

# **Kinship and locality in section systems: A reconsideration <sup>1/</sup>**

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## **Kinship: Some definitions**

In his provisional statement for this conference Dumont draws a distinction between what he calls real systems, i. e., what the people themselves conceive as real, and nominal systems as seen by the analysis of the anthropologist. I should argue that there is no fundamental difference of reality between what is conceived by one or the other: both kinds of human beings use a conceptual frame of references in formulating (verbally or behaviourally) the system. The people living in it may have a better acquaintance with it, but their concepts may be less differentiated and therefore less able to facilitate adequate formulations. Since the ethnographer is not just a silent observer, he will have to use the people's formulations as a most important source of his own interpretation, and his view of the system may depend on his ability to translate one set of concepts into another. He may face the difficulty, for instance, that a people's concept implies both religious and social aspects (as he conceives of them), while his translation renders only one of the aspects, since his language lacks such an undifferentiated term (for instance, "spirit"). Dumont himself has seen the problem. He therefore recalls his formulation "think of (e. g.) locality in terms of ...", because the people's notion should properly be seen as the "encompassing." But if these notions encompass more than our analytical concepts, it would amount to a distortion of the facts, if we should not translate these (for instance) kinship notions also into our terms of (for instance) locality. At any rate, any comparative work would be immensely hampered, if we should restrict ourselves to interpretations and descriptions in terms of the people themselves, since the semantic realm of these notions would vary from monograph to monograph.

In order to proceed we *must* break up the people's notions and concepts until we find, by comparative analyses, some highest common divisor. This is, to be sure, easier said than done, for it implies the breaking up of our own notions and concepts as well. And it is at this point where our troubles begin: our concepts used as analytical tools are still much too coarse. We still translate in terms of (for instance) "lineage" phenomena of quite distinct character. It is now more than fifty years ago

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<sup>1/</sup> Quotation: Löffler, Lorenz G. 2002. In *Aussaaten, Ethnologische Schriften*, 133–55. Zürich, Switzerland: Argonaut-Verlag. Comment: See the list of publications for details. This paper and the list of publications are available as pdf files on this webpage: [www.supras.biz/literature/loeffler.html](http://www.supras.biz/literature/loeffler.html).

that Rivers broke down the concept of "descent" into succession, inheritance, and a residual category again called descent. In the meantime it would have been advisable also to use special terms for transmission processes in the fields of locality and exogamy. But up to this day, also Rivers' restricted definition of descent has not been generally accepted. There may be a very simple lesson behind this, viz., that it is useless to clip off parts of an established concept, diffuse as it may be. Better keep it as a general term, but beware of encumbering it with functional loads.

Therefore, in this paper I shall use "descent" in its largest sense, i. e., in the sense of any principle by which somebody's descendants are related to him. This statement, however, cannot serve as a definition, since it becomes circular as soon as "descendants", in their turn are to be defined by means of "descent." Schneider (1967), trying to find a solution, distinguishes three kinds of linkage within a descent category, namely by consanguinity, by "statuses," and by some agnatic, uterine, or cognatic principle. The "statuses" are, in his view, the elementary units out of which the kin universe is construed. The only linkage which really distinguishes the descent category from all others, is the principle of agnation or uterination or cognation. Schneider has no common name for it, but there should be no doubt: it is the very "descent" again which appears here in its three different forms: patrilineal = agnates, matrilineal = uterines, bilateral = cognates. When functionally loaded, these three "principles" provide remarkably different possibilities, but this should not deter us from seeing the common element. It would be sufficient to specify the "statuses" according to sex, as already done by Radcliffe-Brown (1930a), who reduced them to two elements: an ascending and a descending link. In the resulting grid of relationships a certain set may be defined as "consanguines." But these cannot be seen to constitute a "linkage" of their own, unless Schneider admits that by introducing this category he did nothing but assert that descent, in last instance, is conditioned by the fact of sexual reproduction.

Not quite unexpectedly two new terms cropped up in the above explications: "kin" and "ascending link." The latter is the inversion of the "descending link." Whom do they connect? The answer will be: in first instance parents (in the sense of mothers and fathers) and children (in the sense of sons and daughters). But this description mentions only the targets (the "ranges" of these two relations), we also need a starting point (the "domain" of the relations). In kinship analysis it has become common use to call this domain "Ego." When we connect both types of links we receive siblings on the one hand and spouses on the other, each time including an identity function, "Ego." But we may also connect two descending links or two ascending links, and it is this possibility which allows to solve Schneider's problem: there are, for instance, fathers and brothers, sisters and mothers in Catholic church

organisations as well, kinship terms – but no kin (as we normally conceive of it). How can we know whether we have to deal with kin and when not? Quite easy: the structure must allow to connect at least two links pointing in the same direction, that is, it must allow to define parent's parents and (by inversion) children's children.

After all that's nothing beyond what was proposed by Radcliffe-Brown in 1930. All I did is making it a little bit more explicit. For the sake of simplicity the two basic links will be called here "filiation." Every kinship system is based on serial filiatioins which allows to define an theoretically endless number of nodes (positions in the multitude of connections). Practically this number is considerably reduced by introducing further rules lumping together different nodes into one "category" by means of what we call kin terms. By introducing special transformation rules for the primary kinship grid these categories can be structurally defined.

But let us be careful. If we want to say that somebody is the son of his father, we must at least have a concept of what is a father. If Radcliffe-Brown attributes patrilineal descent to a local group in Australia, how does he know that some of the members of this local group are father and son to each other, even though the people maintain that men are not vital for the coming to life of the children, and even though these children become full members of their "father's" group only after initiation? Where is the reason to speak "in terms of kinship" of this kind of local group?

I need not repeat here the difficulties faced by those who tried to give an interculturally applicable definition of "father" based on biological, social or juridical criteria. There is but one possibility to exclude these difficulties and to account for all variables, namely by having recourse to the structure of a kinship system: father is any person who stands to Ego in the relation of a primary ascending male (the first ascending generation, lineal, male relative of the older componential analysis). We may postulate that in any language there are sememes which by themselves or in combination can define the two components "parent" and "male" as two elements of the structure, the interpretation of which we call kinship. There can be no doubt that in any language the term thus specified will imply more (will signal, for instance, certain rights and obligations), but these additional meanings and their differences are excluded from our definition. What we have done is just to determine the biggest common divisor. Mark: I do not say that "father" is nothing but a first ascending generation male, I only say that he must at least fulfill these criteria. And it is only after we have identified this structural category that we are able to analyse the various kinds of social functions connected with it or attributed to persons in this position. Actually, this procedure has been followed (more or less consciously) by all field-workers, but to be conscious of it will prevent us to maintain that kin terms can

be defined by social roles. We thereby also can reconcile our view with that of Dumont: by abstraction the anthropologist provides the "nominal" system (a structural grid) which together with the functions yields the "real" (kinship) system.

Returning to descent (as the relation between Ego and his descendants, as such defined by the structure of the kinship system) we can see that, for instance, agnation is something "more" than descent, viz., descent plus (patri-)lineality, i. e., disregard of one sex. This simple semantic fact is at the basis of the ever repeated argument that there is a major difference between cognatic (bilateral) and lineal descent. Let me add that it is admittedly possible to use patri-and matrification as primary components, the combination of which allows to define the different forms of descent. A glance at several kinship terminologies, however, will show that the overwhelming majority of their definitions are based on a sexually undifferentiated Ego, although a distinction according to patri- and matrification is made in section systems, an exception which should call for our attention.

Having so far clarified my basic concepts, I now find some difficulty in calling a grouping of descendants (whether lineal or not) a "descent group," because to do so will require further operations, the first of which is to make these descendants independent of the position of Ego. We cannot achieve this by combining ascent and descent, since when saying that the descendants of somebody's ascendants constitute his "kin," this "somebody" as a reference point must still be "Ego." Kinship is Ego-centred, but "descent groups" are not. They may have a founding father or mother, but they can also exist without this reference point. What connects them with kinship is that the recruitment of their members is regulated by kinship criteria. But basically they are social units of their own order. They not only rely on kinship to recruit their members, but they also may influence the kinship structure by defining the range up to which certain kin terms should be used. Still, within these groups the question who shall be called how can only be solved by returning to a focal Ego.

To be sure, there can also be Ego-centred groups, usually called kindred, but it can only contribute to confusion when we lump kindreds and decent groups together under the term "kin groups." For "unilineal kin groups" we commonly use the term "lineage." I should ask for an additional criterion, viz., that its members trace their descent from a lineal ascendant specified as a person. If the apex is defined by a certain genealogical distance from Ego, it would be better to speak of a unilineal kindred.

The kin based social units usually called descent groups tend to be loaded with a number of functions as, for instance, common property, common leadership, common exogamy, common locality, or just common name. All these common rights

and duties in other societies or even within the same society may pertain also to groups whose members are not kinsmen. Therefore we shall have to differentiate between, for instance, local segments of a descent group, and kin segments of a local group.

### **Local groups and sections**

In his paper on Australian section systems, Dumont (1966) offered some new proposals for critical appraisal. The only published reaction which came to my notice (Buchler and Selby 1968) quotes some of Dumont's passages, leaving again the critical appraisal to the reader. There is, however, a major difference in attitude: what Dumont himself called "tentative proposals" is treated by Buchler and Selby like factual data and used as the main source in a chapter on Australian section systems. Let me try to raise some doubt in the validity of Dumont's analysis.

Dumont rejects the assertion that section systems are based on descent, the more so, since Radcliffe-Brown here acknowledged descent against his own definition. According to Dumont, the sections are connected a) by rules of intermarriage, and b) by rules that determine to which section the children of each kind of intermarriage belong. And he maintains that even if we construe a special rule of filiation, the rules of intermarriage will also entail the complementary filiation; if, for instance, the children of A (father) and B (mother) are C, we can choose between matrification B-C or patrification A-C. In 1913, Radcliffe-Brown showed both kinds of filiation in a diagram of the Kariëra system, but the "patrilineal" arrows disappeared in his later publication of 1930, a fact which, according to Dumont, "underlines the paradox of Radcliffe-Brown's attitude as a whole." There is, however, nothing paradox at all in this disappearance, since these descent lines are not an invention of noxious anthropologists in order to explain by matrilineal moieties alternating generations; they belong to what Dumont himself called the "real system." In case of irregular marriages – if, for instance, a man marries a woman of his own section – or in contact with neighbours who have different rules of connecting their sections, it is only the mother's section which counts, the father is "thrown away." Hence Dumont's conclusion that one rule of filiation, if there were any at all, would by itself entail the complementary rule, is obviously not correct. On the contrary, we must state that matrification (as defined above) is given expression by the rule (also verbalised by the people themselves and used to determine the section of a foreigner): "By a mother of that group, a child of this group." There are, by the way, still other symbols used to express matrilineal descent, for instance, by saying that a child has its flesh and blood from its mother.

Still, we may concede to Dumont that someone who regards sections as groups linked by matrification and therefore calls them "descent groups," he is liable to "substantiate a structure." Here all hinges on definitions. We have to ask: Are the sections social groups (not Ego-centred)? Are they connected by (and is membership determined by) filiation? Answer: two times "yes." My definitions given above leave me no choice: I can find no objection to call them "descent groups." The structure is "substantiated" by the people themselves: their sections are given names and they are loaded with functions. But let me clarify: the sections are descent groups only when linked by filiation into what has been called "section couples." A single section does not form a descent group of its own.

Dumont prefers to regard filiation as secondary and to start with marriage relations. Intermarrying sections are called by him "generations." A generation, as we use the term, is a set of relatives determined by congruent sums of ascending and descending links, so that there can be no generation without descent. However, as a matter of fact, sections can and sometimes do intermarry without recourse to a common generation. This can be demonstrated by the Ambrym case, for which Dumont maintains that "at least one intermarriage between different generations is necessary." How does he know? The answer is clear: Draw six boxes in two lines and three columns and connect them in such a way that each column is connected one time with the other two columns. To achieve this you will need either two horizontal and one diagonal or three diagonal connections. But calling the boxes in each line "generations" is really mistaken. For even if Dumont relates groups and not individuals, these groups will at one time (or even any time) stand in, for instance, a relationship of MBDC = FMBSC to each other. Different and same generation being (on the level of sections) analytically inseparable, we may well be able to perceive intermarrying "descent groups" (the three columns, each comprising a section couple), but never to construe intermarrying "generations." If we follow Dumont's definition, a six section system is no section system. Clearly a paradox.

Obviously, intermarrying "generations" are at best an epiphenomenon; but we may assume that Dumont has chosen a misleading term. What he wanted to do is to draw our attention to the pairs of intermarrying sections. Nevertheless, even on the level of the model, I can see no reason to attribute to them more importance than to the "couples" formed by filiation. The people themselves tolerate marriages not in conformity with the general rule, but they are strict when it comes to filiation: if necessary, the father is "thrown away." This means that in case of doubt matrification is decisive, and accordingly there has been some reason for coining a special term for such a section couple, viz. "matrilineal moiety." The term "moiety" (derived from the French word for "half") in itself implies that there always is a

couple of them, and once they are (in principle) exogamous what connects them is intermarriage. So why invent "generation" when moieties do the same job? That they really do, is shown by the fact that the six section system has no moieties. Hence moieties do not form a prerequisite for section systems. But if even they are dispensable, Dumont's "generations" will not do either.

When I formulated: "matrifiliation is decisive" I did so because the fact that patrification is disregarded in case of irregular marriages does not mean that patrification does not exist. If it did not exist at all, there should be no special rule to invalidate it in some cases. Thus we cannot exclude the possibility that patri-lineality may play a role and have to ask: what about the "patrilineal moieties"? They may easily be construed on paper (and, as a matter of fact, form the basis of nearly all schemes of Australian kin term systems drawn by anthropologists), but do people themselves recognise them as such? We have the statement that they distinguish between their own and the opposite side, and since these statements cannot be related to a single locality only, they apparently group together two times two sections among the Kariera, and, clearly stated, two times four subsections among the Aranda. They group them in such a way, that what might be seen as patrilineal relatives are on one and the same side. Dumont, trying to avoid descent constructs, calls these units "two ideal kinds of local groups." This would imply that anyone local group is exogamous, against which, however, we have the statement of Spencer and Gillen that an Aranda can find a marriage partner in his own locality. Thus, it cannot be locality alone which links the successive sections in question. Since the fathers are in one of these linked sections while the sons are in the other, one might suppose a descent link. But why then did Radcliffe-Brown cancel the signs for patrilineal connection in his diagram?

Again the reason is rather simple: they are not decisive for the system. It can function independently of these "patrilineal moieties" like it functions independently of "intermarrying generations" – provided only, one acknowledges the existence of special rules of intermarriage. Radcliffe-Brown, contrary to Lawrence and Murdock, did acknowledge these special rules. Since Dumont, at least for the eight section system, does it too, he could be taken to beat a fellow-combatant, if he would not, on the other hand, side with Lawrence and Murdock in assuming a holistic regulation of marriage by virtue of the sections, instead of regulation by "simple" kinship.

Unfortunately for all those who like simplified models, the exogamy rules repeatedly run contrary to both the section system and the terminology (to mention but the Southern Aranda and the Wik-Munkan). But before we can discuss this question, let me once more return to the "patrilineal moieties." In order to be able to accept this

designation (as a special form of descent groups), we should be sure that the presence of fathers and sons in these "moieties" is not just "incidental" by that it results from a group linkage in its own right and not by that of patrilineal descent. The decisive question is: will one be regarded as a member of a certain "moiety" by being the son of a member of this group? The answer must be "no," since, as we have seen, a man's section (and thereby moiety) membership is determined by the section of his mother: a man marrying a wife of his own section will have children who belong neither to his nor his wife's "patrilineal moiety" (which are the same), but to a section of "the other side." What then do these statements of "our side" etc. imply? The only answer which seems plausible (and is backed by Strehlow's translation of the term for the opposite "moiety" of the Aranda by "our in-laws") is common exogamy, though apparently not common *local* exogamy.

It should be noted, however, that Strehlow's translation is a male based view. It will not be valid for women, since for them their "in-laws" of the other side are those of their opposite matrilineal moiety. If the ethnographers had not been men and if they had not asked men but women to explain them the system, would there still be any patrilineal moieties? Until now it is only the matrilineal moieties which, by virtue of the filiation rule, qualify as "descent" groups. But their members do not coreside, while in the case of the assumed patrilineal moieties there is a high tendency that their male members do. That is why Dumont called them "ideal kinds of local group." But what is a local group the members of which coreside only "ideally"? To be sure, the men have the right to coreside, but what is the basis for attributing them this right?

The Aranda have a special term for that part of the patrilineal section couples which lives together in one locality: *njinanga* (Strehlow 1965: 136). These *njinanga* apparently constitute the proper kin section of the local group which Spencer and Gillen (1927: 62) characterise as "associated with the class [i. e. section] organisation," specifying that "the whole of the Arunta country is divided up into areas, each of which is now, or has been, associated with men belonging to the various sections of the tribe – in each case those to which a father and his children belong." Spencer's "associated with" is meant to indicate (as appears from the table of contents p. xvi) that these areas contained mainly, but not exclusively, segments of the section couples. The boundaries of each locality being demarcated by mythical episodes were not subject to revision, and males from other sections who took up residence in this locality "could not be admitted to full membership" (Strehlow 1965: 138). Unfortunately this is not a very precise formulation. Strehlow goes on to call all the men living in a *njinanga* area members of the local "totemic clan" (Strehlow 1965: 140), but this inclusion of foreigners proves very little. His "clan" actually is a

local group including also members of other totems (Strehlow 1947: 146). Spencer and Gillen speaking of "local totemic groups" indicate that they are composed "largely, but not entirely, of individuals who denote themselves by the name of some animal or plant" (1927: 8-9).

I conclude that the "foreigners" could participate in the rites of the local *njinanga*, but had no say in it, since they originally were members of foreign *nji-nangas*. Whether their children by being born in the new locality of their fathers could become full members of its local *njinanga*, remains an open question, similar to that of granting full citizenship to children of immigrants in modern nations. (They probably never were, even though their mother was a local native – see the data on terminology among the Northern Aranda quoted below.) Most of these "foreigners" were brought into their new locality as "the result of marriages in which wives refused to live in the *njinanga* section area of their husbands." In case they settled with their husbands "genealogies also show that in many cases a spouse coming from one of the four-class Aranda territories into an eight-class Aranda area was reclassified and put into the class proper to the new area of residence" (Strehlow 1965: 158). Whether the same happened to wives in case of irregular marriages remains an open question. The Southern (four section) Aranda followed the rule of matrification, but Strehlow (1947: 127), speaking of a certain man from the Northern Aranda, says that this man "under the patrilineal system of counting descent, could only be classified" in the section of his father's father.

Let me postpone the discussion of Strehlow's assertion of patrilineal descent. For the time being we should accept the possibility that the men might try to introduce it. With the neighbouring Walbiri, who possess an eight section system like the Northern and Western Aranda, matrification is again the rule, but "if a man contracts an improper union, so that his son is born into the opposite patri-moiety, the men of the father's patriline may alter the boy's subsection and kinship category in order to bring him back into his father's patrimoiety and make him eligible to participate in the father's dreaming ceremonies" (Meggitt 1962: 186).

After all, though a *njinanga* apparently is a patrilineal kin segment of a local group, the section couples (perhaps comprising several of these kin segments) are not just be a bigger unit of the same kind, since these "couples" (with the possible exception of the Northern and Western Aranda) lack a direct means to express patrilineal descent. We may even ask whether sections are kin groups at all. As a matter of fact, hitherto unrelated persons may be assigned to a certain section in order to be addressed as relatives. The Aranda word for section (*anbanerintja*) means "term of address" or "greeting" used when two persons meet or are introduced to one

another for the first time. By telling each other their "section name" (the "greeting") they become able to use appropriate kin terms (Strehlow 1965: 135).

In olden days it may have been a matter of life and death to be able to prove that one was a "kinsman," and the adoption of section names (a repeatedly documented process) improved the possibility to identify a man, providing him, so to say, with a kind of passport. In a four section system this passport would be issued not so much in the name of one's FF, but (matrilineally) in that of MMB. Normally, however, this would not matter since both FF and MMB belong to the same section as Ego. Thus a "section" would appear to be less a kin group than a name group, access to which is usually, but not solely (the system can spread), by a special consideration of matrilineal descent.

This view, however, does not explain why there are just four or eight sections and not some odd number of lineal descent groups, which sometimes do exist and therefore might have served the same purpose. Moreover, whatever the actual function of the sections may be, this function need not explain how and why the section systems came into existence, it will only explain why they still are existing and spreading. However I do not desist from calling a section a kin group, since otherwise it may be argued that I violate my own principle, viz. to regard as kin relative everyone to whom a certain position in a kinship structure is allotted. Since everyone assigned to a certain section can be addressed by kin terms comprising more than three generations, it would be best to regard a section as a name segment of a kin group. This may be seen as nothing but a formal characterisation, but if the Austabs integrate all foreigners as kin who can be classified according to their system, we have no right not to let them have their way. Still, we shall have to ask, how it is possible to accord membership of a certain section to a foreigner. Before I try to give an answer by returning once more to the "moieties," let us have a closer look at the marriage regulations.

## **Terminology and exogamy**

There is reason to doubt that there exists an Australian section system where really all partners of a pair of sections can intermarry. At least with the Kariera and Aranda, cited by Dumont, this is not the case. Thus whether we follow Dumont or the moiety theorists, in neither case shall we be able to explain the marriage rules. We might be well advised to return to Radcliffe-Brown and his view that marriage is regulated by kinship expressed by the terminology, but it seems that he was not really sure about the reasons for his statement. There is a passage in his paper which tells us that the marriage regulations are "the result of the terminological classification (reinforced by

the action of the generation principle and the generalisation of the parent-child relationship to distant 'brothers' of the father and the mother)" (1930: 443), but this does not answer the question which principle guides and limits classification and generalisation. From other passages it appears that marriage regulations result from an "emphasis on family and horde solidarity" (1930: 449). This ambiguous solution, due to a too liberal identification of kin terms and role expectations, is unsatisfactory, and I shall turn to the Aranda systems to see how they really worked.

There were at least four different Aranda systems, but I shall contend myself with those reported by Spencer and Gillen for the Northern, and by Strehlow for the Western Aranda. The latter system is easier to be understood: In his "marriage partner section" Ego has, besides his *noa* (possible spouses), his *palla*, with whom, whether they are near or distant relatives, marriage is forbidden since they belong to higher or lower generations. This fact at first sight may seem to support Dumont, but in fact it completely disproves him, since he connects sections. His so-called "generations" are extremely deceptive, since by his definition they must include alternating generations so that a male Ego should be allowed (in case of an eight section system) to marry FMZ and ZSD too. But Ego can marry only in his own (but not 2 up, 2 down) generation as defined by ascend and descend. The same principle had already been reported by Radcliffe-Brown for the Kariera, a four section system, where Ego's section also includes MFZ and (B)DD. These relatives are forbidden "even if their relationship to me is a very distant one, and they are near my own age" (Radcliffe-Brown 1930: 55). This fact was known since long, and as a result the old designation "marriage classes" was dropped and replaced by "sections." To be sure, one and but one of these "sections" or "greetings" contains according to the rules governing the system Ego's legal marriage partners, but nevertheless a great number of them he is not allowed to marry.

With the Northern Aranda things are a little bit more "complicated" but at the same time more instructive. The eight "subsections" still provide for the general structure, but the terminology also reflects locality which in its turn influences marriageability. The data were reported by Spencer and Gillen in a precision never reached by researchers before them and very rarely (for simpler systems) after them. Still, there are some (at first sight) minor details which they did not mention. I know of no source providing them, and there may be no possibility to retrieve them, since the system may have been subject to changes in the meantime.

In any eight section system each section of the two "intermarrying moieties" of a four section system will be divided in two. That is why these eight units also have been called "subsections." With the Northern Aranda as recorded by Spencer and

Gillen at their time the two subsections of the opposite moiety in Ego's generation contain two times two types of relatives irrespective of sex: *anua* and *apulla* in the "spouse" subsection and *unkulla* and *chimmia* in the "cross-cousin" subsection. (I use the quotations marks in order to indicate the nearest possible equivalent in our term system, but there are, for instance, cross-cousins of quite different degree, and not all fall into this section, but into that of possible spouses). To illustrate this terminology, Spencer and Gillen (1927: 49) specify that a man cannot marry (though belonging to his "marriage class") his "FFZSD" = "FMBSD" (my quotation marks indicate the category in terms of the nearest relative) in case her father belongs to Ego's locality or to his personal "family." These criteria obtaining, this women will not be *anua* but *apulla*. Note that the two conditions normally do not imply the same fact. When a "FFZ" marries out, her son and his daughter will belong to the locality of the "FFZH" = "FMB." It will be different only in case this husband moves in.

Spencer and Gillen moreover explain that if a FMZ (also *apulla*) remains on marriage in her own locality "which however rarely happens," her daughters (in the subsection of FZ) are *uwinna* instead of *winchinga*. *Winchinga* are the mothers of *unkulla*, *uwinna* are the mothers of *chimmia*, i.e. both are distinguished even though both ("first cross-cousins" belonging to the subsection of MF) are not to be married. Similarly, a woman's SDD is *winchinga*, if she belongs to her own locality or family group, but *uwinna* if she belongs to another locality and family group. This clarifies that Spencer's "belong to a locality" does not mean that somebody lives there, but that he or she was born there. And although one can marry into one's own local group (1899: 560), one cannot marry somebody whose father was born in one's locality. This may imply that it is only in the second descending generation that one will be regarded as a member of the *nji-nanga*, but the terminology does not confirm this: born by a mother (FFZ) who married uxorilocally, one is unmarriageable like a sibling, but still classified as an *apulla* (an unmarriageable second cousin of the opposite moiety). The male descendants of a foreigner marrying uxorilocally into Ego's *njinanga* are mercilessly set back into the categories of foreigners. Anyhow it remains true that marriage is forbidden with own second cross-cousins and individuals whose father's parents were already residing in one's local group. The father's residence alone will not be sufficient to bar marriage.

Regarding the difference of the two kinds of "first cross-cousins," *chimmia* and *unkulla*, the children of Ego and *unkulla* of the same sex can marry, while the children of Ego and *chimmia* of the same sex should, according to the system, call each other *apulla* and hence cannot marry. Both *chimmia's* and *unkulla's* FF (and FFZ) are *chimmia* as well. Normally the son's children of such a *chimmia* man (in the subsection of MF) should be *unkulla*, but when this son marries Ego's *uwinna* (a

"FZ" born in her mother's locality) Ego will call her children *chimmia* again. These children are so to say put back in their FF's category, and any possibilities of subsequent remarriage will be deferred by two generations. By their MM's remaining in her own locality they stay too closely related. This nearness is expressed by calling their mother *uwinna*. Judging from Strehlow's Western Aranda terminology, this term is the primary one for FZ (Strehlow writes *wona*), and neither here nor with the Northern Aranda a man's children should marry their own FZSC.

Most probably we can generalise and say that a person born in a local group without being a member of its kin segment (*njinanga*) is classified with his or her FF's generation. If one lives in one's proper *njinanga* area, however, this is generally not the case, since, for example, those who are *anua* for Ego, are *apulla* for his FF and his siblings as well as for his SC, and vice versa. The *apulla* in his own generation, however, may provide Ego with *anua* in the next generation but one, so that he has, in his "marriage partner" section *anua* and *apulla* both in his own and his alternating generation level. On the other hand, Ego's *apulla* and *chimmia* by uxorilocality have as their FFs men who are again *apulla* and *chimmia* for Ego, but apparently do not coreside with their grandchildren. Thus, locality is one thing, but reclassification is another. It should, moreover, be clear that the two second ascending generation *chimmia* of Ego and of his *chimmia* cross-cousin need neither be close kinsmen nor share the same locality, and we must ask by what criterion these different persons are covered by the same category.

An Aranda man distinguishes between two groups, each of which comprises members of four subsection: his *ilakakia* (his own moiety) and his *maljanuka* (his opposite moiety). Strehlow's translation of *maljanuka* as "our in-laws" is once more misleading, as, for instance, a man's mother-in-law belongs to his *ilakakia*, while his own mother belongs to his *maljanuka*. As everywhere, not all persons of opposite sex in the opposite moiety can be married. Excluded are especially those *njinangas*, into which Ego's own *njinanga*'s members of the generation above him did marry (i. e. not only his own mother's *njinanga*). It is they which contain both his *chimmia* and his *unkulla*. If Ego had to take into account all the marriages of the members of his *njinanga*, the task to decide "who is who" would be rather cumbersome; by the institution of "greetings," i. e. section names, his undertaking is materially facilitated. By virtue of this classification, all his *chimmia* and *unkulla* have the same subsection name, and what remains to be done is to see whether he can trace an actual genealogical connection. The case failing, a member of this opposite section can pass as *unkulla*, if, however, he (or she) is a genealogically definable kinsman two generations up or down (for instance MF or DS), he (or she) will be *chimmia*. If we add two (patrilineal) generations down or up, the resulting relation will be that of

*unkulla*. Thus, there basically are two kinds of *unkulla*: 4 or 6 genealogical steps removed. Only if they are six steps removed, they will become Ego's children's *anua* (possible marriage partners), otherwise they will remain *apulla*. The *chimmia*, on the other hand, are only 2 or 4 steps removed. A marriage partner must be at least 8 steps distant, in other words, two persons cannot marry when they have one great grandparent in common (forming, in Spencer and Gillen's terminology, a "family"). To reflect this rule by adequate kin terms would require an immense terminology, if the Aranda had not devised the possibility of reclassification.

While an own sibling is two steps removed, a primary parallel cousin is four steps removed. They are called by the same term, i. e. classed as siblings. This leads to the peculiar fact that a man may indeed marry a girl of the FFZSD = MMBDD category, provided that, however, she is not the grandparent's own sibling's child. In order to express this, an own second cousin of this kind is put back by two steps, thereby becoming, terminologically, a four step relative, i.e., *apulla* instead of *anua*. The 4-step *unkulla* mentioned above are not put back and thus may be seen to form an exception, but *unkulla* are not eligible for marriage anyhow.

We should not expect that all people take so much care as the Aranda in order to adjust their term system to the marriage rules. If there is, as with the Walbiri, a distinction made according to what kind of grandparent is concerned, a rule like that of the Aranda will not work, and no term system can adequately reflect the number of genealogical steps when it has to include into its categories parallel cousins of any degree. It will therefore be impossible to maintain (as Rad-cliffe-Brown did) that the marriage rules result from the terminology – at best it is the other way round.

If we want to find out how the Northern Aranda conceive of these marriage rules, we must return to a man's *chimmia* in his own generation. We have surmised that the said man is reclassified not for genealogical, but for local nearness, disqualifying him as a future father-in-law of Ego's children. Local nearness apparently increases with the number of steps of common locality; genealogical nearness, on the other hand, decreases with the number of steps in genealogy. There may exist some correlation between the two, still, the following diagram can be nothing but a tentative proposal:

<i>Main categories of relationship</i>	<i>Steps of genealogy</i>	<i>Generations of locality</i>	<i>Possibility of marriage</i>
Own generation distant kinsman	8	1	yes
2nd cross-cousin	6	2	no
1st cross-cousin	4	3	no
Sibling	2	4	no

The last row is based on the fact that the Aranda equate persons of the same locality but four generations removed, so that for instance FFFF and SSSS are elder and younger brothers of Ego. However, my conclusion may be taken to imply a paradox, viz. that going up and down the genealogical links increases the distance, while going up and down the local links (which are also phrased genealogically) decreases the distance. The decrease in genealogical nearness has one proviso: we will have to cross over from one sex to the other at least once. Unless we do so we could well leave the realm of (patri-)locality, but not the realm of moiety exogamy. Disregarding its influence for the moment, there can be no doubt that Aranda and Kariera genealogical exogamy is perfectly bilateral. The father is taken into just the same account as a mother when genealogical links are concerned. The Northern Aranda term system, however, is definitely tilted towards a patrilineal counting (cf. the recurrence of *chimmia* in alternating generations). This tilt reflects locality. As a "spiritual" being a man does not stem from a father, as such he is pre-existent and comes the nearer to his local source the more he ascends in his local history which has less a lineal than a circular character. However, the fact that terminologically a male Ego's siblings will reappear after four generations of patrilineal descent, cannot be taken to form a real prove of this male explanation of their existence, since the same will be true for a female Ego after four generations of matrilineal descent. No wonder then that the female members of this society may have a different view of this matter and sometimes refuse to reside patrilocally.

The system as exposed so far could exist without any moieties. But the terminology extends beyond those relatives which can be defined by genealogy or locality. Ego's *ipmunna* (his moiety members by two matrilinks), for instance, do remain unmarriageable for him even if they pass out of the six step limit for kinsmen, but they obviously do so because of their very character as moiety members. The rules of exogamy elucidated until now are not sufficient to explain it. Nevertheless one might assume that moiety exogamy has something to do with a kind of local or genealogical extension of the hitherto presented rules.

## Moieties

We may recall the fact that Ego's collaterals in his own locality are classed as his siblings. This extension by common locality, however, will not explain, why Ego has "fathers," "mothers," "siblings" etc. in localities which are not at all his own. They may belong to his moiety; but how does he come to conceive of such a unit? Is it that he belongs to (has rights in) different localities? Yet, according to the section system he can find mothers, fathers etc. in places which he has never thought of before, irrespective of any hypothetical tribal boundaries. It is not the "tribe" which contains the division, but the division which encompasses an ever wider circle of men of whatever tribal affiliation. Dumont spoke of two "ideal kinds a of local groups," but since it is neither kinds nor ideals which intermarry, but human beings, the question is how these human beings came to find out about these "kinds," or, more precisely, how they managed to group together several local groups into these ever larger units? Oddly enough, anthropologists dealing with moieties and the like apparently never bothered about this rather fundamental question. They contented themselves with stating the "structure."

Let us first see what is going on to facilitate the orientation when there are no section names. Let us call Ego's father's local group A, his mother's local group B. A and B can exchange "sisters," but need not, since there are other local groups also intermarrying with A or B. The peculiar phenomenon now is that those other groups which marry with A will not marry with B, and vice versa. Provided that a) the local group is exogamous and b) there is but one residence rule – these provisos are not essential, but they simplify the demonstration – then all members of Ego's local group, marrying into another local group, will be his unilineal kinsmen. If, by now, somebody is doing the very same, viz., not marrying into Ego's local group but into that of his in-laws, it is but reasonable that Ego can treat this person and his or siblings *as if* they belonged to his own group. They are, to be sure, not siblings in every respect, but at least with regard to marriage, and when not contradicted by other marriages corresponding identifications can be extended to all members of the two lineal groups. It may be pure theory to ask to which of the factors we should give priority: the application of sibling terms or the rule, not to marry into a group with which one shares a group of marriage partners – they may elicit each other –, but since the application of sibling terms does not *eo ipso* imply a marriage ban, while the rule itself is unequivocal, the latter will prove more convenient, at least for a formal analysis. This rule forms alternating groups connected by intermarriage as a horizontal correlate to the vertical sequence of alternating generations connected by descent. It establishes a kind of "negative alliance," in that any two groups which

intermarry with a third cannot themselves intermarry. These groups need not be strictly lineal or local, but they must at least be recognisable exogamous units. As such they will be sufficient to explain any dual marriage arrangement.

This hypothesis, however, has a weak point, viz. that we have to assume there had been no previous marriages between Ego's group and that of his affines' affines. We cannot postulate that they had lived very far apart, since otherwise they might not have married with Ego's affines either. Exceptional situations are really not useful when we have to explain a very common phenomenon. We therefore will have to abandon Dumont's idea of looking for marriage ties and localities first. We must consider the causes which gave rise to moieties.

We know that in former times foreigners who could not be identified as "relatives" were liable to be killed. The kinship system offered two basic categories: "we" (the "brethren") and the "others" (the "in-laws"). Thus, two groups intermarrying with a third one would have only two possibilities: to accept each other as "brethren" or to try to eliminate each other. In the latter case the chances to win the fight will grow the more numerous a group is, the more "brethren" it can mobilise. Since all local groups were rather small units, their only means to improve their competitive force was to ally themselves with others. For this purpose, "in-laws" will not do (they may like to have more potential marriage partners), you need "brethren"; and you can make this alliance binding by allowing them to share your "in-laws". Your "in-laws" by following the same policy will enlarge your marriage range as well. This policy will be the best way to avoid war and to have access to a growing number of marriage partners. Personal competition may increase, but public peace will be assured in the whole area of allied local groups. Anyone from outside this area would be definitely disadvantaged – unless he adopted this policy as well. As a result, the "invention" of "marriage classes" spread rapidly. Already the Austrian emperors in their quest for enlarging their realm had tried to avoid war by proclaiming "*sed tu, felix Austria, nube*" (in other words: "make love, not war"), but only the Austrians succeeded in permanently institutionalising this device.

When defining socio-centred descent groups, I insisted that they were social units of their own order. I avoided the characterisation as "political" units, since otherwise my subsumption of the section couples under the category of descent groups could be questioned. By now it appears that the primary reason for the development and the institutionalisation of these couples was a political reason. As membership in these groups was expressed and defined in terms of kinship only, European anthropologists here as elsewhere mistook these descent groups for nothing but kinship groups. And

since the colonial overlordship had introduced its own peace-enforcing devices, the section couples or moieties seemed to serve no other end than to regulate marriage.

So far no assumptions have been made concerning patri- or matrilineality. Both might do. In the case of irregular marriages, matrilineality tends to decide about group membership. Societies with matrilineal descent groups favouring matrilocality have been analysed as creating a multitude of intersecting ties, fostering internal cohesion and enabling common defence against other societies. But when a society is made up of numerous small local groups favouring patrilocality and when the primary reason of the moiety formation is to be seen in political alliances for common defence, a patrilineal Organisation would be more effective. Most probably the habitat is not without influence: the harsher it becomes, the stronger patrilineal tendencies. Moreover, the Australian invention of sections made it unnecessary to choose between matri- or patrilineality, the basic system can be interpreted both ways. Until now, all I did was to try to explain the moiety formation. But what gave rise to the sections?

Sections seem to regulate marriage, but in reality they first of all regulate the application of kinship terms. To give an example: In the course of time the large number of Ego's parallel cousins of any degree will no longer be of approximately the same age as Ego. As a result he will have siblings of any age, and likewise in all other categories. How can he know whether the men he meets and identifies as a man of his own patrilineal moiety will be his "brother," "father," "father's father," "son" etc.? By letting him recall all his ascendants until there will appear a name which appears in Ego's line too, then count and subtract the number of steps up and down? This would be rather cumbersome.

There are two ways to overcome the difficulty: either you apply kin terms in the proper way only when near relatives are concerned and beyond this limit contend yourself with distributing them according to age, or you introduce another device to facilitate classification. But this is easier said than done. If anthropologists did not know about the section system, I wonder whether they might be able to invent it. Even if we surmise that a very expert group of native elders found the solution, invented four names and the rules for their transmission, and finally ordered all others to adopt the new system, we must ask for an explanation how they could invent the principle of alternating generations in a situation where it became extremely tedious to identify even a single generation, the more so as the term system did not give any hint.

Until someone can explain that to me, I am ready to have recourse to bilineality, not in order to explain what is happening (the intersecting moieties may be

epiphenomena), but what may have happened. We know that the Dieri, for instance, do have both matrilineal and patrilineal kin groups, the former being more important and linked into (named!) moieties. Any patrilineal local group automatically contains two segments of these moieties to which its members belong in alternating generations. Thus the necessary preconditions are given, yet the Dieri have no sections. As shown by the Kariera, the fact that the Dieri do not allow marriage with a first cross-cousin is no argument against the introduction of a four section system. We have to conclude that the Dieri had no reason to introduce it. The bilineal descent producing alternating generations solves the problem of identifying distant relatives, hence our assumed problem can be solved without having recourse to sections. There can be no doubt that a four section system could easily be introduced, but why should it, if there is no need to do so?

Until recently, in SW and SE Australia, there existed side by side tribes with patrilineal and others (like the Dieri) with matrilineal moieties. In case of inter-marriage, no conflicts in moiety association will arise as long as only males of the patrimoiety tribe marry females of the matrimoiety tribe. But in case of continued "sister exchange," the groups will face a serious problem. In order to demonstrate this let me call the patrimoieties P1 and P2, the matrimoieties M1 and M2. A M1 male's and P1 female's children will, in their father's locality, be M2, but should not (according to the matrilineal concept) marry into their mother's moiety P1. But seen from the mother's side, they will be P2 and will not be allowed to marry into their own moiety, hence further intermarriages will be impossible. The most important man regarding marriage arrangements, the mother's (mother's) brothers, will have to decide the question, and they, to be sure, will find out that the problem is fictitious, provided only all moieties are halved, resulting into four sections: P1M1, P1M2, P2M1, and P2M2, common to both tribes. This judgment will be easily accepted, since, due to the principle of alternating generations, any local group practically contains two sections. As soon as their different role in cross moiety marriages is recognised the difficulties disappear (cf. Spencer and Gillen's account of Southern Aranda Arabana relations, 1899: 68-69).

There is no reason to exclude the possibility that one of the elders' councils of the mixed group did recognise the facts and in consequence accepted the four section names instead of the two times two moiety names, thereby practically, though most probably not consciously, abolishing what analytically still can be called moieties. Nevertheless, just because of its excellent compatibility with any moiety system, the new idea would probably not have spread, had not the people propagated it in a religious movement, preserved in one of the Aranda traditions, telling us how these cultural heroes came from the East, transforming into human beings those whom

they met on their way, circumcising them, and making them to stand apart (Spencer and Gillen 1899: 397).

Another step was necessary to unite two four section systems into one eight section system. I have published my ideas about this in connection with an analysis of the Aranda practices of adoption (Löffler 1966) and shall not repeat them here. A contrary development, viz. a splitting within a four section system, was proposed by Dumont. Yet, as may be seen from his diagram 3a (1966: 243), this splitting produces nothing but what Murdock called a third moiety and can never explain the rearrangement of the section sequence of the formerly coexisting two 4-section systems (as reported for instance by Schulze 1891). Dumont himself admits that his theory does not account for the number of groups (i. e. two-section couples) involved in the system; but it does not even account for the existence of these "groups" at all.

But what about Dumont's "four kinds of local groups"? They are best exemplified by the Mara, virtually "unnecessarily abstruse" in their representation "in terms of an eight section system by Spencer (1914: 60-64), uncritically reproduced by Radcliffe-Brown (1930: 332-333). The Mara have two times two named patrilineal kin groups kept apart in their moieties by the simple rule not to marry with one's mother's patrilineal group. The corresponding rule for the Northern Aranda, accounting for their "four kinds of local groups," is not to marry into one's mother's subsection couple. This subsection couple need not be a local group, but it may be the same as a patrilineal descent group, provided only Strehlow was right when he asserted patrilineal descent. A final confirmation, removing any doubt, would be the clear statement that in case of irregular marriages it is not the father but the mother who is "thrown away." It was provided by Pink (1935: 297).

With the Southern Aranda and their four matrifiliating section couples, however, things are different. Spencer and Gillen's assertion that there is practically no difference, since each pair of sections contains marriage and non-marriage partners cannot comfort us. From the four subsection couples of the Northern Aranda two are excluded as marriage partners since they are united in Ego's (patrilineal) moiety. From the opposite moiety mother's subsection couple is forbidden as well. In the South we might do without the concept of moiety by simply stating that Ego cannot marry into his (= his mother's) section couple. But once more the members of the remaining couple are divided into two groups, and father's group will be excluded as well. How this matrilineal "father's group" can be defined without subsections remains an open question. Perhaps the Southern Aranda restrict it to those members of their father's moiety who are their mother's brothers' and father's sisters' children and all those classed together with them in the *njinanga* of their locality. The system

might then be seen as a 4-section frame with an 8-(sub)section terminology and corresponding marriage rules.

If we use the concept of "lineal descent groups" instead of section and subsection couples and connect these with the four categories of grandparents demonstration will be easier. In the North Ego cannot marry into his FF's, MF's and MM's patrilineal descent group, i. e. should marry into the FM's group; in the South Ego cannot marry into his MM's, FM's and FF's matrilineal descent group, i. e. should marry into the MF's group. Though this sounds different, the resulting possible marriage partners are indeed the same: in both systems they can be identified as (classificatory) MFZDC = FMBSC. The Southern Aranda might as well intersect their matrimoieties by patrilineal descent groups, and this the more so as they are in some way already realised by the local groups ensuing from patrilocality. It does not really matter which kind of descent (patrilineal or matrilineal) we assume. This is the reason why Dumont suggested that we might drop the descent construct, replacing it by filiation (with "complementary filiation" always implied) and locality. But we cannot drop it, since we need the moieties. Otherwise we would receive an open end instead of a closed system.

Let us assume that the section couple exogamy of the Northern and Western Aranda is nothing but a generalisation (made possible by the existence of the subsection names) of a more basic regulation by localised patrilineal (*njinanga*). We then have to take into account FF's, MF's, MM's, and FM's patriline, marriage being allowed with the latter only. To keep these lines apart, the rule not to marry into the three first lines will be sufficient. But now we face a problem. There may be dozens of *njinanga* and we lack any means to allot them to our four lines without conflicting classifications. All these *njinanga* still form an open system. To unite them in a closed system, we must – unless we assume "negative alliance" – accept the existence of patrilineal moieties. By accepting them we implicitly assume that the Aranda, though being considered (and considering themselves) as one tribe, are in themselves an example of the union of two groups giving different weight to the concepts of patri- and matrilineality by acknowledging matrilineal moieties on the one side and patrilineal moieties on the other.

It would be easier to argue that, once the section (or subsection) couples can conceptually replace the moieties without the least change in the structure, it needs but a minor change in the affiliation of the sections in order to pass from matrilineal to patrilineal moieties. The example of the Walbiri, cited above, provides an example: the men, still accepting matrilineal descent in principle, annul it in case of irregular marriages by reclassifying the children according to their patrilineal

concepts. The Northern Aranda have been more consequent: they just "throw away" the mother. Thus they need not think in terms of matrilineality anymore, but the latter remains implied by the structure of the section system which could not have developed without it.

## Summary

Kinship has been interpreted as a structure based on two complementary concepts: descent and ascent, male and female, the former defined in relation to a given Ego. These elements can be combined according to certain rules, not specified in this paper, yielding kin categories. These categories may be marked by kin terms, and all persons covered by these are Ego's relatives. A segment of these, obtained by repeatedly ascending and descending, are each other's kinsmen, any functional segment of these kinsmen is a kin group. These kin groups may in their turn segment (or be themselves segmented by) other groups definable on the basis of locality, inheritance etc. An Australian local group may consist of a lineal kin group, plus the women married by its men, minus the daughters married by others; our analysis disregarded this composite kin group, and centred on the lineal kin segment of the local group. For such segments the Aranda term *njinanga* has been used. Membership in the *njinanga* was found determined not by residence, but by descent, i. e. allocation to a kin category. The people themselves conceive of this membership in terms of spiritual participation.

Exogamy was treated as a social phenomenon of its own not necessarily determined by kinship, though closely related with it since, for instance, genealogical exogamy is phrased in terms of kinship and can be reflected in kin terms. Depending on the presence of distinguishable social units, exogamy on the other hand can be defined by sections, access to which will again be defined in terms of kinship. However, genealogical exogamy as a rule overrides exogamy rules structured by sections. Kin terms can, but need not reflect the difference.

With regard to locality, our analysis had to recur to what Dumont called the "real system." Radcliffe-Brown (1930: 34) had maintained that the "horde, a small group owning and occupying a definite territory or hunting ground" was one of the two "basic elements of social structure in Australia," and Dumont (1966) had intensified the role of the local group by his argument, that kinds of local groups and not descent should be taken into account for the section system. We have seen that localities do play a vital role, but less in defining a residential unit than in their spiritual aspects. It is by virtue of being the son of a father that a man has a right to be initiated into the cult practice associated with a certain locality, and although the patriline has a local

reference in that its lodge is ritually linked with identifiable dreaming sites, it is not in itself a local, residential group (Meggit 1962:211).

Since people who have the same "patri-spirit" cannot marry, these patrilineal kin groups (*njinanga*) may be seen to form the basic exogamous units. But how to weld these in section couples? Kinship terminology since long may have implied the possibility to call affines' affines by sibling terms. But the resulting formal dual structure of terms cannot have had the power to form larger social groups, viz. moieties. Whether localised or not, the groups united in them profess common rules of exogamy. These rules are a must, but cannot explain the development of moieties. These are not just kin groups, but socio-centred political groups formed by alliances which, according to my thesis, served to establish peace. Moiety organisations have to be based on a common lineality. Exogamy rules concerning one's genealogical relatives have survived and still contradict the section rules. They are completely bilateral. Hence they were not suited to determine the lineality of moieties. Preferences in the choice of postmarital residence, in their turn influenced by the believe in spiritual patrilineal descent allocating special ritual rights to still coresiding members, may have had a stronger influence. However, in many societies it is obvious that a preponderance of one lineality in one sphere may be compensated by the other lineality in another sphere. Thus, spiritual patrilineality may be accompanied by marital matrilineality as well. I suppose that the habitat had an decisive influence, since it attributes more or less importance to either the male or the female field of activities.

However this may have been, it is obvious that the simple solution to bisect dozens of patrilineal groups by matrimoieties may produce a system like that of the Dieri, but this by itself will not be sufficient to bring all these patrilineal groups into a closed system of section names which, in its simplest form, requires just two patri- and two matriline. Moreover, the example of the Dieri shows that the mere acceptance of bilineality will not be sufficient to introduce a four section system. Still, since there were societies which had matrilineal moieties and others which had (and still have) patrilineal moieties, there must have been zones of contact. In order to avoid constant warfare and to form alliances beyond this somewhat artificial borderline, that is to provide for mutual exchange, the people had to acknowledge both ways of counting descent in at least one common field, that of moiety formation. Intersecting patri- and matri-moieties were the unavoidable result. Beyond all distinguishing peculiarities, the resulting sections became the common element, worth to be called by names of their own and worth to be spread by special ceremonies celebrating the cultural heroes who invented them.

These sections were and remained the primary intermarrying units. They rarely need to care for locality or descent. Both ceased to be an important factor. (How far their influence still determines marriage has been shown for the Northern Aranda.) Section systems require that the children of a marriage between members of these sections had and have to belong to another section, but whether allotted matrilineally or patrilineally, in a 4-section system one's lineal grandchildren always will find themselves in the same section as Ego. Anthropologists may construe lineal section couples according to the natives' attributing special importance to the one or the other lineality, but it remains a minor factor. These societies are based on a bilineal concept. In 6- and 8-section systems, however, this principle of alternating generations will be valid in the male line only, in the female line the return will need 3 and 4 generations respectively. This need not, as the example of Ambrym shows, deter the people from insisting on matrilineal descent, but, as shown by the Northern Aranda, matrilineality may also be abrogated. But this will not inhibit further intermarriages with other less radical groups, provided only the sections will be kept alive.

By means of a superficial structural analysis anthropologists may declare descent in the case of section systems to be an analytical category of no relevance, but this view will substantially limit our understanding of the peculiarities of the different systems and the common principles of their development. I am far from disapproving formal analysis, on the contrary. Nothing but formal analysis showed me that the basic elements of kinship were unsuitable for the definition of a socio-centred descent group. As a result I was bound to define moieties as political units, though they found their expression in terms of kinship. Nevertheless it still took me years to realise that political units which are not determined by kinship cannot be explained by kinship processes, but need a political explanation, which in the Australian context must be a historical explanation. Traditionally both functional and structural analyses tend to decry historical explanations – I advocate "intermarriage".

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