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On Reading T.G.H. Strehlow's 'Aranda Regular and Irregular Marriages'

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The first and last paragraphs of T.G.H. Strehlow's paper not only perfectly frame the body of the main argument, but more importantly summarise the major preoccupations which are still prevalent in any study of kinship in Australia. In fact these preoccupations are probably valid for the entire field of Australian Aboriginal anthropology.

The aim of this review is to put Strehlow's findings into a contemporary Central Australian setting of kinship studies; as well as understanding Aboriginal marriage patterns. My own research in Central Australia involved the study of a different group from that studied by Strehlow. The Ngaatjatjarra, a dialectal group of the Western Desert cultural bloc, live in Western Australia, talk a different language, and use a kinship system based on what Elkin called the Aluridja type — which is in some important ways distinct from what has been called the Aranda type. However, the first and last paragraphs of Strehlow's paper not only allow, but definitely impel, the reader to extrapolate his approach to data on marriage patterns found outside his own regional field experience. The aim of this review is therefore not only to compare the paper's findings with contemporary conditions but, more importantly, to apply the conceptual framework to another geographical, linguistic and cultural group than the one from which it has been formulated. Indeed, in the first paragraph Strehlow states:

> ...it is not sufficient to concentrate merely on the marriages of those persons who are officially regarded as lawfully wedded couples... It is equally important to record any alternative permanent marital arrangements...

And in the last paragraph:

> The classificatory kinship system was to them not an end in itself, but only the means to an end... The natives never forgot that social and ritual cooperation and marriage were the real objects of their systems of class-names; and they did not stick rigidly to these names if this meant that cooperation and satisfactory marriages would have had to be prohibited in a large number of

> instances...they did not sacrifice commonsense to the cast-iron rules of a super-logical system.

Strehlow does not outline the theoretical framework or reasons why he considers 'irregularity' as important as 'regularity'; or why he concludes that 'explicit system' or 'formal norm' does not always take precedence over contextual behaviour. In other words there is no indication in this paper why he considers that a formal or systemic approach to kinship systems may not always be the accurate way to understand social behaviour. But the fact that the section on irregular marriages occupies a major part of the paper, and that the data is presented in the form of 'case by case', 'example by example' style instead of summarising some 'general rules', illustrates his approach.

In this sense, the paper is years ahead of Hiatt's precise account (1965), and, at that time, new approach of Aboriginal marriage systems in which contextual strategies (what Hiatt calls 'disputes') are not seen as a deviation to a 'super-logical system' (to use Strehlow's words), but as integral parts of social life.

I will come back to the theoretical framework at a later stage of this review. It is more appropriate to briefly discuss the paper's structure and the information it presents. Not by way of a summary, but more to point out some elements which I consider (probably too subjectively) to be major components of past and current discussions on Aboriginal kinship. Following this I will briefly explain regular and irregular marriages in a contemporary Western Desert context, and compare them with Strehlow's findings. Finally, I will propose theoretical frameworks which could be useful to integrate the emic (and sometimes etic) manifestation of the dichotomy between regularity and irregularity into an anthropological (i.e. *logos* of the human being) objective of analysis; as opposed to a sometimes too relativist approach of local and historical phenomena which are considered unique.

STRUCTURE AND DATA OF T.G.H. STREHLOW'S PAPER [2]

Strehlow begins with some remarks on the (over-)complexification of Aboriginal kinship systems by certain scholars, and proposes to study marriage patterns by analysing accepted behaviour associated to some 'simple rules'. He also states that marriage rules can only be understood against a specific economic, cultural and geographical background. He uses the genealogical information gathered by his father Carl Strehlow (1907-1920) in an attempt to avoid discussing marriage patterns that could be characterised as being affected by non-Aboriginal influences. He then proceeds to present regular marriage rules through the

understanding of local organisation (patrifiliation and absence of tribal unit) and social organisation (eight subsections or classes[3]) and their functions. After this, Strehlow proposes a diachronic presentation of how subsections could have emerged from local (territorial) organisation to global social organisation, allowing him, at the same time, to present regular marriages, that is, rules of marriage founded on two major concepts — local exogamy and reciprocity — which he associates with generation 'cleavage' and inadmissibility of marriages between first cousins. He then discusses mythological elements associated with marriage rules and the emergence of a social organisation of eight subsections, and suggests that this is linked to inter-tribal or inter-cultural contacts and marriages. He then states that regular marriages did not normally occur between 'blood-relatives', but rather between classificatory relatives.

In the second part of the paper, he discusses irregular marriages among the Western Aranda and distinguishes two categories: (a) between members of the same tribal sub-group, and (b) between members of different sub-groups. This second category is characterised by an important discussion of a number of examples; after which he proceeds to a 'general conclusion' which highlights irregular marriages and consequences of these bonds, both to the individual (punishment/acceptance) and to the group ('class-shifting').

I would now like to discuss some specific points which are, in my opinion, important aspects of the paper, and to kinship studies in Aboriginal Australia generally. The most important point is that Strehlow does not confuse social organisation with kin classification and marriage. He states that:

> ...class-names used by Central Australian tribes are a comparatively late device, which supplied merely convenient inter-tribal labels for kin-groupings.

In his view, what today anthropologists term 'subsections' or 'sections', is actually a type of summary of kin-classification which allows easier contact and exchange with neighbouring groups using different languages and even different modes of kin-classification. The inter-cultural or 'extra-tribal' function of subsections and sections was, some years later, underlined by Service (1960),[4] when he proposed to distinguish egocentric terminologies from sociocentric terminologies. Service, like Strehlow, rejects previous assumptions about sections and subsections,[5] such as those describing them as 'marriage classes' and being survivals of a previous custom of group marriage (see for example Morgan's introduction to Fison and Howitt 1880, and Fison himself in Chapter 2); or as the result of the intersection of matrilineal and patrilineal descent and the prohibition of incest (see Durkheim 1897, and

Murdock 1940). Strehlow and Service do tend to agree with Radcliffe-Brown (1951), Warner (1937) and Elkin (1954) that subsection systems are the result of a division of intermarrying moieties (and semi-moieties) and the distinction of generational levels, and are not determinants of marriage customs. But Strehlow also states that he prefers the term 'class' to the term 'subsection'. Indeed, he contrasts 'njinana sections' (the only political and territorial recognised unit) with social organisation; and, stating that the 'Aranda tribe' or any sub-tribe does not exist as a political unit, he explains that subsections are, in fact, the result of the distinction of, and the relation between, father and son in one and the same 'njinana section' or group. This is an approach which is considerably different from that outlined by Radcliffe-Brown and others, where subsections are considered from an egocentric generational distinction inside a local group, as opposed to a division of sociocentric semi-moieties. Indeed, while elaborating a possible evolution into the eight subsection system, Strehlow states that it is not necessary to rely on any division of the tribe into any social grouping (moieties or sections), and that kin-groupings originated first, moieties last. It was when people 'wished' to marry unrelated persons, that 'arrangements had to be made' in order to 'adopt kinship classifications towards one another' (i.e. subsections).

This leads to the second interesting feature pointed out by Strehlow. He states that subsections are 'a comparatively late device' in Central Australia, while kin-groupings are, 'since the whole social and political structure is based on them', very old divisions. The diffusion of section and subsection terminologies across the continent in quite recent times has been hypothesised by other researchers[6]; but it is the recent studies by McConvell (1985a, 1985b and 1996) that concentrate systematically on this phenomenon, showing where subsection and section terminology originated, and how it spread over important parts of Australia.

The highly dynamic character of the section and subsection terminology points to the inter-cultural function of the systems themselves. Indeed, if subsections were introduced by diffusion, that is, from 'outside', this means that the system itself is associated with, if not produced by, inter-tribal or inter-cultural relations. Strehlow writes: 'class-names are merely convenient inter-tribal labels'.

As I mention below, the section system adopted by the Ngaatjatjarra in the 1930s is an 'extra-political' feature, allowing easier classification of (and therefore communication and expected behaviour with) persons of other groups and languages. Consequently it is rarely used as an intra-group labelling.

In another interesting section of the paper Strehlow explains how some mythological and sociological features in Aranda culture emphasise

physical paternity, which is in contrast to some contributions made in the famous polemic on 'virgin birth' published in the late 1960s and early 1970s in *Man*.[7] Most interestingly, Strehlow states that father and son are ' ...of the same substance — in the last instance literally of the same 'blood' '. This is also in contrast to what has been written concerning other parts of Australia where, according to Elkin (1934, 1954, 1970) the mother-child relationship is considered as the blood or flesh relation.[8]

Strehlow associates the importance and predominance of physical paternity in Aranda culture to the patrilineal character of the local section or 'horde' (njinana). This obviously leads to the assumption that what has been called the local group is basically a patrilineal kin-group exchanging women. This is where Radcliffe-Brown (and more importantly for the history of anthropology, Lévi-Strauss, Fox, and Yengoyan) differ with Hiatt, Shapiro, and others — a difference of opinion which reached a head during the conference *Man the Hunter* (see Lee and De Vore, 1968). Basically, Hiatt maintained that the local group was not a kin group, and that they did not exchange women. Theorists of filiation, whom French anthropologists call the Anglo-Saxon *'structuro-fonctionnalistes'* (such as Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard and others), and theorists of alliance (headed by Lévi-Strauss) found in this debate some points of agreement. Indeed, if alliance (i.e. prohibition of incest and exchange of women) is the basic social structure, then it is only possible if the exchanging groups are determined by some type of filiation and vice versa. Thus, participants of the conference *Man the Hunter* argued that Hiatt's data must have been 'contaminated' by non-Aboriginal influence.

Strehlow anticipated many points of this controversy, even though his paper was written some years before the famous conference. Indeed, he stresses that the data he used was collected before the effects of non-Aboriginal influences, and shows the patrilineal foundation of the local 'horde' whereby he refutes Hiatt's future critics. There is no reason to believe that either Carl Strehlow or his son mis-recorded or misinterpreted the data. But Strehlow also points out that movement of men between 'local groups' was not totally absent. For example, in one section of his paper he discusses the concept of 'class-shifting' which is an outcome of marriages between persons of different tribes and tribal sub-groupings. As Strehlow indicates, this means that a residential group does not only contain patrilineal kinsmen. One has to accept that the situation was not standardised throughout Australia, and that there were some cultural entities where territorialised patriliny was some kind of ideal; others, as in the Western Desert, where the concept of patriliny itself was and is unknown.

WESTERN DESERT CURRENT CONTEXT

A summary presentation of the data I have been collecting is necessary before applying Strehlow's findings to a current context.

The Ngaatjatjarra are a dialectal group of the Western Desert language (Wati) composed of some forty different dialects. The approximate extension of the Ngaatjatjarra dialect is from the Western Australia-Northern Territory border in the east to the Clutterbuck Hills in the west; and from Kiwirrkurra community in the north, to south of the Rawlinson Ranges. A strict territorial and social distinction between dialectal groups is not possible. In the north, Ngaatjatjarra merge with those who are today called Pintupi; in the south-east with Nyangatatjarra (today Pitjantjatjara); in the west with Mandjindja; and in the south-west with Kuwarra (today Ngaanyatjarra). Local organisation was that of one or more nuclear families, accompanied by third persons (adopted children and relatives by marriage) travelling in a more-or-less defined area. The Ngaatjatjarra, like other groups of the Western Desert cultural bloc (Berndt 1959) did not and do not know any form of patrilineal grouping. The aggregation of several of these travelling groups formed what could be called 'regional groups' whose members were linked through birth, descent (ambilineal, but the preferential association is with FF[9] for men and MM for women), marriage, or prolonged residence, to important sites and waterholes. These regional groups are exogamous and know at least one initiatory site. The aggregation of several of these regional groups forms the dialectal group. Travelling unit, regional groups and dialectal groups are not to be considered as strict territorial units, although members of each of these segmentary units could be characterised as usually living on the same estate (actually a series of waterholes), and considered to be linked to one or more sites included in these estates, although people also underline associations to sites outside the estate.

People who today identify as Ngaatjatjarra associate with one of the five or six regional groups which are still exogamous, and they reside largely in one of five communities: Karilywara (Clutterbuck Hills), Wanarn, Warakurna (Giles) and Tjukurla. Some individuals who identify themselves as Ngaatjatjarra also live in Kintore, Kiwirrkurra, Docker River and other Communities, and in Alice Springs.

Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people know an Aluridja type of kinship system. That system is characterised by: close cross-cousins may be called siblings; absence of terminological lines in grand-parent's and grand-children's generation; and absence of sections or subsections. Six section names organised in what is a four section system, were adopted from the west in the 1930s. Marriage rules are expressed following two

basic principles: (1) most important is the notion of local exogamy (i.e. exogamy from residential community, but also from affiliation to traditional 'regional group'); and (2) spouses must be cross-relatives of the same generational moiety, and at least of the third degree (i.e. persons with whom direct genealogical connection is formally unknown). In summary, marriage is between persons who are spatially and genealogically distant ('long way').

Irregular marriages are termed *yinyurrpa*, which originally means the relationship between persons of distinct generational level, and may be of three types:

1) Marriages between persons of adjacent generations (for male Ego with M, FZ, D, ZD)

2) Marriages with parallel-relatives of the same generational moiety (for male Ego with FBD, MZD, SD, MM)

3) Marriages with cross-relatives of the same generational moiety but locally or genealogically too close (i.e. real cross-cousins or classificatory cross-cousins but living in the same community, and close FM or DD for male Ego)

These irregular marriages form what could be called type 1 irregularities, or 'formal irregularities'; and sanctions must usually be expected by 'transgressors', such as punishment or marriage by force (see also Sackett 1975, for Wiluna). Usually the couple must elope *warngirnu*, and the union is finally tolerated when the couple have children. These marriages count for less than two per cent of all marriages (283 in total); and the genealogical information collected does not record any marriage between persons of adjacent generations.[10] Strehlow's figures of the Western Aranda record 119 marriages, of which eight point five per cent are irregular.

An interesting feature associated with marriages between close cross-cousins is worth mentioning. Relatives of the family of each of the couples continue addressing each other with the 'consanguine' terminology, instead of the 'affine' terminology normally in use after marriage. For example, a WM is termed, by the brother of the husband, *kurntili* (FZ), instead of *yumari* (real, classificatory, or potential WM). The absence of affine terminology is accompanied by weaker obligations of sharing between those families.

A second type of irregularities (or behaviour considered irregular) which could be called 'fictive' or 'pro forma' irregularities, may be distinguished. These irregularities are based on behaviour which does not satisfy the manifest expectations of relatives and community members, but still

conforms to the formal marriage rules outlined above. I call these fictive because the manifest expectations are actually not compulsory, and sometimes not even desired, even if explicitly formulated. An example is marriage between a man and a wife promised at the time of his initiation. Marriage with the promised girl is infrequent (probably less than twenty per cent traditionally, and even less today), although older men maintain at some stage that they prefer, and even expect, young men to marry the promised partner. But this preference or expectation remains formal (i.e. does not generate the expected behaviour) because it is in contradiction with another ideal which is the one of diversification of alliance in its extended meaning (i.e. institutionalising solidarity between groups and families). Indeed, bestowal on its own engenders lasting solidarity and obligations of distribution as in real marriage, and this even if a man does not marry the promised spouse.

Another example is symmetric exchange (reciprocity). Elders regard this type of marriage arrangement as the best, if not the compulsory way, to obtain a wife; although in the 283 marriages analysed, only four are symmetrical exchanges. Indeed symmetric exchange would bind two identical families (one family with one other). Asymmetric exchange, on the contrary, binds three families (one family with two others). The noticeable absence of marriages resulting from symmetric exchange underlines diversification of alliance, and thus enlarges the outcome of 'demand sharing' (Peterson 1993) and mutual control.

This seems to have been equally true for the Western Aranda. Indeed, Strehlow writes that a not inconsiderable number of men and women preferred to choose their own partners instead of following marriage arrangements made by elders. Tonkinson (1990) has shown that marriage patterns have changed in the Western Desert following the arrival of missionaries and other non-Aboriginal officials, and that individuals, especially women, now act as 'free agents' (i.e. 'liberated' from the pressure of elders and community). However, my own impression from the data collected among the Ngaatjatjarra is that those 'free choices' of partners, and the lack of 'obedience' to the arrangements made by elders, may have been traditionally, as is the case today, an implicit mechanism for creating allies.

Indeed considering (as I mentioned above) that the arrangement itself already produces solidarity, marriage with a girl from another place and another family virtually duplicates the number of persons one can count on as allies. This is true both in traditional situations (e.g. during times of drought, and in a situation described by elders as a 'permanent war'), and in current situations (e.g. demand-sharing of wealth with persons from communities with real or potential income – such as tourism or mining).

Strehlow distinguishes two kinds of irregular marriages. Those contracted between persons of the same tribal sub-group, and those contracted between members from different sub-groups. Let me first consider the latter. Although Strehlow distinguishes marriages which are effectively 'wrong' from those which involve only establishing section-subsection equivalence, both are discussed in the same section on irregular marriages. I would, in contrast to Strehlow, not label this second type of marriage as irregular because it does not produce relations which are considered 'incestuous'. The frequent marriages between Ngaatjatjarra (using four sections) and Pintupi (using eight subsections) are of that type, but they are not considered 'wrong marriages' if section-subsection correspondence is observed. Marrying a 'MBD' or 'FZD' is accepted by Pintupi when marrying Ngaatjatjarra if there is no genealogical connection. Strehlow, however, regards this type of marriage as irregular, because both Aranda groups using four sections, and those using eight subsections, marry 'distant' cross-cousins.

Most, if not all, Ngaatjatjarra marriages are between what Strehlow would probably regard as different tribal-subgroups; although, as mentioned above, definition of tribe and tribal sub-group is not only difficult, but erroneous for the Western Desert people. Exogamy is the main feature in Ngaatjatjarra marriage arrangements traditionally and today. Thus, arrangements between sections and subsections are daily features among the Ngaatjatjarra, because many marriages are between persons using eight subsections (Pintupi) and persons not using section labels at all (Pitjantjatjara). But the section terminology is only used in inter-group relations. Indeed, among Ngaatjatjarra-speaking persons, one hardly hears section or subsection names being used. This is obviously enforced by the fact that the populations are small (perhaps some 500 persons identifying as Ngaatjatjarra), and that one is supposed to know or to be able to deduce another's classificatory position. Sections come into use during contacts with Ngaanyatjarra-speaking groups of the Warburton area, and subsections during contacts with Pintupi - Luritja, Warlpiri, and Aranda-speaking persons.

Strehlow points out that class-names are determined according to the residence of the partners. This is particularly true for the Ngaatjatjarra; indeed, when two classificatory siblings have children, the sections of the children are established by following the residence of the parents (and children). If the couple lives in a community with predominantly genealogical relatives of the mother, then the children's section is established following the mother. If, on the other hand, genealogical relatives of the father predominate, the children are labelled following the section of the father.

Let me now return to the first type of irregular marriages described by Strehlow which he regards as falling into two categories: *bailba*

(alternative marriages) and *itioka* (incestuous marriages). He records seven marriages between men and classificatory MBD considered as 'alternative marriages'; one marriage with a classificatory MMBSD which he considers formally as a 'legal alternative marriage'; and two marriages which are 'class-incests', i.e. between a man and his ZD. In all cases, subsections of the children were subsequently determined by the father's subsection.

Marriage with a classificatory MBD (genealogically and spatially distant) is, as already mentioned, a regular marriage among Ngaatjatjarra, as first and second cross-cousins are not distinguished.

Marriage with MMBSD requires some comments. Elkin (1939: 210) states that this is a regular marriage among the Aluridja type of kinship system, which he considers to be a variation of, and even a development from the Aranda type (1939: 216). Although the Ngaatjatjarra use a system which Elkin would classify as being of the Aluridja type, marriage with MMBSD would be considered as irregular (and not only as an alternative marriage), because it would unite persons whose parents were potential allies, and because this marriage would thus be the repetition of a marriage contracted or permissible in the previous generation.

The ZD marriage would, among the Ngaatjatjarra, be regarded as strongly incestuous because it would be a union of persons of different generational moieties. Such a marriage, of which I could not find any example, would be immediately dissolved if the couple could not elope; and it would probably not be accepted even then if the couple had children.[11]

Let me now, before moving on to the last part of this review, summarise the most important points emerging from this study of irregular marriages:

Among the Aranda

1) Irregular marriages between persons of the same tribal sub-group reflect a strong patrilineal bias and underline a probably quite strong correlation (at least ideally) between local group and patrilineal kin-group, because any children are labelled patrilinealy.

2) Irregular marriages between persons of different tribal sub-groups reflect a strong residential influence in determining subsectional position of the children of these unions.

Among the Ngaatjatjarra

1) Irregular marriages between spatially close (related) persons, and considered therefore as 'consanguines', reflect the importance of marriages as political and economic tools through exogamy. This is because they do not alter the relationships (i.e. they are not made affins) and thus do not induce the strong obligations of sharing known between the affins of regular marriages.

2) Irregular marriages between classificatory siblings reflect the importance of the residential community because children are labelled following their predominant genealogical relations present in the residential community.

Whether through an analysis of both Aranda and Ngaatjatjarra irregular marriages, any hypothesis of cultural or social norms may be formulated is a question I prefer not to address here, although I allow myself some very general observations.

Residential membership is an important factor in the social organisation of both Aranda and Ngaatjatjarra communities. Important questions arise: Is it possible, through point 1 among the Aranda cited above, to state that the Aranda favour patrilineal descent, and thus tend to emphasise an attitude maintaining their pattern of political and territorial organisation; while the Ngaatjatjarra (through point 1 above) tend to stress extra-political strategies by seeking allies from distinct social and territorial groups, and are thus subject to 'foreign' involvement in what Aranda would may be call 'internal affairs'? And can we, with all the lessons learned from the mistakes of previous studies, associate this with 'a definite economic, cultural and geographical background'?

A THEROETICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND REGULARITY AND IRREGULARITY

I have attempted to show that using 'irregularity' could be a fruitful method of understanding 'regularity' as a social norm and as a strategy of accepted behaviour. Strehlow's paper is certainly an important step in this direction. This aspect has, to my knowledge, not been conceptualised in the study of kinship.[12] This may be because formal study still dominates most research, and also because detailed data on irregular marriages and their consequences is not as readily available as for regular marriages. Piddington (1970: 337) asked '...why has the vitally important subject of irregular marriages been so neglected...' His answer

was that too much emphasis had been given to formalising ideal kinship systems and behaviour.

But irregularity has been used in other disciplines to understand regularity and it might be the case that one could draw similarities from those studies. A case in point is Gould's work (1968, 1980) in archaeology (and ethnoarchaeology) concerning what he called *anomaly* (in contrast to *analogy*). It would take too long to present in detail the distinction Gould traces between the analogical method in ethnoarchaeology and the method concentrating on anomalies. In summary, the author studies 'aberrant' facts, unexpected appearances or habits and concludes that they are part of a system of adaptation minimising anticipated risks.

Anthropologists working on ecological adaptation have long since used 'irregularity' to understand some cultural features. Indeed, social phenomena or structures may be understood to be the result of an adaptation to extreme, and not to average or regular conditions (see for example Suttles 1968).

Strehlow's paper as already pointed out takes this view. Regularity is nothing more than a certain quantitative and qualitative amount of conformity to explicit norms, rather than a system of abstract relations. Irregularity, on the other hand, exposes individual strategies which are still to be confronted by, and may only be understood following, the expressed norms. But irregularity also points to the limits of the system (and to the limits of studying only the system). As Strehlow points out: ' ...men did not hesitate to achieve the real objects of their means by altering the means themselves'.

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NOTES

1 The author is enrolled as a Ph.D. student in social anthropology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, and attached to the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie, Marseille. He did field work in Alice Springs and the Community of Tjukurla (WA) between 1994 and 1997; financed

with a scholarship from the French Ministry of Research, and a limited grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

2 Single and short quotes throughout ('...') enclose citations from his paper, unless otherwise cited.

3 Strehlow uses the word 'class' instead of 'subsection' (see below the reasons for doing this). Because the term 'subsection' is generalised today, I will use this later in this review. What Strehlow calls 'njinana sections' are 'patrilineal hordes' or groups composed by men of two subsections which are in father-son relation. I will use the notion 'social organisation' as including all sociocentric labels (i.e. sections, subsections and moieties), in contrast to 'kin classification' as based on egocentric labelling.

4 Elkin (1954: 101) had already mentioned this function of social organisation in inter-tribal meetings.

5 See Service (1960) for explanations and references. The present discussion is largely taken from this paper.

6 Bates (1925) suggested that the section names of the Aranda probably originated in the northern part of the Kimberleys. Elkin (1939: 199) commented that the study of sections and sub-sections in the Northern Territory and in Western Australia reveals that they have diffused into those regions from the north-west, i.e. from the De Grey-Broome region.

7 See also Roheim (1938), Ashley Montagu (1937,1960 and 1974), Tonkinson (1978) and Merlan (1986).

8 See also McConnel (1930) who reports for the Wik Munkan that although a child usually inherits the name (totem) of his father, in inter-tribal marriages it inherits that of the mother, thus (my interpretation) pointing to an implicit 'matrilineal principle' of transmission of identificatory substance.

9 Abbreviations used are F (father), M (mother), B (brother), Z (sister), D (daughter), S (son) and W (wife). Thus MBD is 'mother's brother's daughter'.

10 The 283 marriages recorded include all marriages contracted between approximately 1910 and 1997. There does not seem to be any significant change in the number of irregular marriagessince contact in the 1960s. Tonkinson (1991 [1978]: 65) reports less than three per cent of irregular marriages among the Mardu.

11 There is an example of a girl being in love with a classificatory MB (this would be the ZD marriage). She was instantly removed by her father from her residential community and married by force as a second wife to an elder man.

12 Bourdieu (1972) has been trying to conceptualise the disparity between ideal and real marriage in north Africa.

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