Culture

Kinship Exercices / Françoise HÉRITIER, *L'exercice de la parenté*, Paris, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1981. 199 pages, figures, appendices, bibliographie, index, carte

R. H. Barnes

Volume 2, Number 2, 1982

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1078257ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1078257ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)
2563-710X (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this review

Barnes, R. (1982). Review of [Kinship Exercices / Françoise HÉRITIER, *L'exercice de la parenté*, Paris, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1981. 199 pages, figures, appendices, bibliographie, index, carte]. *Culture*, *2*(2), 113–118. https://doi.org/10.7202/1078257ar

Kinship Exercices

Françoise HÉRITIER, *L'exercice de la parenté*, Paris, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1981. 199 pages, figures, appendices, bibliographie, index, carte.

By R.H. Barnes
Oxford University

With the publication of this oddly titled book, a new master of the kinship discipline stakes her claim for international attention. A close colleague of Lévi-Strauss, Françoise Héritier has for several years engaged intensively in a remarkable project deriving from research among the Samo of the Upper Volta. Slowly results from this undertaking have made their appearance in a series of articles. At last the main study has appeared. It reveals itself to be not a run of the mill monograph on Samo kinship, but an ambitious theoretical treatise, in some ways clearly intended to be set beside Lévi-Strauss's classic on elementary structures.

The first thought which suggests itself is that *L'exercice de la parenté* represents a substitute for Lévi-Strauss's abandoned volume on Crow-Omaha systems; for the book is situated plainly within the Lévi-Straussian problem area of the transition from elementary to complex patterns of kinship and marriage. The author nowhere however invites the reader to see her study in these terms, and the comparison if made would obscur the real contributions of her work.

Other than a brief introduction and conclusion and three useful appendixes, the book falls into only three longish chapters: the first on the fundamental laws of kinship, the second on semi-complex systems of alliance, and the third on the passage to complex alliance structures. Chapter one begins with a standard resumé deriving from Kroeber and Lowie of the logical possibilities by which a kinship system may organize itself on the basis of the distinctions given in the biological banalities that there are two sexes, that one generation follows another and that members of one generation are distinguished by the order of their birth. Héritier lays stress on the fact that some of the logical possibilities lack empirical realization, a circumstance which she feels requires explanation. She creates an entirely fictional society organized patrilineally into clans residing *amitalocally* (Murdock's term), that is with the adult females of the clan —younger women and their husbands going to live with the women's father's sisters. The terminology equates F with MB as opposed to FB and M with FZ as opposed to MZ. Similar equations and distinctions carry through at lower levels. Cross-cousins may not marry, but there is a preference for marriage with parallel cousins. In principle such a system is quite workable. It does not exist, she tells us, because it is inconceivable that the tie between two men linked through a woman (sister of one of them, wife of the other) should be closer than that between two brothers. This argument smacks rather of the old Africanists' depreciation of ties of affinity in favor of solidarity based on blood ties. Ultimately she finds the explanation in the fundamental inequality between women and men. She proposes therefore that varieties of systems may be compared by the degree to which they express male dominance.

Otherwise the chapter leans heavily on Lounsbury's kinship analysis, which she tries to piece together again from the rubble to which it was reduced by Allan Coult's careful critique. Not many minds are going to be changed by what she says about it. She herself remains unmoved by Edmund Leach's famous attack on anthropological butterfly collecting. For her kinship systems sort themselves into several basic types, with variations. Any terminology which makes patrilineal equations, except those of asymmetric alliance, appears to be an Omaha terminology. From Lounsbury she has it that in an Omaha system the relation between a brother and sister is equivalent to that between a father and a daughter. There is no evidence that any such thing is actually true for the Omaha, nor it is easy to make sense of the claim that Omaha women never become adults for the men of their own clan.

Of course the argument in question, as phrased by Lounsbury, has to do *not* with how ego classes Z and D, but whether he classes together FZS, ZS and DS. An Omaha man does apply the same term to FZS and ZS, but not to DS. The converse for a woman is supposed to be the equations FZS = ZS = S, which the Omaha do make. It is equations of this kind which Kohler attempted to explain (in 1897) by reference to the Omaha preference for marriage with the WFZ, WZ or WBD. Few anthropologists since Rivers have accepted Kohler's explanation, but he did identify a significant pattern in the terminology, for which he deserves credit. There are no less than thirty-nine sets

of equations in the version used by an Omaha male (and an equal number in that used by an Omaha female) which parallel their marriage preference. This similarity presents exactly the same kind of explanatory quandries as does the similarity between the patrilineal rule for forming clans and the patrilineal equations in the terminology. Indeed, as anthropologists have noted before, both sets of equations are linked by reciprocity and require therefore a common explication. Héritier and Coult both remind us that Lounsbury offers not an explanation, but just another description, actually a commonplace one which goes all the way back to Kohler. The statement that the relation between brother and sister is equivalent to that between father and daughter is metaphorical, and it is furthermore an anthropologist's metaphor, not an Omaha one. Because it gets away from the ethnographic facts, having no counterpart in the actual relations between brothers and sisters, it can not serve as the sought after explanation. What is true is that the Omaha tend to treat similarly the offspring of women from the same descent line. This factor however is just another aspect of the general problem. Interestingly much the same is true of patrilineal societies with asymmetric prescriptive alliance like the Purum and the Kédang. The crucial differences between them and the Omaha therefore lie elsewhere.

Chapter two contains the most original part of her study. In the course of her research in the Upper Volta, Héritier discovered among the Samo, patrilineal lineages, a relationship terminology making extensive patrilineal equations, and a complex marriage system constituted by three kinds of union as well as an elaborate system of marriage prohibitions. She also took the trouble to collect exhaustive genealogies going back from 5 to 9 generations for 26 lineages in three close villages from a population of 1500 living persons. With this extraordinarily rich informational base, she prepared the ground for a thorough, modern empirical study of how a system of marriage prohibitions works. It is this investigation which she presents here and in the previously published articles upon which this chapter is based. Nothing quite like it has ever been published before. The complexity of rules to be examined and the sheer size of the sample (2450 marriages and several thousand individuals living and dead) required somewhat more than normal human resources. Through the auspices of Lévi-Strauss and the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, she obtained the services of a computer and the collaboration for many years of the expert programmer Marion Laurière. To her ethnographic achievements, she then added a new expertise in applying computer techniques to certain anthropological problems. Students of anthropology working on issues genuinely demanding the use of a computer, and there are not likely yet to be many, would do well to repair to Paris and sit at the feet of Mme Héritier.

She has been able to establish that with a very small deviation the Samo do manage to obey their many marriage prohibitions; yet 75 percent of marriages were within the three closely allied villages of the study area. This remarkable combination of practical endogamy with restrictions leads her to conclude that the Samo specifically seek out unions with non-prohibited kinsmen or that marriage takes place as close as possible to the point where the interdictions cease to apply. Such repeated ties are naturally between kinsmen of several different genealogical kinds, and she does well to speak here of a preference rather than a prescription. The genealogies show many cases of kin marrying kin, and the ethnographer observed public discussions intended to arrive at just this sort of arrangement. The links are not always between two sets of agnates, for cognatic ties play a role too. Of course, it is a commonplace of anthropology that people tend to marry kinsmen, and her results are not all that astonishing. She wishes to distinguish the Samo arrangement from simple endogamy by emphasizing that it occurs in conjunction with marriage prohibitions and therefore corresponds to a general structure of alliance. About all she has achieved though is to demonstrate that these prohibitions do not preclude a degree of endogamy in practice.

The alliance structure to which she refers does not concern a specific relationship category, a positive marriage rule, or a single kind of genealogical partner for a male, since the kinsmen chosen may be of many different kinds. She intends rather a combination of indirect and direct exchange together with a priviledged choice of partners which would renew an alliance after four generations. She has traced a large number of marriage cycles of various lengths, which however she concedes have only a statistical significance. Such cycles are bound to occur wherever regional endogamy combines with descent group exogamy, except in certain symmetric systems. The feature of direct exchange is more interesting. Despite the many prohibitions, the Samo do permit two men to exchange sisters, and such marriages occur. It is also permissible for a woman to be returned at a later generation, especially where plural marriages of connecting relatives help to remove her from a prohibited category. Héritier contrasts the Samo with asymmetric alliance systems in the following terms. In an asymmetric prescriptive system, only members of the descent group who are of the same sex may repeat alliances. Except for sororal polygyny, among the Samo only persons of opposite sex in the same group may repeat alliances. Even this generalization is qualified by the way the prohibitions are phrased. Although a man may not marry into the same clan as his FF, he is unrestricted so far as the marriage of his FFB is concerned; so repetition of marriages by

persons in collateral lines can occur fairly soon.

Since the Samo express their marriage rules only in so far as they govern the decisions made by men, a good deal of work had to be done by the author before she could suitably compare the positions of women with those of men. This problem involved formal analysis of the symmetrical and inverse relationships between the marriage rules for men and those for women, which has lessons for anyone working on similar topics. Her study therefore is distinguished in three respects, first by the exhaustive initial empirical research, especially in collecting genealogies, her adoption of computer techniques for exploring the issues thrown up by this research, and in the formal analysis by which she made the nature of those issues precise.

The project was formulated to explore hypotheses made by Lévi-Strauss in 1965 in his Huxley Memorial Lecture, "The Future of Kinship Studies." These purport to explain something called "Crow-Omaha" systems, and Héritier writes throughout her book as though much that she says about the Samo holds good for the Omaha. Actually much of her analysis is indeed very instructive for understanding Omaha society. Unfortunately, the ethnography of North American peoples is generally uncertain and incomplete when it comes to their marriage rules and practices. About the Omaha we know somewhat more than is common, but we will never know nearly as much about them as we now know about the Samo.

Héritier follows Lévi-Strauss in lumping the Samo, the Omaha and several other systems including cognatic ones together in a category called semi-complex systems of alliance, falling between elementary systems and the complex ones of industrial societies. The idiosyncratic vocabulary is Lévi-Strauss's, is quite ambiguous, and has already provoked several volumes of attempted exegesis. Héritier also refers to the Samo relationship terminology as an "Omaha" terminology and the Samo marriage rules as an "Omaha system of alliance." This is a separable question and should be dealt with by itself.

The place to begin is with Lévi-Strauss's definition of a Crow-Omaha system. This exists in three versions, first in the Huxley Memorial Lecture (published 1966) which is in English, in the preface to the French second edition of the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1967) and in the English translation of that book (1969). The first two versions differ insignificantly in wording, the original being:

> whenever a descent line is picked up to provide a mate all individuals belonging to that line are excluded from the range of potential mates for the first lineage, during a period covering several generations.

As Héritier points out, this definition implies that the marriages of men have the same effects on the choices by women as they do for junior males, which in any case is not true for the Samo where a woman can marry into the same line as her brother. Readers of the English translation of 1969 should be alerted to the fact that a translation error has changed "mate" (the French is *conjoint*) to "wife," thereby implying that it is only marriages of males which affect the choices of other persons in the lineage. Héritier also points out that the definition cannot account for lineage exogamy, nor for the prohibition on women in MM's lineage. She shows quite correctly that it is insufficient in that it mentions only unilineal groups, while the Samo effectively prohibit a range of cognatic kin as well —a point which is valid too for the Omaha. The definition does not fit the Samo prohibition on women in the lineages of WM, WFM, and WMM. For the Omaha it runs afoul of their prohibition on women in the sub-clans of FMM, MM or MMM and their preference for a man marrying other women in his wife's family. The Omaha permit brothers to marry into the same sub-clan. There are several other unclear features in the definition, some apparently intentional, having to do with the indeterminate number of generations, the relation between terminological lines and concrete lineages, and so on. Lévi-Strauss therefore offered really not a precise definition but a rough-and-ready characterization which does not fit any single society very well. In fact his description of "Crow-Omaha" societies seems largely made up of elements taken from both the Samo, which he would have known through personal contacts with the ethnographer, and the Omaha, essentially as presented by J.O. Dorsey in his classis *Omaha Sociology* of 1884. Lévi-Strauss and Héritier gloss over differences between the two societies which might otherwise be considered important.

Perhaps it would be useful therefore to compare directly the marriage rules of the two cultures.

	SAMO	OMAHA
1.	F's lineage (prohibited)	F's clan (prohibited)
2.	M's lineage (prohibited)	M's clan (prohibited)
3.	FM's lineage (prohibited)	FM's sub-clan (prohibited)
4.	MM's lineage (prohibited)	MM's sub-clan (prohibited)
5.	Any lineage from which a classificatory F has taken a wife (prohibited)	Doubtful, but to judge by unpublished information not practically true for the Omaha
6.	FMM's lineage (permitted)	FMM's sub-clan (prohibited)
7.	MMM's lineage (permitted)	MMM's sub-clan (prohibited)
8.	Any lineage from which a classificatory B has taken a wife (prohibited)	Any sub-clan from which a classificatory B has taken a wife (permitted)
9.	W's lineage (prohibited)	W's sub-clan (permitted and preferred)
10.	WM's lineage (prohibited)	WM's sub-clan (permitted)
11.	WFM's lineage (prohibited)	WFM's sub-clan (permited)
12.	WMM's lineage (prohibited)	WMM's sub-clan (permitted)[1]

1. There is a further Omaha series of prohibitions, for which there is no Samo counterpart, involving lines traced through ego's junior relatives and children.

The fact that Samo and Omaha descent groups do not have exactly the same sociological status does not constitute a material difference for present purposes. Similarities occur only in the first four regulations, thereafter there are only differences. Perhaps the most important difference is the fact that the Samo prohibit brothers from marrying into the same lineage and a husband from taking further wives from his first wife's lineage and from yet other lineages which are wife-givers to hers. These regulations flatly contradict the Omaha preference for a man and his brothers to take several wives from the same sub-clan. The Samo permit such secondary unions only where the first wife has died or been divorced, though certain lineages of smiths ignore such prohibitions and permit sororal polygyny. The two systems might very well be said in Lévi-Straussian terms to be transformations of each other. Nevertheless the differences are significant. The two societies work differently as a consequence of the differences in their rules. In these respects the Samo are much closer to Lévi-Strauss's definition than are the Omaha. By Lévi-Strauss's standard the Omaha, paradoxically, do *not* have an Omaha system of alliance.

Lévi-Strauss has established that the Omaha are not to be lumped together with asymmetric prescriptive societies which make in some ranges of the terminology similar patrilineal equations. This point is now generally accepted, although a few people continue to follow Murdock, against whom Lévi-Strauss made the criticism. In more than one place I have explicitly published my agreement with Lévi-Strauss, for the reasons he gives, namely that prescriptive terminologies make a series of characteristic affinal equations which the Omaha lack. Through a misunderstanding Héritier however accuses me of making Murdock's mistake. The passage in question was one in which I was merely echoing Lévi-Strauss. Since the confusion has arisen, perhaps I should once again make may position plain. By Murdock's criteria, namely certain patrilineal equations involving cross-cousins, he should count the Purum (and the Kédang) as Omaha societies. In fact the Purum and Kédang are not Omaha societies and to class them as such would separate them from societies to which they are truly comparable such as the Kachin, who do not make some of the equations in question. Like several other anthropologists, I think the whole business of patrilineal equations, especially those involving cousins, has been over emphasized.

If it is accepted as common ground that the mere similarity of patrilineal equations does not by itself constitute a reason for classing two terminologies together, the question must be asked why Héritier does speak of the Samo as having an Omaha terminology. In her second appendix she publishes for the first time the Samo relationship terms. Understandably, there are a great number of differences in detail, but many of these are not especially significant. The Samo do make a large number of patrilineal equations, and these largely coincide with those made by the Omaha. As might be expected though, the Samo and the Omaha most differ in their classification of affines; and some of these differences correspond to differences in their marriage rules. An Omaha woman, for example, makes the following equations which a Samo woman does not: HB = FZH, ZH, BDH. There are therefore systematic differences both in the terminology and in the rules. These incongruities are significant. In their light, anthropologists ought not to say that the Samo have the same terminology and alliance system as the Omaha. This truth will be conceded, at least implicitly, by any claim that the one is a transformation of the other.

Another reason why anthropologists should be reluctant to assimilate the Samo to the Omaha is that thanks to Héritier's work we know far more about the Samo marriage structure than we do for the Omaha. Durkheim in a review (1913) of *The Omaha Tribe*, the second classic Omaha ethnography by Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, commented that Dorsey's analysis, based on dry and fragmentary indications, never got beyond externals. The later Omaha monograph did not advance upon Dorsey in relevant respects. The fact they did not mention Omaha prohibitions, even though La Flesche was an Omaha, might deserve consideration. In fact the whole theory of "Omaha alliance" rests on a few somewhat garbled pages in Dorsey's book in which he sets out an extensive, if somewhat incoherent, list of restrictions on the evidence given him by Two Crows and Joseph La Flesche. There is doubt as to whether Joseph La Flesche's mother was a Ponca, as claimed there, or an Omaha, which makes for uncertainties in interpreting his information. Even what Two Crows said is not completely straightforward (Fortune has accused him of deliberately misleading Dorsey about Omaha secret societies). Héritier is aware of some of these difficulties and makes an effort to disentangle this passage.

Not much can be achieved however without further genealogical information of a kind which has not yet been published. Dorsey mentioned once that he was preparing some Omaha genealogies to include in a monograph on personal names, but he died before he could bring this project to completion. Alice Fletcher also gathered a good deal of data on Omaha families during her work in preparing for the allotment of lands on the Omaha reservation in 1883. Fortunately both Dorsey's genealogies and Fletcher's allotment papers, as well as other supplementary documents, have been preserved in the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, D.C. This material provides an extensive picture of fair quality of Omaha marriage patterns during most of the nineteenth century. This aspect of Omaha life will never be completely understood, but a good deal more can

be learned than has been known so far.

An example of the value of this newly available information is provided by an inference Héritier draws form Dorsey's report. He happens to have mentioned that both Two Crows's daughter and Two Crows's brother had married into the Tapa descent group. Héritier concludes that they married therefore into the same sub-clan. The difference between clan and sub-clan is important for some marriage restrictions. Tapa is the Deer Head clan, and Dorsey had described it as being divided into four sub-clans. Fletcher and La Flesche on the other hand denied that there were Deer Head sub-clans; so there are some grounds for Héritier's interpretation. Dorsey's genealogies however substantiate his report of four distinct sub-clans. They also show that Two Crows's daughter White Moon Morris married Eagle Chief or George (Grant) Merrick of the Deer Head Pipe sub-clan, while his brother Dakota (Shaa$^{n\prime}$) or Sioux Solomon (also called Silas Morris) married No^{n}ce$'$i^{n}ce (a name of unknown meaning) or Sallie Levering of the Real Deer Head sub-clan. Two Crows's daughter and brother did *not* marry into the same sub-clan.

The genealogies provide tests of varying degrees of reliability of the Omaha observation of their prohibitions; most of this matter will be made available in another publication. For the moment, the issue of symmetric exchange may usefully be considered. Out of 360 marriages, there were only four where a man and his BD married into the same group. In one instance they married persons related as FFBD/FBSS, the rest however did not involve unions of persons who were closely related to each other. According to Dorsey, a man should not marry into his BD's sub-clan, but by inference from the probable dates of birth of those involved, it was always the FB who married first. The question then is whether women were wrong to take husbands where their FB had found his wife. There is no indication that they were restricted in this way. It may be mentioned too that the genealogies lead to the provisional inference that, unlike the Samo, even men among the Omaha gave no consideration to the marriages of their fathers' brothers.

In all there were 22 marriages by men in Dorsey's record where men married into the same sub-clan as did one or more of their female relatives. In only three such marriages is there any proven genealogical relationship between the spouses. The Omaha make certain terminological equations suggesting that they, like the Samo, permit direct sister exchange: WB = ZH, HZ = BW. Such exchange however would seem to be precluded by the Omaha prohibition on marriage with the ZHZ. There are no examples of such marriages. The closest example occurred when a B and Z married patrilateral parallel first cousins (FBD/FBS). The man therefore married his ZHFBD. Another man and his two sisters married a woman and a man related as FBSD/FFBS. The man therefore married his ZHFBSD. Dorsey mentions both possibilities as being equivalent to a man's marriage with ZHZ. Hence these marriages violated Omaha prohibitions. There were five other cases where B and Z married into the same sub-clan, and one instance of second parallel cousins (FFBSS/FFBSD), but the spouses involved were not related to each other. Dorsey gives no indication that these marriages would be wrong. Five men married into the sub-clan of their FZH, but since they were not genealogically related to their wives, they did not violate the prohibition on women called *iti$'$zhu^{n}* (e.g., ZD, FZD).

The survey currently in preparation permits the definite conclusions that Omaha moieties were not exogamous, that their symmetrically structured prohibitions covered only a small field of traceable kin, that direct exchange was otherwise permissible, and that between larger groups marriages tended to go both ways, giving rise in the aggregate to a *de facto*, but culturally insignificant, pattern of direct exchange. Of the 360 marriages in the available sample, there are only 19 where the husband violated some one of Dorsey's rules. This figure is somewhat low, for there is no way of checking whether the earlier marriages are correct, but the result of about five percent which are improper must be near the actual deviation.

Considering how much rests on the passage in which Dorsey sets out the description given him by Two Crows and Joseph La Flesche of the marriage rules, we can only wish that Dorsey had made a greater effort to be certain that he knew what they intended. He seems to have collected this information in 1882, when they visited him in Washington, D.C. to help him revise the manuscript of his book. He did not actually concentrate on collecting the full tribal genealogies until 1889 when George Miller and Samuel Freemont visited him for this purpose. Two Crows told Dorsey into which lines he could not marry. He also explained that two of his brothers Shaa$^{n\prime}$ and Mixa$'$to^{n} were subject to the same restrictions and had married, respectively, women of the Deer Head and Ko$^{n\prime}$ce clans. These facts are accurate so far as they go, but Dorsey would surely have been more cautious had he realized that Shaa$^{n\prime}$ had married another woman from one of the supposedly prohibited sub-clans and that four more of Two Crows's full-brothers had also done so. It would be most interesting to know what explanations Two Crows and his living brothers might have given. One of the women involved was even the divorced wife of Joseph's son Francis La Flesche (co-author of the second monograph), and Two Crows may have surpressed mention of her out of deference to Joseph's feelings.

The Omaha system is not perhaps really one based on such elaborate restrictions on marriage

choice as some have thought. The appearance of this elaborateness is in some ways produced by the circumstances of Dorsey's conversations in 1882 and the way in which he wrote them up. What Two Crows may have been trying to tell him is that men of the same local line but of different generation ought not to marry into the same groups, so long as (close) kinsmen in these generations are still living or the memory of the tie is fresh. Omaha restrictions were not in practice based on absolute limits to ties of a given kind. Instead their implication and purpose depended upon memory. Where no one living could remember precisely a connection, no restriction existed. Dorsey's Omaha genealogies are not in general of excessively great depth, encompassing three to five generations of adults. The Omaha rules might work out in practice very differently in a society like the Samo, with their long memory for alliance.

The ideas of closure of alliance cycles and the periodic repetition of alliance out of which Lévi-Strauss and Héritier make so much capital could turn out to be of little relevance. Nothing indicates that the Omaha were aware of or specifically valued either closure or periodic repetition, and the structure of the terminology embodies no prescription, whether explicit or implicit. More useful is Héritier's emphasis on the cognatic range of Samo and also Omaha prohibitions. In both societies the prohibitions are nuanced and partially articulated by the presence of unilineal descent groups, but the underlying implications are surely cognatic. Some Siouan societies which lack unilineal groupings also prohibit marriage with relatives traced through the four grandparents. Their regulations differ from those of the Omaha principally in their lack of any unilineal bias. The Omaha arrangement is best seen in conjunction with these non-unilineal patterns among neighboring and ethnologically related tribes. Judgement on the proper weight to give the diferences between the Samo and the Omaha may best be reserved until it becomes possible to consider a range of ethnologically similar neighbors of each of the two peoples. More modern work influenced by Héritier is being done in Africa, which will surely facilitate comparison. Philip Burnham and E. Copet for example have recently been working on prohibitions amongst communities of Cameroon and the Central African Republic whose genealogical memories, rather like the Omaha, are considerably shorter than those of the Samo. In many respects, it would seem that the Omaha resemble the Gbaya or Mkako where they diverge most from the Samo.

These studies may also call into question or qualify Héritier's definition of semi-complex alliance systems as structures which forbid repetition of alliance by same-sex consanguines, while permitting opposite-sex consanguines to do so, since at least one of the Cameroon peoples forbids direct sister exchange and pays little attention to repetition of marriage or local endogamy. Since the projects in question are still underway, the full implications and results have not yet been made available.

Héritier's category of semi-complex alliance includes the Iroquois and the non-unilineal Hawaiian pattern. The classification into elementary, semi-complex, and complex is quite loose, and at least in Lévi-Strauss's original paper confusingly described. For Héritier, elementary systems rest on some positively expressed marriage injunction. Complex systems apparently leave marriage to individual choice, governed only by incest prohibitions, but the scholar lays his bets on the chance that he might reveal some at least fragmentary patterns in the marriage choices. The classification is very broad and does not penetrate to subtle relations between rule and choice even in elementary societies. Necessarily each category accommodates more or less uncomfortably an astounding variety of societies. The interpretation even leaves out of the picture Roman Egypt, where full brother-sister mating and marriage was common in all classes and where even father-daughter and mother-son incest seems to have been permitted. Looseness may be a virtue for those who find heuristic value in this classification, but there is no reason why all anthropologists should fall in line behind it.

Chapter three concerns not complex structures, but the *passage* to complex structures, where "passage" does not necessarily receive an historical or evolutionary interpretation. The focus is on marriage possibilities with distant genealogical kin, and the chapter ranges from improbable reconstructions of Inca society by Lounsbury and Zuidema, through Blackstone on electing kindred of the founder to All Souls College, Oxford and an eleventh century text by Pierre-Damien recommending marriage with kinsmen as close as canon law permits, to computer studies of marriages in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. The book closes with instructive appendixes on the distinction between "parallel" and "cross" relatives and very helpfully on the alternative common law, canon law, and Roman law procedures for counting degrees of kinship. On the whole the book is marked by several distinguished and original contributions. It will provoke not only controversy, but progress.