Marriage Practices in Lowland South America

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The Structure of Kuikuru Marriage

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Introduction

For over a hundred years anthropologists have recognized the importance of marriage ties in forming and maintaining social, economic, and political alliances among kin groups, but only in the past few decades has a structural theory of alliance been developed. As a consequence of this development it has recently become fashionable to consider the data of all marriage and kinship structure in primitive societies in the light of alliance theory.

Certainly maintaining family or kin group alliances through marriage is an ideal objective among many preindustrial peoples. However, some societies do not achieve that objective or make a concerted effort to do so. The Kuikuru of the Upper Xingú region in central Brazil are one such society. In the 1950s Kuikuru society appeared to be in flux as a result of demographic changes, and its structure seemed to lack regularity in both rules and practices (see Dole 1966, 1969). As a noted writer once put it with reference to another society, "There is just enough social organization to keep order in the tribe and no more" (Niles 1931:ix). This interpretation has been questioned, however, and an attempt has been made to represent Kuikuru kinship as an internally consistent system of alliances (Basso 1970).

In this paper I will outline briefly the aspects of Kuikuru organization that bear on the structure of marriage, describe Kuikuru marriage practices, and finally discuss the extent to which marriage[1] in that society does or does not conform to alliance structure.

Kuikuru Organization

In 1954,[2] before being moved and relocated in the Upper Xingú Parque Indígena, the 145 Kuikuru lived in a single tribal village. A total of 34 nuclear families were unevenly distributed among nine multifamily houses averaging about four families per house. By "nuclear family" I refer to the minimal kinship group comprising one or more dyads of primary relatives and including at least one adult. The dyads of primary relatives are husband-wife, parent-child, and siblings. Among the Kuikuru the nuclear family is the basic economic and residence unit.

The norm for this basic unit is to settle in the natal community of the husband, patrivincial residence in Carrasco's terms (1963:133). Similarly with respect to the multifamily dwellings the norm is to reside patrivirilocally, that is, with the husband's father (see Wedgwood 1952: 456) in patridomestic units (Carrasco 1963:133). However, in reality the place of residence does not follow any rule consistently; residence arrangements are irregular and unstable with respect to both house and tribal settlement, as well as with respect to the type of focal relatives (see Bohannan 1957). This is because observance of the norm is often inhibited by a number of factors, and the ideal arrangements are interrupted by frequent changes made in response to various contingencies.

One important factor is a strong norm of initial uxorilocal residence that sometimes amounts to a period of trial marriage during which the husband hangs his hammock above his new wife's in her own home, which is also usually that of her parents. This initial period of uxorilocal residence is variable, lasting from a few days to many years. The length of time depends on compatibility, family structure, the economic status of the groom, and the marital history of the partners. If the bride accepts the man as her husband, they may remain with her parents for a few months or until the birth of their first child, sometimes even longer until the young man has paid off with bride service the debt incurred by taking a wife. It is said that formerly young men lived for a longer period with the wife's family and did more for them; today the custom is considerably relaxed.

If, however, the bride has no strong male relatives in the household and especially if it is not a first marriage for either partner, the initial period spent with the woman's family may be very brief, after which the couple moves to the community and house previously occupied by the groom, normally that of his parents.

Other factors that produce mobility include internal tensions. Rather than risk confrontations or loss of face, disgruntled Kuikuru often move to another house or to a different village, where they take up residence with the family of a friendly relative. This is a common occurrence when

couples are divorced. Other factors that may precipitate such moves are the imminent birth of a child and the accidental destruction of a house by fire or wind storm. One instance of natolocal residence (see Barnes 1960:853) resulted when a jealous wife in a polygynous family drove her younger co-wife from their house, after which the latter woman went back to live in her father's house with her infant, even though her marriage remained intact.

To sum up, a considerable amount of variation can be seen in the residence patterns exemplified by the nuclear families at any one time. Nevertheless, *if it is understood that a wide circle of patrikin are included as foci* in the "patrilocal zone" (see Kopytoff 1977; cf. Heinen 1972), the number of families that may be interpreted as following the norm of uxoripatrilocal residence is greater than the unadjusted statistics suggest.

There is a long-standing and still current argument in anthropological literature about the relation of residence practices to other aspects of kinship structure. On the one hand, Murdock (1949:183, 202) and Goodenough (1956), following Lowie (1927:62) and Kroeber (1938: 307), conclude that the association of people resulting from residence arrangements determines other kinship relations to a large extent. In opposition to these findings, Fortes (1953:36) and Kopytoff (1977: 556) theorize that local ties do not form bonds of kinship, descent, marriage, or "citizenship," but that residence patterns themselves are determined by political, economic, and ritual interests or relations, which in turn are shaped by the kinship structure.

This is a complicated and, it seems to me, confused argument. It is commonly accepted that property and political ties are important factors in determining residence patterns. However, this does not negate the common findings that the choice of residence is an important factor in shaping the form of kin groups and kin relations. Because of their mobility the Kuikuru illustrate how these two aspects of social structure are related. As we shall see, the Kuikuru data on residence and marriage suggest that a *norm* of regular uxoripatrilocal residence is associated with a common pattern of marriage and family household unit. On the other hand, because it often happens that the ideal residence pattern cannot be realized, variation in this aspect of structure brings the immediate consequence of variation in the forms of family household units.

With the exception of one fraternal group, extended family residence groups in 1954 were bilateral or composite,[3] rather than either simply patrilocal or uxorilocal units. Analysis shows that the presence of married sisters in some otherwise patrilocal groups cannot be accounted for on the basis of initial postmarital or postpartum uxorilocality. Conversely, nuclear families of own brothers and first male parallel cousins are sometimes dispersed among separate houses and even in more than one tribal settle-

ment. This is not to say that adult brothers do not cooperate in subsistence activities somewhat more intensely than do sets of nonrelatives, but it does emphasize the variety of family residence groups and the degree to which they fail to conform to the stated norm.

The Kuikuru lack any form of unilineal kin groups. Kinship is reckoned bilaterally, and all individuals assume some degree of genealogical relation to most other members of the community, even though genealogical ties frequently cannot be traced. In addition, terms of kinship are generally extended to all members of the local group whether or not actual consanguinity is acknowledged, much as among the Nhadju Dayaks, for example, where "an individual refers to all his fellow villagers as cognates, even if there is no evidence of a genealogical tie. Frequently, the fictitious relationship is assumed to be a real one. . . . For instance a person refers to most of his affines . . . as cognates" (Miles 1970:304). Hence the entire community may be regarded as a cognatic kin group. It is a *local kin group,* not merely a local group (see Dole 1969:111, 113), in which for any ego people may be conceived of as being arranged in concentric circles of kinship, demonstrable kin being at the social center, with stipulated (assumed) genealogical relatives around them, and on the periphery those individuals with whom ego does not claim a genealogical tie but for whom he or she nevertheless uses an appropriate kin term.[4] In general, kin terms are polysemic, the same terms being used for persons in all three of these categories with varying degrees of specificity.

Variation in residence patterns and forms of extended families is matched by a corresponding irregularity in the norms and practices of marriage. It is not much exaggeration to say that there is general disagreement among the Kuikuru about rules of marriage. Because of in-law avoidance and other interpersonal tensions and because some Kuikuru, who speak a Carib language, have spouses who speak only an Arawakan or a Tupian language, there is a remarkable lack of communication among families; each family, it seems, develops its own tradition of what practices are necessary and proper.

No prescription exists with respect to local exogamy. One may take a spouse from within the community, even from one's own household. Some men expressed a preference for wives from other tribal groups (local *and* kin group exogamy), but others asserted that it was best for Kuikuru women to marry within the community (local and kin group endogamy). The discrepancy in these expressed norms may be related to a temporarily acute shortage of nubile women. Informants may have been thinking in terms of both an ideal marriage pattern of group exogamy and the actual scarcity of eligible women. At any rate, about 75

percent of the marriages I have analyzed were endogamous with respect to the *kin community.*

It is understood that upon marriage a man will have sexual access to his bride's unmarried sisters as well as the woman he formally marries, and that his brother may also have access to his wife (anticipatory sororate and levirate). However, the Kuikuru do not recognize any category of persons one must marry. Some informants expressed a preference for a particular matrilateral cross cousin as a mate for their offspring, others a preference for a patrilateral cross cousin. Others felt it was preferable to marry more distant relatives, and still others preferred as mates persons whom they regarded as not related. Thus among the Kuikuru there is no prescriptive marriage pattern; there are only preferences that vary from family to family, and probably also according to contingent circumstances. Parenthetically, the preference of some for cross-cousin marriage is based on the very widespread tendency for parents to try to provide suitable spouses for their offspring by negotiating with their own close relatives, as will be explained.

The only rule with respect to Kuikuru marriage structure is a proscriptive one, namely that persons may not marry within the nuclear family or with first parallel cousins, parents' own siblings, own siblings' children, grandparents, or grandchildren, which is merely a statement of minimal incest prohibitions. This is not a prescriptive rule, since there is no category marked by a distinctive term from which mates must be chosen. By including other persons than the preferred categories, such as "nonrelatives" and even foreigners, as potential mates, the circle of eligible mates is widened and becomes infinite except for close consanguines. As Löffler and Baer point out, opening the marriage system to include people who are not affines obscures the distinction between kin and affine. A system "can in actual fact only remain free from contradiction as long as the affinals for the affinals are neither marriageable nor permitted to marry each other, i.e. as long as they behave like siblings. . . . This can no longer be controlled when the endogamy limitations cease to exist . . . " (1974:278, 279).

It is a tautology to label prescriptive a marriage system in which all persons are defined as affinable except close consanguineal kin. The circularity of such reasoning has been expressed by Schneider: "A prescriptive system is one in which ego has no choice but must marry a 'marriageable woman'. A 'marriageable woman' is a woman from a wife-giving unit. If this is a prescriptive system, what then is the opposite type?" (1965b:66). Moreover, if marriage patterns are not obligatory, "alliance" loses much of its meaning when applied to marriage structure. To represent such a system as alliance would indeed be simplistic.

Returning to a description of marriage practices among the Kuikuru, when girls reach the age of puberty they are secluded for from two months to two years; boys are normally secluded for two years or more. Although prepubertal intercourse is generally frowned upon, both males and females may freely engage in sex after they have been secluded. Men like to marry women immediately after the latter leave seclusion. Because men are somewhat older when they enter seclusion and usually remain in seclusion for a longer period, a woman is ideally three or more years younger than her husband. In actuality, however, because of a continuing shortage of eligible mates, marriages, especially secondary ones, unite persons who differ in age considerably more; that is, women may marry men who are either considerably older or considerably younger than they are.

If a young woman is engaged at the time of her seclusion or if her father approves of her suitor as her future husband, he may permit the young man to visit her privately behind the seclusion screen. However, if a young woman should bear a child before her marriage, the infant would probably not be allowed to live.

Infant betrothal is not uncommon, and girls are usually promised before they are ten years old. However, informants made it explicit that these arrangements are not binding but are subject to the wishes of the young people when they reach sexual maturity and are ready to marry.

If all parties agree, the marriage takes place, but if a woman's fiancé is not her own choice and she does not like him as a partner, she "sends him away," and he does not press his suit; the match may also be broken up by their respective lovers. Moreover, if the parents think the young man is lazy, they may prevent the marriage by stalling and other indirect devices.

Divorces occur because of barrenness, ill humor, adultery, spending too much time away from home in one's natal settlement, and probably laziness, although this last was not made explicit with respect to early marriages. Both men and women have extramarital sex partners, whose identity is usually well known to other members of the society in spite of the principals' attempts to hide it. In the absence of stable residence kin groups there is very little control over private interpersonal relations outside the nuclear family.

Polygyny occurs, but few men are able to attract and keep more than one wife. The Kuikuru say that formerly only the headman or a champion wrestler had plural wives. Some informants now consider polygyny to be bad because co-wives fight with each other. As a matter of fact, most polygynous unions are unstable, whether sororal or not.

Ideally a man and his sister try to arrange for the marriage of their children. Thus these two go-betweens (*kitofo,* "speakers") are father's

sister (*etsí*)[5] and mother's brother (*auaju,* or *jogu*) to the prospective mates.

As most Kuikuru perceive it, it is a young man's father who takes the initiative in making arrangements for his first marriage. Even though a youth has made his own choice of a mate, it is his father who undertakes negotiations. "When a man finds a girl he wants to marry, he asks his father to talk to the girl's parents about it. If the girl's parents are willing and the girl has been secluded, they can marry immediately," after her father's brother or mother's brother cuts her bangs, which have been allowed to grow and cover her eyes during seclusion. From the point of view of the girl also, it is sometimes her father who negotiates for her marriage by speaking to her prospective husband's parents. "A man speaks to his daughter first and asks if she wants to marry his sister's son. Then he talks with his sister about it." If a young man has no father, his widowed mother asks her brother to promise his daughter as a future wife for her son, even if the daughter is still an infant.

Among the Kuikuru the role of cross aunts and uncles as helpers in *arranging* marriage appears to predominate over the concept of wife giver and wife receiver. This interpretation is supported by the fact that one's mother also sometimes is referred to as *isogu* (third person possessive form of *jogu*), and by the fact that the terms *etsí* and *auaju,* or *jogu,* are spoken with obvious fondness and respect (*ifisu,* which the Kuikuru translate into Portuguese as *vergonha,* "shyness, shame"; compare the Kalapalo *ifutisu,* "good kinship behavior," in Basso 1970, 1973, 1975). Even before marriage the intended mates show great respect for prospective parents-in-law (*ifisofo*) by avoiding contact through touching, looking at, or speaking to them or speaking their names.

Although brother and sister often cooperate in arranging matches between their adolescent offspring, it sometimes happens that own allogender (opposite sex; see Dole 1957:144-45) siblings do not live to negotiate marriages for their offspring. In such instances avuncular relatives, own or classificatory, serve as surrogate parents, thus widening the circle of preferred mates to include second cousins by negotiating marriages with their own offspring.

It appears therefore that first and second cross cousins are frequently promised to each other, and in some instances they honor the promise. However, even when the arrangement does result in marriage, many of these first, arranged marriages are brittle and of short duration. An individual may have several other mates consecutively before a compatible match is made. It is felt that marrying lovers (*ajo itsómitï*) is good and that such marriages last longer.

What amounts to a formal announcement of an engagement occurs when a man deposits outside his future mother-in-law's door a load of

prized hard firewood that he has split and brought from his garden. She gives some of the logs to her sisters and special women friends (*ato*), who also thereby assume the status of the man's mothers-in-law.

On the occasion of a woman's first marriage the groom gives to his parents-in-law several items that require considerable time or expense to provide. Although a woman's brothers may also use the affinal relationship as an excuse to exact favors and gifts from her husband, his gifts to these brothers-in-law are less costly. Nevertheless, brothers-in-law are socially very close. They ask freely from each other, even taking from each other without permission or repayment. But they also help each other in times of need, as when a man cannot cultivate his own garden because of illness.

The Structure of Marriage

As I have already noted, about one-fourth of the marriages unite Kuikuru with mates from other communities. However, there are reasons to believe that this figure is abnormally low. In a community of as few as 145 people it is often necessary to find spouses outside the local group. In 1954, for instance, several unmarried men were looking for wives at a time when there were no Kuikuru girls in seclusion being prepared for marriage, whereas in the neighboring and closely related Kalapalo community three girls were in seclusion.

From genealogical data covering five generations of Kuikuru, local exogamy appears to have decreased since 1905. This change has occurred in part through *locally* endogamous marriages that have united Kuikuru with members of former tribes who had already moved to the Kuikuru village. Reduced by disease and the resulting hostilities, those tribes had ceased to exist as separate local groups, and some members of remnant families had sought refuge among the Kuikuru. It should be noted that, although locally endogamous, the first of these marriages were tribally exogamous and are so regarded by the Kuikuru (see Dole 1969:110).

Even if there were enough eligible mates within the community, it would be important to create and perpetuate ties outside the community, as well as outside the immediate family and household. In addition to special friends (*ato*) that a man has in each of the tribal settlements and whom he visits to trade, it is also important to have kinship ties to provide for hospitality during intertribal ceremonies and refuge from interpersonal tensions or accusations of witchcraft, as well as to prevent intertribal conflict. The Kuikuru have in fact established kin ties with all the other Upper Xingú tribes.

Given both the negative consideration of scarcity of eligible mates within the community and the positive advantages of having relatives in

other settlements, it is understandable that parents should try to arrange "cousin" marriages between their children and the children of relatives in other settlements, thus perpetuating intertribal ties through kinship. If repeated over several generations, the marriage of either first or more distant cross cousins, together with exchange marriage, sororal polygyny, levirate, and sororate, would result in alliance structure. Let us see to what extent Kuikuru marriages conform to this pattern.

It has been possible to trace genealogical relations between the partners in a significant number of current betrothals and marriages. In many instances the partners are related in two or more ways, and in the following discussion I have used the closest relation in each case.

Only five contemporary marriages united first cross cousins. One of these couples separated without offspring soon after marriage. Another was separated by death within a year of marriage. In my sample four men were married, and another was engaged, to second cross cousins. Again, one of these unions lasted only a few days.

With respect to exchange marriages, it is rare that siblings obtain spouses from the same nuclear family among the Kuikuru, or from families that are closely related to each other. In one instance brothers married women who were parallel cousins to each other, and in another sisters married parallel cousins. I have not found evidence that when this type of exchange occurred in the past, the alliance was maintained in subsequent generations. In the single instance of current sibling exchange, the marriage of two brothers to two sisters, one of the couples separated after a few days, reportedly without consummating the marriage with sexual relations.

Although not mandatory, and subject to the same individual preferences as primary marriages, levirate and sororate unions are common, but these secondary marriages necessarily produce fewer offspring to maintain the alliances than do primary ones.

It is clear from these data that marital alliances among closely related *families* seldom last over more than two generations among the Kuikuru. Nevertheless an alliance structure could be established if members of two *categories* were regularly united by marriage. As we have seen, however, no such intermarrying categories occur among the Kuikuru.

A significant finding in this respect is that Kuikuru marry parallel as well as cross relatives. For example, men were married to first and second parallel cousins (M 1/2 SiD, MFSiSoD, MMSiDD, and MF 1/2 SiSoD). In a system of alliance each of these marriages would necessarily have united people who were in the same marriage category. The same is true of some marriages that link persons whose ancestors were found to have married each other, as for example the marriage of men with their FMBWDD and BWBDD. All of these marriages would tend to remove

a distinction between "wife-giving" and "wife-receiving" categories. Such unions are not regarded as abnormal by the Kuikuru, suggesting that beyond first cousins they make little distinction between cross and parallel relatives with respect to marriageability. By contrast, it is reported that the Kalapalo prohibit marriage with any relative other than cross cousins (*ifándaw;* Basso 1970:410-11).

Among the Kuikuru, on the other hand, marriages to cross cousins are fewer than marriages to other types of relatives, including numerous cross-generation marriages. In many instances, however, it is not possible to determine whether the partners would be "affinable" in a two-section alliance system because informants often do not distinguish lineal from collateral relatives in reckoning their genealogies.[6] A brief digression is necessary here to clarify the relation of consanguinity to affinity among the Kuikuru.

People usually reckon their relation to others by referring to their relation to an intermediate relative, often a member of parents' generation, or by the kin term used by the referent. The following examples illustrate these principles:

X is my classificatory sibling (*ufisï/ufisuïngï*) [because]

1. he/she is my *auaju indisïpe* ("MBD")
2. he/she is my *auaju mu(ku)gu* ("MBSo")
3. his/her F is *auaju* ("MB")
4. Y [who is X's F] is *ujogu* ("MB")
5. *eu primo, veu?* ("I am his cousin, see?").

X is my affine, *apaju ifitsï* (FW).

X is my son; he calls me *ama* (M); or *isųuï ugé* ("I am his father").

X is my daughter [because] *meu primo papa* ("my cousin [is her] father").

X is my nephew [because] Y [X's F] is my *ufisï* (B).

X is my grandchild [because] Y [X's M/F] says *"ama,"* or *"etsí"* (FSI), [to me]; or he/she says *"kokojó"* (GM).

In each instance the connecting relative is classificatory. It is interesting to note that some informants rely on what kin term the referent uses rather than on demonstrated genealogical ties, thereby accepting a stipulated relationship.

Now brother and sister terms are used regularly to refer to both parallel and cross cousins of any degree (the Generation pattern). In spite of the fact that Bifurcate Merging terms are used in +1 and −1 generations, since one's parents refer to all their kin in their own generation as brothers and sisters, ego learns to know them all, both cross and parallel, as MSi/B and FSi/B, instead of distinguishing them as "kin" and "affines." This means that sets of siblings who are in fact a parent's cousins are telescoped into "parent's siblings." In this way, not only are near and distant

relatives merged, but also the distinction between cross and parallel, or kin and affinable, is lost to subsequent generations. Thus designating *etsí* and *auaju* as a category of spouse givers would imply an affinal opposition that does not fit either the Kuikuru marriage practices or kinship terminology.

Everyone of course knows his or her own or supposed biological parents, and probably grandparents as well. However, people remember with less precision the names of collaterals and more distant ascendants. In genealogies distinctions between matri- and patrilateral relatives, between cross and parallel relatives, and between siblings and cousins are often blurred. An example of the pervasive confusion of sibling sets appears in Basso's account of a Kalapalo-Kuikuru genealogy in which two Kuikuru men, "Nahu" and "Luis," are represented as own brothers (1975:223). According to genealogies obtained from these men in 1954, they were actually related as second cross cousins (FFBDSo). In another instance a woman chose to overlook the affinability of her FSiSo and referred to his wife as sister-in-law, an affine, thus bringing her own male cross cousin into a "brother" relationship.

Clearly if the Kuikuru think in terms of "sibling" sets, those sets include both cross and parallel cousins. An individual is acknowledged as both kin and affinable in different contexts, and different kin terms are used for the same relative depending on whether a supposed consanguineal or affinal link is alluded to. In informant responses there is a good deal of indecision and vacillating between these alternate terms. Thus attempts to maintain marital alliances among the Kuikuru are continually frustrated by the terminological confusion of cross and parallel relatives.

As noted earlier, some informants explicitly preferred as mates persons who not only were not first cross cousins but who were regarded as unrelated. The Kuikuru express unrelatedness by the word *telo,* which contrasts with *telófïŋï* (not unrelated) and *ifisuïŋgï(pe)* (relatives). Terms that are cognate with *telo* are used among the Galibí and Caribs of the Maroni River in the Guiana region. In those societies *tewô* and *ti:wo* respectively refer to a man's first cross cousin (Arnaud and Alves 1975).

Used in general contexts, *telo* has the meanings of "other" and "different." In the context of kinship and marriage it was defined or explained by the term *ñailï* (nothing, no relation). The use of *telo* differs from one informant to another. Under identical conditions, for example, being asked to indicate one's relation to other Kuikuru as presented to the informants in alphabetical order, some informants gave a kin term for every other Kuikuru whereas one informant of apparently pure Kuikuru ancestry used *telo* for a considerable number of Kuikuru. Others admitted to being uncertain about their relation to a few people. It is used variably in other situations to mean "distantly related," "related but in an un-

known way," "affinable by reason of being unrelated," and "foreign" (that is, a member of a different tribe, for example, Kalapalo). A sample of the persons who were referred to as *telo* were found to be related to the speakers as follows:

1. Cousins: first cross cousin, first cross cousin once removed, first parallel cousin once removed, first cousin twice removed, second cross cousin, second parallel cousin, second cousin once removed (one of whom was also a step-father to the speaker), step-mother's sister's daughter.
2. Affines: step-daughter's husband, half-sister's husband.
3. Niece: daughter of a half-sister who had married into another group.
4. Mother's affine: mother's half-brother's wife.

Some of these are clearly cross relationships and would conform to alliance structure, but others are parallel relationships. Still others are not clear, since the method of reckoning the relationships is not made explicit and they would be cross or parallel depending on whether ego reckoned descent through males alone, which is generally not true for the Kuikuru, or through females, for which there is even less evidence.

From the above example, together with statements from informants, it is apparent that *telo* is frequently used to indicate persons with whom ego claims no demonstrated or stipulated relationship or to whom he does not know that his parents claimed a relationship. By using this term also for parallel and distant cross relatives along with persons in other tribal communities, ego changes their status from consanguine kin to potential affines.

In the context of marriage, use of this term supports informants' statements that they felt they should marry someone who was unrelated. But relatedness itself is conceived of as being quantifiable. In one instance when the offspring of a brother and sister were discussed as potential mates, they were classed as *telo* instead of the usual *ifisuïŋgï* (relatives), increasing the social distance between them. One informant said it was not good to marry a first cross cousin and specifically rejected the idea of his daughter marrying his own sister's son, preferring that she marry a young man who was *telo*. When it was pointed out that the informant had been referring to that young man's mother as "sister," he said, combining Kuikuru and Portuguese, that her son was *telo poquinho* (a little bit unrelated). Another informant described a woman as being *telo* to her lover. But when her relation to him (second parallel cousin) was pointed out, the informant added that they were *ifisuïŋgï kotsífiŋï* (not close relatives).

These examples illustrate the importance of fictively increasing genealogical distance in the context of both extramarital sex and marriage. It appears that by labeling as *telo* genealogical relatives who are regarded

as potential marriage partners, some Kuikuru purposely remove them from the category of consanguines in order to justify their marriage plans.

In analyzing data on Kuikuru marriage I found a seldom-used term for cross cousins, *ufaï*, that appeared to be a clue to former marriage structure. On the basis of the manner in which this term was used by the Kuikuru, together with comparative data on the kinship nomenclature of 15 other Carib-speaking societies and research on the process of change in kinship nomenclature, I interpreted *ufaï* as a term that had once been commonly used to designate a category of affines, namely male cross cousins and brothers-in-law (Dole 1957:294ff.; 1969).

Subsequently Basso studied the use of a corresponding Kalapalo term, *iɬaú* (third person possessive of *ufaú*). Approaching her data from a structuralist orientation, she took exception to the necessity of adducing factors of change and explained the term as "an integral, viable part of the system by which kin and affines are classified" (1970:42ff.). Further, on the basis of an unspecified amount of time spent with the Kuikuru (remembered by them as three days) at their new settlement Afanítafagï, called Lafatuá by the Kalapalo, as well as with the Carib-speaking Matipú ("Wagifïtï") and remnants of the Nafuquá ("Jagamï") at Magiapé, Basso generalized about kinship and marriage among all "Xingú Caribs,"[7] implying homogeneity of marriage norms and practices as well as kinship nomenclature among all those groups (1970:403-4).

This is not the place to describe all the differences in terms and usage between the Kuikuru and Kalapalo. However, a discussion of the use of the term *ufaï* is important to an understanding of Kuikuru marriage structure.

ufaï

It is true that among the Kuikuru as among the Kalapalo *ufaï* is "rarely heard in speech and even more rarely used by young people" (Basso 1970: 411). Beyond this, however, Kuikuru usage differs considerably from that of the Kalapalo, where Basso speaks of a prohibition on the use of affinal relationship terminology within the hearing of affines, and states that "a term marking a specific affinal category is never uttered within the hearing of such an affine of the speaker. The terms seem to be confined to contexts where the need arises to specify an affinal relationship to an ignorant listener" (1970:412).

Among the Kuikuru, although affinal terms are not used to address parents-in-law or allogender siblings-in-law, other specific affinal terms are used freely within hearing of the affines. Spouses often address their mates as *uño* (husband) or *ufitsï* (wife), and men especially use the term

ufametigï in its specific sense both in addressing and referring to brothers-in-law. A man may openly and purposefully address a prospective or actual brother-in-law as *ufametigï* with the intent of thereby imposing on the latter the affinal obligations of freely giving goods and services.

Nor is the less common term *ufąï* restricted among the Kuikuru to contexts of myths or explaining affinal status as among the Kalapalo (see Basso 1970:412). In fact it was not used by Kuikuru either in the context of eliciting genealogies (*ifisuïŋgï afefijï,* "writing relatives") or in response to questions about actual or potential marriage. It was heard most frequently in response to alphabetically arranged lists of names presented to informants for the purpose of eliciting relationship terms. In other contexts informants stated that it was "a good word" and could be used in address as well as reference with no embarrassment (*ifisu*). It is used by both males and females to designate any cross cousin (*"auaju mu(ku)gu,"* MBCh, or *"etsí mu(ku)gu,"* FSiCh). Although informants made the relationship explicit in these ways, in fact the cousin ties referred to are distant; I have not been able to trace precise genealogical links between persons designated as *ifąï* (third-person form of *ufąï*).

With the definition of *ufąï* as cross cousin in mind and the frequency of marriage to persons other than cross cousins, it becomes significant that although some informants felt that marriage with *ufąï* was good, others merely said it was permissible. One man explained that a person could have sex relations with *ifąï* (*"ufaï kupitsï ake"*) and added in Portuguese that they could legitimately either marry or be lovers (*"casar ou namorar"*). *"Quando etsí tem filha, eu pode trabalhar a ella"* (when father's sister has a daughter I can have sex with her). A man's father's sister "can give" her daughter to her brother's son, reminding one of Yalman's explanation of the relationship between cross cousins among the Sinhalese: "It is said that they have blood claims . . . upon each other. They already belong to each other from their birth since they find themselves in categories of kinship established by the kinship position of their parents" (1962:565).

While it is clear that *ifąï* are considered to be among one's cross relatives, some informants felt that the relationship was too close for marraige. One man who raised his *ifąï,* a small orphan girl, in his own home seemed to regard her as a close relative and would not have intercourse with her. As explained above, some preferred marrying more distant relatives or persons not known to be related and referred to first cross cousins as *telo* in order to imply affinability by reason of distance if they were attracted to a specific first cousin.

In my earlier paper I proposed the hypothesis that abandonment of special terms for cross cousins is in general associated with a breakdown of exogamous kin groups and an increase in marriage within a kin group

(1969:119). Actually there is evidence for a recent change away from cross-cousin marriage among the Kuikuru. An informant stated that formerly *ifąï* married each other *"bem direito"* (very strictly), but that the Kuikuru were abandoning that practice. He noted that a man can now marry *ufati* (SiD) if they are *"poco longe"* (a little distant) and that one man had married his "mother's sister" and one woman her "mother's brother." Many cross-generation unions between both parallel and cross relatives do in fact occur in the Kuikuru genealogies. The same informant commented that such marriages *"atropalha muito"* (mix things up a lot).

Before leaving the discussion of *ufąï,* it should be noted that an alternate term, *pamï,* was borrowed from the Carib-speaking Bakairí formerly in the Upper Xingú region. It is clearly cognate with *ufąï* and with the form *ibamuy* used by the Island Carib in 1665 (see Dole 1969: 112). This borrowed form is used by Kuikuru in exactly the same sense as is *ufąï,* and not exclusively for an *ifąï* who is also a special friend (*ato*), as reported by Basso for "Xingu Carib" (1970:412). It is interesting in this connection also that the conservative forms *pa:mï* among the Moroni River Caribs and *paman* among the Galibí are used along with *ti:wo* and *tewô* (cf. Kuikuru *telo*) for FSiSo and MBSo (Arnaud and Alves 1975).

Conclusion

Among the Kuikuru marriage structure is not clearly an alliance system. There are few recognizable exchanges of spouses, either direct or delayed. Siblings usually marry members of different sibling sets, different house "factions," and different sets of cousins. Moreover, the not infrequent marriage of parallel relatives counteracts any tendency to establish categories of affinables as opposed to consanguine kin. Instead of a neat system of alliance, Kuikuru norms provide a wide range of variation of appropriate marriage patterns and support them with appropriate rationales. In practice, marriage exhibits an even wider variety. In this respect Kuikuru structure resembles that of the Tsimihety, of whom Southall says, "Nowhere is there any suggestion of a marriage alliance pattern between groups. All kin groups (with the exception of a few important royal ones) are genealogically shallow . . . " (1971:154).

By contrast among the Kalapalo—who speak a similar Carib dialect, have a generally very similar culture, and intermarry with the Kuikuru to some extent—marriage structure is described as "an alliance between two sets of siblings . . . who are considered suitable spouse exchangers . . . " (Basso 1975:212), with "the majority of marriages conform[ing] to the same general formal pattern of 'affinal repetition' within a single

generation . . . " (Becker 1969:85). If the Kalapalo do in fact marry cross relatives regularly, they may indeed maintain an alliance structure more strictly than the Kuikuru. However, in seeming contradiction to her generalization about alliance marriage among the Kalapalo, Basso indicates that she found "no examples of such exchanges occurring over more than two generations" and adds that "the present system does not contain elements of permanency. . . . The kinship-based [intermarrying] groups have no definite existence beyond a single generation" (Becker 1969:85). My observation of Kuikuru marriage agrees with these findings.

I also agree that the use of *ifąį̈* for a category of affinable cross relatives is explainable in terms of marriage alliance structure. This point is not at issue. What is at issue is whether structural theory can explain the fact that the term is not used regularly among the Kuikuru. Its relatively infrequent use among the Kuikuru is not explained by its structural meaning.

The current regular, public term for cross cousins is the same as the one that is used for siblings and parallel cousins (*ufisï, ufisuïṇgï*). Unless one is convinced that terms similar to *ifąį̈* that were used regularly for cross cousins or affines among 16 other Carib-speaking groups, dating from as early as the seventeenth century, are independent of the Kuikuru tradition, the conclusions are unavoidable that this term was once used more generally among the ancestors of the Kuikuru to designate cross cousins or affines or both; that a sibling term has been extended to cousins in regular usage; and that the infrequency of the current use of the Carib cross-cousin term among the Kuikuru requires explanation in terms of culture change.

A structural approach neither conflicts with nor replaces the study of culture change; the one complements the other. A structural analysis describes the system in its ideal form; the developmental (in this instance "devolutionary" rather than "evolutionary") approach may explain the lack of functional correlation between the ideal pattern and actual practice.

NOTES

1. Despite Leach's view (1961) that any attempt at a universal definition of marriage would be vain, I believe it is absolutely necessary to make such an attempt in order to communicate on the subject and to make possible comparative studies of marriage. I therefore suggest a definition with cross-cultural application in mind.

In this paper I use "marriage" to mean the socially sanctioned kinship union of two or more persons for the purpose of legitimizing their sexual relations or offspring. Any such union necessarily establishes jural affinal relations and is publicly recognized, if not acclaimed, by a customary act, even

if that act is no more than moving one's hammock (cf. Dillingham and Isaac 1975:60-61). To distinguish the act of becoming married from the structure of marriage, the former has been aptly referred to as a marriage act (Ackerman 1964).

The above definition is compatible with those found in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1965): "marry: to join as husband and wife according to law or custom . . . ; to take as a spouse . . . ; to enter into a close or intimate union," and "marriage: the state of being married; the mutual relation of husband and wife; the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. . . ."

Such a definition of marriage in terms of practices or customs allows one to describe, discuss, and compare marriage as a culture trait, whereas definitions such as "a set of native concepts . . . which serves to justify requests for spouses" (Basso 1970:402) refer only to the ideas about and rules for the conduct of marriage practices. Requesting a spouse is an integral part of marriage as a culture complex, and therefore it cannot logically be justified by the thing of which it is a part, namely marriage as concepts. Rather, marriage is *based on* a set of concepts, including "native beliefs," and it *exemplifies* those concepts and beliefs to varying degrees. In addition, marriage involves a customary social agreement between human partners and an association of those partners in a special kinship unit. In order to be able to study marriage practices themselves, it is essential to keep in mind these aspects of marriage as well as the concepts, beliefs, and rules for behavior.

2. Data in this paper were collected in 1953 and 1954 in the Kuikuru settlement of Lafatuá, also called Lamakuka, which was located near Lake Lamakuka a few miles west of the middle Kuluene River in the Upper Xingú basin of Mato Grosso. I am indebted to Robert Carneiro for additional data collected by him in 1975 at the settlement of Afaŋítafagï, one of the two current villages on the Tuatuarí (or Tïfatïfagí) affluent of the lower Kiliseu.

3. Composite extended families are organized on the basis of two principles, in this instance lineality and bilaterality, resulting in groups that include the nuclear families of parents and of both male and female offspring.

4. Although the Kuikuru do not claim actual genealogical ties with many members of other groups than their own, they extend kin terms to the latter, and it seems likely that as of 1954 members of all the Upper Xingú tribal groups were interrelated, even though the relationships may not be remembered.

In the present discussion only kin terms of reference are considered, although most of the same terms may be used in address as well.

5. Unlike Kalapalo, Kuikuru words are regularly accented on the penult. Accents are indicated here only when the pronunciation differs from the regular pattern.

6. Another difficulty in tracing genealogical relations, and therefore marriage ties, is the use of four or more different names during one's lifetime: two baby nicknames, one given by each side of the family; adult names also

given from each side of the family ancestry; and finally at least one other name taken from an ancestor if a person lives long enough to give his or her own name to a grandchild. In talking about kinship relations, individuals speak the names that have been given by their own progenitors and not those given by affines. Hence different people use different names for the same person. In addition, various people pronounce names differently, sometimes using shortened forms and different dialect renditions.

7. The Kuikuru, Kalapalo, and Matipú live not on the Xingú but in an area drained by five rivers that meet to form the Xingú. The area drained by those tributary rivers is properly referred to as the Upper Xingú basin.