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A mirror of paradigms

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnology reflected in *Bijdragen*

Reviewing the contributions¹ to the discipline initially known as *volkenkunde* published in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* entails some unachievable goals. A comprehensive discussion of the ethnographic information these contributions report cannot be undertaken in a single article. Moreover, contextualizing the discipline called *volkenkunde*, or *ethnologie*, in the socio-political circumstances contributing to its conceptualization and shaping the conditions for its academic establishment and application, although crucially important in any assessment in the history of science, is also beyond the scope of this article.² Even the contributions to the discipline the scholars writing in *Bijdragen* have published elsewhere can only be discussed selectively here.

We therefore confine ourselves to an examination of a sample of contributions selected with certain considerations and questions in mind. As the title above suggests, in communicating a wealth of ethnographic data throughout this period, *Bijdragen* reflected a series of scientific paradigms. These paradigms, rooted in the broad intellectual currents successively prevailing in the Western world, not only provided a conceptual framework for the analysis of the ethnographic data reported but also largely determined their selection. Moreover, since the ethnographic reports published in *Bijdragen* were written by Dutch administrators and missionaries and later by trained anthropologists on the societies constituting the Dutch colonies in the East and West Indies, the paradigmatic shifts revealed in these reports illuminate the development of Dutch anthropology as a whole. These paradigmatic shifts, emerging sometimes gradually, sometimes seemingly abruptly, provide the heuristic criterion for the periodization employed and the selection of the contributions discussed.

Three periods are distinguished. During the first, lasting from 1853,

¹ We would like to thank Professor P.E. de Josselin de Jong, Dr J.G. Oosten, Professor R. Schott and Professor G.W. Stocking for their critical comments on a previous version of this text, and Han F. Vermeulen for providing valuable additional bibliographical details.

² See Ellen 1976 for an assessment of the impact of colonial policy on the development of Dutch anthropology. See P.E. de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen 1989 for an overview of the history of Dutch anthropology in the period 1830-1940.

when *Bijdragen* was established, until 1884, virtually all the contributors concentrated on assessing differences, usually conceived in moral terms, between the societies they studied and their own. This interest not only provided the contributions published during this period with a remarkably homogeneous paradigmatic character, it also emerged from the studies published in *Bijdragen* in subsequent periods.

The second period commenced in 1885 with the first of G.A. Wilken's contributions. He introduced a paradigmatic shift involving the proclamation of *volkenkunde*, or *ethnologie*, as a discipline in its own right and the proposition of a general ethnological theory accounting for information recorded in the Indonesian archipelago and elsewhere.

The year 1925 marks the beginning of the third period, with W.H. Rassers' first contribution to *Bijdragen* introducing the shift in theory retrospectively identified as the beginning of the Leidse Richting ('Leiden School') in structural anthropology. The historiography of the Leiden School has repeatedly emphasized the influence of E. Durkheim, M. Mauss and other contributors to the *Année Sociologique* on the analyses presented by F.D.E. van Ossenbruggen, Rassers, and their Dutch contemporaries (Needham 1963; P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1972, 1977, 1980; Locher 1988; P.E. de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen 1989; Prager forthcoming). Instead of elaborating on this shift, we focus here on the relationship between Rassers' ideas and those of his predecessors, to identify the paradigmatic context which may account for the positive reception of the ideas of the *Année Sociologique*. At that point we conclude our article, since it would be impossible to cover the paradigmatic variety characterizing social anthropology in the Netherlands and elsewhere since World War II, as reflected in more recent issues of *Bijdragen* (see Kloos 1975).

For each period, we have selected contributions providing examples of either the application of a certain dominant paradigm, or the incipient changes which in retrospect can be recognized as having led to a major paradigmatic shift. We have scrutinized these contributions with the following questions in mind:

1. With what academic discipline did the authors identify themselves when selecting data and conceptualizing its significance? We shall observe that reports now identifiable as social anthropological were initially classified under such headings as *Land- en Volkenkunde*, or *Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, and that *Volkenkunde* (*Ethnologie*) only gradually emerged as a discipline in its own right.
2. What theories were applied in the analysis of data, and to what extent were these theories made explicit? In the broadest sense, such theories describe the nature of relationships between social and cultural phenomena, and stipulate the types of data which must be available for a particular type of analysis to be feasible. A focal question in this context concerns the assumptions about the consistency of social and cultural phenomena

and the procedures used in practice to account for observed inconsistencies.

3. What type of comparative analysis was applied to which sample, and to what extent were such theoretical and methodological choices explicitly argued? Anthropological theories involve comparative statements assessing the phenomena under scrutiny in terms of phenomena reported from other societies which the theory holds to be comparable. We show that paradigmatic shifts entailed changes in the assumptions made about the conditions of comparability, and hence about the qualification of the societies under study in relation to other societies, including the analyst's own. In other words, the 'otherness' of the societies under study underwent major conceptual changes.

Rather than engage in 'presentist' criticism (Stocking 1982; compare Kuper 1991) by evaluating the contributions to *Bijdragen* according to a scale of modern academic standards, we examine how contemporary paradigms were reflected in the contributions and how, conversely, the contributions helped shape the paradigms.

The formative years (1853-1884): assessing the difference

The ethnological data reported in *Bijdragen* during the journal's first three decades were collected in part in response to questions formulated by the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Neêrlandsch-Indië (KITLV). The Institute's founders had declared their 'collective endeavour to promote the knowledge of our precious colonies' (Pijnappel 1853, *Bijdragen* 1:iv),³ an aim considered from the outset as serving other goals as well. The knowledge gathered would enable 'a just, benevolent, and enlightened administration' of the colonies, which in turn would serve the 'glory and prosperity' of the Netherlands (Baud 1853, 1:5-6). Data collection was sanctioned not only in academic terms, but also by reference to a ranked set of national values.⁴ To achieve the ends envisaged, a research programme was conceived with *Bijdragen* as forum. Government officials, missionaries and other professionals working in the Dutch colonies were to provide data filling the gaps in existing knowledge. As far as ethnology was concerned, these questions had an ad hoc character, resulting from the more or less coincidental research activities of different scholars, seemingly lacking any paradigmatic interest other than that of encyclopaedic compilation.⁵ The scholars submitting these questions were not individually identified, exemplifying the research programme's communal nature.

³ All English translations of Dutch, German and French language quotations are ours.

⁴ Some fifty years later, H. Kern emphasized the same values in his laudatory speech delivered on the 50th anniversary of the KITLV (1901, 648).

⁵ Compare the lists of questions in *Bijdragen* 1853, 1 and 1866, 155.

The ethnographic data provided and published during this first period revealed a set of presumptions consistent in both their selection and their interpretation. These presumptions form part of a paradigm consisting of two interrelated sets of ideas. The first set called for social phenomena to be classified within a wider category of 'natural facts', as the selection of questions and data under the composite label *land- en volkenkunde* (geography and ethnography⁶) makes clear. The second set concerned the comparative perspective in which these data were to be interpreted. Both the societies under scrutiny and those of the researchers themselves were included in this comparison. Societies were measured on a scale composed of different variables, including a society's proximity to 'Nature', serving as indicators of contrasting levels of morality and civilization. Since, as we shall demonstrate, the first set of ideas was subsumed under the second, we call this paradigm 'comparative morality'.

When *Bijdragen* first appeared, ethnology was not conceptualized as a distinct discipline but as part of 'geography'; the relationship between ethnographic and other 'geographic' facts was perceived as one of inclusion. The KITLV research programme implied that ethnographic, topographic, climatological, geological and biological data should contribute to the encyclopaedic knowledge of the colonies in equal measure.⁷ However, whenever a contributor distinguished ethnographic facts from other 'geographical' phenomena, conclusions about comparative morality were drawn. For example, in the first issue of *Bijdragen* (1853, 5:71) H.C. van der Wijck presented comparative statements about the Ambonese formulated simultaneously in physical and moral terms. He observed that Christian Ambonese 'are often fused with European folk, so that it is difficult to estimate whether someone is of pure Ambonese or of mixed European descent'. While the long-term contact between the Ambonese and the Dutch hampered unambiguous classification of the former in physical terms, it also accounted for the relatively high level of morality and civilization as expressed in 'customs, thought, and ways of feeling' compared, for instance, with the Javanese.

In his contribution describing geographic, economic and ethnographic conditions in southern Sulawesi, W.M. Donselaar (1854, 33) classified the population in similar terms. Coastal and inland peoples were assigned different levels of civilization (*staat van beschaving*) and morality (*algemeene karaktertrekken*⁸), whereby literacy, house-building technology

⁶ Ethnography appropriately renders the meaning of *volkenkunde* during this first period (P.E. de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen 1989:282-3; Vermeulen 1994:49-50).

⁷ This also emerges from two compilations designed as reference works for the study of the *land- en volkenkunde* of the Indonesian archipelago (De Hollander 1861-64 and Pijnappel 1863).

⁸ It concerns 'traits of character' formulated in moral terms and assigned to a 'people' as a whole.

and access to overseas centres of 'higher civilization' through trade and shipping served as criteria.

A. van Ekris (1856, 54) contrasted the moral states of coastal and inland populations in the case of southern Seram, but he assigned inverse values to them. The 'mountain Alfurs', 'a strongly muscled race', still lived in a 'state of nature'. 'Deprived of all foreign additions', they had the innocence of children. Monogamy, bride price, rules of avoidance and fines imposed on divorce all bore witness to a 'natural' morality. In contrast, along the coast, this morality had been corrupted. Both Muslims and Christians – the latter, being deprived of missionary attention, having 'run wild' (*verwilderd*) – exploited the inland peoples, having themselves 'abandoned the diligence and many other good characteristics of the Alfurs, because they are indolent, cunning, immoral and arrogant' (54:73-4).

The assumption that societies should be classified according to the level of civilization and morality imposed upon them from abroad justified for S. Keijzer his scholarly treatise on the sources of Hindu and Muslim law published in *Bijdragen* in 1859. 'Law [...] necessarily contains the elements which have contributed to bring a people (*volk*) development and civilization. These elements are usually foreign to that people themselves, and are derived from other nations (*natiën*) with whom they have come into contact.' Study of Hindu and Muslim codified laws would therefore enable a scholar to 'separate the foreign from the original ['Polynesian'] elements' (Keijzer 1859, 76:137-9).

What emerges from these and similar contributions⁹ is the basic assumption that 'civilization' did not originate in, and so is not intrinsic to, the societies of the Indonesian archipelago, but is the product of transfers from abroad. As such, 'civilization', conceived as inseparable from higher morality, provides the criterion by which societies in the archipelago are ordered among themselves in 'more civilized' or 'less civilized', a valorization made in reference to foreign centres of 'high civilization' and morality. Such contrasts between 'states of civilization' in the archipelago were detected in the present – as between the contemporary coastal and inland peoples of Seram and southern Sulawesi – and in the past – as in Keijzer's distinction between the originally 'uncivilized' 'Polynesian' societies of the past and present-day societies, the latter being the outcome of a historical process of 'civilizing' influence.

In 1870, the two authors G.K. Niemann and P.J.B.C. Robidé van der Aa initiated the application of this paradigm to phenomena from European

⁹ See also Keijzer 1860, 88 and 1862, 104. Notable exceptions are Deeleman (1859, 82) who refrains from any moral assessment in his description of a Javanese court ceremony, whereas Coster (1866, 151) argues that the more intense the contact of the different 'tribes of Bush Negroes' with Europeans in Surinam, the higher their level of civilization and the more corrupt their morality.

history they considered similar to those observed in the archipelago. They gave the paradigm an important additional dimension, without shifting its value orientation. Niemann (1870, 200) classified contemporary Malay, Javanese, Buginese, Dayak and Batak, together with Muslim societies in India and the Middle East, as 'uncivilized' because they shared a belief in auspicious and inauspicious days. He acknowledged that similar beliefs had prevailed in ancient Greece and mediaeval Europe, but since these societies were removed in time, contemporary Europe did not need to forfeit its 'civilized' status. Robidé van der Aa, in a discussion of proverbs reflecting the 'characteristics' of a society (preface to N.P. Wilken 1870, 204) associated the contrast between more civilized and less civilized peoples in the archipelago with literacy. He argued that, whereas among illiterate 'tribes' proverbs could not be traced to a foreign source and were a 'pure and uncorrupted reflection of the tribe's characteristics which had largely preserved its originality' (204:196), the written literature of other societies revealed substantial borrowings of foreign idioms. This, according to Robidé van der Aa, applied as much to Dutch indebtedness to the Bible as a source of proverbs as to Malay and Javanese borrowing from Hindu and Muslim sources. By this stage, European and Indonesian societies had become comparable within an overall historical framework of 'increasing civilization', that is to say, of comparative morality.

In the meantime, P.J. Veth, in his inaugural address of 1864 to the *Rijks-instituut voor Onderwijs in de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* in Leiden, introduced to the Dutch scholarly community the 'new geography' developed in Germany by Carl Ritter (1822-59). This not only entailed a re-definition of the discipline of geography as 'human geography', but also questioned the nature of the relationship between ethnographic and geographic facts. Whereas the former were still considered to be part of the latter, hypotheses were put forward about the determinant character of their relationship. This acquired a particular significance against the background of Darwin's theory of the genesis of the varieties of natural species. This theory immediately concerned Dutch scholars when it led to a series of classifications of 'natural' phenomena observed in different parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Two such studies published in this period were A.R. Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869) and A.S. Bickmore's *Travels in the East Indian Archipelago* (1868), both reviewed favourably in *Bijdragen* by J.J. de Hollander (1872, 228). Wallace suggested that geological, biological and ethnographic phenomena were all subject to the same principles of morphological order, and that their classification should reveal these principles. His categorization of natural phenomena on the basis of biological and geological characteristics served simultaneously as a model for a division of the human populations of the archipelago into two different 'races', the Asiatic-Malayan and the Australian-Papuan. According to De Hollander, Wallace's study, more than Bickmore's, 'contains

new observations in the field of natural science in the broadest sense of the word, particularly if Darwinism, to which Wallace subscribes, should turn out to be true' (De Hollander 228:130).¹⁰

Two other Dutch scholars, although opposed to each other in one sense, were remarkably consistent in their concern for the implications of Wallace's study for questions of comparative morality. J. Pijnappel criticized Wallace for his paradigmatic use of zoological criteria, arguing that botany and ethnology, each applying their own criteria of classification, should generate different categories. He did not elaborate this critique (Pijnappel 1872, 232:163), however.¹¹ Veth, on the other hand, who translated Wallace's study into Dutch, pointed out in his preface that Darwin himself, unlike some of his interpreters, 'nowhere taught that the theory of the development [of species] can bridge the gap which separates man from even the most highly developed animals' (Veth 1870:viii). Veth emphasized that, although Wallace 'in the meantime has applied [...] Darwin's teachings to the genesis and development of Man' in the Indonesian archipelago, he had also postulated that 'the law of natural selection has its limits, and that we observe both in the physical appearance and in the mental and moral modalities of Man the results of the functioning of another, still unknown law, transcending (*geheel verheven boven*) and independent of all laws of which we have any knowledge'. Thus one 'can be a Darwinist without denying human nature its nobility' (1870:ix). Veth wholeheartedly subscribed to this value of 'nobility of human nature' as a metaphysical *tertium quid*. But, rejecting Wallace's scepticism about the 'Malay race' in this respect, Veth argued that it implied the universal susceptibility for the 'civilizing influence' exerted by one society upon another. 'Why should the civilization of the peoples of contemporary Europe not exert the same ennobling influence upon the subjugated peoples [in the archipelago] as the Romans [once did upon the European peoples]?' (Veth quoted in Pijnappel 1872, 232:167).

Pijnappel vehemently attacked this line of thinking, arguing that he could 'prove the contrary. [...] Had the Malay race possessed the capacity for higher development, this would have revealed itself; but this never took place, even though the necessary conditions existed before.' Denying this 'independent capacity' to the 'Malay race', the influence Hindu civilization exerted on them 'for at least 15 centuries' only resulted in 'dependent imitation'. Wherever the influence led to a more 'independent imitation', as in the case of literature,¹² this imitation was

¹⁰ Bickmore's study was translated into Dutch by De Hollander in 1873.

¹¹ 'Because I flatter myself [with the intention] to write more extensively on this subject in the future [...] I shall refrain from further comments on Wallace's anthropological theses' (Pijnappel 232:163, note 1). This study never materialized. See Vreede (1902, 649).

¹² Literacy proved to be a problematic criterion for other authors as well. P.A.L.E. van Dijk, for example, in a contribution on the Loeboe of Sumatra, argued that lack

'highly deficient'. The 'Malay race' lacked the 'germ of a higher, independent moral civilization' (*geestesbeschaving*), so that a 'typical' (*eigenaardig*) Malay civilization 'such as the Chinese or the Japanese may have' was missing. The Malay peoples were 'like children, and destined to remain so', and could never be developed into 'free people, that is, not subjected to the force of their instincts' (*dwang hunner lusten*) (Pijnappel 1872, 232:169).

Veth thus argued against Wallace for a principle of humanity transcending, and not reducible to, the order of natural phenomena, attributing to all societies the receptivity for being introduced to civilized morality. Pijnappel, on the other hand, took from Wallace the idea of an absolute order among societies as a modality of an immutable order among different natural species. Yet, while upholding the initial idea that social phenomena form a part of natural phenomena, he was led to conclusions which, though contrary to Veth's, were also of a moral nature: some 'races', being like 'children driven by instincts', would never be able to attain the higher levels of civilized morality. We note that, while taking up opposite positions, Veth and Pijnappel both argued within the parameters of a dominant paradigm, as did contemporary contributors to *Bijdragen*. The paradigm stipulated that ethnographic descriptions of single societies necessarily entailed a comparative valorization involving societies of the present and of the past, of the Indonesian archipelago, South and East Asia, the Middle East and Europe, in an assessment of the degree to which each society conformed to one specific value: the morality attributed to the 'high cultures'.

The second phase (1885-1924): in search of similarities

In 1885, the first of Wilken's contributions to *Bijdragen* appeared. These can now be identified as reflecting a paradigmatic shift. Wilken¹³ introduced a paradigm entailing a systematic attempt to explain social phenomena recorded in different societies in the Indonesian archipelago as the outcome of general social processes rather than of contingent historical influences to which societies had been exposed to a varying degree. Moreover, whereas in this period exemplary value was still attached to schemata from the natural sciences, particularly geology, for Wilken these schemata assumed the status of models of periodization applicable to social phenomena only as analogues, with no implication that these phenomena were subject to the laws generating the morphological distinctions between 'natural facts'. In contrast, Wilken envisaged ethnology as 'an independent and powerful science' in itself, emancipated from geography (Wilken 1912 [1885], II:85). Thirdly, Wilken selected his data from social

of literacy deprived a society of the status of an independent people (*volk*) (Van Dijk 1884, 383).

¹³ See also Wilken 1912.

phenomena in various Indonesian societies on the basis of similarities defined by a general ethnological theory. This theory, developed by contemporary scholars including J.J. Bachofen, J. Lubbock, E.B. Tylor and H. Spencer, stipulated that a uniform process of 'evolution' of societies had taken place world-wide and that societies differed from one another in the extent to which this process had unfolded. Wilken assumed this process to be indexed by the same selective set of social phenomena all over the world. This idea provided the comparative framework whereby at first sight the paradigm of comparative morality characteristic of the previous period seemed to recede into the background. However, in Wilken's conception, this criterion acquired a new and more complex significance.

In his contributions to *Bijdragen*, Wilken selected from many societies in the archipelago phenomena similar to those to which other scholars had applied the general theory, comparing them with each other and with phenomena held to be similar reported from societies in other parts of the world. This research procedure resulted in a virtually identical format for each of Wilken's contributions. Typically, opening paragraphs contain a statement about the generality of the phenomenon in question. A survey of its occurrence and specific forms in various societies in the archipelago follows, and it is then compared with a selection of similar phenomena from societies elsewhere. Finally, the phenomenon in question is defined as an index of a certain stage of social development.

In his first contribution, entitled 'Circumcision among the peoples of the Indonesian archipelago' (Wilken 1885, 402),¹⁴ Wilken opens with a quotation from H. Ploss (1876) about the 'extraordinarily wide distribution of the custom of male circumcision' among 'numerous peoples in the old and new world'. Wishing to fill the gap in knowledge about this phenomenon in the archipelago, he surveyed data from Sumatra, Java, South and Central Sulawesi, New Guinea, the Moluccas, Borneo, the Philippines, Nias, and other 'Malayan-Polynesian tribes' (402:182)¹⁵ including those of Madagascar, Tonga, Fiji, the New Hebrides, Samoa, Tahiti, the Marquesas and Eastern Island. The generality of the institution among Muslim and 'pagan' societies alike led him to conclude that it could not be of Arab-Muslim origin, but must be an 'ancient institution which the peoples of this race certainly must have known before their dispersion from their common tribal land' (402:182). Its reported absence from New Zealand, Melanesia and Micronesia 'cannot be adduced as evidence to the contrary. It is possible that in these islands it has been lost, or that it has been abandoned for certain reasons' (402:182-3).

Having established circumcision as an 'original institution' in each of the societies where it has been reported, Wilken explains its 'meaning' as

¹⁴ 'De besnijdenis bij de volken van den Indischen Archipel'.

¹⁵ It concerns 'peoples which although living outside the Indonesian archipelago are so closely related to those living there, we cannot pass them by in silence' (402:179).

its final cause, 'what one aims to achieve by this operation' (402:183). Since the general theory of evolution requires a final cause to be defined in universal terms, its definition must exclude any cultural specificity. Wilken subscribes to Ploss' interpretation of circumcision in terms of an 'original tendency' to perform an 'act preparing for the sexual function of men [...] at the age of sexual maturity', which, in Wilken's words, 'necessarily acquired the character of a ceremony declaring the marriageability' of the boy in question (402:184). Whereas male circumcision arises from Mankind's 'original' experience that circumcision facilitates sexual intercourse, female circumcision is also explained in physiological terms, as an operation correcting physical deformities. 'We only note in passing, and need not demonstrate further, that circumcision, according to Ploss' theory, has no religious meaning' (402:189). For Wilken, the religious significance reportedly attached to the institution marked the 'non-civilized or half-civilized' stage of social development, when 'fertility and reproduction' become conceived as a 'Divine command'. Since circumcision would implement this command, the institution itself becomes a 'deed pleasing to the God' (402:190). Wherever it still exists among the 'more civilized peoples' it represents 'an institution of very great antiquity, therefore originating in periods of lower culture' (*lagere cultuurperiodes*) (402:193).

Already, in his first contribution, Wilken rejects the axiom crucial to the previous paradigm of comparative morality that any institution prevailing among the 'lower' as well as the 'higher' civilizations must derive from the latter as the foreign centres of 'high culture'. His contrary view is that societies have an intrinsic capacity for independently creating institutions from the physiological experiences shared by Mankind, and not merely for adopting civilizing influences from abroad, as Veth had argued. In line with this argument for the universal auto-development of institutions, Wilken denied that, among the 'higher civilizations', religious concepts would have laid the foundation for their own institutions. If circumcision in the archipelago derived originally from physiological experiences, this should also have been the case elsewhere. He therefore argued, for instance, that Hebrew circumcision, as an 'arbitrarily selected symbol for devotion to Jaweh', was a 'relatively recent' institution. 'We venture the hypothesis that [the Hebrews] considered that this operation facilitated the male sexual functions and thus directly promoted the maintenance of the human species. Soon, however, circumcision seems to have become a religious act.' (402:190-1.)

The transition from an 'original' stage of Mankind to a stage of 'civilization' is indicated by the emergence of a socio-religious value attached to an institution originating in a physiological experience. Since Man is universal both in the 'original' absence of 'civilization' and in the emergence of the socio-religious significance attached to this institution, it is in terms of this transition that societies display the universal characteristics by which they can be compared.

The procedure of establishing this primordial transition as an axiom for the thesis of subsequent transitions of stages of 'civilization' is evident from Wilken's comparative study not only of religious institutions, but also of kinship and marriage. He is again concerned with the stages following a primordial transition from an original stage when physiological experiences result in certain practices to a stage when these practices acquire socio-religious significance. He focuses on the class of phenomena conceptualized in the contemporary theory of social evolution as 'matriarchy' and 'patriarchy'. Wilken conceives 'matriarchal' institutions, resulting from a transition from an earlier stage of social organization characterized as an 'era without marriage' (*echtelooze tijd*), developing first into institutions typifying the stage of 'patriarchy', and finally into institutions marking the era of 'endogamy' (Wilken 1912 [1883], I:413-44).

In his second contribution to *Bijdragen* (Wilken 1885, 407), responding to criticism¹⁶ of his thesis that the 'ancient Arabs' had known 'matriarchal' institutions, Wilken discusses the incest prohibitions reported from various societies in the archipelago. He argues that this institution cannot have originated in 'the observation of the disadvantageous consequences' that would result from transgressing the prohibition. Given the observed occurrence of cross-cousin marriages in the Indonesian archipelago, these consequences 'do not seem to have existed to the extent that it would have drawn the attention of *natuurvolken*'. With the incest prohibition established, the consecutive stages of social development are indicated by different rules of exogamy. In the stage of 'matriarchy with exogamy', children of sisters are not allowed to marry; in the subsequent stage of 'patriarchy with exogamy', children of brothers are not allowed to marry. Wilken explains the fact that in a number of cases matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is permitted, but patrilineal cross-cousin marriage is forbidden, as the survival of a 'matriarchal' institution in a 'patriarchal' stage of development.

Wilken maintained that the prohibition on incest (*bloedschande*) had not yet been conceptualized in societies living in the original 'era without marriage'. However, it acquired its full realization at a 'very early stage' of social development, 'given the circumstance that it occurs in its most developed form among primitive peoples' (*natuurvolken*), only to become 'less frequent and weaker' (*minder en zwakker*) with the advance of civilization (407:415-6, note 10-11). Wilken reiterates this point in a later contribution to *Bijdragen*, arguing against his contemporaries L.H. Morgan, J.F. McLennan and J. Kohler that exogamy, which 'made an end to the promiscuity in which people everywhere must have lived in ancient

¹⁶ This concerns J.W. Redhouse's criticism (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17, I(1884):275-92) of Wilken's 'Het matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren' (*De Indische Gids* 6, I(1884):90-132), to which E.B. Tylor referred in a lecture delivered in London.

times', is a 'very old institution' (Wilken 1886, 421:150). The earliest form in which it still 'survives' among some societies is that of 'matriarchal exogamy', entailing the rule that children belong to the mother's kinship group. Elsewhere in *Bijdragen*, Wilken attributes the genesis of this rule to the 'ovulistic conviction' that only the experience of a physiological bond determines the acknowledgement of the parent-child relationship; therefore only the mother qualifies as parent. This 'ovulistic conviction [...] has contributed, if not to its genesis, then certainly to the development and perpetuation of this institution' of exogamy (Wilken 1888, 453:187). According to Wilken, religious beliefs in the negative consequences of incestuous marriages are phenomena later superimposed on the original physiological foundation (Wilken 1886, 421:150).

The primordial transition from an 'original era', marked by a physiological experience giving rise to a certain practice, to an era in which this practice reaches its full development as a socio-religious institution, is again constructed as the universal frame of comparison for the different forms an institution assumes. Establishing this axiom of universal similarity makes possible the comparison of other institutions associated with exogamy, such as marriage rules defined by kin type, marriage by capture or by exchange, and the rituals of engagement and marriage. The comparative analyses of these institutions amount to assessments of the extent to which an institution has undergone a process of development, removing it from this primordial transition, and enabling Wilken to estimate the 'level of civilization' of the society in question (Wilken 1886, 421; 1889, 475).

Wilken conceptualized his comparative method by analogy with the natural sciences. This analogy was taken on one occasion from geology, after E. de Laveleye: 'Geology also teaches us that certain continents have preserved florae and faunae which elsewhere have disappeared long since. It is thus maintained that one finds in Australia plants and animals which belong to previous periods of the geological development of our planet. In similar cases the method of comparative research can be of great service. If certain institutions dating from ancient times (*temps primitifs*) still exist among certain peoples in our days, it is there that one can catch them by surprise in order to better understand a state of civilization which elsewhere has been lost in the darkness of time' (E. de Laveleye, *De la propriété et ses formes primitives*, quoted in Wilken 1885, 407:408.) Elsewhere, Wilken took his analogies from botany and zoology: 'He who wishes to know the development of society must necessarily begin with the society of the savages (*maatschappij der wilden*). For the practitioner of sociology these savages are as interesting as, to employ a cherished analogy, the lower plant and animal species are for the botanist and zoologist.' (Wilken 1912 [1885], II:88.) Just as older geological layers may be hidden from view but still exist, and the lower order biological species still live among the higher order species, so are the early stages of social

development still present not only among contemporary 'savages' but also in the traces left among 'civilized' societies: 'That which has developed must bear the traces of this development. The higher, as it has come into being out of the lower, carries the imprint of the latter. This is one of the foundations of the law of biological evolution; it is likewise the foundation of sociological law.' (1912 [1885], II:96.) In other words, the primordial transition, the intrinsic origin of institutions in all societies of the world, is what makes all societies, 'savage' as well as 'developed', comparable. Indeed, whenever Wilken engaged in a comparison between 'high' and 'low' civilizations, he selected institutions from 'lower' civilizations which had left their 'imprint' in 'higher' civilizations.¹⁷ Societies are comparable in the institutions bearing witness to the universal primordial transition.

This primordial transition from practices arising out of physiological experience to the development of socio-religious ideas about these practices is taken to result in institutions which are already 'fully developed' soon after transition, and as such are assumed to have once been shared among all societies in the world. Selective processes of subsequent development lead to an 'increase in civilization'. There is an ambiguity in Wilken's valorization of this process of 'increasing civilization'. More than once he attributes to these processes a disruptive effect on the original institutions. When he compares the institutions of the 'civilized' and the 'non-civilized or half-civilized' societies, only those of the latter display a form still approximating to the primordial transition. Wilken rendered this form in highly valued terms. His treatise on the *couvade* among the peoples of the Indonesian archipelago (Wilken 1889, 473)¹⁸ is an example. He argued that this institution occurs 'among numerous peoples in all parts of the world' and that it originated as a 'reaction' on the part of the father against the initial 'ovulistic conviction' that recognized only the physical bond between mother and child. In agreement with Bachofen and Tylor, he considered that the institution once marked the transition from 'matriarchy' to 'patriarchy', and that subsequent processes of development reduced its significance to that of 'a remainder' (*overblijfselen*). However, instead of following his contemporaries in qualifying the original form in pejorative terms, Wilken argued that the process of social development deprived the institution of its 'complete' (*volledig*) and its 'non-violated' (*ongeschonden*) state, 'so that it can usually only be observed in the form of *disjecta membra*' (473:258).

In conceiving the primordial 'savage' stage of Mankind as the whole against which the parts – the institutions 'surviving' in 'developed' societies as 'limbs torn from the body' – are assessed, Wilken conceptu-

¹⁷ See for instance his discussion, in a comparative perspective, of the rules of succession to Dutch kingship in 'Oostersche en westersche rechtsbegrippen' (Wilken 1888, 448; see also Wilken 1886, 425).

¹⁸ 'De *couvade* bij de volken van den Indischen Archipel'.

alized a hierarchical model¹⁹ of world history with the process of developing 'civilization' simultaneously representing a process of increasing fragmentation. The question of how to valorize this process presented Wilken with a dilemma. On the one hand, he dismissed those contemporary theories according to which the process of social evolution corrupts 'pure' and 'simple' societies (Wilken 1912 [1883], I:413). On the other, while for Wilken 'development' led to 'increase' in 'civilization', it also resulted in the fragmentation of 'completeness'. Nowhere does Wilken suggest that 'higher civilizations' are characterized by a higher level of morality justifying the imposition of their 'civilization' on other societies.²⁰ What he does argue is that, in the process of the fragmentation of 'completeness', an institution loses the meaning it derived from being part of a whole, acquiring instead the superficial significance of 'remains'. He conceives this whole to have once been Mankind as generated by the primordial transition of physiological experience to socio-religious meaning, from 'nature to culture', so to speak. Wilken's dilemma was that he could not reconcile this axiom of an original universal completeness, situated in the dim historical past, with the evolutionist axiom that social development necessarily leads to future social and moral perfection.

Wilken's theses set the parameters for much of the research published in *Bijdragen* in the years that followed.²¹ Some studies confirmed, some refined, others refuted, but few ignored these theses. C.M. Pleyte, for instance, fully endorsed Wilken's views. His articles on ethnology were modelled on Wilken's in composition and argument. Pleyte noted in 'Something about mnemonism and other signs among the peoples of the East Indian archipelago'²² (1887, 420) that proper data from the Indonesian archipelago were lacking in Richard Andree's world-wide survey of mnemonic signs (1878). To correct this omission, he surveyed the phenomena reported from the Papuan societies, from Roti, Aru, Seram, Buru, Bugis and Makasar, and the Rejang and Batak of Sumatra. Pleyte

¹⁹ We employ Louis Dumont's model of hierarchy, in which the value attached to each of the parts is determined by the relationship between that part and the whole (Dumont 1979).

²⁰ On the contrary, 'isn't there *periculum in mora*? More and more primitive peoples (*natuurvolken*) are disappearing from the world's stage before the all-equalizing current of the European culture, which slowly but surely finds its way to the furthest corners of the earth. [These peoples] must therefore be studied before it is too late, before they perish in the struggle for existence, or they lose all originality (*oorspronkelijkheid*) under the civilization forced upon them'. (Wilken 1912 [1885], II:87.)

²¹ The KITLV stimulated this development by requesting the Minister of the Colonies to distribute Wilken's study 'De verbreiding van het matriarchaat op Sumatra' (453) among the civil servants stationed there 'with the invitation to initiate researches in order to fill in the existing gaps' (Graafland 1890, 482:40, note 1).

²² 'Iets over het mnemonische en andere teekenen bij den volken van den Oost-Indischen Archipel'.

argued that the need to remember and communicate events arose immediately after Mankind 'set the first steps on the road to development' (420:127). Language and sign language suffice for communication with neighbours. For sending messages across larger distances, however, societies need 'to avail themselves of symbolic signs'. Such signs also serve a mnemonic function, since they are a 'visible and tangible means whose form reminds one of this or that matter' (420:127). Not only do the cave drawings of Cro-Magnon demonstrate early Mankind's needs and means to memorize and communicate, they can still be observed among 'civilized' peoples 'who already practice the art of writing' in the form of rosaries, carving sticks or knots tied in handkerchiefs. Pleyte suggested that script originated in such sign systems.

All the elements of Wilken's paradigm are present: the procedure of establishing the universal similarity of the phenomenon in question; the axiom that this universality resulted from a primordial transition of Mankind, in this case indexed by the need to memorize and communicate across large distances; and the method of comparison between 'more civilized' and 'less civilized' societies, selecting phenomena from the latter recurring in the 'civilized' societies as redundant survivals. Pleyte's 'Ceremonies and customs from the cycle of the family life among the peoples of the Indian archipelago' (Pleyte 1892, 516)²³ reveals the same paradigmatic character.²⁴

Critics of Wilken's evolutionist schema concentrated on two issues. The first was his procedure of accounting for certain institutions in terms of his evolutionist scheme of the replacement of 'matriarchy' by 'patriarchy'. The second concerned the thesis current among contemporaries, such as Tylor and applied by Wilken to data from Indonesian societies in his survey of 'Animism among the peoples of the Indonesian archipelago'²⁵ (1912 [1884-85], III: 1-287), that the earliest form of religion was marked by 'animist' ideas and practices. Van Ossenbruggen (1916, 882) amended this thesis by subscribing to Marett's postulate of a 'pre-animist' phase characterized by early Man's inability to 'to form a mental image (*denkbeeld*) of those phenomena which cannot be observed through rude perception (*die niet grof-zintuigelijk zijn waar te nemen*)'. Hence the 'tendency among less developed peoples [...] to materialize abstracta' (882:17), which Van Ossenbruggen exemplified in the phenomenon reported from various parts of the archipelago of 'personifying' smallpox. Pre-animist thought 'cannot conceptualize something as abstract as

²³ 'Plechtigheden en gebruiken uit den cyclus van het familieleven der volken van den Indischen Archipel'.

²⁴ Other contributions subscribing to Wilken's theses include S.W. Tromp, 'Een Dajaksch feest' (1890, 481); A.F.P. Graafland, 'De verbreiding van het matriarchaat in het landschap Indragiri' (1890, 482); J.L. van der Toorn, 'Het animisme bij den Minangkabauer der Padangsche Bovenlanden' (1890, 483).

²⁵ 'Het animisme bij den volken van den Indischen Archipel'.

disease', and whenever spiritual agents are believed to be involved these are conceived of in a 'monistic-material form' such as water or fire (882:32). Referring to Vierkandt's *Naturvölker und Kulturvölker* (1896) and to Durkheim and Mauss' essay on 'primitive forms of classification' (1903) he attributed to 'primitive Man' a mode of thought ('insofar as one can speak of thought at all', 882:33) fundamentally different from that of 'civilized Man (*cultuurmensch*)', which was characterized by the 'sylogistic association of ideas' and the 'illusion' that acts based on perceived analogies would be effective in themselves.

Van Ossenbruggen followed Wilken in postulating a universal stage of early Mankind in terms of an original physiological experience – this time preceding the capacity for abstract thought – as an axiom necessary for the comparison of phenomena reported from different societies in the archipelago and elsewhere (see also Van Ossenbruggen 1911, 785). He also followed Wilken in arguing that similar phenomena reported from societies which had already 'developed' into the 'animist' phase represented survivals (Van Ossenbruggen 882:121). In contrast with Wilken, however, Van Ossenbruggen sought the characteristics of early Man in particular forms of logic which had once been universal as 'general human qualities' (882:61) but now only observable in integrate states, in particular 'uncivilized' societies.²⁶

Intermezzo: Meerwaldt, a solitary critic

Whereas in the selection and interpretation of data the ethnological contributions to the second phase of *Bijdragen* invariably reflect the paradigm propagated by Wilken and refined by others, the critical, original analyses of one author stand out. J.H. Meerwaldt, a missionary with the Rheinische Mission who had worked for 18 years among the Batak of the Toba and Silundung regions in Sumatra, published two articles in *Bijdragen*. In the first, 'Do the present-day customs and habits of the Batak still reveal traces of an original matriarchy?'²⁷ (1892, 510), Meerwaldt refuted for the Toba Batak case the thesis that matriarchal institutions had preceded patriarchal ones. Conceding that the Toba Batak concept of *dongan saina*, like the Dairi Batak concept of *senina*, referred to the idea of an original 'tribal mother', Meerwaldt argued that, since this notion signified a shared identity at the level of the sub-tribes which were believed to have originated from polygynous marriages of a single patrilineal clan (Batak *marga*) ancestor, this should not be taken as

²⁶ This paradigmatic refinement proved attractive for some time. In two contributions to *Bijdragen*, Kruij (1918, 932; 1919, 951), for instance, subscribed to this notion of 'pre-animist thought', arguing that it enabled him to perceive more sharply the meaning of the concept of *mease* among the Posso of Sulawesi.

²⁷ 'Wijzen de tegenwoordige zeden en gewoonten der Bataks nog sporen aan van een oorspronkelijk matriarchaat?'

evidence of original matriarchal institutions. Given the additional fact that the Batak were perfectly aware of the genitor role of the father, this 'provides the evidence that the patriarchy among the Batak was the original [form]' (510:204).²⁸ It is, however, Meerwaldt's third argument which exposed a basic flaw in Wilken's evolutionist thesis and revealed a new insight into the nature of Batak social organization. Wilken argued that in a 'matriarchal' stage of historical development, a man considers his sister's children as his own, whereas a man's children are 'strangers' to his sister. He also asserted that matrilineal cross-cousin marriage represented an institution indicative of this 'matriarchy' and as such 'surviving' in a 'patriarchal' society. Meerwaldt asked the following question: 'How could a brother give his daughter as a wife to someone whom he considers as his own son? Would that not have been incest? According to the rules of matriarchy, it is the sister's son whom the mother's brother considers as his own, while among the Batak the reverse is the case. There the mother's brother considers his sister's son to be a stranger, since he belongs to a different [clan], whereas his sister's daughter counts as his own (*eigene*). Therefore [...] he can give his daughter as a wife to his sister's son while his own son cannot take a sister's daughter as wife; rather he receives at the marriage of his sister's daughter a part of the [bride price]'. Wilken's scheme must therefore be rejected: 'the assumption of an original matriarchy does not bring us closer to a clarification of this problem' (510:204). He demonstrated that matrilineal cross-cousin marriage enabled a man to perpetuate an affinal relationship (*aanverwantschap*) with the *marga* into which his daughter had married. Meerwaldt emphasized that for the Batak this form of affinity represented an interest in itself. It is important for a man 'to have a large number of affines (*een groote aanverwantschap*, Batak *tondong*) since it is a source of assistance in troubled times, so he seeks to establish and expand his affinal relationships'. To solidify the affinal relationship established by his sister's marriage he gives his daughter as wife to his sister's son; and to extend affinity to other *marga* he considers his sister's daughters as his own and does not take them as wives himself'. Were he 'to take his sister's daughter as daughter-in-law, then that which could move out from him (*van hem uit kon gaan*) to increase his wealth and reputation would simply return to him again; this he conceives to be as wrong as "water which flows up against the mountain"' (510:205).

In this remarkable article Meerwaldt, focusing on the structural position of the wife-giving *marga*, sharply perceived the Batak interest in affinal alliance in accordance with which affiliation had been adapted in a certain

²⁸ J.H.F. Kohlbrugge (1901, 628) later refuted for the Batak case Wilken's argument that particular forms of name giving could be taken as an index for original matriarchal institutions. Without any reference to Meerwaldt's contribution, he stated that 'nothing has proven that the matriarchat – Wilken's second stage – is older than the patriarchat' (1901, 628:163).

manner. Moreover, by offering an interpretation of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage in terms of Batak representations, he could dismiss Wilken's axiom of the primordial transition from physiological experience giving rise to institutions, to the attribution of socio-religious significance to these institutions. Emphasizing that the Batak acknowledged the father as genitor, he dismissed any 'ovulistic' interpretation of this original transition. And yet, he refrained from further exploration of the consequences for Wilken's general universalistic thesis of his refutation in this case.

Meerwaldt displayed a similar insight into the nature of Batak social and religious representations in his second contribution to *Bijdragen* (1902, 654), an analysis of the Batak 'magic wand' (*toverstaf*).²⁹ He established the interconnection of various types of phenomena, namely, the iconography of the object itself, the myths describing the genesis of the first object, the social conditions requiring a new object be produced (in casu on the occasion of a fission of a *marga* and the establishment of a new one), and the ritual procedures, including human sacrifice, enacted to provide the new object with its sacred identity. He described how the object was used in war and in the opposite context of promoting agricultural fertility, and then related semantically the names of the protagonists in the myth to the cosmological functions of the object. He outlined how the dualistic form of contrasting ideas (such as rain and lightning, female and male), rendered in the myth as a relationship between twins, were subsumed under a single idea when a human being and a tree merged into one sacred identity. Meerwaldt emphasized that the exegesis offered in the myth of the origin of the ritual object was 'in no way an arbitrary expression of a people's fantasy, but stands in a close relationship with that which is represented by the magical wand' (654:307).

Meerwaldt again displayed his independence of the parameters of a dominant theory, relying on his knowledge of Batak representations to establish the coherence between them. There is no reference to the prevailing assumptions of 'animism' or 'pre-animism' to account for the Batak idea that parts of the sacrificial human victim were incorporated into the object, or for the mythical theme of the transformation of people into objects. Demonstration of the interconnections between myth, ritual, social order, and the activities of war and agriculture sufficed to refute interpretation of myth and ritual as the product of 'people's fantasy'. Meerwaldt again refrained from further scrutiny of the theoretical implications of his analysis for the prevailing general ethnological paradigm. For this missionary the idea that one would have to demonstrate that a society was part of mankind as a whole before one could provide an ethnological

²⁹ For such an insight he deemed indispensable 'a thorough knowledge of the language which can only be acquired during a long stay' among them (1902, 654:297).

analysis of its ideas and actions, was apparently redundant. He remained a solitary critic whose insights were curiously ignored for the time to come.³⁰

Introducing the third phase (1925): systematizing the 'original integrity'

According to its historiography, the Leiden School of structural anthropology's reception of the sociological theory developed by Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and others of the 'Année Sociologique group' resulted in a paradigmatic shift among Dutch ethnologists studying Indonesian societies (Needham 1963; P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1972, 1977, 1980; Locher 1988; P.E. de Josselin de Jong and Vermeulen 1989; Prager forthcoming). Van Ossenbruggen was the first to apply this theory in his analysis of the Javanese *monca-pat* classification system (Van Ossenbruggen 1917).³¹ The readership of *Bijdragen* was introduced to this theory in 1925, when Rassers, acquainted with the works of Durkheim and Mauss through Van Ossenbruggen's publications (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1977:8-9), published a synopsis of the analysis of the Javanese wayang featured in his doctoral dissertation (Rassers 1925, 1033; see also Rassers 1922). In 'On the meaning of the Javanese drama'³², Rassers sought, in Javanese myths of origin, in rituals, in rules of social organization, and in the design of the stage where wayang plays are performed, the coherence between ideas and practices, which he considered to stem from the common dualistic structure in which the phenomena from these various domains were ordered. Adopting Durkheim and Mauss' axiom that the classification of people into social groups generated the classification systems of other phenomena, Rassers argued that Javanese society originally displayed a dual structure in its division into two exogamous phratries whose founding ancestors, according to the myths, were destined to be married. Javanese social structure thereby conformed to any other 'primitive society organized in exogamous groups' (Rassers 1033:312). He also detected a dualism in the dichotomy between two states of human existence, given the fact that rites of initiation, as reported from the *lakon* narratives and enacted in the wayang plays, served to make possible the transition from a state of 'spiritual and physical imperfect' existence to a

³⁰ All subsequent contributors to *Bijdragen* ignore Meerwaldt's analyses, as do later students of the Batak (for example Vergouwen 1933); his name is also missing from Koentjaraningrat (1975). The only reference found to date is in Rassers' unpublished typescript, ca. 1942, on the 'Bataksche Toverstaf', expressing Rassers' admiration for Meerwaldt's insights.

³¹ In a discussion of the 'associative logic' in his study of the 'Typical customs during smallpox epidemics in the Indonesian archipelago' Van Ossenbruggen (1911, 785) had already referred to Durkheim and Mauss' study on 'primitive classification'. Then, however, he did not yet adopt the axiom of the determinant role played by the classification of social groups in the genesis of systems of classification in general.

³² 'Over den zin van het Javaansche drama'. An English version was published in Rassers 1982.

state of 'perfect human beings'. Thirdly, the rites reported in the myths revealed a dichotomy between the contexts of communal social life and of solitude in the wilderness sometimes associated with death. The transition from 'imperfection' to 'perfection', a necessary condition for marriage, required initiates to stay temporarily in the latter (1033:313). Observing a 'perfect similarity between the typical construction of the wayang stage and the structure of the myth' Rassers argued that, rather than representing 'phenomena different in essence and origin', there was an 'essential coherence' (*essentieel verband*) in the form of a 'classification [...] observable in every performance' of a wayang play (1033:314-5).

Rassers employed Durkheim's concept of 'collective representations' to describe the coherence between myth, ritual, and social order in terms of a common structure resulting from the application of the same classification principles to each domain. He conceded that a 'perfect coherence' between these representations could no longer be observed in contemporary Javanese society: 'The community to which these rites originally belong has not existed for centuries' (1033:315). Since the structures revealed in the wayang could only be accounted for when considered as the 'direct expression' of these 'collective representations', Rassers projected the 'perfect coherence' of Javanese society in the past, in a time when the 'classification system [...] commanded the entire Javanese logic' (1033:332). In subsequent 'stages of development' these representations had 'gradually lost their irresistible force over the minds' of the people, allowing the performer of the wayang to display more 'individual invention' (1033:315).

In unfolding this interpretation of the origin of the coherence of Javanese institutions, Rassers explicitly subscribed to Durkheim's axiom, laid down in the latter's *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (1895)³³, that systems of 'primitive classification' should not be explained in terms of 'individual psychology' but 'in the preceding social phenomena' (*in de daaraan voorafgaande sociale verschijnselen*; Rassers 1925, 1033:377). It is in terms of this model, representing Javanese society in a hypothetical stage in history when there was still a perfect coherence between its representations, that Rassers considered Javanese society to be comparable with Australian Aboriginal societies revealing similar dualistic structures (1033:379). Evidence thus abounds of the importance Rassers attributed to Durkheim's theory for the interpretation of Javanese phenomena. This suggests that his analysis reflected a paradigmatic shift rather than just a theoretical shift.

Less conspicuous, however, is the continuity discernible between Rassers' thought and Wilken's, particularly regarding the latter's axiom about the auto-development and 'original integrity' of a society's insti-

³³ Rassers refers to the edition of 1919.

tutions. Let us recall that Wilken had constructed a conceptual frame for the comparison of societies by arguing that, in the distant past, each society had gone through a primordial transition in which socio-religious meaning became attributed to institutions which had themselves originated from certain physiological experiences. Wilken had argued that the closer a society is to this original transition in its stage of development, the more integrated and 'complete' are its institutional forms. Conversely, the more a given society has 'developed', the more fragmented are its institutions. We also observed that for Wilken, it was in terms of those institutions, still revealing their proximity to the original transition, that societies could undergo comparative analysis.

This axiom of an 'original integrity' as the universal condition of early Mankind establishing the comparability of societies is also reflected in Rassers' argument. Durkheim's theory enabled Rassers to conceptualize the original integrity as the system of 'representations', the coherence of which had been generated by a logic classifying phenomena in the world in homology with the categories of social order. Yet, in projecting this 'perfect coherence' in the past and in proposing future comparative research focusing on societies still displaying such coherent systems, Rassers' thought reveals no axiomatic break with Wilken's hierarchical model. On the contrary, this paradigmatic continuity seems to have set the conditions for the favourable reception of Durkheim and Mauss' theory of the coherence of classification systems which enabled Rassers, like Van Ossenbruggen before him, to conceptualize within the framework of a new sociological theory the notion of 'original integrity' which for Wilken had the character of a moral axiom.

Conclusion

To identify the theoretical and methodological shifts emerging from the contributions to *Bijdragen* during the three periods distinguished we have used the concepts of 'paradigm', defined by Kuhn in the context of natural science research as the 'constellation of beliefs, values, techniques [...] shared by the members of a given [scientific] community' (Kuhn 1970:175), and paradigmatic shifts, the 'scientific revolutions' bringing about radically changed assumptions about 'the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed' (Kuhn 1970:4-5). Stocking asserts that the history of social anthropology is similarly characterized by such episodes, with social evolutionism, emerging in 1860 and being rejected after 1900, as an example of a scientific revolution in the Kuhnian sense (Stocking 1992:344). Stocking observed, however, that, in contrast with the 'synchronic discontinuity' which Kuhn considers characteristic of natural science paradigms, 'paradigm-like bodies of assumption [...] perdured through long periods of time' in social-anthropological thought.

To identify these persistent bodies of assumption, Stocking introduced the concept of 'paradigmatic tradition' (Stocking 1992:344).³⁴

As part of such a paradigmatic tradition, we identify a particular concern shared by virtually all the authors publishing in *Bijdragen* during the three periods examined. This is the fundamental question of how to conceptualize the metaphysical *tertium quid* which could constitute the overall frame for the ethnological comparison of societies. This persistent concern set the stage for the reception and modification of some contemporary theories, and for the rejection of others.

In the first phase, data from societies were selected and comparatively interpreted in terms of a 'comparative morality', with the scholars' 'own' society setting the standard of 'civilized morality' against which other societies, present as well as past, could be assessed. This criterion of 'civilized morality' applied to societies as wholes, the moral properties of which were conceptualized as 'traits of character' as if these societies had a personality of their own, or as the characteristics of certain stages in the human life cycle, with adulthood coinciding with a fully developed morality. With the assumption in this period that moral civilization radiated from societies of 'high culture', the debate focused on whether the capacity for adopting such a morality introduced from abroad was intrinsic to all societies in the world. Those in favour of a universal susceptibility to 'civilized morality' rejected the idea that the Darwinist scheme of an order of ranking among natural species should serve as a model for the moral order among different societies. Those arguing against it took from Darwinist theory the idea of an immutable order of ranking among natural species as a model of a similarly fixed order among 'lower' and 'higher' forms of morality. Most authors, however, implicitly subscribed to the axiom that world history represented a process of increasing moral civilization which would culminate in a uniform level of morality. Societies in the Dutch colonies and elsewhere would eventually conform to this transcendent order of a morally unified humanity. Whereas their 'own' society had already reached that level, 'other' societies needed to be led in that direction.

In the second period, the same paradigmatic concern with the establishment of a metaphysical *tertium quid* determined the receptivity for those ideas formulated in the framework of evolutionist theory. This again entailed the idea of a uniform process of world history which societies had either already passed through, or were still in the process of going through. Whereas, again, one's 'own' society outlined the direction in which such a universal process would unfold, it was not only assumed that the capacity

³⁴ We will not concern ourselves here with the ongoing conceptual and epistemological debate about the validity of the paradigm concept as such, nor with the adjustments and changes that Kuhn himself has proposed in response to criticism (see Barnes 1982; Hoyningen-Huene 1993).

to develop was intrinsic to all societies in the world, but also that each of them had already independently initiated this process. It was taken to have originated from a universal primordial transition in which socio-religious meaning became attached to institutions that had arisen from physiological experiences. Therefore one's 'own' society was no longer conceived as the centre from which the 'civilizing' influence would necessarily emanate. In Wilken's thought in particular, processes of auto-development were not assumed to result in a future moral unity of civilized societies. On the contrary, Wilken assumed that these processes led to an increasing fragmentation of what had once been a whole of 'complete', integrated institutions, envisaged as each society's eventual destiny. 'Other' and 'own' societies could only be compared in terms of the fragmented institutions where the latter still resembled the former. A transcendent order of 'humanity' was no longer expected for the future, but projected into the distant past, when all societies displayed the order of the same 'complete' institutions. This axiom could not be reconciled with the idea that world history entailed a process of increasing social and moral perfection.

Durkheim, Mauss, and other scholars of the *Année Sociologique* provided the scholars writing in *Bijdragen* with a sociological theory facilitating the re-conceptualization of this axiom of an 'original integrity of Mankind', evidenced in the 'completeness' of societies' socio-religious institutions. This initiated the third period. No longer was the primordial transition from physiological experience to socio-religious meaning, from nature to culture, assumed to be the primal cause of such an 'original integrity'; it was rather Man's inability to construct his categories of perception other than in accordance with the categories of social morphology. Whereas Van Ossenbruggen initially employed this 'associative logic' to refine Wilken's 'animist' thesis, Rassers was led to interpret Javanese phenomena as the fragmented results of the 'perfect coherence' of ideas and actions once characterizing Javanese society. The 'completeness' of this society, conceptualized as the coherence of its 'collective representations', thus continued to be projected into the past. In these terms, Javanese society was considered comparable with societies such as the Australian Aborigines still revealing this 'original' coherence. The axiom of an 'original coherence' generated by a society's socio-morphological order provided the redefinition of the metaphysical *tertium quid*. In the years to come, scholars of the Leiden School either subscribed to this axiom (Van Wouden 1935; J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong 1928; Rassers 1931, 1106) or argued against it (Luttig 1933; Locher 1932), but never rejected the idea that an original coherence of collective representations constituted the overall frame of comparison of societies.

The paradigmatic tradition within which different theories were adopted, modified or rejected during the three periods discussed entailed a continuous concern with an axiomatic definition of a transcendent order of humanity. Projected first into the future, then into the past, but never

into the present, this axiom of a transcendent order enabled scholars to arrive at a comparative understanding of what was observed in single societies.

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