

Kinship, marriage and ideology among the Raj Gonds: a tribal system in the context of south India

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THE STATUS OF THE UNMARRIED BOY AND GIRL

For Gonds the life of a new human being begins at the time of birth.¹ This starts with labour and ends after the ritual of purification a week or so later. They make little distinction between the birth of a boy or a girl.

A human birth is the coming together of five elements, earth, air, fire, water and sky or ether² which is given life, *ji*,³ by god, *Bhagvan*. Combined, these substances and force are elemental, like a seed that can multiply on reaching manhood at marriage and crumble to dust when the life force is taken back by god at death. Human existence is a process of development that must go through its full cycle to be complete. The Gonds symbolize this as five seeds of sorghum—their staple cereal. At marriage the five seeds become five full measures of seed and at death they are ground into five measures of flour. However, if the person dies before marriage the cycle of development is cut short, the burial ceremony abbreviated and the symbol of five seeds becomes insignificant.

¹The research for this paper was undertaken in Andhra Pradesh between 1977 and 1978 under a research grant from the United Kingdom Social Science Research Council. The overall project was headed by Professor Furer-Haimendorf to study social change among Indian tribes. Thanks go to Professor Furer-Haimendorf, Mrs Haimendorf and Valerie Yorke for assistance in the project. Professor Furer-Haimendorf, Hilary Standing and Terrell Popoff assisted me in reading early drafts and M. Abdul Majid provided essential insights into the structure of Raj Gond kinship.

²This five-fold division of the basic elements follows the standard Hindu division into the *pancha bhutamulu* (Telugu) composed of earth, *prithvi* (*dhatri* Gondi); air *vayu* (*wari* Gondi); fire, *tejas* or *agni* (*tarmi* Gondi); water, *apas* (*jal* Gondi) and ether or sky, *akasha* (*akash* Gondi). See Walker, 1968, Vol. II, p. 441.

³This also follows the Hindu conception of *jiva* or phenomenal self. Here *jivatman* is distinct from *paratman*, the distinction being between phenomenal soul and supreme soul. (See also Furer-Haimendorf, 1953).

The *sanal*, or persona after death, is the totality of this cycle of development. It is the character and individuality developed over a life-time. It is, in a sense, the residue of life's experience that has no separate existence until after the death of a fully matured person, when, at the death ceremony, the life force returns to god for potential reincarnation, the five elements crumble to dust as the body is cremated and the *sanal* is cleansed of its dead substance and ceremonially joined, *mirikimar*, with the joint souls of the dead clan ancestors, the *sanalir*. This body of *sanalir* are the focus of the clan cult that is the ideological backbone to the Gond system of kinship and marriage.

In terms of life force, substance and persona, there is no distinction between male and female, only the shape, *rhup*, and function of these are different. At the post-natal ceremony for purification of the umbilicus, the *mod saba*, birth is treated as a general process for the increase of the lineage. A song is sung symbolizing the social significance of the new birth called *ve:li ta patta*, 'the song of the creeper'. The family is symbolized as the many tendrils that the pumpkin plant sends out to cover the roof of the house. In the physiology of this plant the male and female elements are unified yet separate. First the long tendril grows and bears the male flowers; from this the shorter female shoot branches and bears the fruit. All are nurtured by the same roots but the male tendrils are long and continuous. The word *ve:li*, creeper, is used polysemically, referring to the household, its male and female elements and to the lineage as part of a wider clan structure. The household is part of a clan and phratry, membership of which is based on the principle of agnation and the marrying in of wives. Men are members of their clan from birth, but a woman is only a daughter of her clan and has no rights of membership. On her primary marriage she is introduced to the clan gods of her husband and becomes a member of his clan, while retaining a residual membership of her natal clan.

The status of the unmarried daughter

Until married a girl is only a daughter of her natal clan. It is therefore essential in Gond society that all girls are married. Primary marriage is not so much a matter of a Gond girl finding a mate as finding a clan. This is made statistically possible by the fact that Gond men may have more than one primary marriage, whereas the girl can only have one primary marriage which makes her a member of that clan.

Soon after marriage a bride should be introduced, *be:ti*, to the clan deity of her husband. She is then in a fit state for her persona, *sanal*, to be mixed with the other souls of her clan after death. This incorporeal body of souls is the point of definition of the clan—a group of cognates unified by its agnatic principle. The clan shrine has two different sections;

a shrine to the dead male agnates made up of a group of *kam*, wooden posts and a shrine to the dead wives, a group of *sati*, vermilion painted stones. Together the *sati* and the *kam* represent the *sanalir*—the combined personae of the clan, its point of definition.

It would be too easy to say that a woman is absolutely incorporated into the clan and phratry of her husband while she is alive and bears no relationship to her natal clan. She is still seen and often asked of which clan she is a daughter. This is the Gond recognition of the principle of alliance and affinity of her husband. She does not become totally incorporated into her primary husband's clan until she is dead. Her membership of her husband's clan is one of potential absolute incorporation fulfilled only after death. Her position in the clan system during her lifetime is therefore very ambivalent. Her importance is as an item for exchange in the creation of affinal links and alliances.

Until married a girl cannot take part in the rituals to the clan deity—*Persa Pen*. And the essence of being a Gond is to worship *Persa Pen*. Her membership is therefore the nominal one of being a daughter. This is a constant threat to her parents. Untied by the obligations of marriage and connubium she can run off with a non Gond. An unmarried girl who had lived with a non-Gond would be unable to have a subsequent primary marriage, whereas a woman who had been through a primary marriage, having an established position in the Gond scheme of things, would find it less difficult, to have a subsequent secondary marriage with a Gond. The desire to have a primary marriage and a clan identity is paramount to herself and her parents and this contributes to the fact that 92.7 per cent of women in a sample of 258 were married below the age of maturity.

The status of the unmarried boy

Through the agnatic principle a boy is a member of his clan from birth. He is ritually introduced to his clan god at any convenient time before marriage. He is the point of connection through which women are brought into the clan: he is the continuity—the long tendril of the creeper. But until married he remains a minor with no authority; he cannot speak at council meetings nor is he able to set up a separate household. To do this he must make an offering to the headman of the village in which he wishes to live at the festival of *durari* and no offering is acceptable from a person who has not been through the ritual of primary marriage that confers maturity on him.

If a man dies before marriage he is immature and his persona, *sanal*, is undeveloped and cannot be joined with the dead agnates. The corpse is disposed of by burial rather than cremation. The elaborate part of the death ceremony, called *pitereng*, which is concerned with the passage of the persona, and takes two days, is dropped.

In Gond society primary marriage is therefore crucially bound up with the social development of individuals as an integral part of the continuity of the clan cult—a feature central to Raj Gond social organization.

CLANSHIP AND DESCENT: THE BASIS OF IDENTITY AND STRUCTURE

Professor Haimendorf has already written a definitive study of the clan system of the Raj Gonds from two points of view: firstly, as an ideological system in which he discusses the mythical validation of the clan system as a charter for social behaviour (1948) and secondly, as a descent based structure for social organization (1956). Here I only want to summarize the organizational aspects and make one or two points specifically related to marriage.⁴

Clan and tribe

Clan and tribe are related in two different ways: firstly, tribalness as membership of an endogamous unit and, secondly, tribalness as distinct from the wider Indian context of casteness. There is in the Gond descent system a set of organizational principles of unity and indivisibility that make it categorically different from the caste system. It is this difference in the Raj Gond kinship system, which has similar features to the Dravidian kinship system of south India, that makes a study of the Raj Gonds interesting. While structurally the Gond kinship system is part of the wider Hindu system it is also distinct; the Gonds see themselves as totally separate. Haimendorf sums up the structural distinction thus:

Gond society is conceptually a total system, and no group, whatever its composition, can contract out of the basic framework of phratries and clans. Whereas most Hindu castes have an inherent tendency to split up into endogamous sub-castes of different status, no section of Raj Gond society could establish itself as an independent endogamous unit short of complete repudiation of all ties of tribal solidarity (Furer-Haimendorf 1956: 510).

Culturally the Raj Gonds see themselves as pure in a world of impurity. They are the only people who worship the great god *Persa Pen*.

Phratry (saga)

The clan system is a complex of both clans and phratries. The phratries, *saga*, form four vertical divisions in Gond society. The phratries are

⁴It should be mentioned that Furer-Haimendorf's research on Raj Gond marriage is at present under publication and not yet available.

known by their number, beginning at four and running to seven. The numbers do not denote a system of ranking but relate both to the order in which the original ancestors emerged from a cave where they had been trapped and to the number of sons that these ancestors had in their separate territories before their grandchildren scattered across the country.

Each phratry has its deities—*Persa Pen*—shared among all its constituent clans. But the phratry is not a corporate ceremonial unit. Worship of the clan god is done by the clan and the maximal lineage. The significance of the phratry is that no man may have a primary marriage with a daughter of his own *saga*. And that ideally for a secondary marriage a man should marry the ex-wife of a man of his own phratry, though in practice this rule is not always followed and any infringement may incur a small and largely symbolic fine. Once a woman has been made a member of a phratry by marriage all subsequent unions should ideally be within that group. But she is totally forbidden to re-marry a man of her natal clan. This would be incestuous. She therefore continues to retain a measure of her natal clan membership making her phratry membership somewhat ambivalent. The phratry is therefore exogamous by the fact that a married woman cannot re-marry a man of her natal phratry and full membership of her phratry by marriage is not achieved for the woman until she is dead, when it is assumed that she becomes the wife of her primary husband in the other world. The fact that re-marriage should ideally be within the phratry has little to do within descent but is rather a matter of secondary marriages having to follow the patterns of alliance set up by the primary marriage. It is in this light that I will later come on to discuss marriage as a matter of alliance rather than of descent. Primary and secondary marriages cannot be distinguished on the basis of one being outside the phratry and the other within it. Marriage is the single process of public recognition of mutual rights and duties in an alliance. The distinction is that primary marriage involves the 'rite de passage' of the bride and groom to maturity and the ambivalent incorporation of a woman into the phratry and clan of her husband.

The phratry as a division of Gond society

The phratry has two constituent principles: descent and fraternal solidarity (see Alavi 1972). Descent is the vertical axis following the division into four phratrics originating from the four apical ancestors. It is diachronic, binding the living male members together into an agnatic group. The horizontal dimension is based on the principle of fraternal solidarity between the contemporary members of the agnatic group and their wives. The Gonds distinguish these two dimensions in the following way.

The overall descent group of the phratry, including both the dead and the living are called the *sagali*. In identifying a person one asks him to

which *saga* he belongs. It is not a corporate group but only a unit of belonging to which membership is only finally fulfilled after death. While in this world one acts as a member of the *rotalir*, which literally translated means 'the people of the house'. The *rotalir*, not the *sagalir*, jointly perform the rituals and ceremonies of marriage and death. The *rotalir* is a group distinct from the *soiralir*, who are all the people not of ego's group. At all ceremonies not centred on the worship of a particular clan, such as at village festivities and crop fertility rituals the attendants divide into four distinct groups of *sagalir* to eat the ceremonial feast. At all ceremonies involving the worship of a particular clan deity the attendants divide into *rotalir* and *soiralir*, that is into two rather than four groups, based on ties of fraternity and lack of fraternity.

The principle of fraternity rather than descent incorporates women into the phratry: a man may not marry his own sisters and daughters, that would be incestuous. The obvious corollary is that a man is forbidden to marry his *rotalir* and only allowed to marry his *soiralir* and it is no doubt this assumption that gives the illusion that marriage is governed by exogamy. But this muddles the principle of descent with fraternity. A Raj Gond never says that he cannot marry his *rotalir*, in fact the opposite is true; in secondary marriage he must marry the women of his *saga*, those who sit as married women of his *rotalir* on ceremonial occasions. The point is that the unmarried daughters of a man's *soiralir* do not yet have a phratry. They are therefore not one's *soiralir*; only their parents are one's *soiralir* on the oft-recited maxim that *soirana baiko nawa selad* or 'the wife of my soira is my younger sister'. The women whom one can marry are not one's *soiralir*, the *soiralir* being the elder generations, but rather the daughters of one's *soiralir*—those women who can potentially become one's *rotalir*.

At this stage we must draw the preliminary hypothesis that whereas the clan system can be seen in terms of unilineal descent, the same model cannot be applied to marriage regulations; neither category of endogamy or exogamy fits the evidence. The problem is that the person one can or cannot marry is defined not by the individual's position in a descent model but by links inherited from the elder generation: women are not defined as members of their natal descent group, as Haimendorf says:

a [unmarried] woman's clan status is indeterminate . . . unlike the men as boys of her father's clan and the women married into it, she is not required to participate in such rituals as the eating of the first fruits (Haimendorf 1956: 508).

The divisions of the phratry (pari, kita, khandan and ron)

In discussing the sub-divisions of the phratry I will not be primarily

concerned with marriage. What is important here is that they form the units of religious corporation and day to day identity.

The clan, rather than the phratry, is the most immediately apparent motif in Gond society. It is the idiom used to identify every man, boy or married woman and everyone knows by heart which clans belong to which phratry and therefore the relationship that pertains between any two people along a classificatory model.

The numerous clans that make up each phratry are ideologically unified around a shared ethno-historical myth. This myth has two central themes: firstly, the acquisition of a clan deity (a divine form of the original ancestor) and secondly, the subsequent scattering and dispersal of the grandsons of the original ancestor. In the myths it is supposed that each phratry had a territory, but it broke up as a local unit and dispersed across the known world. The epic concludes with a long narration about a particular ancestor taking the clan shrine and travelling up hill and down dale until he finally sets up the shrine at its present location. This is the ideological core of the clan cult organization that structures Gond society.

Members of different clans within one phratry see each other as brothers according to a system of elder and younger brother, *dadal* and *tamur*, which runs throughout all Gond kinship terminology as in all Dravidian kinship systems (see Dumont 1957). No member of a senior clan may marry the widow or divorcee of the junior most clan; while being the youngest and weakest, he is the one that stays at home to look after the ageing parents; he is also the greatest and purest: their bullocks should not be borrowed nor their land leased.⁵ Thus the principle of fraternity is a normative ideal.

For historical reasons some clans are united in corporate worship at a single shrine while other clans are divided and worship at two or more places.⁶ Where the clan is divided the adherents of each shrine form a sub-division identified by the location of the shrine.

The adherents of each shrine are dispersed. The chief bard, *pen da patari* (see Furer-Haimendorf 1950-51), an officer of the clan priest, *katora*, keeps a mental inventory of adherents and visits them to collect his dues, announce ceremonial dates and collect the offerings; his job is to keep the sub-clan in touch with each other not merely physically but also in all matters of gossip, ritual observance and customary regulation.

⁵The idea of the youngest son being at the same time the greatest is found in many forms in India. Piers Vitebsky has also told me that among the Sauras of Orissa the youngest brother is always the trickster, weak yet making fools of the others.

⁶The usual reason for these splits is factional conflicts in the past. Furer-Haimendorf gives an excellent example of this, see Furer-Haimendorf, 1956, p. 505-6.

As an agnatically defined cult group the clan divides into maximal lineages called *kita*. These are distinguished by their different functions in the worship of the clan deity. Thus there is the maximal lineage of the priest, *katora kita*, of the keeper or headman of the shrine, *patel kita*, and lastly one or a number of commoner lineages, *kutma kita* (in some cases where there is a renowned ancestor or ancestors there is more than one *kutma kita*). Again these maximal lineages are dispersed. A man of a priestly lineage should strictly speaking only marry the daughter of another priestly lineage. But with the weakening of the clan cult this principle is now often broken by those not of the immediate household of the priest. I was present at one dispute in which the eldest son of a priest, his heir, *palira*, had taken a wife from a commoner lineage in secondary marriage. The head bard, *pen da patari*, complained bitterly that at the ceremony other members of the priestly lineage would have to bow to the feet of the wife of a commoner lineage, 'how could they show respect in the clan god's name to a woman who was not of a priestly *kita*?'

This dispute shows how the descent system orients around the clan cult ideology and that any tendency for structural change must be reflected in a weakening of that clan cult, as is happening; also that primary marriage incorporates the wife into her husband's descent group at the level of maximal lineage, sub-clan, clan and phratry and that this does affect her for life (and even into the next world, see Furer-Haimendorf 1953: 39).

Two ideological principles again govern the divisions of the clan, descent and fraternity, called respectively *khandani* and *rota* (the respective nouns being *khandan* and *ron*). The first literally means branch or bough of a tree—any branch or division of the cult group/descent group is called a *khandan* and the adjective *khandani* is used to mean 'of true descent' or 'pukka'. *Ron* literally means 'house' and refers to any contemporary unit at whatever level of division—the *rotalir* as mentioned earlier, which is distinct from the *soiralir*.

However, in general usage both these terms refer respectively to major and minimal lineage groups and have particular reference to the smaller divisions of the descent group whose members live in one locality. Thus a *khandan* is most often the descendants of a common known ancestor in one village and the *ron* are the people of one family, extended or nuclear, that share a common courtyard.

To conclude, the fissive aspect of the descent system is highly elaborated by the Raj Gonds. This reflects a short genealogical memory span; the average person can only remember a depth of three generations and in cases of locally important lineages five generations is the maximum.⁷

⁷In the case of one royal clan for which certain documents do exist Furer-Haimen-

The motifs of the clan cult mean that an individual's position is closely defined; his membership is immutable on the basis of a number of customary regulations, a few of which have been mentioned here. To preserve this immutability the sub-divisions within the descent system are carefully classified. However, social change is rapidly denaturing this system. Even if Gonds themselves were never certain of their own allegiances in the past, their *rota patari*, or house bard, would have known. But the system of house bards is also declining due to largely economic considerations as Haimendorf has discussed (Furer-Haimendorf, 1950-51: 176-7) and they can seldom recall the precise position of their patrons. This often gives rise to uncertainty which is today solved by side-stepping the refinements of customary practice, as was the case of the man of priestly lineage who married a commoner wife; ultimately all objections to the marriage were over-ruled.

PRIMARY MARRIAGE

Before discussing marriage regulations and preferences the complex rituals that surround it should be outlined; they provide the symbolic and ideological keys that circumscribe the regulations and preferences from which we can analyze how the system works.

The rituals

The cycle of primary marriage rituals are exceedingly elaborate, taking a full week to perform. The song cycle accompanying them took three days to sing when I hired a group to go through them. I will limit myself to the fundamentals that concentrate on the structural aspects such as the changing statuses of the participants, establishing new relations and, slightly differently, those aspects that symbolize marriage as a rite de passage. (The rituals can be studied in greater detail in a book now under publication by Professor Furer-Haimendorf.⁸)

There are three variations on the basic theme for primary marriage rituals based on two sets of variables; one, whether the marriage is prestigious and involves the elaborate pre-marriage betrothal ceremony, *kaja kobre*, 'presentation of a coconut kernel', or whether it is a simpler marriage by capture, *pisi watwal*, 'coming having been taken', and two, whether the marriage is virilocal or uxoriocal, the former being either

dorf was able to record to a depth of twelve generations. But this is extremely rare and in this case due to external legal factors.

⁸*The Raj Gonds of Adilabad*, of which volume one dealing with myth and ritual was published by Macmillan in 1948 and volume two dealing with marriage and politics still remains in manuscript and is now being prepared for publication.

betrothal or capture and the latter being called *lam sade* or 'indebted son-in-law' that is similar to the pan-Indian system of *ghar jhavae*.

The normal form of marriage is where the bride is taken or captured by the groom's family into their household. In this form the groom's parents bear the full expense of the ceremony. The less normal form is where the bride is nevertheless made a member of the groom's clan, but the groom is taken into the bride's parents' household. Here the marriage is paid for by the bride's parents and, in compensation for freely incorporating a woman into his clan, the groom is contracted to work for his wife's family for a specified number of years, ranging from three to twelve. In this uxorilocal form of marriage certain rituals are not performed until the debt of labour has been paid off and the groom can claim the full rights of marriage as pertain in the virilocal form. At this time the final ritual of handing over the *pari kapri* is held in which the groom's parents give certain pieces of cloth to some of the bride's relatives (her F, MF, FM, eBW and Z) in recognition of the final transfer of rights.

In order to understand the rituals and their underlying ideology I will take the virilocal form of bride capture marriage ceremony as normative. The first ceremony is when two ambassadors, *sur vertalir*, arrive from the groom's household to the bride's household, to make sure that the marriage has been finally agreed and to bring the bride and her party to the groom's household. One of them must be a *rotalir* and the others *soiralir*. At this time the house bard of the bride's mother's father's clan is called and paid his *pal dhan* or milk fees. It is said that the bride was nurtured on the milk of her mother's natal clan. This recognizes a link of shallow maternal filiation connected with the idea of nurturance which the Gonds refer to as the milk line. To establish this one Gond asks another, 'whose milk did you drink?', *borna pal uti?* On her marriage the bride is cut off from this and is in future fed and clothed by her husband's clan (in the case of virilocal marriage). The family bard must therefore be paid off and the relationship between the immature girl and her mother's house bard terminated.⁹ This is the first stage in severing the bride's ties with her natal unit and the start of the transfer. After a formal feast at the bride's homestead and a series of formal farewells and gifts to the bride by her parents, the bride is taken in a formal procession on bullock cart to the groom's household where the full rituals of marriage are performed. Even if the bride comes from the same village as the hus-

⁹These milk fees must also be paid by a man to his house bard when his daughter, not his wife, gives birth. This is not a termination of the relationship but is a gift to the bard, who keeps the family in touch with its clan deity. It is a thanksgiving to the deity that milk has flowed from her breast. It is the milk of the man's daughter that gives life to his granddaughter. Therefore it is at the granddaughter's marriage, when she is cut off from her milk line, that this relationship is ended.

band a fiction is preserved that she comes from another village; the cart is taken some distance outside the village to circle the settlement before coming to the groom's house. Haimendorf correctly sees this as an expression of earlier days when each phratry occupied separate territories. The fiction is that of a girl seized from another territory and this is found in the songs that are sung to accompany the procession in which the groom's party are referred to as an army who have raided the clan territory of the bride.

On arrival at the groom's village the party is formally welcomed and shown into a house either built specially or a house of a member of the bride's natal phratry. This is the *janosa ron* which is symbolically part of the bride's natal clan territory.

Both phratries then alternately sing their mythical histories, *biruwar patta*. The ritual objects are prepared and the bride, groom and all the objects are processed to the shrine of the village mother goddess.

She is a typical south Indian earth mother goddess defining the village as a religious community of cooperation. As an earth goddess she binds the people together as the cultivators who live off a shared territory. In the forthcoming ceremony the earth or ground on which mankind exists forms a reference point for all the rituals. With this presentation the rite de passage becomes a sacred act and moves into its liminal phase. This phase is called *lagri* and is the interstitial phase in which the bride and groom are neither immature or mature and take on the divine role of the demigod *Mahadeo* and his wife *Girja Parbati* who inherited the world from *Mahadeo's* father *Prabhu Niranjan*,¹⁰ the primordial lord of nothingness, the void, who created the world. In these liminal roles they pass through all the stages that *Mahadeo* went through to gain knowledge of the universe of mankind, and emerge at the end of the ceremony a mature couple.

The rituals involved here are highly complex but the basic motifs are as follows. The village headman takes on the role of *Prabhu Niranjan*. He erects the first setting for the drama—a pile of cattle manure, *goverdhan gautan*. This is the resting place of *Kam Dam Kasturi Yayal*, the cow mother, who was first to be offered control of the world by *Prabhu Niranjan*. However she failed in her task and was given custody of *Modwa Dip*, the zone or island of the navel. This is seen as the bud—the first thing from which the universe and the human body springs, the umbilicum. The demigod *Mahadeo's* journey through the primal universe also serves as a reflexive model of the human body, to gain knowledge and maturity before being given control of it, his entrance is made through *Modwa Dip*

¹⁰*Prabhu Niranjan* appears to equate with *Narayana* of the Mahabharata, the original or eternal man personifying the oceans that were churned to create order out of chaos.

—the navel. This pile of manure represents the primordial universe. On it is placed an earthen pot of water. Into the water are placed coloured dyes, burning coal, sugar and turmeric powder. It then represents the primordial oceans that were churned by *Shri Shek* to create the universe. The water is then divided into five smaller pots representing the five substantial elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether. A curtain is erected above this shrine and the bride and groom are placed either side of it. The curtain is removed amid uproar from the crowd and the couple are formally introduced to each other as *Mahadeo* and *Girja Parbati*.

The couple are then led to the second setting for the drama. This is an elaborate drawing, *lihi*, that represents both the formative universe and the human body. The drawing is a complex pattern of intersecting lines in which the 110 intersections represent the 110 joints in the human skeleton. This skeletal drawing also represents the first of the nine continents in Raj Gond cosmology that make up the nine continents of *Nau Khand Patar Dip*, the formed world often described as *Singar Dip*, the zone of beauty, that part of the universe between the earth and the sky that we can perceive and live upon (see Tyler 1973). In the centre are two earthen mounds, *bahula*, on which the bride and groom sit to be given possession as mature beings of this world of mankind. At the four corners are placed four piles of eight ritual objects that represent, along with the drawing, the nine continents of the world. The first of these is the only one that need concern us here. On the four corners and at the centre front of the diagram are placed the *siyung chiting dhana*, the five measures of grain that accompany the human body throughout its cycle of development. As I mentioned earlier, at the birth ceremony these were five single seeds representing the five elements. Here they have increased to five full measures of grain as the bride and groom reach maturity: at the funerary rites they again appear as five measures of flour.

As the procession with the bride and the groom arrives from the manure heap they begin a rhythmic dance around the drawing sprinkling it with the matter of the primordial oceans, which re-enacts the creation of the formed world from the churning of the oceans. At the same time a song is sung which describes all the elements in the drawing. This re-enacts the original journey that the demigod *Mahadeo* went on in which he travelled through the universe that is also the human body to gain knowledge of it before he was given control over it and the aeon of *kaliyug*, the last of the four periods of the classical Hindu chronology in which man is mortal. Finally the bride and groom are carried by their respective elder sister's husbands, *bato*, onto the seat, *bahula*, in the centre of the drawing. In the words of the myth called the *sana patta*, a myth of creation and destruction sung at the funerary rites, the bride and groom are mature and the controllers of the world.

Then Prabhu Niranjan Guru (the void) said to Mahadu, 'Up to now you have been called Shri Mahadu. From now on you will be called Shri Shembu Mahadeva and Girja's name will be Girja Parbati.' Then Niranjan Guru asked Kam Dam Kasturi Yayal (the cow goddess) for a bull called Nandi and it was given to Shembu Mahadeva. Both the bride and the groom sat on it and Niranjan Guru gave them the whole world from sky to earth called Singar Dip. Having given all this he said, 'My dear son, the whole world is yours. You are father of the world and Parbati is the mother. The nine continents are yours to rule.'

After this rite de passage from immaturity to maturity is finished the part of the ceremony that deals with marriage commences with the father of the groom putting the *pohti*, or marriage necklace, on the bride. This is done with great solemnity. It should be worn throughout her life and symbolizes not only her marriage but also her position in her husband's clan.

The next stage of the ceremony recognizes the bonds of kinship and affinity created between the kin of the bride and groom. The groom's father fetches the *pari kapri* and gives these specified pieces of cloth to the bride's father, mother, father's mother, mother's mother and elder brother's wife and her sisters. Meanwhile a song is sung that underlines the exchange and the union between the two kin groups. Then both kin groups pay homage to the bride and groom in their roles as *Mahadeo* and *Girja Parbati* and give them small pieces of cloth and money. Another song is then sung telling the bride and groom how to refer to each of their newly acquired affinal kin.

Then begins a long series of dramas that humorously depict the nature of married life. The most interesting is called *novri na pedgi sarapi watus-mar*, the 'spreading of cowdung by the new wife'. The bride is taken by her husband's brothers' wives and symbolically taught how to dung the courtyard of her new home. The whole drama is accompanied with howls of laughter and joking songs about the hardships of married life. Finally the bride and groom return on their own to the manure pile for a small private ritual in which they shed their liminal status as *Mahadeo* and *Girja Parbati*. Various symbols are exchanged and they eat a small feast together.

This very cursory and shortened account of the primary marriage rituals firmly establishes that marriage in Raj Gond society is not merely a matter of transferring rights and duties but also involves the onset of social if not biological maturity.

The ideology behind Gond primary marriage appears to stress an element of exogamy. Throughout the marriage there are songs and rituals about the bringing in of a girl from another descent group, the unhappi-

ness and joy that this creates and the exchange of cloth required to compensate for this. It seems to be the transfer of a person from one group to another and in a purely descriptive way this is so. However, the crucial point is that there is no element of effective exchange here. The loss of an unmarried girl to one group is purely the loss of a human being to whom they have become closely attached as a person they nurtured. She is not and never was a permanent member of that group. At no point in the ceremony does the unmarried girl renounce her membership of a patrilineal descent group before being given membership of her husband's clan. The only renunciation that takes place is from a shallow matriline of affiliation and nurturance. The exchange of cloth cannot be seen as a brideprice compensating the loss of a member but rather a set of gifts to underline the breaking of personal rather than structural ties. Rather than losing one membership and gaining another the primary marriage ceremony is concerned with giving the bride membership of a cult group for the first time; membership of a group within which she must now continue to marry for the rest of her life and establish ties of affinity.

MARRIAGE REGULATIONS AND PREFERENCES

Gond society works on complex notions of 'them' and 'us', *soiralir* and *rotalir*. A man and a woman who are siblings and nurtured from the same mother, whose milk they drank, cannot set up household together and breed; nor can the children of two sisters marry due to the milk line. Structurally they have an exogamous system in principle. However, in looking at the ideologies we have found that it is impossible to define marriage in terms of descent. To overcome this confusion I have suggested that recruitment into the descent group is ritually separate from marriage; that is the daughters of 'them' are recruited on the principle of exogamy and the subsequent union is with an inherited affine. This is based on the premise that the unmarried girl does not belong to a group until her primary marriage. The hypothesis that bothers whether or not exogamy or endogamy is the rule only confuses the issue as it relies on the notion of descent as both the emic and etic principle structuring Gond society. This is clearly not so: the Gonds do not see their structure in terms of blood and descent; it is idealized in terms of ancestor worship and cult membership. In summary, if the descent model forces us to separate culture from structure it does not apply. To provide a model let me start by looking at marriage regulations and preferences in the hope that a more sophisticated one than the descent model can be made to fit the complexities of Gond marriage.

The terminology of marriage preference

In all discussions with the Gonds about their kinship system one comes up against the maxim *soriana baiko nawa selad*. This should be examined in detail. So far I have translated it as 'the wife of the *soira* is my younger sister' without analyzing the category *soira* except insofar as accepting it as opposed to *rotalir*, the contemporary cult group members. The crucial point is that the maxim goes 'the wife of my *soira* is my sister' rather than 'the daughter of the *soira* is my wife'. The implication is that 'we' are given to 'them', with the emphasis on my group as the defining principle. The reasons for this should be clear. My group, the *rotalir*, is clearly unified as the descendents of one apical ancestor. But the *soiralir* are not unified; they are a residual group composed of the members of three phratries who, for me, are only unified by the fact that I give my sisters to them. They are not unified by the fact of taking their wives from me, because they also take their wives from other groups. The system therefore lacks symmetry.

How should we translate the word *soira*? Clearly it is not a term based on descent as they are members of three different phratries. Also the maxim implies that the *soira* are a group of men with whom I share a relationship of alliance by marriage or affinity. The *soiralir* are then my affines. The equation now becomes clear: 'the wives of my affines are my younger sisters' and the principle of alliance rather than descent as the rubric for marriage regulations becomes clear. Descent, no doubt, gives us the defining principles for cult membership into four *saga*, phratries, but not for marriage regulations based on 'them' and 'us'.

The *soiralir* then are those men with whom I cannot find a link of fraternity with myself or any of my agnates. Therefore the division of *rotalir* and *soiralir* is a division into parallel and cross relatives.

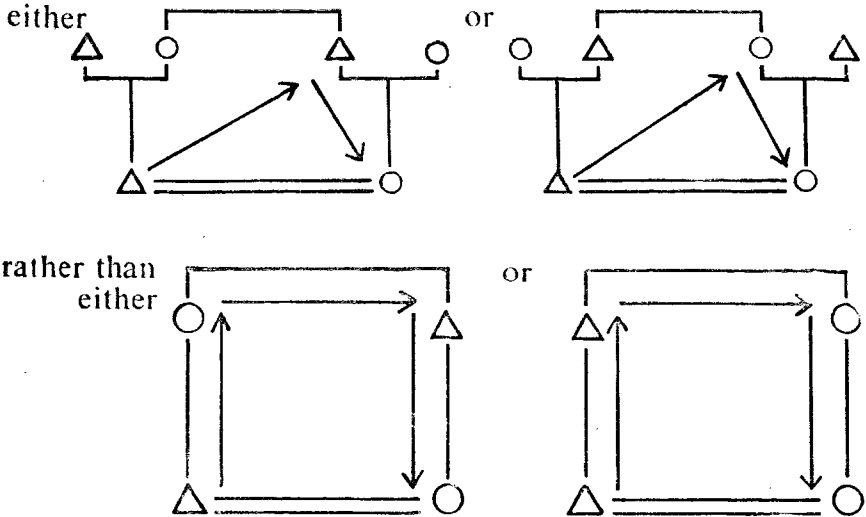
On the principle that my closest cross relative is my MB and my FZ, and my closest affines are my WF and my WM, and that both sets are equally my closest *soiralir*, they carry the same kin terms of *mama* (male) and *a:ti* (female), and their respective wives and husbands are also *a:ti* and *mama*.

Primary marriage preferences

Among the Gonds the marriage most preferred is with the MBC or FZC, that is the closest cross cousin or affines' child. However to describe the preferred spouse as the cross cousin seems to be wrong given the absence of stress on blood, consanguinity and descent among the Gonds. It is not so much a marriage between cross cousins as a marriage between the children of close affines, reflecting the maxim 'the affines' wife is my sister'. This emphasizes that my sister (fraternal tie) is married to my affines, rather than 'the affines' daughter is my wife' which emphasizes that

my mother's brother's daughter (consanguinous cross cousin) is married to me, the former having an alliance model as its basis and the latter a descent model.

The preference is for marriage between the children of affines, that is



By taking an alliance rather than a descent viewpoint the problem of exogamy or endogamy becomes unimportant. It is not so much marrying outside the group that matters as that my sister, who is not fully of my group, should be married to and included in another group and, vice versa, that I should be allied to another group by having their daughter in my group.

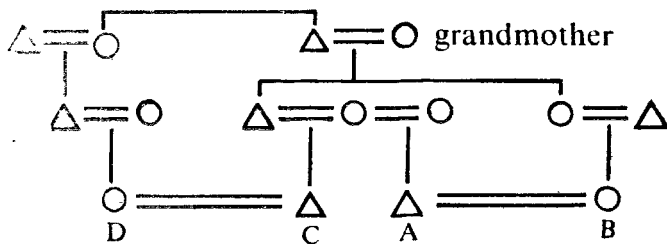
In a survey of 125 unions, out of the 91 primary marriages, 13 were marriages with the children of close affines, that is MBC, MMBCC, FZC or FFZCC. As might be expected the highest percentage of such marriages with close affines' children were cases of primary marriage by betrothal, 37.5 per cent of which were with close affines. These marriages, being carefully planned, are more likely to approximate to the ideal preference. Of primary marriages by capture 14 per cent were with close affines and of uxori-local marriages 11 per cent were with close affines, making an overall percentage of 14.

While it is true that the bride and groom are interested in marrying a close affine the main pressure comes from parents and grandparents whose wish is to keep an existing alliance going. Marriage is not a simple dyadic relationship between bride and groom, it is a matter of forging alliances between wider kin groups. A child's marriage is often arranged

long before it is even aware of the implications. In our sample 15.8 per cent of the grooms were below the age of 11 and 92.7 per cent of the brides were younger than 11. We can safely assume that 54.3 per cent of the sample had not reached maturity.¹¹ Of the brides 46.9 per cent were married between the ages of 7 and 9, whereas 57.7 per cent of grooms were married between the ages of 11 and 13.

Clearly the preferred age for marriage is before puberty for girls and on the point of puberty for boys. This confirms that one function of marriage is to recognize physical maturity as a social status and boys do pressure their parents to marry them as soon as they become mature.

While marriage is a rite de passage for the children it is also shared by the parents who are seeing and performing the ceremony for their children and also becoming a part of those parents whose children are married. For them it is also a valuable change in status. This creates a strong desire among grandparents to see the marriage of their grandchildren. Here we find the intense desire to remake old alliances and to draw their grandchildren together. Thus in 1977 the old grandmother Sedam Marubai of Gadalpalli organized a double marriage. One of the marriages was between her seven year old son's son (A) and her three year old daughter's daughter (B). The other was between her son's ten year old eldest son (C) and her husband's sister's son's daughter (D), thus:



The old grandmother explained that she wanted to see her grandchildren married while she was still alive. She was happy to see them together and it was cheaper to do two marriages at the same time. From her point of

¹¹In collecting these figures an artificial bias has inevitably been added. Only a few educated Gonds are capable of giving precise age based on quantitative reckoning. In a pilot survey I realized that the ages were highly inaccurate. After discussion with the subjects we decided to fix the age of 11 as the age of maturity. This was not fixed by me but by the subjects, who assumed the same age for both men and women. Ages were therefore calculated from the fixed points of birth at zero and maturity at 11 to the nearest two years. In some cases, when people did know their precise age there may be a non-fit with our ideal age of maturity at 11.

AGES OF MALES AND FEMALES AT PRIMARY MARRIAGE

Age	2-3	3-5	5-7	7-9	9-11	11-13	13-15	15-17	17-19	19-21
Male No.	—	—	4	23	14	149	14	49	1	4
%	—	—	1.5	8.9	5.4	57.7	5.4	19	.4	1.5
Female No.	—	32	43	121	43	19	—	—	—	—
%	—	12.4	16.7	46.9	16.7	7.4	—	—	—	—

view she has brought the children of her only son's affines together inexpensively and she could depart in peace.

Marriage prestations

An interesting feature of Raj Gond society is that the pattern of marriage alliances is not signified by any form of symbolic gift giving as found in other Indian societies (see Alavi 1972; Dumont 1957: 29-33). Compared to the overall expenses of marriage only small gifts are given by the groom's parents to certain of the bride's relatives,¹² as mentioned earlier, in recognition of their new relationship. The point is that the relationships that existed before marriage (their inherited relationship) remain terminologically the same after the marriage of their children if they follow the ideal double cross cousin marriage. Thus the FZ is still the *a:ti* in her new role of WM after the ideal marriage of her daughter to her brother's son. And likewise the MB and the WF are classified together as *mama*.

The presence of marriage prestations defining intergroup relations of an affinal nature on a large scale is not required as it is continuously being affirmed at cult group rituals. The primacy of cult group affiliation in Gond society preserves the diachronic element of inherited affinity required by the system.

Uxorilocal marriage

A note should be added about uxorilocal marriage. Of all primary marriages 41.7 per cent are uxorilocal.

The main reason for uxorilocal marriages is that many parents cannot afford the expenses of a marriage ceremony for their sons. If a wealthy man has an unmarried daughter and needs another man to help plough they arrange an uxorilocal marriage and bear its expenses. The preference for marriage at puberty and the high expense of marriage gives rise to the high rate of uxorilocal marriages. Marriages can cost between 2,000 and 10,000 rupees in an economy where a family with the average land-holding of 11 acres can expect an annual income of 3,000 rupees in a good year. But with recent reservation of forests and a critical shortage of land there has been an increase in the number of landless labourers whereas certain families with education have managed to acquire large holdings. The gap is therefore increasing between those who can and cannot afford to hold marriages. If, as I suspect, this is true, we can expect that there has been

¹²It should be remembered that this exchange of *pari kapri* is only practised by the Raj Gonds found in the lowland area where I was studying, to the southeast of the main population, that is in Asifabad Taluq. On the high plateau, in Utnur Taluq, where Professor Furer-Haimendorf has studied, a more substantial gift of plough bullocks is given. Furer-Haimendorf refers to this as a system of brideprice rather than just part of a series of marriage prestations,

an increase in the number of uxori-local marriages in the last generation.

The important point is that an uxori-local marriage is only a ceremony of maturity and clan incorporation for the bride and the fact that today 41.7 per cent of all primary marriages are uxori-local only emphasizes the preference for performing marriage at the time of physical maturity and also that this preference is not only a matter of concern for the children but also for the parents in making and remaking alliances.

But despite this high rate it is not the normative way to marry. Ideally marriage should be viri-local, though structurally there is no requirement for this as there is no concept of clan land at present. The idea that women are captured from other clans who have territories, that is predominantly a descent model where land and blood are homologous as is often found among other Indian tribes, does have validity in the mythology and in certain present day symbolic motifs. But this descent model no longer operates and today the dominant theme is alliance between dispersed groups unified around the clan cult ideology.

When the inquirer asks a Gond to describe marriage he will always take the viri-local form as the point of departure. The uxori-local form is seen as an aberration; the groom has to pay off a debt for what is clearly an aberration to the norm of the groom's parents bearing the expenses. While not normative, uxori-local marriage is becoming normal, though it is interesting to note that it is by far the least stable form of marriage. More than 40 per cent of uxori-local marriages break down, whereas 23.1 per cent of primary marriages and 18.2 per cent of secondary marriages broke down for reasons other than the death of either partner.

SECONDARY MARRIAGE

All secondary marriages should ideally be with a person from one's own phratry, though not necessarily one's own clan. No new alliances are set up except with close affines. A man cannot take a woman as a secondary wife until she has first been through a primary marriage that has given her both maturity and a clan by the ritual process mentioned, which cannot be duplicated in the secondary marriage ceremony. Whereas a woman cannot have a secondary marriage until she has had a primary marriage the same does not apply to men who are born with clan membership. However no man would conceive of undergoing a secondary marriage before first having had a primary marriage as he would still be considered a minor; to have a wife and at the same time be socially immature is an anathema to the Gond and I have not found a single instance of it.

Secondary marriage is in no way inferior to primary marriage. The wife has the same status as a primary wife and the same goes for the children. If the marriage is polygynous then the senior wife has a degree of authority

over the junior wife, though I have seen the reverse when the husband gave all his attentions to the secondary wife. But this is not common as the first wife usually runs away under these conditions.

Secondary marriages may be arranged by the parents for their children and they may be the result of mutual agreements between lovers either when the man already has a primary wife or after the previous marriage has broken down. One of the common forms of secondary marriage is when a man and a woman have been living together for a month or two and the village council forces them to go through a secondary marriage so that the transfer of rights is publicly recognized and the clan membership of the children is recognized. Secondary marriages arranged by the parents most commonly arise when the primary marriage breaks down before one or the other becomes physically mature and the marriage is unconsummated.

In my sample of 125 unions 33 were secondary marriages. Thirteen were due to the death of the previous spouse (41.9 per cent), 16 cases were due to the breakdown of the union (48.5 per cent), but it is interesting that only four of these were due to the general incompatibility of the couple. The other 12 were all due to a breakdown in uxori-local marriages. This bears no relationship to the union between partners but rather to the nature of the contract whereby the husband pays off the expenses of marriage by working for his wife's parents. The usual reason is that the husband feels he is being used as a servant and not being allowed access to his wife. In nine of these cases the spouses made a new union and lived independently. In three cases a second husband was brought in as an uxori-local secondary husband. As secondary marriage incurs virtually no expense the secondary uxori-local form of marriage is not a contractual affair with the husband having to pay off the expense of marriage. The groom is usually the son of destitute parents and prepared to live as part of his wife's extended family working their land and earning his keep in the hope that his wife will be given some land that he can cultivate and will be inherited by his children.

Of the 33 secondary marriages four were polygynous, two were cases of illegitimate children being regularized by the council and the last two were due to husbands taking a second wife as their first unions were childless.

Generally it appears that secondary marriage is the simple replacement of a primary wife who has died or left with a woman of the same category, that is someone married to your classificatory brothers. The fact of her being of your same phratry or not is unimportant, the importance is that she is the wife of a brother. The crucial affinal ties created by primary marriage are retained after a secondary marriage; it is said that when a man dies it is his primary wife who would be his wife in the next world.

The rituals of secondary marriage

Secondary marriage is referred to as *pa:t* distinguishing it from primary marriage, *marmi*. Secondary marriage hardly involves the respective families and relations of the partners at all. It is a simple ceremony in the village council publicly recognizing the mutual rights and obligations. When it has been discovered that a couple have been living together for some time and there is some danger of the previous spouse claiming rights over one of the partners the village council often decides that the informal union should be formalized, all previous duties and obligations cancelled and the new set ratified. In other cases secondary marriages are arranged and presented to the council after a deserted partner, often with the intervention of their parents, has found a new partner. The ceremony is simple, taking about two hours which must be performed at night. It is performed in front of the village council who ratify any legal arrangements. The couple are washed and dressed and the groom ties the *pohti*, marriage necklace, on the bride. All eat a small feast together. The whole ritual is heavily laced with joking and ribaldry and is in absolute contrast to the seven day ceremony for primary marriage. It is purely legal and secular.

THE TIES OF MARRIAGE

In this section I want to analyze the relationships created by marriage. I will be concerned with the relations between husband and wife, husband and wife's parents, wife and husband's parents and lastly parents and children. In Gond society marriage and married life are separate realities. A marriage does not mean the immediate start of married life and a family. In primary marriages the ceremony can take place many years before the start of married life, whereas in secondary marriages married life may well predate the ceremony. Therefore a distinction is necessary. The ideal end-product of marriage is a stable and separate married life not only between husband and wife but also between parents and children and all the concerns of affinal links which are a major factor in Gond political and economic life.

The husband-wife relationship

In the majority of cases the husband-wife relationship is a matter of very slow development. With infant marriages the child is brought up in the knowledge that it is married and the process of introduction is gradual. In the case of virilocal marriages the daughter is sent to live in her husband's house before the onset of puberty. The final marriage feasts are reserved until this time. Before the wife is introduced to her husband she is under the authority of her parents and involved in their economy. When she goes to live with her husband's parents she comes under their

authority and only later are she and her husband given a separate sleeping area and their personal relationship a chance to develop. Throughout this period there is a slow changeover from being under the dominance of the parents to a relationship of ideally mutual cooperation between husband and wife. Her rights and duties as a working member of an economic unit gradually devolve into a quasi-autonomous dyad of husband and wife. Ideally it is not until this has developed that the couple can build a separate house and the husband is given a share of his father's land. This gradual development has many potential points of conflict between husband and wife, or the couple and the boy's parents. If these conflicts erupt the division into a separate marital unit may happen earlier and the couple may either be given a share of the land, or, in the past, they might move to a new village using ties of kinship to ally themselves and clear new land or work as servants in a well developed household, while also trying to clear new land with the help of their master's plough bullocks. However with the recent shortage of land this option is seldom available today. One of the major problems in separating is to build up a herd of cattle sufficient to achieve independence. While the son is still living with his parents calves are given to him. Ideally the development of a herd should parallel the development of the new household.

Uxorilocal marriages are different. The marriage is not normally held until the boy is at least old enough to do responsible work. This means that he must be at least eight or nine years old and capable of handling a yoke of bullocks. Initially the boy is a servant in his in-law's house. However he sees their daughter as his wife and the parents should ideally encourage them to build up a relationship as husband and wife, giving them freedom to spend time together, helping them to build up a herd and hopefully give the daughter some land. If this works well the uxori-local husband comes close to becoming a son. However, one of the potential problems is for the boy to gain identity beyond that of a servant which makes it difficult for him to exercise the freedom required in creating a married life. In all cases of breakdown of uxori-local marriages a problem was that the husband felt that his duties as an indebted labourer were not being compensated for by the satisfactory development of married life. If the husband-wife relationship does develop and the right to the husband's labour satisfactorily changes into the husband's rights over his wife's labour and children are born, full independent married life does follow as in virilocal marriage.

In secondary marriage the distinction between marriage and married life is not necessary. In most cases the couple set up a separate household either before or immediately after the ceremony. In many cases the marriage is the arrival of the new wife into an already independent household.

In conclusion, the relationship between a couple involves ultimate total transfer of mutual rights of labour and procreativity with the end of setting up a separate household requiring land and cattle. But it is a matter of slow development.

The husband-wife's parents relationship

In the normal primary virilocal marriage this relationship carries little significance. The wife's father is referred to as *morial* and his wife as *pora*. There are no legally defineable rights and duties involved. Generally speaking as close affines they are both part of the classificatory category of *mama* (male) and *a:ti* (female) along with the MB, FB, MZ and FZ. They are given great respect. In the same category is the WeB, the *tad morial*, both refer to each other as *ba* and it is a relationship involving greater respect than for the wife's father. By contradiction the WyB, *serendu*, is a joking relationship in which both call each other *koko*. In this relationship our husband is the eZH to his WyB, *bato*; he is the person who will have to accompany him at the time of marriage, carry him to the manure pile and the drawing, and, as closest affine of the same generation, is an equal but not of the same family. This relationship is very intimate and our husband should provide a great deal of private help.

All these relationships become more critical in the case of primary uxorilocal marriage. Such marriages are the means whereby a poor family are able to perform their sons' marriage, as I have described it so far; it is also a technique often used by a wealthy man with influence and access to land to build up a hamlet of affines and agnates with himself as the headman. To do this a wealthy Gond will bring in uxorilocal husbands for his daughters, or even his brother's daughters. In subsequent generations he can strengthen these alliances by paying for the marriage between son's sons and his daughter's sons with the preferred form of double cross cousin marriage. The point here is that the husband to wife's father relationship is always one of great respect, but when the uxorilocal husband scenario works well the affinal link becomes a highly effective one in the building up of a cognatic based community which can subsequently intermarry.

The wife-husband's parents relationship

Whereas the relationship between the husband and his wife's parents runs across cult group boundaries and has a political dimension, the relationship of wife to husband's parents has a more intimate domestic dimension. The son's wife is ideally the daughter of the closest fraternal or sororal affine. She is classified by her husband's father along with his younger brother's wife as *koriad*, and in all direct references he calls her *biye*, the same term used for his own daughter. The relationship is one of

reciprocal respect and affection. The wife must be careful not to look her father-in-law in the eye and should never sit in his presence nor be up a ladder on the roof of the house in which her father-in-law is. Although the ties of filiation to her parents remain strong she now becomes a member of her husband's father's clan. This is an important effective relationship which finally matures on her death when she joins the ancestral dead and the expenses of the mortuary rites are borne by her husband's clansmen. In respect of all this her duties are now towards her husband's clan. The songs at marriage stress her new duties by symbolically introducing her to her role in dunging the courtyard of her husband's father's house and taking food to them in the fields.

In secondary marriage the effective relationship between the wife and her husband's parents ideally should not be transferred to a new set of people. Ideally she remains a member of her first husband's clan. However this depends greatly on how and when the first marriage broke down.

The parent-child relationship

A vital aspect of marriage is to legitimize children. If a person did not belong to a clan he would be a complete enigma in Gond society, unable to marry, unable to take part in any ceremony and outside the framework of phratries and clans that identify people. From birth clan membership is defined by being the child of two parents of the same clan, the product of the creeper, *ve:li*, the result of the union of the male and female elements of the same plant. A child born outside a union is a *podela puri*, which literally translated means 'bush baby'. The inference is that the child is wild and not 'quite' human.

Human nature, being what it is, illegitimate children exist. Normatively a child is assumed to be the son of its social father unless there is clear evidence to contradict this. Gond marriage regulations may well be rigid to the extent it is difficult for a girl to reach maturity without first being married and that any baby will almost certainly have a social father. However, children are born under circumstances whereby it is not possible to claim the social father as the genitor or else the social father refuses to accept the child and upholds his claim in front of the council. Depending on circumstances there are tactics open to legitimize the birth. They involve the pouring of the water from the five small pots that are placed on the manure pile, *goverdhan gautan*, during the marriage ceremony, over the child. The effect is to purify (*yendusmar*) the child and make it a creation of the clan in whose name the marriage was performed, which, by definition, must be the same clan as the father who is claiming it. A child gains its clan membership through the right of the father's primary marriage, even if it is a child of a secondary marriage, when its mother may be of a different clan to itself. We therefore have a distinction, in the

Gond mind, in the relationship of a child to its parents, between the obligations of clan membership and obligations of upbringing and nurturance. To explain this let me take up hypothetical cases.

If a child is born before the primary marriage ceremony the water of the five small pots is poured over it at the time of its parents' marriage. If a child is borne by a woman other than his primary wife with whom he has no marital union and he is forced to admit paternity, he must purify the child whether or not it is going to live with him or its mother. To do this he will have to wait until there is a marriage of a man of his clan. He will take the child to the marriage and the water of this marriage is used. In theory the Gonds admit that this father should later arrange the child's marriage and if it is a boy give him land. However if the child does not live with its father but with a step-father, the latter usually becomes the affective father and will provide for it. But for ritual purposes the child has to look to its effective father, though this is only important for men.

If a child is borne by a woman before the secondary marriage is performed it will have to be purified. It is said that a child obtains its clan membership by the sexual union of a man and woman of the same clan. All illegitimate children are regularized by being bathed in the water that symbolically unites another such couple of the same clan or else in the water of its own parents' marriage. The principle seems to be that all children are recognized as the children of the primary marriage, the secondary marriage frequently being with a woman of a different clan, though ideally the same phratry. We have the suggestion that secondary wives are only replacements for primary wives. Although secondary wives are legally recognized they are purely secular and the original primary marriage still persists as a religious union even after a public divorce. The only other explanation is that although the mother of a secondary marriage may be of a different clan, she is of the same phratry as her husband and his first wife, and what is important is not so much the clan but the unity of the phratry. However, I do not believe this descent model can be argued. For one, the water used to regularize an illegitimate birth must be of the same clan and not just the same phratry, and many people even specified that it should be the water not only of the same clan but of the same *khandan*, that is a person who worships at the same ancestral shrine. Secondly, although the legal aspects of a primary marriage may be negated in a divorce, a primary marriage can never be entirely annihilated. The personal bond that tied the two together may break down but the more distant ties of affinity persist, the closest affine is still the WF, who, due to the preference for cross cousin marriage is still referred to in both his roles as WF and MB not just as *mama*, but as *mamahari*, that is 'closest affine' (*hari* implies immediate or direct, rather than classificatory). These more distant ties preserve the effective primary marriage such that I have

heard of five cases of primary marriages being resuscitated often after many years of separation and intermediate secondary wives, and that this return to the primary wife occasioned no marriage ceremony at all.

To summarize the relationship of parents to children: primary marriage legitimizes the children as filiated to both parents and members of the father's clan cult group. There is a reciprocal duty for the parents to arrange the marriage and maturity ritual for their children and to provide the sons with land and cattle. And the sons are obliged to perform the mortuary rights for their parents. Unfortunately there is not space here to discuss the regulations of inheritance, however, the basic principle is that inheritance follows clan group solidarity.

A question which should be mentioned is that of adoption. Although the genitor is the person who should perform the marriage of his children this obligation can legally be transferred by an adoption agreed in front of the village council. Adoption occurs when the father dies and the brother takes on the responsibilities. Also certain wealthy Gonds adopt young boys and girls, taking on the responsibility of performing their marriage as long as the adoptee works in their household. The headman of Ginne-dhari adopted two boys and a girl. He arranged an uxorilocal marriage for the girl and wives for the boys and gained six extra pairs of hands to help with his large land holding. Whereas the adoptee can expect to have his marriage performed he cannot claim any right to his adopted father's property.

No distinction is made between the children of a primary and a secondary wife in matters of inheritance. Although there are elements in the system that make it look like a system of legally recognized concubinage in that the secondary marriage is largely a de facto marriage between two people rather than a complex alliance between two kin groups. However, it does operate within the existing pattern of the primary marriage alliances in that there is a weakly upheld prescription on marrying the ex-wife of a classificatory brother, that is within the phratry.

Summary

How do these factors affect our view of the meaning of Gond marriage? As we have seen the wife ideally preserves her primary husband's clan and continues to worship at that shrine even after divorce, and her persona, *sanal*, is united with his ancestors, if only by namesake during a ceremony held for a more important member of her primary husband's clan cult group. The primacy of primary marriage is all important as a union that creates alliances and affinal relations that last even after death. Subsequent secondary marriages do not destroy the wider network of affinal relations and alliances which are as much concerned with relations between two kin groups as between two people. The secondary marriage is a secular union,

ideally within the phratry and preferably within the clan. It is therefore a marriage of replacement, giving legitimacy to subsequent children within the pre-existing affinal alignments. The children of that secondary marriage are effectively linked into or rather filiated to their father and his primary wife, even though the affective mother-son bond may be with the child's real mother.

Marriage, then, is an alliance between two cult groups. Descent is not a significant consideration in the process of marriage, though it is relevant in the legitimation of children through the ties of filiation to both parents.

Another relevant point is that although the Raj Gonds are a Dravidian-speaking people and have a typically Dravidian kinship terminology which emphasizes elder and younger at all levels, this does not mean hierarchical status differences exist in Gond social organization as are found in caste society. This has particular reference to our present discussion about differences between primary and secondary wives and their children. Vis-a-vis the general Dravidian situation Dumont says:

An all pervading distinction between older and younger, senior and junior, great and little [brothers etc.] is common to all four Dravidian languages. On the level of kinship taken in isolation it indicates a difference in age, and a very strong stress, which is laid upon it may seem excessive (Dumont 1957: 11).

This applies among the Gonds but it does not go further and indicate any kind of status difference either between brothers, wives or children of different wives. No doubt structurally the potential for such a distinction is there, but ideologically there is no room for such considerations. If a child does have a step-mother she is referred to as *chudiya*, a combination of *chudur* and *yayal* meaning 'little mother'. This term is also applied in an affectionate way to *kaki*, the mother's younger sister. Likewise if a man has a step-father he is referred to as *chudba*, 'little father'. However, this is not a distinction between primary and secondary wife but rather between real mother and step-mother and therefore does not carry any structural distinctions of status, but only distinctions of closeness to the child. In categorizing the little mother and the little father with mother's younger sister and father's younger brother it is following the principle of horizontal fraternity that unifies the members of the phratry as people worshipping a set of clan deities who are brother to each other. Dumont's statement that the similar distinction between *periya* and *ciNNa* (sic) in Tamil, which is the same as *pedda* and *cinna* in Telugu and a form used by the Raj Gonds in the area that I worked, who are in close daily contact with Telugu culture, can refer to a 'distinction between the son of a man

and his first wife and the son of the same man and another woman' and that one of the cases in which this pertains is in the case of 'the principal wife on one side and a concubine generally from a lower caste, on the other' (Dumont 1957: 11-12) does not apply in Gond society where the endogamous group is egalitarian and carefully bounded with rules of out-casting typical of tribal society.

CONCLUSIONS

Descent versus alliance and affinity

It is no doubt tempting to see the principle of descent as ordering Raj Gond relations of kinship and marriage, as a descent model ties in with the supposed egalitarian nature of tribal society. No doubt the clan cult, a descent based structure, does isolate Gond society from the non-tribal groups with all the fears of impurity, excommunication and outcasting; but descent is not the prime mover in Gond ideology. While having tribal features the Gonds have a marriage system that fits into the wider south Indian Dravidian kinship system as propounded by Dumont.

Outside the arena of clanship it is difficult to operate with the confines of the descent model. Even in the area of Gond marriage prohibitions, with the universal prohibition on parallel cousin marriage and its apparent stress on consanguinity we come unstuck if we see descent as the defining principle. The principle is that a boy is a member of a clan cult group, part of a phratry. He is one person in a matrix of groups with whom he stands in a certain relationship to other groups, *soiralir*, and his marriage must follow the lines of pre-existing configurations in which the defining principle is inherited affinity. Gonds do not talk of a man marrying a person in a particular relationship, but of a man marrying a daughter from the group to whom his parents stand in a relationship of affinity—*soirana baiko nawa selad*—'the affine's wife is my younger sister'. The principle of uterinity also has recognition in the idiom of the mother's milk. However, this principle is not tied to an idea of inheritance but of upbringing and nurturance.

A corollary is found in the system of secondary marriages. Without having any connotations of status difference, secondary marriage is the replacement of a primary wife with the ex-wife of a classificatory brother. The original primary marriage still exists as a religious union, as a rite de passage and an alliance between phratries. Abandoned primary marriages can be resuscitated without ritual and divorcees' funeral rights are ideally performed by the primary husband.

Gond kinship has to be seen in terms of an alliance model with similar fundamentals to Dumont's model of the Dravidian system, but with the clan cult as the structuring principle rather than caste.

In discussing marriage I have isolated what Needham (1971: 3) sees as the fundamental of kinship—the allocation of rights and their transmission from one generation to another. Whereas it would need a book to consider all such rights I have limited my discussion to the transmission of group membership and its content. Is it merely membership of a clan cult or is it also the transmission of a set of regulations of affinity defining whom one can marry, therefore making affinity as important a structuring principle as descent?¹³ I have shown that Raj Gond ways of marrying cannot be satisfactorily understood in terms of descent alone, even though the descent model appeals to the assumed tribal label. Rather I have argued that there is a system of asymmetric prescriptive alliance, a system of rotating connubium. The interesting point adduced from this is that it puts the Raj Gonds into a new analytical perspective whereby it is now possible to see them relating to a general south Indian pattern. Whereas this should not surprise us as they are clearly Dravidian speakers, it begets a number of questions about the way that such a system of prescriptive alliance works with all the corollaries assumed by Dumont of a basically hierarchical organization.

In relating what has largely been an ethnographic paper to the wider discussion of Dumont's analysis of marriage alliance in south Indian kinship, I have shown that the indigenously expressed marriage prescription, 'the affine's wife is my younger sister', does not merely state whom ego should marry or who should be brought into the descent group in order to preserve its purity. While allowing that this is true and does have significance to the Raj Gond, it is only the partial truth or reality of the system, which, in effect, goes further than this. Not only is descent inherited but affinity is transmitted. As Dumont (1971: 183) puts it: 'The very existence of the marriage regulation implies that affinity is transmitted from one generation to the next just as consanguinity ties are'. What I am arguing is that the Raj Gond case supports Dumont's ideas that marriage is not simply the corollary of descent with descent as the prime social mover. To understand the Gond case it is necessary to adopt Dumont's (1971: 183) view that: 'Marriage cannot in general be considered as a secondary product of other institutions such as descent, which we then take as being primary; there is rather an interrelation in the complete make-up'. The Gond case shows that not only is descent transmitted, but also affinity is transmitted as one makes a marriage in accordance with the marriages of

¹³The most important corollary of this which clearly cannot be discussed here is the absence or presence of hierarchical arrangements in affinal relations among the Raj Gonds. If it can be said that notions of hypergamy exist, however incidental, it would be possible to make further statements about Raj Gond social structure. But this is beyond the bounds of this paper.

the preceding generation. 'In other words, the regulation causes marriage to be transmitted much as membership in the descent group is transmitted. With it marriage acquires a diachronic dimension, it becomes an institution enduring from generation to generation', much as descent also does, 'which I therefore call "marriage alliance", or simply "alliance"' (Dumont 1971: 184).

I have not discussed the internal consistency of alliance and descent models here. If the reader should wish to do this I would refer him to a series of well-known papers by Leach, Needham and Dumont on the alliance side, and Fortes, Goody, Gough and Gluckman on the descent side, and particularly Schneider who considers the overview (1965).¹⁴ What I have tried to do is to look at the ethnographic data from the Raj Gonds and see what model produces the more useful analysis or understanding not only of how the Raj Gonds see their own system to work, but also to adduce the underlying principles that motivate actuality. I have done this in the light of Furer-Haimendorf's earlier paper (1956) on the descent system of the Raj Gonds. I am not stubbornly trying to defend one typology against the other. As Schneider says: 'Too much time, energy and effort are spent on mending the model, in protecting it from new data, in insuring its survival against attack' (Schneider 1965: 78). What I have tried to do more than anything else is to follow up Schneider's statement:

Finally there is one point which needs stressing and which I have not touched on. Alliance theory as a theory is capable of dealing with the symbol system as a system apart from, yet related to, the network of social relations. It has a way of dealing with problems of meaning which the descent theory of Radcliffe-Brown and Fortes does not have. Alliance theory in the footsteps of Durkheim here as elsewhere, is cognizant of the importance of how the actor conceptualizes the structure ('how the natives think' perhaps) and the difference between this conceptualization and an outsiders construct of the system as a system (195: 78),

and I believe that the material I have presented supports this view.

¹⁴Schneider (1965: 80-85) gives a full bibliography of the literature concerned in this discussion which is again taken a stage further by Needham (1971).

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