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The Structure of the Sinhalese Kindred: A Re-Examination of the Dravidian Terminology

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Source: *American Anthropologist*, Jun., 1962, New Series, Vol. 64, No. 3, Part 1 (Jun., 1962), pp. 548-575

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

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The Structure of the Sinhalese Kindred: *A Re-Examination of the Dravidian Terminology*

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I. INTRODUCTION

IN THIS essay I wish to examine the proposition that the main function of the Dravidian kinship categories is to regulate marriage and sexual relations inside bilateral and largely endogamous “kindreds.” The proposition is discussed mainly in the context of Sinhalese kinship, but the argument has bearing upon the kinship systems of other groups in South India and Ceylon, and the comparative evidence is examined in the last section of the essay.¹

The Dravidian terminology we are here concerned with has been noted for its connection with a prescriptive, bilateral, cross-cousin marriage rule. In this respect, the terminology is highly systematic, and all the terms imply bilateral cross-cousin marriage, and such marriage is essential if the categories of kinship are to be kept in order (Dumont 1953). While the kinship categories are thus highly systematic, Sinhalese society, in particular, has been referred to as “loosely structured” (Ryan 1953:21). I suggest in this essay that the apparently “loose” kinship structure, while certainly permissive in many important respects, is very highly structured with regard to marriage and sexual relations. In the Sinhalese context, the “kindred” is not simply an amorphous group, which differs from individual to individual, but has an identity as a kin group and exhibits considerable solidarity in diverse contexts. It is the most important social group as far as the individual Sinhalese is concerned. And thus, the systematic kinship categories organize the vital relations of marriage and sex within these small groups.

This argument regarding Dravidian kinship categories is supported by the relevant material from other groups in South India and Ceylon as well. If the “kindred” type explanation of systematic Dravidian categories, and prescriptive marriage rules, stands up to analysis, our conclusions will have implications for the Australian material. For, as is well known, the Dravidian terminology is almost identical with the Kariera type, and what is true for South India and Ceylon may also apply to some features of the kinship systems of Australia.

In the literature on Australia, the systematic terminologies of the Kariera or even the Murngin type have been explained in terms of exogamous lineages which exchange women between them. Lévi-Strauss’ contributions (1949) are perhaps the best known examples of this line of argument; and the attempt of Murdock and Lawrence to trace the logical implications of the Murngin terminology also belongs to the same class (1949). While Radcliffe-Brown

(1951), in his rejoinder, reaffirms his point that marriage is regulated by the terminologies and not by the class systems, it is still true that unilineal groups, clans, form the basis for his analysis. Leach's well known contribution, too, takes "lines" for granted and is concerned with the further question as to whether the asymmetry of the Murngin marriage rules is associated with rank differences among local lines (1951).

The difficulty in all these approaches is that the significant local group, referred to as the "horde" among the Murngin and other tribes, is not a "lineage" at all and contains a variety of kinsmen linked through affinal or cognatic ties (Warner 1937:137-40.) The unresolved confusion between "clan" and "horde" is perhaps the weakest point of Warner's classic. I would suggest that, in all these systematic kinship terminologies which are connected with a prescriptive marriage rule, we are dealing with pigeon-holing systems which classify the totality of the kinship universe of the individual and fix his marriage (and often sexual) partners within this universe. It is likely that these terminologies get confused beyond the kin group as is the case among the Sinhalese. I would suggest, hence, that these systematic terminologies connected with prescriptive marriage are probably related to quasi-corporate "kindreds" which may or may not contain lineages. This would appear to be the reason for the terminologies with their quite complicated principles being extended far beyond any lineages to all who are part of the "kindred."²

In the next part of the essay, I discuss the Sinhalese kindred. In the third part, I provide a description of the categories of kinship and the rules of marriage. Part IV is an analysis of the functions of these categories in the internal structure of the kindred. The discussion of comparative data from other castes and groups in South India and Ceylon is in Part V.

II. SINHALESE KINSHIP

The Sinhalese I am concerned with are peasants of the dry zone of Ceylon. They live in small nucleated villages and are mainly rice farmers or shifting cultivators. The outlines of Sinhalese caste system have been described (Ryan 1953; Yalman 1960), and an admirable analysis of a type of dry zone village, with much material on kinship, is also available (Leach 1961; for further accounts see Leach 1960, Sardar and Tambiah 1957, and Ryan 1958).

The Sinhalese village of the dry zone varies in size from a dozen households in the northern and eastern sections to the large conglomerations with 100 to 200 households in the Central provinces. The larger villages frequently contain a number of service castes—washermen, tom-tom beaters—besides the most numerous and highest caste of cultivators. In the larger villages, there is little solidarity to the community as a whole. The most important social groups for the individual in the village are his immediate circle of kinsmen who act together and who regard themselves as a kin group (*pavula*) with a definite identity. Thus a person's closest associates will be persons to whom some form of kinship may be traced. Whether such kinship links are on the

paternal, maternal, or affinal side is of no consequence. Unilineal descent plays no role in the social life of the village, even though the wealthy or aristocratic households will use patronymics for prestige purposes.

Sinhalese kinship (*nākama*) is an undifferentiated category into which kin of all kinds is merged. Links through women or marriage are as important as links through men. There is a significant merging of affinal kin with kin of common blood. Kinship among the Sinhalese implies very strongly the permissibility, indeed, the necessity, of "marriage." In this sense kinship (*nākama*) and caste (*jāti*) are complementary concepts. Kinship stops at the boundary of caste. Caste differences imply the prohibition of intermarriage and interdining; hence, kinship is strongly associated with marriage and commensality. Where castes have no formal mechanisms like the Indian *panchayat* to enforce caste prohibitions, it is the kin groups which vigilantly protect their own purity (in Sinhalese simply expressed as "protecting our caste," *api jāti araksava kirima*) and hence the purity of their castes.

The concept of pollution is a link between the caste and kinship systems. In the minds of the Sinhalese, the entire universe is graded on the purity-pollution scale, and this is also true of members of the same caste. Thus, even among members of the same caste, in the same village, there will be pure persons—who will attempt to justify the purity of their ancestry by the recital of long aristocratic (*radala*) pedigrees—and others who though not formally excommunicated, should nevertheless be avoided.

It is appropriate in this context that the group of persons who constitute a kindred, and who hence consider themselves to be closely related by blood and marriage, should also claim and be accorded equal ritual status. It is usual to speak of kindreds (*pavula*) as "one people" (*eka minissu*) and "one blood" (*eka le*). In this regard, the kindred (*pavula*) appears as the microcosm of the Sinhalese castes (see Yalman 1960:90ff). The kindred can be referred to as "one caste" (*eka jāti*); the implication here is not that they form a named "sub-caste," but that they are of the same ritual level (*vamsa* or *tatvaya*) inside the caste. Indeed, it might be useful to refer to the kindreds as "micro-castes."

The equality of ritual status reflects the cohesion of the kin group. Members may freely interdine and intermarry among themselves because of the certainty of such equality; or, alternatively, the groups which act as one, by interdining and intermarrying freely, are regarded to have the same *vamsa*. The ideology is consistent, so that when a member gets "polluted" (*naraka* or *apirisilhu*) by associating intimately with persons of lower castes, or lower kin groups of the same caste, he or she may be excommunicated. He will not be invited to kindred feasts, and intermarriage with him and his associates will cease, to put an end to contamination.

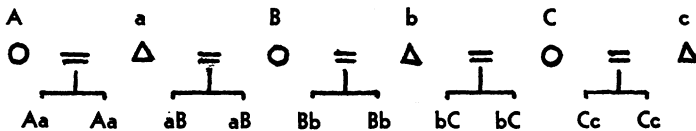
Claims on Property and the Rights of Women

The concept of individual income and property is highly developed. Each individual may cooperate with many others in the cultivation of paddy or in

the slash-and-burn agriculture. He may not necessarily own any land, but he will always have an income as a return for his labor or for his bullocks (used in plowing) or indeed for the seed-paddy which he may lend on interest. He may be engaged in "boutique-keeping" or in transport enterprises with his bulls (*tavalam*). Whatever he does, the income belongs to him alone. In the case of married men this share of the harvest in the form of paddy goes into a separate granary to which only the wife is allowed access (Yalman 1958).

The ownership of property follows a similar pattern. Each individual who is the "owner" (*aitikaraya*) of any property has the right to dispose of it or convey it to any of his heirs by testament. If he dies without a testament, all his children, male or female, will divide it per capita among them. It is noteworthy that the interstate inheritance is not divided per stirpes (that is, according to the offspring of each "common bed") but that the "marriages" of the parents are disregarded for this purpose. Thus, all the children of a man, whoever their mothers may have been, share and share alike in the inheritance. The same is true of the children of a woman. Their paternity (as long as caste problems do not arise) is of no importance for the purposes of their claims on the property of their mother. Brothers and sisters are accorded equal rights.

Hence, if there have been a number of "unions" between some men and women, property devolves in a complicated pattern.



Thus, a set of full siblings would have the same property, but half siblings would receive property from diverse sources. But even a full sibling group does not remain with a single set of property rights. Since women have claims on property, all brothers upon marriage will acquire rights of usufruct and/or management on the lands of their wives and will be drawn further apart from their full siblings. They may, moreover, buy land or property as well. Each individual, therefore, has a unique configuration of claims on property. He may have inherited property from his father, from his mother, he may manage the lands of his wife, and he may have bought lands himself.

There are two further observations to be made here. It is clear, first, that the bilateral character of Sinhalese kinship is directly related to the rights of women on property and particularly on land. It is the property rights of women which fragment the group based on land. Women carry the property claims with them upon marriage to their husbands. If these are outsiders, then theoretically the control of land also passes to outsiders. In the Sinhalese case, rights in land are not in fact allowed to leave the kindred with the woman. She is either married to a relative close enough that the property does not leave the close circle or, if she marries an "outsider," he is assimilated into the family and again land remains within the "kindred."

Second, the special position of women as carriers of land rights and as porters of kinship links makes their connections of great interest to the men who control them. Hence the fathers, mothers' brothers, and the actual brothers of the women are vitally interested in their marriages. This forms the backbone of the dowry system. If women must be married to close relatives to keep land in the kindred, or if, as an alternative, the "husband" will be introduced into the kinship circle, one might as well take the next step and deliberately endow women with a large dowry in order to bring influential men into the family. The practice is very widespread both in Ceylon and India and is critically and significantly related to the nature of the kinship links which are forged by the "give-and-take of women" (*gānu hira ganu denu*).

These are the reasons why the marriages in this society must be spoken of as "alliances." The women are controlled by the men. When they are offered to another man together with rights of management on her property and dowry, close cooperation is expected in return.

The "Kindred" as a "Micro-caste"

The word "pavula" ("kindred") literally means "family" and can be extended to refer solely and politely to the wife. A pavula will normally consist of half a dozen or more heads of households and may include 20 adult males. Though there may be disagreements on the exact membership of the pavula, and its wider ramifications, the core of the group, named after one or two prominent leading members, will consist of some very highly interrelated kinsmen who will normally act in unison.

These "kindreds" which engage in all kinds of activity are clearly evident in the internal politics of Sinhalese villages. Factions, when they do not involve members of different castes, always follow pavula lines. The groups which are formed for or against the village headman or other officials in the village concern the pavula. Members of the pavula will consult each other on all critical occasions and will provide help (*udan*) to each other whenever this is necessary or demanded. Thus, the pavula is not formed around any particular interest like agricultural activities, or ownership of land, or local contiguity, but is a group of kin pledged to support one another within the general reciprocity of kinship. It is, as it were, a mutual insurance association conceived in the realm of kinship and infused with kinship values. The group offers security in the absence of other agencies.

While the individual Sinhalese could probably trace some form of kinship to most—if not all—members of his caste in his village, he usually makes definite choices regarding which of these links he will keep up seriously. Adjustments are continually made, particularly among families who rise and fall in wealth, but the usual person remains in the "kindred" of his parents. There is a definite tendency to justify the continuity of kindred membership in caste terms. Thus it will be said that the kindred is of "one blood," and

that their ancestry (*parampara*) has never been mixed or blemished. Since previous intermarriage is the best proof of status equality, it will be claimed that the kindred has always intermarried among its own members. In this respect the kindred approximates a small "caste."

But kindred endogamy is only an ideal. For it is obvious that with time and new generations and marriages, kinsmen get dispersed. Some of these kinsmen remain in the kindred and keep up marriage links with other kinsmen in the group. In other cases, when there is no desire to perpetuate kinship obligations, the links are allowed to lapse.

We suggested above that reciprocal assistance is the basis of the pavula. It should be noted that the ideal of endogamy is only feasible among people of the same relative wealth and influence in the village. For various reasons which need not be touched upon here, the economic structure of the dry-zone villages is not stable. It is quite clear from family histories that rises and falls in wealth are quite steep (Yalman 1958, 1960). Some start gambling and lose their lands and cash; others start successful boutiques and become rich. The rich want to intermarry with the rich, and the wealthy try to shed their poor relatives. The influential wish to have influential relatives, and in the long run by an extremely painful process which is the key to much hostility in Sinhalese villages, the poor get squeezed out of the kindred of the rich and have to intermarry with their own kind. As the Sinhalese put it, "money is the younger brother of the gods" (*salli deviyange malli*.)

Thus, if the notion of the uniqueness of ritual status strengthens the endogamous tendencies in the pavula, the divergence of wealth has the opposite effect. Marriage is the mechanism whereby new alliances can be contracted and the pavula materially strengthened. When new kinsmen are brought into the theoretically closed circle, they are assimilated into the pavula. They are introduced into the systematic kinship categories and are addressed by kinship terms (see below). As Pieris has noted, there are no "in-laws" in such a regime, for it is assumed that everyone is already related (Pieris 1956:216). Under such conditions, the fact that the relationship is a new one will not normally be revealed to outsiders. The suspicion that the "new" kinsmen might be of lesser status will be too strong.

Thus the fiction of common ancestry (*parampara*) and marriage are the two axes of the kin group. The idea of common blood gives the group continuity in terms of kinship and status. Marriage provides for flexibility and allows the operation of choice in the reorganization of the group. These double principles of bilateral kinship and marriage, with their implications for continuity on the one hand and flexibility on the other, make these bilaterally organized kin groups ideal as a "protective wrapping" around the individual in many societies. This is especially true when there is a great diversification in terms of wealth, and the positions of families are not altogether stable or firm. In such conditions there is great advantage in utilizing the marriage alliance to improve upon consanguineous kin.³

Feasts and the Fiction of Kinship

The solidarity of the pavula is manifested on certain ritual occasions when the cleanly saronged and well powdered men, and similarly powdered but sari-wearing women, of the kindred congregate. These occasions are associated with all rites de passage, but there is a special feast on the Buddhist New Year.

The proceedings in these feasts can be stormy. If there are doubts about the relative status of the kinsmen who have been invited, if some of the kinsmen have allowed themselves to be connected with "polluted" persons, the others at the party may take exception. Fights may start and end up in murder. Though we may say that feasts are hopefully intended to express the unity of the pavula, the occasions are again utilized by unsatisfied members to secede from the group. This is the way kinship is formally broken (*nekam kedila*).⁴

We may also note here that often the arguments regarding social status and rank by which one pushes others out of the kindred or leaves it oneself are, in reality, pretexts which, when analyzed, reveal deeper conflicts about property, women, or debts. It is also true, again, that when there are great material incentives for members of a group of high status, but with little wealth or influence, they may form marriage alliances with people of low status to whom they would have objected under normal conditions. In this sense much of kinship is only putative and fictional. It can be denied when it exists or it can be created when links are considered expedient. An example will elucidate this aspect of Sinhalese kinship more clearly:

When Banda, a very wealthy and influential merchant of Makulle, married the daughter of Dodang Mudalali, the alliance was purely political. Both families were very important in the region. Banda's grandparents had been newcomers and only in Banda's generation had the family become very powerful. Dodang Mudalali, though a native, had also recently made his fortune. It was decided that the families should get related and Banda started calling Dodang Mudalali *mama* (mother's brother) and, appropriately, Banda's father started calling Dodang Mudalali, cross-cousin (*massina*) (see below). With these links established, the rest of the kindred also utilized an appropriate terminology. Eventually, Banda married the daughter of Dodang Mudalali—who as the daughter of a mother's brother (even if only putative) stood in the correct cross-cousin relationship.

After a year of marriage the girl died without children. At the marriage, Dodang Mudalali had presented his daughter with some land as dowry. Under normal conditions, this land should have reverted back to Dodang Mudalali upon the death of his daughter without children. But the families had intended to get related in any case and were not put off by the death. Dodang Mudalali did not take the lands back and all pretended that they were now eka pavula (one kindred) even though there were no extant links between them.

With poorer people this state of putative kinship is often brought about simply by the contiguity of houses and gardens. They begin to act as if they

are actual kin without really any established links between them except the claim that "Oh! My great grandfather called his great grandfather so and so." In all such conditions people will be inclined to guard and respect the rules of marriage and thus prove kinship (see below). Nonetheless, it is an actual marriage which finally links them.

Even though kinship is a fiction, it is still highly significant that all important social relations are channelled into the kinship idiom when possible. Kinship is the opposite of contractual relationships. There are many occasions on the paddy fields, on the slash and burn highlands, when traditional contractual arrangements are utilized by Sinhalese peasants, but in all such cases the reciprocity that is expected is highly specific. In the kinship idiom, while the element of reciprocity is still present, it is stretched over an unlimited period of time and is subdued. In fact, kinsmen deny that they help each other in return for certain expectations. This "materialistic" approach runs contrary to the spirit of kinship, in which allegedly no return of any kind is expected. The attempt to assimilate important and valuable social relations into the kinship sphere is, in part, a concern to stabilize and ensure the perpetuation of these relations. Though the kindred is partly a status group, and partly thought of as a descent group, it is formed around the expectation of mutual assistance and support.

The kindred, then, is not a corporation. It has no common property, no chief, no clear boundaries. It is somewhat amorphous, but nevertheless it can exert considerable influence upon its members. It is the main significant primary group which emerges outside the elementary family within the Sinhalese castes. It forms the basis of all factions in the village and is always in evidence in any kind of dispute. Fellow members will validate one's claims in the case of disputes concerning landed property for which one has no title deeds. They will support each other in agricultural activities, in business undertakings, in the arrangement of marriages, and will work together especially against the authorities.

These kin groups, which I consider to be of great importance in Ceylon, clearly exist on much the same pattern in parts of India as well. Before turning to comparative evidence, however, we must examine the rules of marriage.

III. THE RULES AND CATEGORIES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

There is no word in Sinhalese for "incest." Although it may appear to the superficial observer that the villagers of the dry-zone of Ceylon are somewhat promiscuous in their amorous adventures, there are in fact clearly defined rules which regulate sexual and matrimonial relations among them. They have a vital part to play in the internal organization of the kindred.

The Categories of Kinship

But what are these kinship categories? How precisely do they regulate marriage and sex?

The Sinhalese rules regarding sex and marriage are entirely dependent upon

the terminology of kinship (see Fig. 1). They are impossible to comprehend without taking the terminology into account; this has been frequently described in its general form, which is not confined to the Sinhalese.⁵ The terminology which is inherently associated with a prescriptive bilateral cross-cousin marriage rule is exceedingly systematic; the relationship between every category in the terminology except for grandparents and grandchildren carries the implication of consistent and regular cross-cousin marriage.

As Morgan noted, referring to the "Tamilian" system (which is formally identical with the Sinhalese), the terminology "proceeds with the utmost regularity . . . it is coherent, self-sustaining and harmonious throughout. . . . As a plan of consanguinity it is stupendous in form. . . . The fundamental conceptions upon which it rests are not only clearly defined, but are enforced with rigorous precision" (Morgan 1870:387).

All the sisters of the mother are called "mother"; all the husbands of these "mothers" are "fathers." The same is true of the brothers of the father; they are called "father" with prefixes for elder and younger. The wife of a "father" is a "mother." All the children of these "fathers" and "mothers" are "brothers" and "sisters."

As is well known, the really interesting terms are those of MB, FS, and affines. Thus, *mama*, the "brother" of anyone in the "mother" category is MB, FS husband, and father-in-law. *Nānda*, the "sister" of any "father," is MB wife, FS, and mother-in-law. The daughters of *mama* and *nānda* are "cross-cousin" and "wife" to Ego. They are called *nāna*, and Ego can have sexual relations with them or marry them. The sons of *mama* and *nānda* are *massina*, and the sister of Ego can be married or have sexual relations with persons standing in that category.

Furthermore, what is important is that they can only be married (or have sexual relations with) someone in these categories; they cannot marry or sleep with anyone else; for all the others are either "brothers" and "sisters" or "sons" and "daughters" or "sons-in-law" and "daughters-in-law," or, in the superior generation, "fathers" and "mothers," or "mother's brothers" and "father's sisters."

In other words, sexual relations are in principle allowed only in Ego's own generation, and within that generation parallel cousins are forbidden; as the sole choice one is left with the cross-cousin category. The idea of cross-cousin marriage is, as it were, embedded in the terminology; the kinship terms imply cross-cousin marriage and, what is more, cross-cousin marriage is imperative if the kinship terms are to be kept consistent.⁶ It is impossible to marry the wife of a deceased *mama*, for she would be "mother-in-law" or a "father's sister," and in either case the union would be considered sinful (*dos*). The terminology, thus, is an essential agent in the preservation of marriage regulations, and vice versa. If the rules are not kept, all kinship categories would be thrown out of gear.

It is not merely "wrong marriages" (*varada kassada*) which introduce inconsistencies into this orderly structure. If a person merely addressed another

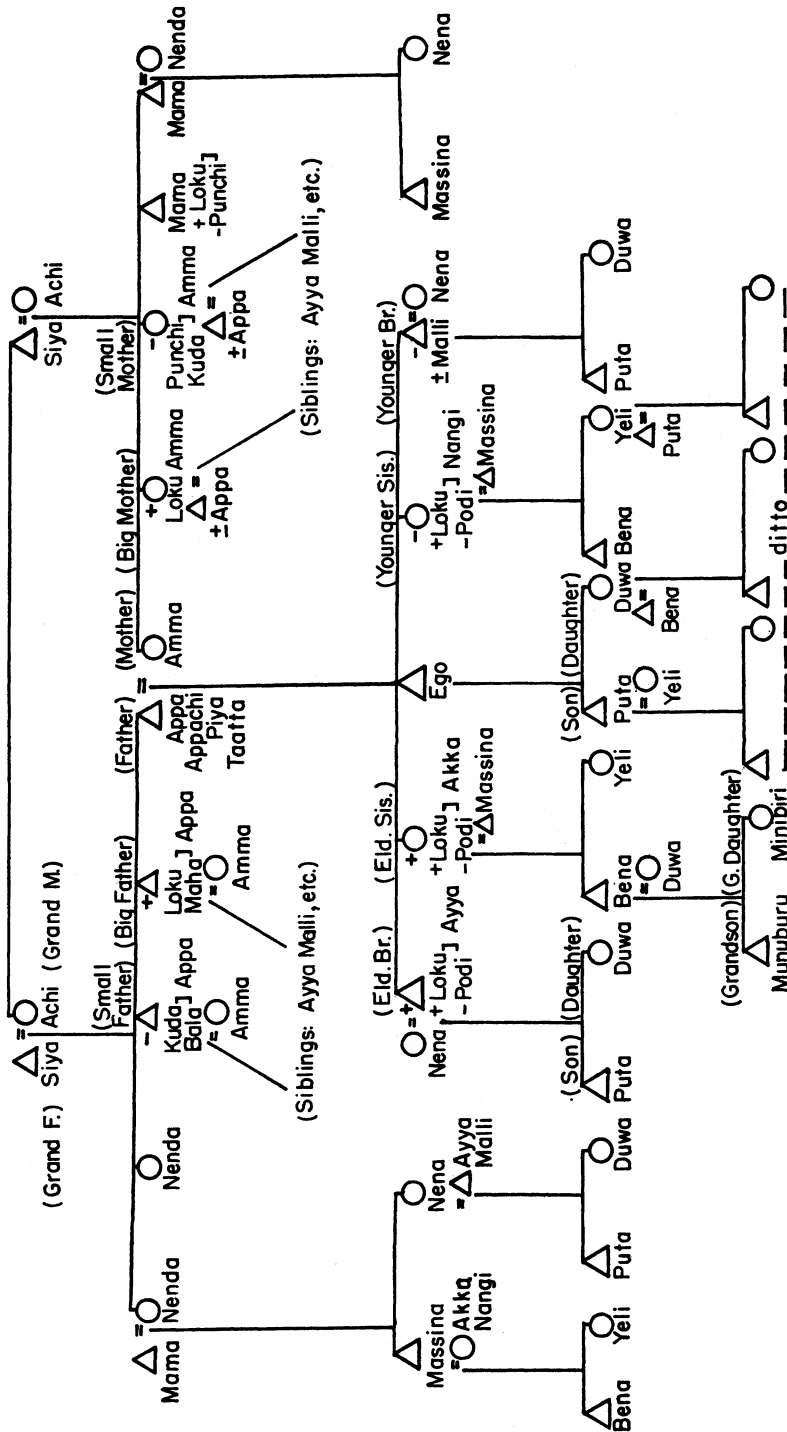


FIG. 1. The Sinhalese Kinship Terminology.

by a kinship term which was not "correct"—if, for instance, one called a classificatory "sister," *nāna*—and if the fault were not corrected, relations would similarly be confused. *Nāna* implies a person with whom one may have sexual affairs. If one called a "sister" *nāna*, that would be nothing less than a lewd sexual suggestion. The villagers say that the "sins" resulting from wrongful intercourse are the same as those arising from a wilful confusion of the categories by addressing kin by the wrong terms. It is *dos* (sin) in both cases and may result in serious illness or the revenge of some deity. (For further elaboration of the concept of *dos*, see Yalman 1961).

On the other hand, it is also true that certain changes in address have been accepted. Thus, it is frequently the case that male cross-cousins (*massina-massina*) call each other elder and younger "brother" (*ayya-malli*); this is always so when there are status differences between them. Such changes in the terminology, highly important though they are, are only confined to address. For purposes of marriage they are always disregarded; the people would say that "by kinship we are *massina*, it is only out of respect that I call him *ayya*. His sister is still my *nāna*."

"Wrong" Marriages

While there is no doubt that the terminology is inherently linked up with orderly relations between kinsmen, at times "mistakes" are wilfully made.

Two cases are described to illustrate this point. Case 1: *c*, the brother of *b*, had married a woman (*e*) from another village (Fig. 2). By virtue of this

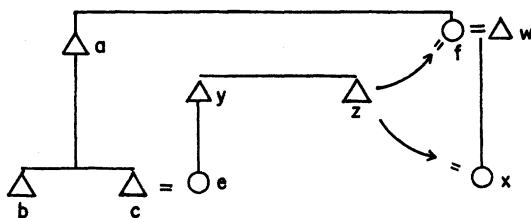


FIG. 2

marriage *a* and *y* were *massina* to each other (for *c* calls *y*, father-in-law—mother's brother, *mama*; and, therefore, *a* calls *y*, brother-in-law—cross-cousin, *massina*). *Z*, the brother of *y* (therefore, also, *massina* to *a*), came into the village and immediately set up a polyandrous household with *w* and *f*. This union was "correct," because *f*, as the sister of a *massina*, stood in the category of *nāna* to *z*. *F* had been an adventurous woman and had a daughter *x* about whose paternity there was no great agreement. However, *x* was *duwa* (daughter) to *w* and stood in that relationship to *z*. Hence she was prohibited to her mother's new man. When *x* grew up and had her puberty ceremony, *z* suddenly decided to renovate the domestic arrangements. He gave up his

polyandrous household and, to the great consternation of the village, settled down with x who was his "daughter" by relationship.

B in particular was greatly perturbed. He pointed out that x was his own father's sister's daughter (nāna), therefore z, who had previously been mama (as the brother of y), now had to be called *ayya* as he had become the husband of a nāna (*nāndage duwa bendapu nisa, ayya venava*). He had had a dispute with z, in any case, and after the incident he quarrelled both with y and z (ostensibly because of their "immorality") and became a Buddhist priest for a while. By 1955, when I was in the village, he had returned and had accepted the situation. He called y mama and z ayya (elder brother). There was no great "public" pressure against the union, but it was the kinsmen who objected.

Case 2: In some cases the wrong marriage is ignored for the purposes of the terminology (Fig. 3). People go on as if the objectionable union had not

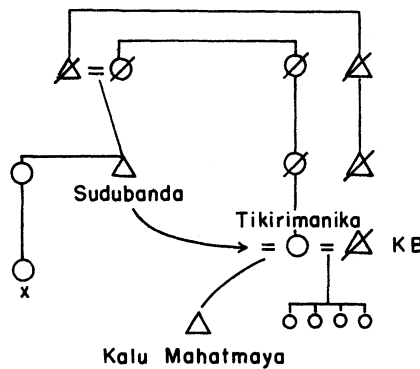


FIG. 3

taken place. Sudubanda, who was notorious with women, was *loku appa* (father's brother) to K. B. Nevertheless, after the death of K. B. (a rather rich man), he disregarded the fact that he was mama to K. B.'s wife, Tikirimaniika, and started courting her. Soon enough, he settled in her house. The pavula greatly disapproved of the union, but it was clearly a good connection for Sudubanda, who was not rich at all.

Now, Tikirimaniika had had four daughters from K. B. Later she bore her new lover a son called Kalu Mahatmaya. The daughters, remembering Sudubanda's former position, always called him *siya* (grandfather) and never "father." In the same way Kalu Mahatmaya identified himself with his sisters and also called Sudubanda—his father—*siya* (grandfather).

The reason why such unions are felt to be wrong is that their confusion is cumulative. Thus, if Kalu Mahatmaya chose to trace his connection to x in the future through Sudubanda (his father) then she would be nāna (cross-

cousin). He could sleep with her. If, however, he traced kinship through his mother, then x would be "mother's sister" (*amma*, i.e., "mother") and therefore would have to be avoided.

Thus, in many such doubtful cases where an obviously wrong union had taken place, attempts are made to fit the mistake into the pattern by "discovering" some connection which would place the couple in the correct category. Then it would be said that "a *nāna* relationship has been *put in front of* the wrong connection." Such an excuse—however far-fetched—was normally considered essential to preserve at least a façade of propriety.

There are two further questions which arise. First, what is the range within which there is an interest to keep these rules? Second, why are the rules in this remarkable form?

The Range of the Rules of Marriage

The answer to the first question can be given definitely: the range in which the rules and the terminology are carefully preserved, and where there is great preoccupation with consistency in the terms, marks the widest extension of the kindred (*pavula*). Within the kindred, among people who think of themselves as close relatives, it is considered a sin to have sexual relations with persons in the wrong category, and even, as we have noted, to call these people by wrong kinship terms would be looked upon as most unfortunate and inauspicious. Though villagers were often highly amused when "wrong unions" were pointed out to them, they were not amused when close relations of the *ävāssa* *pavula* (own kindred) were involved in such scandals.

On the other hand, the membership of the kindred does change over time, and those who consider themselves kinsmen at the moment may, for unforeseen reasons, become enemies. Or, alternatively, as we suggested, new members might make their way into the kindred. In such cases the kinship categories of the two groups are articulated to each other on the basis of a single marriage assumed to be between the categories of *nāna* and *massina*.

There remains, of course, the question: What function is served by the terminology inside the kindred? This point is related to the "form" of the terminology and is dealt with below.

IV. THE FORM OF THE TERMINOLOGY

It will be noted that the cross-cousin marriage rule has certain implications: as a corollary all parallel cousins are prohibited from entering into sexual relations or matrimony. This extension of the rules has had a great charm for theorists.⁸

The distinction between parallel cousins and cross-cousins makes no sense on its own. Why should the children of "sisters" or of "brothers" be forbidden to marry and those of a brother and a sister encouraged? That the children of "sisters" in a matrilineal society would be of the same descent group, and that the offspring of "brothers" in a patrilineal society would be in a similar position, is clear. But why the prohibitions should be on both

patrilineal and matrilineal parallel cousins at one and the same time needs an answer.

Two categories of answers to this question have been suggested: first, there are the "general" answers of W. H. R. Rivers (1907), C. Lévi-Strauss (1949), and L. Dumont (1953, 1957); and second, those in terms of single societies of M. B. Emeneau (1937, 1941), K. Gough (1956), and M. N. Srinivas (1952), to mention only some of the work concerning South Indian kinship systems. However, to anyone familiar with the area, it must be obvious that the latter kind of explanation is theoretically unsatisfactory. This type of terminology, embodying a marriage rule and sexual prohibitions, is in use among groups which exhibit widely different kinship structures.

In Ceylon, the Sinhalese are not the only people who use this type of terminology. The Muslims of the east coast who are matrilineal and matrilineal (Yalman 1956), the Tamils of the east coast who have a similar pattern (Yalman 1962a), the Tamils of Jaffna who have a different organization altogether (Banks 1960)—all utilize this type of terminology. Going over to India, the low-castes of Tanjore, the Todas, the Coorgs, the Iravas, the Pramalai Kallar, and many others, all have formally the same terminology.

It is too simple to offer explanations for each single society separately, disregarding all others; especially so, when, as in South India and Ceylon, the groups are historically and culturally related. Furthermore, single society explanations appear inevitably forced. Thus, Gough, in an excellent article, mentions the prohibitions of the low-castes in a Tanjore village on their maternal parallel cousins. She then attempts to explain them by claiming that "sisters" retain ties in their natal families and are often identified, so that the restrictions safeguard good relations between them (1956:846). Apparently these low-castes have patrilineal exogamous lineages which "explain" the positions of paternal parallel cousins.

The Coorgs are patrilineal and have exogamous *okkas* with joint estates. It is quite clear both from Srinivas (1952) and Emeneau (1938) that they have the same formal terminology as the Sinhalese. As far as the rules are concerned, Srinivas remarks that "The only relative a man may marry is his cross-cousin . . ." (1952:145). While, however, the prohibitions on the patrilineal parallel cousins are explained by the rules of exogamy in the *okka*, the extension of these complex regulations on the matrilineal side is not entirely convincing: "Such accordance of importance to maternal relatives is an attempt to balance the enormous importance accorded to paternal relatives . . ." (1952:145).

In the case of the Muslims of the east coast of Ceylon, there are matrilineal *kudi's* (lineages) with formulated ideas of exogamy, but again this is no answer to the question as to why paternal parallel cousins should be prohibited (Yalman 1956).

The most intriguing of these single society type of explanations is that of Emeneau (1937). It appears that Rivers (1906) was mistaken in describing the Todas as patrilineal. According to Emeneau, they have patrilineal *mod's* and

matrilineal *puljol's*, and both these groups are exogamous. Hence, restrictions on both sides are taken care of.

But, there are indications that all is not as simple as this, even among the Todas. That the Toda rules are the same as the Tamils is admitted:

No man may marry or have intercourse with any woman who is related to him through a wholly male line or through a wholly female line. This is the system which is generally followed by the castes and communities of Hindu South India. . . . The corollary following from it, that a man may marry his cross-cousin, obtains of course among the Todas as it does among the other South Indian Communities following these rules.

But one wonders whether Emeneau is really clear about the system when he says that:

. . . the marriage of two brothers to the daughter of their sister's son violated no rule; the disapproval that attended the marriage was undoubtedly due to the disproportion in age . . . (1937:105).

For, in the Dravidian terminology, the two brothers would be "grandfathers" to the girl, certainly not "cross-cousins." Even if there had been no age difference, disapproval would still have been felt in all the societies we have mentioned against such a marriage. It would have been one of the Sinhalese *varada kassada* (wrong marriages). There is reason, therefore, to be skeptical as to the role of these "lineages" that are described.

The Toda system is still rather confused. For Emeneau does not make the function of the *puljol* clear, and one gains the impression that he is using it partly as a useful heuristic device to explain the patterns of the terminology and marriage, which begs the question (Emeneau 1941:166). And, in any case, it is of little use in explaining the prohibitions of the other societies we have mentioned which are without *mod's* and *puljol's*.

There is another answer. If a particular structural trait is common to a large number of societies which differ among themselves, then we must look for common structural elements in all these societies. Rivers (1907) and Lévi-Strauss (1949) have attempted explanations of this order. They are essentially similar. According to Rivers, the terminology and the prohibitions are the result of a conquest of a matrilineal society by a patrilineal one. Hence, both sets of prohibitions are enforced, and hence the only kind of marriage which remains is cross-cousin marriage.

Lévi-Strauss's explanation is nonhistorical but of the same nature. He takes patrilineal descent and local exogamy as his two elements. If the patrilineal groups are also exogamous, then a *Kariera* type of terminology results (1949:203ff).

In another context, he gives an even more ingenious explanation. It is the balance of reciprocities thought of in terms of the balance of payments (1949:167-69). One gets "credit" by "giving" women. The "credit" is then used as a "balance" with which to take a woman. The exchange leads, eventually, to a distinction between parallel and cross-cousins. The hypothesis presumes that the group—however constituted—must "marry out." But, theoretically, it could be self-sufficient in its female assets.⁹

All these arguments which revolve around unilineal groups giving out women—local exogamy, suffer from the fact that, although they fit some societies, they are widely off the target for others. Thus, for the Sinhalese, it must be pointed out that there are no exogamous patrilineal lineages; there is hardly any recognition of unilineal descent. There is no local exogamy; on the contrary, the basic group is formed by in-marriage; it is largely endogamous.

Function of the Rules in the Kindred

The answer to our questions does lie hereabouts. It is misleading to think of the marriage prohibitions—at least as they appear to be in use in South India and Ceylon—as being the result simply or even predominantly of lineal “exogamy.” This confuses the issue. Exogamy is too readily invoked to explain these rules. One forgets that it is not merely lineal descendants in the male or female lines who are prohibited, but that, together with the injunction on Ego’s marriage, there is a prohibition on marriage between members of different “generations.” The two rules are connected. With the notable exception of some Tamil communities of South India, Ego may only marry a person of his own generation. This rule is certainly as important as that prohibiting parallel cousins from sexual intercourse. Moreover, it should be recalled that people who are not related by genealogical links at all, the affines of affines of affines too may be brought within the compass of both the terminology and the rules. There is an obvious emphasis on *lateral* spread rather than simple lineal “exogamy.”

The hypothesis I propose is that these abstract rules are not necessarily associated with lineal exogamy or groups exchanging women at all, but that they are systematic categories which form the internal structure of bilateral kindreds of the Sinhalese type.

In the following pages, the functions of the terminology in the pavula are discussed, particularly from the point of view of marriage regulations. This is then related to the material from the Tamils of Ceylon and other South Indian peoples.

The Sinhalese Concept of Marriage

Before we go on to examine how these categories function in organizing the marriages of the members of the kindred, let us consider Sinhalese ideas regarding marriage.

We have already noted that marriage is an alliance, and that the link is used to bring new relations into the circle of kin or to strengthen ties which have grown loose within the kin group. It is highly significant, therefore, that although there is this deep concern with marriage, the Sinhalese sometimes dispense with all ceremonies of marriage to the point where some authorities find it difficult to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate children. Various forms of marriage, polyandry as well as polygamy, though rare, are permitted. These too may start without formal ceremonies.

Indeed, Sinhalese peasants hardly have a word for marriage as such. The formal term is *kassada bandinava* (tying the household) which derives from the wedding ceremony where the thumbs of the spouses are tied to each other. For the villagers this is highly respectable. Ordinarily they will say *gūniyek iyyagannava* (taking a woman) or *ṭavul venava* (becoming family), or at times *ṭavul ganu denu* (exchange of wives). Sometimes the word *sambandha* is used: it would seem to be, I quote from an informant, “a respectable word for sexual intercourse,” and endogamy thus expressed is *api e gollanta sambandha ne* (lit., “we have no intercourse with those people”). Sometimes ordinary villagers will say, “Oh no, we had no *kassada bandinava* (i.e., no ceremony); we are simply *nikang innava* (nothing being, i.e., living together without formality).”

The Kandyan Law Commission, appointed in 1927, certainly got into deep waters in attempting to codify a legal definition of Kandyan marriage. They write:

“In early times the conducting of a daughter by a man of equal caste with the consent of her relations *constituted* a marriage, particularly in the case of persons of low rank who could not afford costly ceremonies,” and they go on to examine illegitimacy. Referring to institutional writers, they say, “It must be remembered that when these writers speak of illegitimate children they refer rather to the issue of a marriage which was considered improper or irregular, in the sense, for instance, that the parties to it were of different castes, than to the issue of a casual connection, the word illegitimate not necessarily implying the non-existence of marriage . . . (23, 26).”

The Commissioners eventually ruled that all this was too complicated (“the time has come when an end must be made of the nice questions which arise and the interminable argument and litigation that they give occasion to”) and decided that the only definition of marriage to be upheld in a court of law was their definition of marriage—that is, “registration.”

It is still notable that, although there are government appointed “marriage-registrars” (*lekam mahatmaya*) near every village, very few people actually register their marriages.

This informality about what we consider to be the most important point of the kinship and social structure of the Sinhalese may appear surprising and contradictory. Why do the Sinhalese have this cavalier attitude towards the “establishment of marriage”? The matter becomes even more extraordinary, particularly from the point of view of the fieldworker uninitiated into the niceties of bilateral kinship, when one notes that at other times the marriage is preceded by long and arduous negotiations, comparisons of horoscopes, and formal and elaborate weddings. In some cases, the affair commences with a careful investigation of all eligible spouses in large numbers of villages; middlemen are utilized to make the initial approaches; when the field is narrowed down, a close search takes place into the relations and family status of either party. The elders meet only after these preparations ensure some success in the discussions which follow. These, too, are conducted on the same terms and with the same strategy as a diplomatic convention. Agreement is reached on a large number of points before the field is clear for the union. In some which I witnessed, the village came alive with festivities, gambling, and gaiety for a

whole week. Such formal unions are always registered with the marriage registrar.

These variations are highly significant and are directly related to the nature of the pavula. When the union is between very close kinsmen near the core of the kindred, then no celebrations, no formality, is called for. Only when a marriage is being arranged between distant kinsmen or between people who had not known each other well beforehand must the utmost caution be exercised. On these occasions, the union is marked by special celebrations. For new kinsmen are being united for the first time and there will be structural realignments.¹⁰

That there should be elaborate preparations and weddings when new kinsmen "unite" is not very surprising. It is surprising and important that a "marriage" can be established among close relations without any formality. It is here that the functions of the terminology appear with the greatest clarity.

The Permanent Categories of Marriage

The terminology renders all kinship categories permanent and unchangeable. But "marriage" stands in contrast to this: it implies a change. The dilemma is solved by turning "marriage" in principle into a permanent categorical relationship. Let me explain what I mean by this cryptic statement.

The reason why there are no formalities in the union of two close kinsmen is because, structurally speaking, nothing happens. The marriage relationship is already in existence. Consider the situation in terms of kinship. A correct union between the right categories of kin changes nothing. The children fall into place in an orderly kinship universe. They would, of course, have fallen into the same categories with any other "correct" partner. There is no danger about "caste" nor difficulties about membership in other social groups: the parents being in the "correct" categorical positions, the children are assured of places. Nothing changes in the kinship terminology and the behavior of all persons in the kinship constellation remains the same.

Claims on property do not come into the question in any case. As we indicated, the offspring of the union will inherit separately from the mother and the father. Whether these two were "married" or not will normally be immaterial for inheritance claims.

Indeed we must go further. Even the relationship between the couple does not alter. For it is the expressed principle that those who stand in the category of cross-cousins may have sexual relations with each other. It is said that they have blood claims (*le uramaya*) upon each other. They already belong to each other from their birth since they find themselves in categories of kinship established by the kinship positions of their parents. They are in a permanent relationship of "marriage" by virtue of their positions in the kinship framework. The entire fascinating ideology regarding the cross-cousins, on which many writers have touched without explanations, is in fact a method of expressing this permanent nature of the sexual and/or marital association of

these categories. This is why the massina-nana have inherited claims (le uramaya) upon each other. This is why the äväsä (own) nāna belongs to the äväsä massina. The institutionalized license between the cross-cousins, the claims that they "play" with each other (*sellam karanava*), and finally the custom whereby a "bride" who has not married an äväsä massina has to "ask permission" from someone in this category, all indicate the permanent association between cross-cousins.

This customary obligation to ask permission is particularly expressive. The last ritual act before the bride leaves the parental home to marry a distant, or newly acquired, kinsman, is the offering of gate-betel. The bride ceremonially presents 100 betel leaves to a person standing in the massina category at the gate of the house. After he takes the leaves, they ceremonially salute each other. The act is interpreted as the bride asking the massina and the massina granting permission to leave with the other man.¹¹ Again the underlying assumption is that she "belongs" to her nearest cross-cousin.

Needless to say, all these acts are omitted when there is no ceremony of marriage. When the couple are already close massina-nana, there is no point in asking for permission from anyone. The very relationship implies the union, as well as sexual intercourse. The people will say, "What is the use of having formalities when we are to ourselves (*api apata*)?"¹²

The structural implications of these customs concerning the cross-cousins are thus quite clear. The kindred consists of a group of people standing to each other in various *permanent* kinship categories. The individual falls into it by virtue of birth and correct parentage and is placed in a comprehensive pigeon-holing system by the terminology. This is the reason why the terminology is both a system of kinship as well as of affinity. The distinction between kin and affines cannot be made; for *nākama* (kinship) categories regulate both kinship and marriage at the same time.

Formal Aspects of the Terminology

I now want to indicate a more purely "formal" aspect of the Dravidian terminology which is not immediately apparent. It will be recalled that this terminology is often referred to as "bifurcate merging"; for there is separation and unification at the same time (Fig. 4). Thus, brothers and sisters are prohibited as sexual partners (generation I). The children of a brother and a sister (generation II) may intermarry, but they in turn beget offspring who are again ineligible as sexual partners (generation III). Provided that sex and generation distinctions are made, the above terminology is a most concise method of indicating categories of persons who may and may not be sexual partners without introducing permanent cleavages like "exogamy" into the fabric.

These points were first noted in a highly condensed article by Dumont (1953). His theory is that the terminology "separates" and "unites" certain categories of kin in such a way as to emphasize the importance of relationships by marriage in a consistent and logical fashion. But, whereas I merely indicate the formal functions of the rules in the *pavula*, Dumont wishes to "explain"

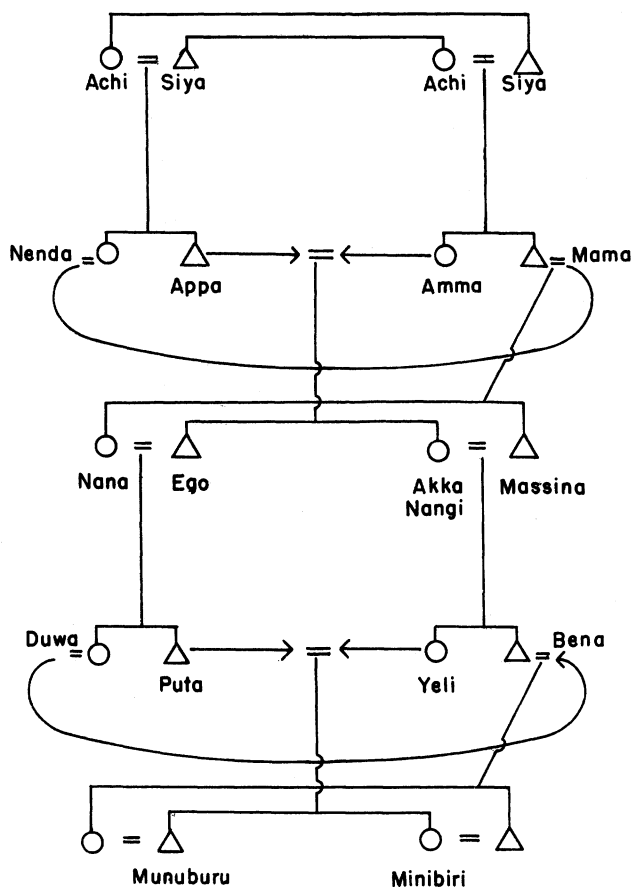


FIG. 4

them by drawing a categorical distinction between “kin,” on the one hand, and “affines” (or “allies”), on the other.

As far as the Sinhalese are concerned, it is important that this distinction is not drawn.¹⁸ Insofar as Dumont uses it as a “logical” distinction which is inherent in the systematic nature of the terminology, “explanations” based on it beg the question (see, in this context, Gough 1959).

Even so, Dumont does provide a general theory, and rightly emphasizes, first, the bilateral nature of the terminology, and second, the closeness and repetitiveness of the marriages implied by it. “What we are accustomed to call cross-cousin marriage is . . . a perfect formula for perpetuating the alliance relationship from one generation to the next and so making the alliance an enduring institution . . .” (1953:38).

V. COMPARATIVE DATA

Having argued that the terminology is directly related to small, largely endogamous social units, and that it only has the range of such “kindreds,”

it will be well to consider some of the South Indian material from this point of view (see Appendix).

The sex division in the terminology is obvious. The generation divisions are also thorough-going in all societies mentioned in the Appendix, except for some groups of Tamils who are allowed to marry their sister's daughters.¹⁴

Quite apart from the principles of sex and generation, there are other indications in the material from South India and Ceylon that a bilateral, largely endogamous kindred is to be found in many groups. Gough, who analyzes most of her material in terms of unilineal descent groups, mentions them for Tanjore:

The endogamous group had no formal organization. It was merely a *clearly demarcated* group within which marriage, visiting (especially for family ceremonies) and free commensality took place (1960:45, my italics).

As far as the Jaffna Tamils are concerned, it is clear that Banks considered these semi-endogamous groups to be the most important units of the social structure. He refers to these unnamed and, as he notes, "fictionally endogamous" units as "*sondakara* castes" (Banks 1960:63). I would suggest that these groups and the Sinhalese "kindreds" are structurally identical.

The presence of shallow unilineal descent groups does not preclude the existence also of kindreds of Sinhalese type. In any case, as will be evident in the Appendix, such unilineal descent groups are reported from the Iravass, Todas, non-Brahmin castes of Tanjore, Jaffna are not highly organized corporations with common undivided property, internal structures, authority systems and clear cut boundaries—when they exist at all.¹⁵

Those among Tanjore Brahmins, Coorgs, East Coast Ceylon Muslims, and Tamils are somewhat more definite organizations. However, in my experience on the East Coast of Ceylon, although the matrilineages (called *kudi* and individually named) existed side by side with the kindred, the latter were felt to be the more vital groups. The matrilineal *kudi* in this area had elected officers and subscription chests. They were sometimes associated with temples, but most of the important social activity as well as factionalism concerned the kindred. There is clearly a separation of the spheres of activity in such cases where bilateral kin groups exist together with corporate unilineal descent groups of one kind or another.

The point to be noted is that we cannot dismiss the significance of largely endogamous kindreds when it is reported that:

- a) affinity is highly emphasized in an alliance (Appendix Note 2),
- b) there is an ideology favoring close in-group intermarriage (Appendix Note 5),
- c) women receive property of an important kind as dowries or inheritance (and that, in matrilineal uxori-local systems of the East Coast of Ceylon, men carry property rights as well as women) (Appendix Note 4),
- d) there is the tradition of cross-cousin marriage with the implication that great attention is given to perpetuating close relationships between

groups of kin not necessarily connected by any bond of unilineal descent (Appendix note 3).

This pattern of small groups who tend to keep marriages in close circles and who have a distinct idea of their own ritual status vis-a-vis other like groups is being reported from other areas of Ceylon and India (Leach 1960: 119; Beals, personal communication from Mysore; Shah, personal communication from Gujarat). I believe that the analysis of these cohesive bilateral kin groups which appear to carry many of the characteristics of the larger "castes" will turn out to be of great interest from the point of view of Indian sociology.

* * *

I have discussed in this paper a system of formal kinship categories which as an "ideal" structure systematically specify the "correct" marriage partners for all persons in a kin group. I noted how "wrong marriages" were fitted into this ideal structure and suggested that the greatest impetus for conforming to the formal categories and prescriptive mating rules was in the kin group.

Although the Dravidian kinship terminology has often been explained—somewhat weakly—by recourse to exogamous unilineal descent groups, it seems clear that within the framework of exogamy only a double unilineal descent system will adequately explain the rules and prohibitions associated with this terminology. This in fact is not the case in the groups I considered and I see no reason why "exogamy" should be a more adequate explanation than "categorical rules." My evidence and the comparative data suggests that "kindreds" of the Sinhalese type do exist among other communities in South India and Ceylon. Hence my argument for the functions of the terminology in the context of the Sinhalese kindred are also applicable to these other cases. These suggestions call for further verification, particularly of the kindred, in the South Indian material. But the arguments appear relevant to the Australian context as well, where similar or more complex rules are utilized, and further discussion of these points may be valuable.

NOTES

¹ The fieldwork on which this essay is based was carried out from August 1954 to January 1956 in Ceylon. The research was supported by grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the University of Cambridge. I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Peterhouse, Cambridge, for electing me to a Bye-Fellowship among them. I am also grateful to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, where the essay was written. I would also like to record my debt to Meyer Fortes of Cambridge, M. Halle of M.I.T., D. Mandelbaum of Berkeley, R. Needham of Oxford, K. Romney of Stanford, D. Schneider of Chicago for their searching criticism of this paper. I benefited greatly from their comments but am responsible for the many faults which remain.

² One of Radcliffe-Brown's visits to an Australian horde is well known. He was kept waiting outside the horde area until he could be met by one of the elders. Long formal discussions ensued, and finally Radcliffe-Brown was given a kinship position whereby all members of the horde immediately became various categories of kinsmen. The Sinhalese are not so thorough-going, but when new members are brought into the kindred their positions are "fixed" in much the same manner.

³ I think that such bilaterally organized kin groups with no common property, no definite focus of authority, but with a lively sense of solidarity and cooperation, are to be found in many diverse societies. They are particularly well adapted to perform the functions of a social security or social insurance agency, particularly in urban conditions. I have come across them in a developed form in Turkey and Persia, and they are doubtless to be found in such western societies where social security agencies are not developed.

⁴ Consider the following item from the *London Times*, April 16, 1957: "Fourteen persons were murdered in Ceylon during the weekend, when the Sinhalese new year was celebrated. It is an annual feature that the murder rate, which is usually more than one a day, rises sharply during the new year celebrations, but this year's figure sets a new record. A total of 157 persons have been murdered in Ceylon this year—40 in April alone."

⁵ For lists of Sinhalese kinship terms, see Ariyapala 1956:379; Hocart 1928; Leach 1960; Pieris 1956.

⁶ It must be pointed out immediately that "actual" cross-cousin marriages are not very frequent.

In Teripehe, out of 139 men who had made 169 marriages, only 22 were married with "full" cross-cousins:

	Uxorilocal	Virilocal	Total
MBD	6	7	13
FSD	4	5	9
	—	—	—
Total	10	12	22

The rate with 2nd or 3rd "cross-cousins" would be very high indeed but is difficult to assess exactly. The low rate of "actual" cross-cousin marriages does not prejudice the argument that all marriages must take place between "categories" of cross-cousins.

⁷ I do not wish to minimize these differences between terms of address and reference. But in this case the terms of address are irrelevant for the purposes of marriage rules. The important reasons for the divergences are beyond the scope of this paper.

⁸ It is not accurate to say, "own patrilineal kin constitute a theoretically exogamous grouping . . ."; the terminology could also "theoretically" be "matrilineal" (see Tambiah 1958:22).

⁹ In fairness to Lévi-Strauss' ingenuity it should be admitted that, in the last resort, the sibling group is unlikely to be self-sufficient in its females.

¹⁰ Much of the great anxiety surrounding arranged marriages arises from the danger to ritual status (see also Yalman 1962b). As one moves further away from the core of the kindred, the anxiety increases and there is recourse to horoscopes and astrologers to deal with this great concern. From this point of view, there is a "built-in" centripetal endogamous tendency in all Sinhalese kin groups. And this is one of the reasons of the preference for the closest cross-cousin unions.

¹¹ Indeed, it is noteworthy that, while the ritual leave-taking from the massina is thus crystallized as a separate ritual act, in elaborate weddings the bride will go around ritually saluting and offering betel leaves to all her kinsmen before she leaves with the groom. The offering to the massina will take place last, but it is clearly part of a more general custom whereby the bride asks for formal permission of the rest of her kin group for her marriage to an "outsider" and whereby the kin group expresses its approval by the acceptance of the betel leaves.

¹² While all formal acts can be dispensed with, there is a formal method whereby even close kinsmen may set up a household. The massina may take a *redi* and *hetti* (women's sarong and blouse) to the girl, and if she accepts them, she changes her clothes and may go with him to his hut. Her own clothes belong to her unmarried sisters. I interpret this act as part of the reciprocity of the household. It is an act not only very widespread in South India (even the Nayar *Tali kettu kalyanam* contains it) but is part of the elaborate wedding ceremony of the Sinhalese. An unmarried girl works in the parents' household; she gets food and clothing in return. After her union the responsibility for her food and clothing falls to her husband. These are the return, as it were, for her services as a wife. My informants commented jocularly on these offerings of cloth

and the changing of the dress by saying that her family "gives her naked to the man" (*helueng denava vagei*).

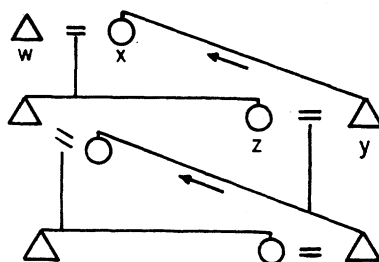
¹³ I did come across an implied distinction of the kind described by Dumont once in a couplet:

haraka bāna vastuwakut nemey
nenda māmā nēka mukut nemey

"A pair of cattle is not property
 Nenda mama are not at all kinsmen"

These sentiments would normally be vigorously denied.

¹⁴ Sister's daughter marriage may be explained as follows: The generation principle is essentially a method organizing the relations between superiors and inferiors on a permanent basis. In the Tamil case, equality within the generation is overbalanced by the existence of great rank distinctions. These are evident both in the attitude of the sister's sons toward their mother's brothers as well as in the widespread use of dowry, thus:



(Arrows mark direction of dowry)

The hypergamous marriage of X allows Z to be married to Y in return, to keep up kinship relationships. Owing to the great rank distinctions between W and Y, Z and Y are considered to be marriageable. (Based on Gough 1956:843-44; see also, McCormack 1958.)

¹⁵ Cf. Iyer (1937) for the curious nature of the concept of descent in South India. It seems quite clear that it is important to distinguish between corporate unilineal descent groups, and unilineal pedigrees preserved merely for the purposes of ritual status *vamsa* inside the caste. The latter do not form corporate groups, though they are sometimes described as "lineages."

APPENDIX

Some Communities Using the Dravidian-Kariera Type Terminology in South India and Ceylon

1. Descent (excluding caste)

Sinhalese	No corporate descent groups No exogamy Names apply to dispersed, nonresidential groups
Ceylon:	Dispersed matrilineages—allegedly "exogamous." Small
East Coast Muslims	shallow matrilineages of 3 to 4 generations (from youngest member) are residential.
Ceylon:	ditto
East Coast Hindu Tamils	
Non-Brahmin castes of Tanjore	Dispersed patrilineal descent groups "exogamous."
Brahmins of Tanjore	Exogamous localized patrilineages of 6 to 8 generation span.
Coorgs	Residential patrilineages—"exogamous." Some matrilocal marriages are allowed.

Todas	Dispersed patrilineages—"exogamous." Dispersed matrilineages—"exogamous."
Iravas (Tiyvars)	Dispersed patrilineages in North Malabar. Dispersed patrilineages, and matrilineal clans in South Malabar.
Jaffna Tamils	Dispersed patrilineal descent groups.

2. Affinity

Sinhalese	Greatly emphasized Affines may live together
Muslims	Emphasized; husband comes into wife's family but keeps relations with sisters.
East Coast Tamils	ditto
Non-Brahmin castes in Tanjore	Emphasized (Cf. Gough 1956:846)
Brahmins of Tanjore	Important as an alliance
Coorgs	Emphasized (cf. Srinivas, 1952:147)
Todas	Emphasized.
Iravas	Emphasized (cf. Gough, 1955:57).
Jaffna Tamils	Affinity greatly emphasized: close cooperation expected.

3. Marriage

Sinhalese	Simple formalities; rule: cross-cousin marriage only; matri- or patrilocal residence, polyandry and concubinage possible.
Muslims	Elaborate formalities; large dowry payments. Matrilocal marriage; rule: cross-cousin marriage only.
East Coast Tamils	ditto
Non-Brahmin castes of Tanjore	Cross-cousin marriage; patrilocal
Tanjore Brahmins	Elaborate formalities; large dowry payments. Patrilocal marriage; hypergamy; rule: cross-cousin or sister's daughter marriage.
Coorgs	Elaborate formalities; dowry; normal patrilocal marriage; matrilocal unions possible; rule: cross-cousin marriage.
Todas	Simple formalities; rule: cross-cousin marriage—patri- and matrilocal unions; polyandry possible.
Iravas	Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage—normally patrilocal—polyandry possible only in South Malabar.
Jaffna Tamils	Elaborate formalities; cross-cousin rule; large dowry payments.

4. Women and Property

Sinhalese	Equal rights as men in most cases.
Moors	Ancestral property in female line but men have acquired property.
East Coast Tamils	ditto
Non-Brahmin castes of Tanjore	Little property; both sexes have incomes.

Brahmins	Land in male line, but women have large dowries.
Coorgs	ditto
Todas	Women may get dowries and own property.
Iravas	North: property often leased from Nayars, descends in female line. South: property normally in the male line; women may have dowries of "jewels and vessels."
Jaffna Tamils	Women may own land and receive dowries.

5. Endogamy

Sinhalese	Caste, <i>vamsa</i> , endogamous; kindred also has endogamous tendency.
Muslims	Rank gradations and even endogamous barriers criss-cross the religious community. Tendency for close marriages in family for property reasons.
East Coast Tamils	Castes endogamous; lineages are ranked; there is a tendency for close marriages for property reasons.
Non-Brahmin castes of Tanjore	Castes and sub-caste endogamy.
Tanjore Brahmins	ditto
Coorgs	Close marriages for property reasons.
Todas	Repeated cross-cousin marriages between <i>okka</i> (patrilineages).
Iravas	Caste endogamy; community already very small; moieties also largely endogamous.
Jaffna Tamils	Caste, sub-caste endogamy.
	Castes endogamous. Unit called " <i>sondakara</i> caste" (structural equivalent of Sinhalese kindred) tends to be endogamous.

6. Generations

The generation distinctions are marked in all the communities mentioned; the superior generation has authority in the family.

7. Terminology

All communities utilize Dravidian terminologies with small variations in the case of Tanjore Brahmins.

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