother is necessarily deeply interested in his sister's behaviour before her marriage, particularly so in cultures where a young woman's virginity is highly valued. Once she is married the brother not only continues to be interested in his sister's behaviour, he usually is even more interested than ever before. This is well borne out by the surprising fact that in so many societies men who, as co-respondents, should know better, proclaim in all honesty that it is the women who are the cause of adultery and of all the interfamily tensions and troubles ensuing from it. The accusation betrays the worry of the brothers over the possibility that their sisters might not live up to their part of the bargain by adhering faithfully to their legal spouses. The brothers, from their own escapades with other men's sisters, know fully well how easily sisters may fail them. They do not wish their own sister to do the same, as any disturbance of her marriage might upset their own relations with her husband's group and eventually even affect their own marriage relations. The brothers feel very strongly that their sisters should not fail in the fulfilment of their part of the deal. On the contrary, the sisters should forestall the troubles caused by their brothers' own philanderous habits and any failure of a woman in this respect is an act of bad faith which cannot possibly be laid to the charge of the men because the men have a real interest in keeping things straight. The men are contractually committed among each other, they are indebted to their own marriage relations. Women are not indebted (cf. below, fig. 2) and therefore irresponsible and dangerous.

The position of a brother vis-à-vis his sister is plainly ambiguous. If a runaway wife takes refuge with her brother, he will not hesitate to bring her back to her husband. He does not wish her marriage to break down because his own interests are at stake. Nevertheless, the greatest caution should be exercised. He should not be too unfair to her lest she become desperate which might result in her running away with another man. In that case the last would be far worse than the first because not only a brawl, but a serious fight might become inevitable. The sister should remain under a moral obligation to her family of origin, primarily to her brother. She should realize that it is up to her to be a good sister as well as a faithful wife. To that end it is essential that the brother observe his obligations to her and her children. He must remonstrate with her husband if the latter should have treated her badly, and he must act the good and obliging uncle to her children.

A sister who feels that she is forsaken by her brother and neglected by her family of origin, is dangerous. She is capable of any mischief. Actually, it is her brother who is indebted to her, and not she to him, and if this brother fails her she may react irresponsibly.

The ambiguity of the brother's position more or less equals that of the sister, which is ambiguous by definition. The price paid for the advantages of exogamous marriage is high and one wonders why people do not more often try to compromise between the exigencies of exogamy and the advantages of upholding the perpetuation of the undivided family by resorting to matrilocal marriage. The answer is that the compromise is neither fish nor fowl. We have already noted that a reversal of the rule that women are exchanged between groups of males does not occur. There is no clear case of an exchange of males between groups of women. In the few cases where an exchange of males is reported, it is the leading males who are the organizers of the exchange. Apparently there is something in the nature of males which precludes the realization of an exchange of males between groups of females. It is always the males who exercise authority, and this applies also in matrilineal societies practising uxorilocal marriage. In such societies the husband's position is uncertain even for the leading males who are either the visiting husbands of women of another group, or the residents in their own group (that of their mothers and sisters) living in virilocal marriage.⁴ A situation of this kind is unsatisfactory to all concerned. In the first place, there is no real exchange of women between groups except in as far as the leading males are concerned who managed to marry virilocally. The visiting husband does not become a member of his wife's group. When husbands settle with their wives' groups they remain strangers, each subject to the authority of his wife's brothers who are the real leaders of the group. The loyalties of these in-marrying husbands either remain divided between their own and their wife's group, or they have to accept a dependent position which denies them proper rights in the group which they have adopted. In any case the position is unsatisfactory and, what is most important of all, this form of marriage does not result in strong ties between the groups of bride-

⁴ In this context M. Kay Martin's study of matrilineal and matrilocal South American Foragers (Martin 1969) is of interest. Unfortunately details concerning the residence rules after marriage in connection with the authority pattern within the matrilineal and matrilocal group are lacking. An additional study of these aspects is needed.

givers and bride-takers. The bride is not really given away, she is retained; she remains under the authority of her brother, c.q. her mother's brother. The sister's position in matrilocal marriage differs widely from the one she acquires through virilocal marriage. Virilocal marriage turns mother's brother and brother into protectors who are indebted to the woman because she willingly agreed to behave as an object in the marriage trade. By marrying matrilocally she does not oblige her brother. The brother's gains are small because he loses little and does not give her away. His actual role is that of an authority, and the same holds true of the mother's brother. They are not indebted to their sisters or sisters' children. As a matter of fact, they own them. The children the woman bears her husband are not her husband's but her brother's, and the father's position with regard to his children tends to become restricted to little more than that of a friend who cannot really assert his influence with their mother's brother, who has the ultimate authority over his sister's children. The woman herself, remaining under the authority of her brother, is more dependent than she would be when, taking the risk of marrying out, she obliges her brother as well as her husband. She does not gain by matrilocal marriage because she does not take a risk. Worst of all, the compromise offered by matrilocal marriage is not a compromise at all. It does not succeed in removing the ambiguity from the brother-sister relation. Another and equally serious ambiguity slips in: the brother to whom the sister is sexually taboo becomes deeply involved in his sister's sexual life because she must bear him his heirs and successors. Here lies a source of new, disruptive tensions. In this context Burridge's description of the brother-sister relationship among the Tangu is instructive (Burridge, 1969, pp. 105 ff.).

In conclusion we state that the women, too, have good reasons to prefer marrying out. It gives them an opportunity to state their terms. The expression should not be misinterpreted. It is not so that a woman, before she agrees to be married out, specifies her preferences and conditions. Normally, nothing of the kind happens. However, there is a code of rules and mores to which any woman can make an appeal. This code of rules and mores is not the simple product of male discretion but the outcome of an incessant tug-of-war between the sexes inside the family as well as inside the society at large. The supposition that a society's rules of conduct are exclusively or predominantly male-made is preposterous. The fact that the codification of the rules and the supervision of their observance very often are male prerogatives should

not lead us to make the mistake of the cock perched on the hedge crowing because the hen laid an egg.

FIG. 2.

Now we are in a better position to consider the consequences of our rapid and necessarily rather sketchy analysis. It can be schematized in the simple diagram of fig. 2 in which the arrows stand for indebtedness, a double arrow indicating a high degree of indebtedness. It is interesting to note that the woman — wife to the one and sister to the other — has no debts. She may be burdened with duties — as she undoubtedly is — but she has no debts. Here lies the strength of her position and the ground of the accusation that she is irresponsible.

The first and obvious inference to be made from the diagram is that any form of virilocal marriage, whether it be patrilocal or avunculocal, involves the recognition of the matriline, and not accidentally, as a secondary by-product of the marriage transaction, but as a structural condition of virilocal marriage as such. The relation between mother's brother and sister's son is not a matter of matrifiliation — a weak argument anyhow as Schneider has shown (1965) — but a relation ineluctably included in this type of marriage. The recognition of the matriline — whether implicit or explicit — is the reification of the brother's debt to his sister. The late J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, when arguing that the bilineate is consistent with matrilinear cross-cousin marriage (1952, pp. 32 ff., 55 ff.), was even more right than he

could then have realized; the bilineate is — structurally — at the root of every form of virilocal marriage. This does not mean that the bilineate will often be institutionalized; it can be present without being emphasized. Actually, institutionalized bilineality is necessarily rare. It means that the emphasis on either line is equally strong whereas the exigencies of social life normally favour the preferential application of one of the two. A good illustration can be borrowed from strictly patrilineal societies such as those of South New Guinea, the Marindanim, the Keraki, the Kiwai, the Torres Straits Islanders. In spite of their explicit patrilineality, the relations between a mother's brother and a sister's child are very close and important. What else does such a close and affectionate tie mean but a recognition of the fact that any child, apart from being a member of its own family and patriclan, is at the same time a kind of non-resident member of its mother's group? The same happens to be the case in many African societies in which such customs occur as levirate and ghost-marriage, which can be interpreted as indications that a married woman is more or less the property of her husband's group. The strong position of the mother's brother in these societies gives evidence that in spite of all this the woman's membership of her family of origin is neither ignored nor effaced. On the contrary, it is a functionally important and effective reality in every family's life. All the evidence goes to confirm the correctness of our analysis which ultimately leads to the surprising conclusion that matrilineate is not the effect of matrilocal but of virilocal marriage.

A second important consequence of recognizing the women's willingness to behave as objects in the marriage trade as a constitutive factor in the structure of kinship, is the elucidation of the problems arising from the widely spread custom of female hypergamy. In its most simple form the problem is as follows. A marriage is based on the gift of a woman made by a group (the bride-givers) to a member of another group (the bride-takers). It is a gift of the highest value which can only be reciprocated by the countergift of another woman. If such a countergift is not effected, the bride-takers remain the debtors of the bride-givers even when and where they make an effort to redress the balance by the presentation of valuable goods to the bride-givers. In other words, bride-givers are superior (or senior, if a more moderate term be preferred) to bride-takers. The status of the bridegroom is lower than that of his bride's family and thus, by her marriage, the bride becomes a member of a lower status group. This, of course, does not imply that the groom's group is necessarily in every respect of

lower status than its bride-giving group. The status implied is only that of affinal relationship and need not affect other status positions. Nevertheless, we might expect a generalizing effect of so recurrent a situation as that created by bride-taking without concomitant bride-giving. The expectation is not fulfilled; on the contrary, in many societies there is a definite trend towards the reverse; though women cannot be given in marriage to grooms of lower social rank, they may be married out to men of higher rank. The trend favouring female hypergamy plainly conflicts with the fundamental rule, deriving from the structure of the gift, that the giver is superior to the recipient.

In Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the implications of hypergamy the problem is largely ignored because in his view compensation for the loss of a woman is possible by means of a payment in goods. Leach (1951) takes a similar stand, but he differs from Lévi-Strauss in that he strongly emphasizes the possibility that women by marrying do indeed take a step down the social ladder, and he illustrates his point with data derived from the Katchin, the Batak and the Lovedu. The Katchin and the Batak are of specific interest because in both cases there prevails a system of generalized exchange based on preferential marriage with a matrilineal cross-cousin. Among the Katchin, as also among the Batak, the superiority of the bride-givers to the bride-takers is evident and made explicit. Does this mean that by her marriage a bride loses in social status? According to Leach it does, at least in principle. He points out that marriages of women with men one class below them do occur and that this serves the useful function of strengthening the relations between the superior and the inferior groups by enlarging the latter's dependency on the former by means of affinal ties. Yet, Leach's argument is not wholly convincing. Though he denies that female hypergamy occurs, he explains in a footnote (1951, p. 43, note 39) that chiefs and headmen may take women from a lower class. Also, the husbands of women marrying into a lower class seem to be pretty carefully selected; in part at least the marriages must serve economic and political ends and this in turn implies that the groom, though lower in rank, is probably a wealthy or influential person. Nevertheless, the fact that a woman may marry a man of lower rank is undeniable and it is in this respect that the Katchin differ from the Batak. Leach's assumption that a Batak woman may marry a man of lower rank is not sufficiently supported by fact. Although wife-givers are superior to wife-takers and wife-takers have to render services to their wife-givers, the status-difference is not generalized into a

difference in rank. In effect, marriages are concluded between members of groups of equal social rank. Moreover, if a woman should marry a man of lower social rank, this would run counter to the fairly general principle of Indonesian marriage customs which very strictly forbids such marriages, whereas marriages between men of higher and women of lower rank are permitted.

We must maintain the conclusion that female hypergamy is of frequent occurrence, whereas marriages between women of higher and men of lower rank are relatively rare. It is exactly the reverse of what could have been expected on the basis of the gift-theory and there is every reason to reconsider the logic underlying the custom. First of all we must point out that in societies where female hypergamy occurs it is not the hypergamous marriages which are important; as it is, they are relatively rare, the great majority of the women marrying men of equal rank. The point is that no woman is permitted to marry a man of lower rank. The notion that the loss of a woman can be substituted with goods does not enter into the picture; it is a matter of the honour of the woman and her family. If the thesis that women are objects among other valuable goods were correct, there would be no explanation for the fact that people are so emotional about a girl marrying a man on a lower step of the social ladder. The most contradictory point of all is that the males who are more intent on upward social mobility than the females, promote the social mobility of the latter and deny themselves the possibility of upgrading by means of an ambitious marriage. The opportunities for upward social mobility are greater for women than for men. In this respect the women are not at all treated as objects; they are the repositories of the honour of the families and of greater importance than any goods. When a girl marries a groom of higher rank it is she who is promoted, her brothers contenting themselves with the glory reflecting from their relation to the woman and her husband. The advantage they derive from the transaction springs from her advancement in the social sphere, and the advancement of the sister is important enough to the brothers to make them willing to pay a dowry, thus reversing altogether the notion that women can be substituted for goods. The assumption that women are objects leads to insoluble contradictions. These can only be solved by assuming that the women behave as objects and that they do not agree to do so unless on their own conditions, one of these being that the brothers defend their honour, i.e. that they be recognized as the repositories of their families' honour. They are willing to behave as objects, provided these

objects are acknowledged to be the most precious items imaginable, the symbols of the honour of the family. Wherever people are sensitive to social rank, a woman is not readily going to marry beneath her social status, except under special conditions.

Here, however, a problem arises. Marrying upwards the bride ascends to a more dignified status, but she loses her brother's protection. Brothers are incapable of protecting her against their social superiors. The consequences can be detrimental to the woman. Wolf, in his recent analysis of Chinese traditional marriage-forms, points out that a son's marriage with a woman of lower social status shields the family from intervention by the new wife's relatives if she should happen to have complaints — as she is only too likely to — about her mother-in-law's demeanour (1968, p. 870). Hypergamy is an effective means of combining the satisfaction of the pride of the bride and her family with a strict curtailment of the latter's influence. Structurally, the situation is interesting; it highlights another aspect of the unsuitability of marrying a groom of lower social rank. The combination of lower social rank with the position of bride-taker would reduce the latter to an unbearable position of inferiority. Another important aspect is that of the authority pattern within the family. Authority is normally vested in the husband and this might be endangered if the wife were of higher rank. The solution of all these problems is to take a bride of equal or lower rank. The latter case is the one of hypergamy which has its special attractions: the bride is honoured, the brother improves his social status and pays for the honour with a dowry for his sister, while the husband and his family consolidate their independence of the bride-givers. Everybody stands to gain, at least formally, though to us the bride, who is the great winner, must appear to be the loser in the material sense, and her husband, socially the loser, the winner. Yet, this is only seemingly true because we appreciate the position of the bride as that of the newly married wife, unprotected amidst a family of strangers and under the strict supervision of a rancorous mother-in-law. This is not as the bride sees it; her perspective is necessarily that of her own motherhood, the mother of a son of rank.

Readers well acquainted with the oeuvre of Lévi-Strauss will have noted that the argument developed in the previous pages is based on exactly the same notion of elementary forms of kinship as the one forwarded by Lévi-Strauss in his essay of 1945, *l'Analyse structurale en linguistique et en anthropologie* (1958, ch. II). A different appreci-

ation of the brother-sister relationship led us to conclusions which deviate from those arrived at by Lévi-Strauss on two important points. In another field of enquiry, however, his views are confirmed, viz. in that of the prevalence of the matrilateral cross-cousin marriage over other forms of cross-cousin marriage. Approaching the subject from the female point-of-view the first thing to note is that, to a woman, marrying a father's sister's son (as she has to do in matrilateral cross-cousin marriage) has the advantage that the opportunities of her brother and mother's brother to give her and her children the protection they need, stand unimpaired. Her marriage with a mother's brother's son, however, is less satisfactory. Her mother's brother, before her marriage, is a protector, at least so in a patrilineal society; in a matrilineal one his role is more authoritarian and all we have to say on the disadvantages involved in marrying a mother's brother's son applies even more strongly in a matrilineal society. As a consequence of his niece's marrying his son the mother's brother turns into an authority as well. The two functions need not conflict with each other, but if they do the situation affects her brother's opportunities to protect her. Her father-in-law is also his mother's brother, a circumstance which limits his freedom of action in case of conflict. Evidently, a conflict in a marriage between a father's sister's daughter and a mother's brother's son leads to greater complications than it would in a marriage between a mother's brother's daughter and a father's sister's son. Finally, there is the possibility of bilateral cross-cousin marriage. In its schematized ideal form it is a marriage in which a brother and a sister marry a sister and brother. In this form it is of extremely rare occurrence (if it occurs at all) and small wonder because it leads to a complete merging of all functions and to the ultimate isolation of the two families concerned from the society at large. In actual practice bilateral cross-cousin marriage is always, as Lévi-Strauss has cogently demonstrated, a marriage with either a matrilateral or a patrilateral cross-cousin because of the two marriages at least one is contracted between distant cross-cousins (1968, pp. 489 ff.). The conclusion is valid that from the women's standpoint the matrilateral variant of cross-cousin marriage is preferable to the patrilateral one, a conclusion which does not detract in any way from the value of Lévi-Strauss's argument that matrilateral cross-cousin marriage leads to an arrangement of social relations of greater structural perfection, a conclusion which should stand unimpaired.

It is worthwhile to extend the analysis to marriages between parallel

cousins as well. Such marriages are fairly rare generally. This is not without reason because more often than not these are marriages between members of one and the same local descent-group. Nevertheless, marriages with a father's brother's daughter do occur. In many Arab societies they are even the rule, notwithstanding the prevailing patrilineal kinship structure. I also recorded this marriage-form among the Sasak of Lombok (Indonesia), although not as a general rule but rather as an expedient to avoid the expenses connected with a marriage between unrelated young people. Confining ourselves to patrilineal societies and societies with a patrilineal bias, we formulate the following hypothesis: as marrying a member of one's own local descent-group has the disadvantage of limiting the number and the extent of affinal relations, we may expect in patrilineal or patrilineally biased societies more marriages between matrilateral than between patrilateral parallel cousins. Curiously enough, the hypothesis is all wrong. Marriages between matrilateral parallel cousins are significantly fewer than between patrilateral parallel cousins. Why?

Again an explanation can be found by examining the case from the women's point of view. To them a marriage with either kind of parallel cousin is unattractive, though there is a difference in degree. Marrying a patrilateral parallel cousin the wife-to-be practically loses the protection of her brother because her husband and her brother are as brothers to each other. However, her maternal uncle's position remains unimpaired. Moreover, the marriage with a father's brother's son has the advantage that the woman continues to live in her own family compound. It is true that she enters another household, but that is about all there is to it. Marrying a mother's sister's son has none of these attractions. Normally the girl must take leave of her family of origin. The protection which her brother can give is again restricted as sister's sons, too, are as brothers to each other, though probably not to the same degree as brothers' sons. In this respect the situation is slightly better, but the effect is completely cancelled out by the fact that she and her husband have one and the same mother's brother. The latter is under fully equal obligations to both, obligations which compete the one with the other in case of conflict between the spouses. What is worse, the relationship between sister's son and mother's brother tends to be closer and more affectionate than that between sister's daughter and mother's brother. In other words, the woman forfeits the protection of her mother's brother when she marries her mother's sister's son.

Our final conclusion is that the recognition of the women's part in the marriage trade leads to a sounder appreciation of the basic structures and principles of kinship. The pivotal significance of the brother-sister relationship has been clearly demonstrated, and so has the structural necessity of the influential role of the mother's brother. Another important conclusion is that wherever virilocal marriage is the rule, a bilineal system of kinship reckoning is latently implied. The system need not be made explicit but the two lines of descent are discerned and recognized anyhow, with or without making terminological distinctions explicit. We were also enabled to reconcile the contradictions connected with female hypergamy. The reverse, marriage between a woman of high rank and a man of low rank, is virtually impossible because it would reduce the husband to a state of abject dependency. The only way to bridge the gap between groups of different rank is female hypergamy. And, finally, the examination of the structural implications between cousins of different kind provided a valuable check of the validity and applicability of our approach.

One point still has to be made. The gift of a woman is a gift of a different character from that of valuables, however precious. A woman is not given as an object among other objects, she is part of a family and the symbol of its honour and presence. Gifts can be balanced by counter-gifts. Sahlins has aptly raised some well-founded doubts with respect to the stability of balanced reciprocity. At the very best, balanced reciprocity requires special conditions for continuity (Sahlins 1965, p. 178). The stability of marriage would be poorly served by balanced reciprocity. However, there is no really balanced reciprocity in marriage transactions because the woman who is given away, though behaving as an object, is not really an object. She could not be, because her activities as a housewife and a mother in the new household continue to forge a never ending chain of debts owed by her husband to her brother and, as long as these activities continue, by her brother to her.

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