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This is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about Crow-Omaha and the overall approach to analysis of kinship systems.

That Omaha patterns can arise for different reasons in different societies is certainly a possibility, and it is good that Read presents here a comparison which claims to show that. I do agree with Read that a formal analysis is a necessary first step before continuing with an explanation of the causes of the specific form of kinship structure in a specific group. I would add that the explanation needs to be diachronic, showing how the specific form and in some cases hybridity of actual systems on the ground develops - see Dziebel (2013) cited by Read. Dziebel makes a strong case for this, referring to McConvell (2012).

In the case of one of the main pair of systems compared here, Fox in North America, Read does propose a diachronic hypothesis – the transformation of an Iroquois system into an Omaha system (pp.26-27). In the other case, that of Thonga-Ronga, in South Africa, there is no discussion of the diachrony of the system in the main text although there is some information of its relatively recent history in Note xix.

The key dichotomy proposed is that between Crow-Omaha as a direct consequence of an inherent generative logic and as resulting from a transformation of the terminology (p.30):

> skewing may arise as a direct logical consequence of the generative logic of the terminology or a transformation of a kinship terminology

The idea that there is a major difference between the causes of the two types is attractive but this conceptualisation of it is problematic. It implies that the Thonga-Ronga system is not due to a transformation, so perhaps has remained the same from a very ancient time. But no evidence bearing on this is offered, nor is it likely that no transformations have been at work.

There is no solid reconstruction of the history and prehistory of these systems in Read's work. One of the main ways we can access such history is through linguistic reconstruction (as mentioned also by Dziebel) but Read does not use such evidence.

in this approach of Read's, systems like Thonga-Ronga are generated by the logic of gendered 'self' terms. Assuming it is possible to find such 'self' terms by a reliable method (about which I am unsure), there is an implication that this should yield a prediction of a Thonga-Ronga type of

skewing, and should be testable. Read does not try such a test on a wide sample of languages. The complementary hypothesis about Fox type could only be tested if we have independent evidence that a 'transformation' has occurred. Such evidence exists for Fox, and appears to be motivated by inconsistency between Iroquois kinship and lineage systems (p.30), but there is no investigation of where else it occurs.

Although the shape of the Thonga-Ronga pattern is said to be determined by a particular 'generative logic' involving primacy of male kin, in fact another structural factor 'a conceptual boundary for kin term products' (p.7,9,11 etc.) lies behind one of the most perplexing aspect of the system: the extension of the term *kokwana* to a wide range of grandparents and grandchildren. This is an interesting idea but not well worked out. As Read notes, there are strong parallels here with the Trobriands system, of Crow type but also with wide extensions of similar type which led to the celebrated debate between Leach (1958) and Lounsbury (1965).

There is extensive discussion of the method used in coming up with the underlying core generative logic – of the Thonga-Ronga kinship terminology in this case. This is useful as this procedure is not always clear. For instance the term 'self' is used frequently in a sense that may not be easily grasped, and note vii, referring to this term, gives little enlightenment.

Lounsbury (1964) foreshadows the notion of variation in Crow and Omaha in his 'types' of each, including those in which grandparents are equated with mother's brothers and thos in which they are not. This may repay further analysis and critique.

Towards the end of the paper, Read finds the classification of Thonga-Ronga as 'skewing' unsatisfactory and proposes that it should be analysed only as a result of the

> generative logic that begins with male self, *tatana* ('father') and *nhondjwa* ('ascending brother') as primary, generating terms, whereas, in an asymmetric manner, the only generating term for the female marked terms is self.xviii .This is the logic of a terminology that structurally only recognizes patrilines.

It is clear that a number of varieties of Omaha skewing around the world are affected or activated by the existence of patrilines and patrilineages. It is not clear how this translates into the particular 'generative logic' Read proposes. Patrilineality and skewing is manifested in a number of ways and to different extents not only in different societies but also in different situations in the same society –not a single driving principle but in combinations with others, which fluctuate and change through time

Kronenfeld (2009, cited by Read) emphasises that those who have a skewing mode of talking about kin, like the Fanti, themselves find it odd and somehow unnatural. Attempts like Read's to naturalise such equivalences by deriving them from single underlying 'generative logics' within the culture would defy this insight. Kronenfeld analyses the usage of kinship among the Fanti as involving three distinct ways of talking only one of which is of the skewing type. McConvell

finds similar internal variation across most of the Omaha systems in Australia, where non-skewed systems are used in particular discourse contexts. The standard analysis in anthropology for skewing is to regard it as a single system (Crow, Omaha or 'Crow-Omaha') with no significant internal variation. While this probably does occur sometimes, it is unlikely to be as general as it is depicted by ethnographies. Such variable systems are important for the tracing of 'transformations' Read regards such 'overlay' systems as 'cultural modifications' although the import of this termis not clear (Note xviii).

Read does suggest however that the Fanti and Australian cases fall into the division of Crow-Omaha systems that result from a 'transformation' rather than a 'generative logic'. For the Australian cases at least there is plenty of evidence that there was a transformation and the exact mechanisms can be described using historical linguistics (McConvell & Alpher 2002, McConvell & Keen 2011, cited in McConvell 2012; for analysis of Kariera see McConvell & Hendery 2017). This transformation in Australia appears to be motivated by use of the skewing extension to block cross-cousin marriage at last on the matrilateral side for a man, yielding asymmetrical marriage. The transformation in this case was from Kariera (not Iroquois) to Omaha, and Read notes that this is a case yet to be worked out in his framework

McConvell (2012) adds additional types of variation in his comparative analysis of Australian Omaha across a number of regions, which help to build up a picture of how these systems developed. These include the number of generations affected by skewing.

Read has been for some years seeking the 'idea' which underlies each type of kinship system, which he identifies as the 'generative logic'. So in the conclusion of this essay he writes (p.30)

> For the Thonga terminology, the underlying kinship idea seems to be that of minimizing the bilaterality of the Family Space by excluding the mother relation as a primary relation for generating the kinship terminology

This 'idea' if it truly lies behind the Thonga-Ronga system must have been implemented at some point in the past and must surely be linked to some social changes, most probably in the organisation of marriage. This can be tracked through linguistic reconstruction as carried out in McConvell (2016). However the chapter cited shows that reconstruction should include cultural and linguistic diffusion, not just modelling of inheritance, as has been the case for many attempts at tracing the history of kinship. Preliminary indications are that Omaha and Crow systems diffused between different groups in southern Africa and North America, as well as being inherited (McConvell and Whiteley 2017). This is a significant difference in the way such terms are transmitted and could be expected to affect analysis. It is not enough to bracket off some changes as 'transformations' or 'cultural modifications' and not subject to analysis in the same way as we might approach kinship systems whose history we think we do not know.

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