Marriage and its Dissolution among the Kachins of Burma

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RÉSUMÉ

Après avoir fait l'examen des théories courantes sur le mariage et le divorce, l'auteur évalue l'apport spécifique de Leach dans ce domaine.

— There are two problems involved in defining marriage and divorce cross-culturally. First, there are a great variety of *forms* of union of a man and woman, and of dissolution of that union. Second, there is great variability in the *content* of that union — i.e. the kinds of scarce values involved in the formation and dissolution of these kinds of union. Thus, a man and woman may merely live together (domestication), and may or may not have a contract involving the position of the children of that union. A marriage may be ritualized or legalized or both. Other factors may be exchanged by the families involved (e.g. bridewealth). Birth of a child or sexual consummation may be required to validate the marriage. We will find two kinds of union among the Kachins, formal and informal; and while Edmund Leach's analysis (1953, 1954, 1961e) concentrates on the formal type, the existence of the other cannot be ignored in a study of marriage and divorce either among the Kachin or cross-culturally. A verbal typology of marriage types is not sufficient, however; for example, domestication may have different implications in different societies — it might imply the same kind of union that a ritualized marriage implies in some other society. Thus, marriage (and divorce) must be viewed in terms of the scarce values involved — that is, what rights, obligations, goods, etc, are exchanged by the families or individuals involved in the union? Leach lists the following ten kinds of rights which could be involved (1961d:107):

1. To establish the legal father of a woman's children.
2. To establish the legal mother of a man's children.
3. To give the husband a monopoly in the wife's sexuality (or its disposal).
4. To give the wife a monopoly in the husband's sexuality.
5. To give the husband partial or monopolistic rights to the wife's domestic and other labor services.
6. To give the wife partial or monopolistic rights to the husband's labor services.
7. To give the husband partial to total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the wife.
8. To give the wife partial or total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the husband.
9. To establish a joint fund of property — a partnership — for the benefit of the children of the marriage.
10. To establish a socially significant 'relationship of affinity' between the husband and his wife's brothers.

We must, of course, realize that there will be variation in these categories of rights between and within societies; for example, the content of rights to the labor of the spouse (5 & 6) will vary cross-culturally. But structurally these scarce values should be the focus of analysis of what happens in the various kinds of unions (and dissolution of those unions) of a man and woman (or women). If there is a marriage payment, or bride-wealth, involved, there are several questions which must be asked about its nature (Leach 1953:180):

1. Is payment fixed or variable in kind or quantity?
2. Does it vary with status or geographical distance embraced by marriage?
3. Are the goods consumer goods, capital goods or ritual goods?
4. Is economic labor — man or woman — among the things transferred?

5. Are payments completed immediately or over a long period of time?

It seems that we must also ask who is involved in the exchange — are there many relatives responsible for producing the brideprice and are many affinal relatives involved in dividing the brideprice once it is received? For example, one difference between the Kachin and the Lakher (our comparative example) is the degree of involvement of the relatives — the Lakher system involves two or three generations of affines, while the Kachin system involves directly only one (or the lineage acting as a unit). Question four above overlaps with categories five and six in the list of rights, but the difference between who gets the results of the labor seems crucial. Thus, when a man works for his affines (brideservice) or a woman works for her affines as a group, it fits the category of things transferred; while if the labor involved is part of the conjugal bond itself, it falls in the category of rights exchanged in marriage unions (thus the strength of the sibling bond is important in deciding who gets the fruits of the labor).

The concept 'stability of marriage' includes a number of important aspects of marriage duration and dissolution. Schneider (1953:55) cites four different ways in which marriage may be defined as stable. First, the jural rules concerning marriage may be stable over time. Second, the alliances involved in the marriage (if any) may be said to be stable. Third, the conjugal bond itself may be stable. Fourth, there may be a jural rule prescribing that marriages be stable (i.e. forbid divorce — of either the conjugal bond or alliance bonds). Most people (including Leach) assume that rules about marriage and divorce are stable through time and space (that is, the scarce values involved are the same), and some (including Leach) ignore the stability of the conjugal bond in their efforts to focus only on the "social structural" aspects of marriage and divorce. I will attempt to show that this does not adequately explain either the jural or behavioral aspects of marriage and divorce.

When refering to the "divorce rate" it must be remembered that different rates serve different analytic functions. For example, the number of divorces can be compared to (1) the total number of marriages, (2) the number of marriages that end in death,

(3) the number of marriages which have ended (the total minus the number of extant marriages), or (4) duration probabilities and age-specific rates. Leach give no data on the conjugal bond, so these rates will not be too significant in my discussion. This is partly justified because the Kachins forbid "divorce" and the ease of common-law marriage means that formal marriage for the most part is only an alliance between lineage groups.

Since we are viewing marriage and divorce as mechanisms of allocation of scarce values (rights, goods, esteem, etc.) to the members of society, I will review the ideas of the various researchers who led to this formulation. Gluckman's initial hypothesis (in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*) states that as we move from matrilineality to bilaterality to patrilineality, divorce frequency decreases; also as bridewealth increases divorce decreases. In the correspondence in *Man* (vol. 53-55) and in other sources this view was disputed. Fallers pointed out that this was only true for patrilineal societies in which the woman becomes part of her husband's lineage — divorce may be high where the woman's lineage retains some control over her. Thus Leach (1961d) finds that high brideprice may demonstrate a futile attempt to strengthen the conjugal bond in societies where the sibling bond is very strong (see also Parry 1932:311-340). The strength of the husband-wife bond will depend on: what their rights and duties are in other roles they may play (non-kinship roles may be important as among the Kachins with regard to politics); the economic status of the nuclear unit; the "relations of affinity" of the man and his wife's family or lineage; and the ideology and practice of male dominance. Gibbs (1964:197) suggests that extreme lineality will lead to instability in marriage (high divorce frequency) — but this is only the case when there is divided authority over the woman. Gibbs says that this normative ambiguity hypothesis of Leach's ignores certain other factors which may influence the stability of marriage; and he presents his theory of epainogamy "to refer to that condition of marriage which is societally supported, praised and sanctioned — indeed, almost enforced" (p. 197). He says that societies wishing to control marital stability will, in addition to eliminating normative ambiguity, reward conformity to norms and punish deviance from norms (p. 198). Preferential marriage will help stabilize the

conjugal bond, since kinship bonds of another sort will be present. The presence of continuation marriage (levirate and sonorate), by transferring rights over the woman or man permanently, will tend to stabilize marriage. "Alternative marriage" — brideservice — causes strains on the man's ego (as well as his back), thus endangering the union (p. 199). The definitive allocation of the children to one lineage or the other will stabilize the behavior of individuals and their children with regard to inheritance, filiation, etc. (more of Leach's reduction of normative ambiguity). Ceremonialization of marriage will generally strengthen the marriage bond, but unless other stabilizing forces are present, this will not suffice to reduce divorce frequency. In this connection, bride-price may be used not to stabilize the union, but as a reflection of how far apart (geographically *and* socially) the bride and groom lived prior to the marriage. The stability of marriage will also depend on what sorts of scarcity exist outside of the marriage bond that don not exist inside. We will see that for the Kachins, alliances and social status are the major values obtained in marriage by the man. A fine pays for all children out of wedlock; sex is easily obtainable, as are the other aspects of marriage — cooperative division of labor, etc. The major punishment for deviance from these norms will, then, be loss of status and allies. Thus, we must consider a number of non-kinship variables in any effort to explain aspects of marriage stability. For cross-cultural research, then, "divorce" and "marriage" cannot be defined more explicitly than in terms of what rights, obligations, goods — social 'knots' — are exchanged by whom (the Kachins view their own system in somewhat these terms; their word *hka* — "debt" refers to social bonds exchanged in various social interactions). I will thus examine the "knots" which are tied in the marriages of various Kachin groups, and show how these are related to the social process.

KACHIN MARRIAGE: SOCIAL STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Leach gives data only for the marriage and divorce complexes of the "Ordinary" Jinghpaw and Gauri Kachins, but it will be

shown that knowledge of the behavior of other Kachin groups must be provided to test the validity of his (and Gibbs') ideas about marriage stability. Jinghpaw refers to a language category — and it subsumes two kinds (or groups of villages oscillating between two ideal types) of political organization — gumsa and gumlao. Gauri is another dialect, similar to Jinghpaw, which is spoken by Kachins with gumsa organization, who live in the northeast corner of Burma. Leach only gives data on the Jinghpaw gumsa and the Gauri groups, and an examination of the systems of the Jinghpaw gumlao and the Maru and Lashi (other linguistic groupings) gumlao villages is necessary in order to test Leach's findings.

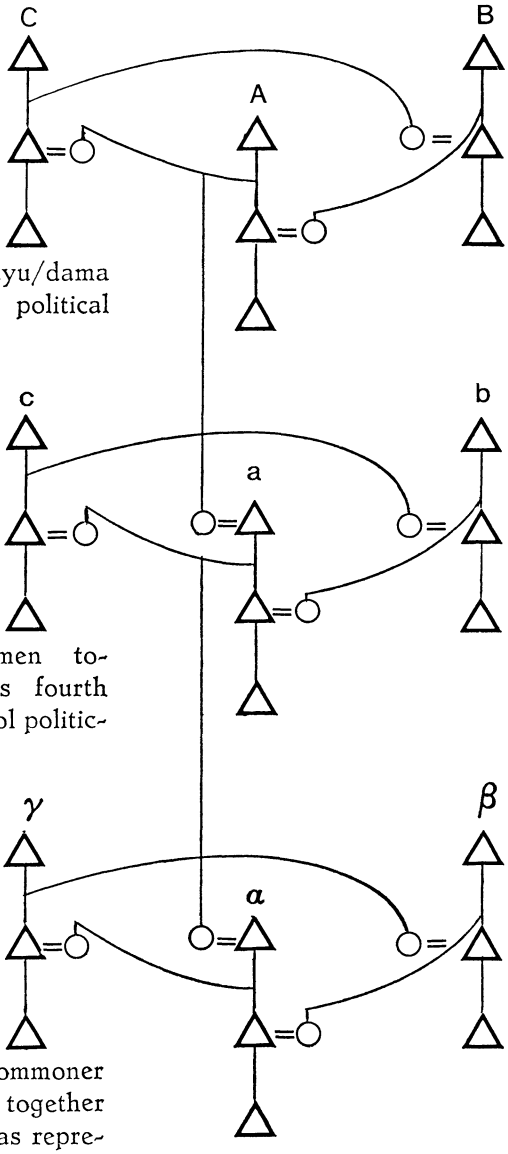
Gumlao society consists of affinally linked, egalitarian patrilineages living together in a village which is politically autonomus from other villages. There are two factors which undermine the stability of these villages. First, the rule of ultimogeniture forces rapid segmentation of these lineage groups, due to the psychological pressure on the older brothers if they remain under the control of their younger brother (Leach 1954:165). These brothers may from a new village or go to live with their fathers-in-law as "clients". The other factor which leads to instability of this political form is the *mayu-dama* form of marriage (Leach 1954:167, 203). The Kachins practice what has been termed "matrilateral cross-cousin marriage" — this means that a man may marry women only from his mother's patrilineage (his *mayu,* or "wife-giving", lineage), and a woman may only marry a man from her father's sister's husband's patrilineage (*dama,* or "wife-getting" lineage). A lineage may not be both dama and mayu vis-a-vis another lineage. This is certain only for the Jinghpaw and Gauri groups; it is not known whether or not the Maru and Lashi groups practice preferential marriage (Leach 1954:203). Leach speculates that they do not because their gumlao organization is fairly stable compared with that of Jinghpaw groups; but Scott and Hardiman's (1901) vocabulary omit any words refering to kinship categories so there is no way of proving or disproving Leach's guess. The Jinghpaw gumlao groups are inherently unstable because this mayu-dama relationship implies that the mayu lineage is superior to the dama lineage (due perhaps to the value of women in the society as scarce values). According to Leach the

groups in the village have a linguistic pressure to rank themselves in the way it is done in gumsa villages. But as we have just seen, it is impossible to prove (without Maru and Lashi data) whether or not it is the linguistic structure or the cultural content of the mayu-dama relationship which produces the instability of the gumlao form of government. By the gradual accumulation of lineage segments under the clientship of various mayu (fathers-in-law) lineage sites, a village tends to become gumsa in its political organization. There exists a centripetal tendency also. Gumlao lineages will try to "marry in a circle" and keep brideprice low to avoid the formation of classes of ranked lineages.

Gumsa society is based on villages connected by mayu-dama bonds; the lineages within a political domain (*mung*) are connected by bonds of mayu-dama relations. Three classes exist — chiefly lineages (rulers of a group of villages (*mung*), aristocratic lineages (rulers of a village), and commoner lineages. A commoner lineage is dama to an aristocratic lineage, and aristocratic lineages are dama to chiefly lineages (or perhaps to each other). If the chief of a gumsa domain forms an alliance with a Shan feudal lord (the valley dwelling Shans have a stable arrangement of territorial, as opposed to lineal, feudalism and class society — the Shans do not practice marriage hypogamy as do the gumsa Kachins), then in neglecting his duties to his followers, he encourages a gumlao revolt in which the villages break away from his authority and form villages based on gumlao ideals of lineage egalitarianism (and the cycle can begin again) (Leach 1954:223). The Gauri, due to somewhat more stable economic situation, are able to maintain a more stable gumsa organization than the Jinghpaw groups (Leach 1961e:118).

The Kachins recognize three kinds of sexual union of a man and woman — all are restricted to mayu women and dama males among the Jinghpaw and Gauri groups. Each house contains a room (*nla dap*) where the girls may entertain courting males free of parental interference. Any children of these unions are claimed by the girl's lineage unless the man in question marries the girl and pays a fee to assure that the children are his (Leach 1954:75). A woman may merely move in with a man, and any children of this union will be considered the man's — he has no affinal obligations or allies) unless the formal marriage ceremony (*num shalai*) is per-

FIGURE 1: *Gumsa marriage and political structure.*



Chiefly class.

Three chiefs in mayu/dama circle form a loose political federation.

Aristocratic class.

Three village headmen together with chief, as fourth village headman, control political affairs of domain.

Commoner Class.

Senior members of commoner local descent groups, together with village headman, as representing his local descent group, control affairs of the village.

formed, nor does he have any status. This formal ceremony is not only an alliance between two groups. For the gumsa (unless otherwise stated, facts refer only to gumsa-type villages) it represents a mechanism of social mobility for the man and his children, since the mayu lineage has higher class status, than his own. Ideally, then, the marriage system appears as in Figure 1 (Leach 1961:86). Of course, the actual system will often oscillate between this arrangement and the gumlao type, where equal lineages "marry in a circle" — like the chiefly lineages of the gumsa organization. This is called *Hkau wang hku* ("cousin circle path") and I will demonstrate later that Leach's failure to use this information in his theory of divorce frequency distorted his results. Thus, the effect of the formal ceremony is to establish an affinal bond between the man and his affines, and to give higher status to his children (Leach 1954:74); the brideprice is therefore a payment for social status of the children and their lineage, as well as for alliance. Gilhodes (1922:211) states that the amount of brideprice varies (for the Gauri) with the girl's status. For example, a commoner woman may bring a price of two buffaloes, two gongs, some cloth, and four or five jugs of "grog" — *laukhry tham mali,* while a princess is worth three or four times that much. On the other hand, Leach (1954:148-152) stresses the flexibility of the system, where the economic status of the man is more important in determining the actual price. This is due to the fact that many items are substitutes for one another, and twenty *hpaga* (ritual wealth units) can be a great deal or very little depending on the actual value of the items involved. While Leach cites an adequate number of examples to illustrate his point, it is probable that among the Gauri there is less variation permitted; this would be consistent with the greater flexibility — less fluidity — of the Gauri class system.

The Kachins (data for the Maru and Lashi groups does not exist) have a highly ritualized formal marriage ceremoy. When a father wishes his son to marry into a lineage for the purposes of alliance (it must be with a mayu lineage), he asks his kinsmen to help collect articles for use as brideprice. He then goes to the diviner, who gives him predictions regarding the future of the girl in question and the success of such an alliance. If he gets a satisfactory reply, he sends two friends to propose to the parents of the girl. If they agree to the marriage, then a date is set and

small gifts are exchanged (Gilhodes 1922:212-213). Then, on the eve of the marriage the boy proposes directly to the girl's parents, who refuse his request three times (only once among non-Gauri groups). On the fourth time they accept, but proceed to quibble about the brideprice — agreement is sometimes reached only with difficulty. The next day the girl and her train ("maids-of-honor", clothing, some small gifts and personal items) go to the boy's house without her parents or relatives. The boy's mother places a silver necklace on the girl as she enters her new home: this is a symbol of "adoption" into the lineage (Gilhodes 1922:216). A large feast is held for all the girl's dama relatives, at which time the couple eat from the same bowl of rice (Kawlu Ma Nawng 1942:60); this is only reported for Jinghpaw marriages. Gilhodes (1922:218) gives a different account for the Gauri. After the feast, a priest blesses the union and the couple drink together (they have often not met until the day of the wedding). Among the Gauri, the girl may return home after the wedding and stay there by herself for several months, in which time she may entertain lovers (who risk punishment as adulterers). It is considered bad for a bride to settle down among her affines immediately after the marriage (Gilhodes 1922: 221; Leach 1961e:118). Jinghpaw brides, on the other hand, while they make a show of running away, are usually sent back and they settle down with their husbands. This is probably due to the greater crystallization of the Gauri class system where the woman's lineage can be more assertive of its superiority by demanding more from the relationship. Since most gumlao marriages are with contiguous lineages, there is little tendency for the brides to be demonstrably pushed in one direction or the other. The lineages are equals and the alliance is thought of as independent of the particular marriage; while among gumsa groups the marriage constitutes the basis for the alliance. Polygamy is unusual unless (1) the first wife is childless or has only daughters, (2) the man inherits his brother's wife by the levirate or widow inheritance (the children of such a union are supposed to belong to the first — deceased — husband, but this may be contested if it is advantageous for someone to do so), and (3) the first wife is old and cannot perform her domestic tasks (including sex) (Gilhodes 1922:225). Little concern is expressed if the girl

runs away; the brideprice is paid over a long period of time and some of these hka are held over from generation to generation in an effort to maintain the alliance. Gauri brides to some extent retain membership in their own lineages — if her husband dies and there is no suitable replacement (she and her relatives have some choice in the matter) she may return to her village with no forfeiture of brideprice. Jinghpaw brides, however, are transferred absolutely and totally into the husband's lineage (Leach 1961e: 119), although the mock running away of the bride may indicate some vague claims made on her by her lineage.

Before examining the relevance of these facts to the theory of marriage stability cross-culturally, I must introduce a brief summary of marriage customs among the Lakher of Burma (Leach uses this group comparatively to develop this theory).

The Lahkers have a very stable hypogamous marriage system, coupled with stability of the class and feudal systems, which, although similar to those to the Kachin gumsa groups, is more highly crystallized. The Lakher have a fixed, highly elaborated system of bridewealth, but there is little ritualization or religious element in the formal marriage rite (Parry 1932:292, 311). Divorce is easy and frequent (Parry 1932:343; Leach 1961e:117); and widows are not bound to the husband's lineage as they are among the Kachin (Parry 1932:295). Leach (1961e:117) states:

> Moreover their bridewealth transactions are not only very expensive but extraordinarily complicated. The husband must not only make a large main payment *(angkia)* to the lineage of his wife, but once his household is established he must make a payment *(puma)* of similar scale to the lineage of his wife's mother's brother, part of which is then transferred to the lineage of the mother's brother of the wife's mother's brother.

Thus, one factor in maintaining continued association of affines is the promise of shares in the brideprice of the various women of those affines. Thus, marriage among the Lakher is only concerned with the jural status of children. Also, after the marriage, the bride sleeps at her husband's house, but he must live elsewhere for a few months and court her as if he were a suitor (Parry 1932:304). Thus, the inferior status of the husband's lineage (emphasized most by the Lakher) allows the woman's patrilineage to retain great deal of control over her —

indeed she never ceases to be a full member of that group, who in a sense merely hire her out as a status-getting device for the man's lineage. Leach (1961e:117) remarks that:

> In this way the husband's lineage acquires permanent rights in the children so produced, but they do *not* acquire rights in the person of the bride. On the contrary, the bride never gives up her effective membership in her own superior patrilineage and she is free to return there whenever she likes. The bride's children belon to the husband's group but not absolutely so; her own patrilineage retains a kind of lien on her children (particularly her daughters so that when these children in due course come to be 'hired out' on marriage her original patrilineage claims half the rent.

Note that the Kachin patrilineage retains all right in the children, although rights in the wife vary between groups. Thus, among the Lakher, when stress is placed on the alliance bond, it is the conjugal "knot" which is broken. Leach suggests that the large bridewealth payments among the Lakher are an effort to strengthen the overly weak conjugal bond in a system which stresses the sibling bond; thus the woman is always a member of her own lineage. Another explanation which Leach does not consider is that since the extensions and elaborations of the bridewealth payments are the major source of political stability and alliance in this system, the duration of the conjugal bond is of little consequence. Quite a different pattern is evident among the Kachin groups.

KACHIN 'DIVORCE'

Divorce is not allowed among the Jinghpaw Kachins, either gumsa or gumlao. Among the gumlao villages, divorce would imply the end of the "cousin circle path" alliance system; the village would then break up into lineage segments which would either feud as new autonomous groups or perhaps reorganize in a gumsa pattern (the Jinghpaw word for feud — *majan* — means love song or feud; its literal meaning is "woman's business"). For gumlao organization divorce implies, then, the breakup of the marriage system as well as the specific couple and lineages involved. For Jinghpaw gumsa marriages, divorce would mean that the lineages which are allied would be forced to feud (Leach

1954:89), but the system in maintained (except of course when a new gumlao village is formed by one of the lineages and perhaps its allies). It is strange that Leach did not see this instability in the marriage system of the Kachins; but he ignores the fact that different scarce values are involved in Kachin marriage and divorce, depending on the political structure of the village. Thus, while divorce is forbidden in both gumlao and gumsa Jinghpaw villages, its significance is different in each kind. Unless feud or village disintegration is desired, the sibling bond between the husband and his wife's brothers must be maintained; thus it is the conjugal bond which must give way. The wife's lineage must supply a new spouse for the husband if the couple simply cannot live together; this procedure is the major form of reconciliation among Jinghpaw villages, both gumlao and gumsa. The Gauri Kachins allow divorce, but it is not encouraged and is rare (Leach 1961e:118). The same efforts at supplying a new wife are often made; but sometimes if the couple doesn't get along in spite of all the efforts at reconciliation by the families, the brideprice (*mum-phu*) is returned, plus a buffalo as compensation (Gilhodes 1922: 222). Thus, to some extent, the Gauri bride retains membership in her own lineage; she may on occasion return to her lineage if she is widowed and the husband's brothers are felt unsuitable for leviratic marriage. Thus, the higher ranking lineage (mayu), which is more entrenched in its position in Gauri villages, reserves the right to some control over its females, unlike the Jinghpaw lineages. This is, however, a matter of degree, not of kind, as the ritual running away of the Jinghpaw bride illustrates; it is emphatically enforced among the Gauri and weakly attempted among the Jinghpaw gumsa.

Before discussing change in the jural aspects of marriage and divorce, the major point of this paper, I will summarize Leach's findings and my criticisms thus far. Table 1 summarizes the points made by Leach: (cf. table 1 below).

Thus, Leach asserts that the strength of the bond between the wife and her siblings (or lineage) determines the divorce rate (see Figure 2) and the high brideprice among the Lakher represents a futile attempt to bring down the divorce rate (thus refuting Gluckman's too simplistic hypothesis). However, by

TABLE 1

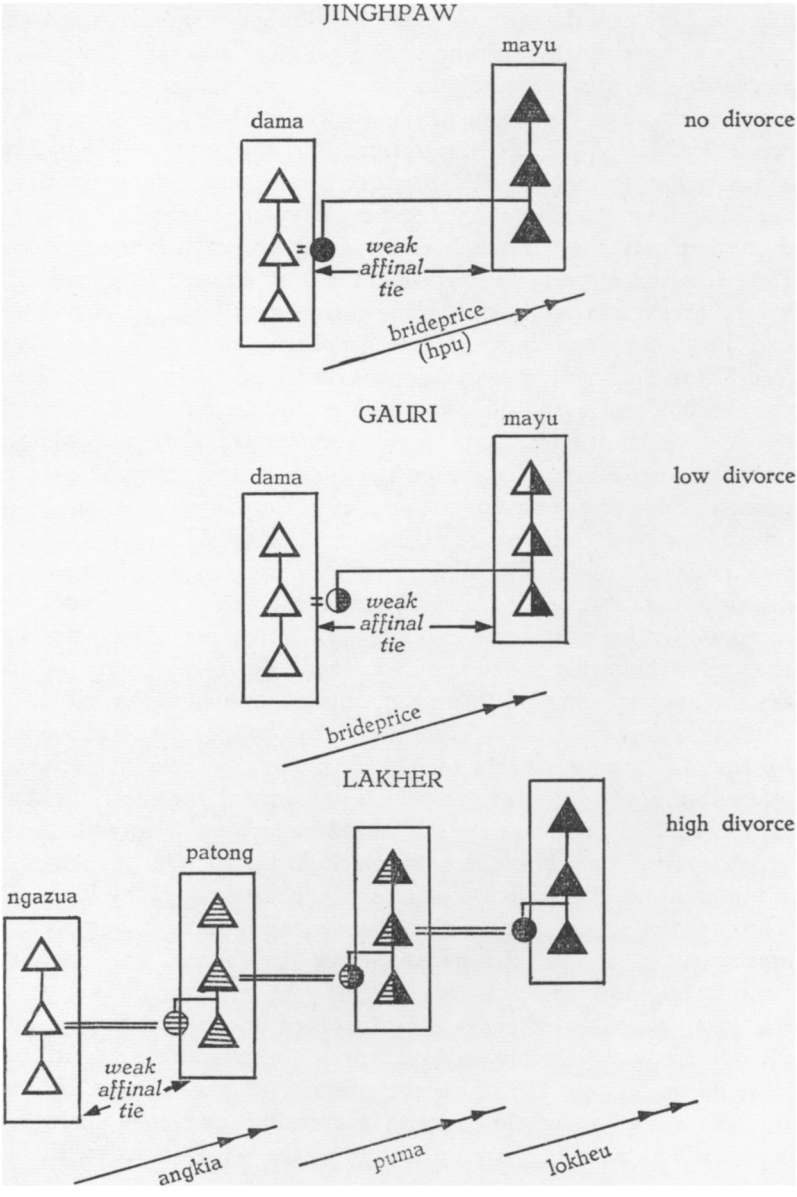
VARIABLE	*LAKHER*	*GAURI*	*JINGHPAW*
Preferential marriage (as a linguistic category)	yes	yes	yes
Strength of the wife's sibling bond	strong	weak	Weaker than Gauri
Brideprice	high and inflexible	higher and less flexible than Jinghpaw	varies with status of man
Ritualized marriage ceremony	no	yes	yes
Divorce rate	frequent	rare	forbidden (but not non-existent)
Stability of class system	most stable	stable	unstable

implicitly assuming that divorce is the ultimate evil to be avoided in this society, Leach has failed to realize that the breakup of the conjugal bond could have variable social structural meaning. The high divorce frequency among the Lakher, rather than being an unfortunate aberration of the class system, was merely an individual reaction to the lack of necessity, due to the elaborate extensions of the brideprice, of maintaining the conjugal bond as a factor in alliance. Also, a consideration of the differences between gumlao and gumsa Jinghpaw marriage further illuminates the social process as focussed upon through the institutions of marriage and divorce.

THE JINGHPAW KACHINS: FLUIDITY IN THE 'MEANING' OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

What, then, are the differences in the scarce values involved in the marriage systems of the gumlao Jinghpaw and the gumsa Jinghpaw, as compared to the Gauri and Lakher? As compared with the relatively low significance of the Lakher conjugal bond, the Kachin groups have low or non-existent (rare) divorce. The Gauri have more fixed and mayu-centered bridewealth systems

FIGURE 2
(From Leach, 1961e:121)



than the Jinghpaw, and are less troubled by the instability (or potential instability) of the conjugal bond. The Jinghpaw, on the other hand, need the conjugal bond as the symbol of the alliance between the groups; and the Jinghpaw gumlao need the bond as the mainstay of the entire political system. Therefore, *as the degree of stability of the class system increases (correlated with an increase in economic-ecological stability — a possible causal relationship), the importance of the conjugal bond as a mechanism of social solidarity decreases:* thus, the strength of the sibling bond and the divorce frequency can increase! It seems that what prevented Leach from seeing this was that he tended to (1) view the marriage systems of the Kachin as stable and (2) ignore or explain away the subtle differences between the Gauri and Jinghpaw, and between the Jinghpaw gumlao and gumsa. We know that several variables are involved in producing these various kinds of system, all of which would be classified as patrilineal, with 'matrilateral cross-cousin marriage'. One variable not mentioned so far is whether or not these groups may be said to possess endogamous or exogamous *demes* marriage communities — or more properly, mating communities. For the Gauri, with fairly stable villages and political domains, we may speak of deme endogamy (as opposed to their lineage *exogamy*); but Jinghpaw communities are not stable enough and during periods of political change exhibit deme exogamy. Indeed, deme exogamy — the exit of married couples in gumsa organization and the influx of dama couples in gumlao villages — is the primary mechanism for social change in Kachin society. It seems that Leach's exclusive interest in social structure and lack of concern for the individual prevented him from seeing the marriage system (through deme exogamy) as the interpersonal mechanism of political change. A summary of the findings of this paper is provided by Table 2. Thus, we can see that as the class system tends to crystallize among these groups, the necessity for stability of the conjugal bond to support the alliances of lineages decreases (change in the jural rules — scarce values involved in the contract), and divorce frequency increases. Brideprice increases in amount, and in importance as a factor in the alliance of the groups. These factors are also correlated with increasing economic-ecological stability and with the strengthening of the wife's bond with her

TABLE 2

VARIABLE	*LAKHER*	*GAURI*	*GUMSA*	*GUMLAO*
Preferential marriage (as a linguistic category)	yes	yes	yes	yes
Strength of the wife's sibling bond	strong	weak	weaker than Gauri	weakest
Brideprice	high and inflexible	higher and less flexible than Jinghpaw	varies with status of man (flexible)	low
Ritualized marriage ceremony	no	yes	yes	yes
Divorce rate	frequent	rare	forbidden	forbidden
Stability of class system	most stable	stable	unstable	no class system
Economic stability	most stable	stable (less so than Lakher) partially	fairly stable, but less so than Gauri.	less stable than gumsa
Transfer of wife's to husband's lineage	never		almost totally	totally
Ritual assertion of status of bride's lineage (refusal of proposal, running away of wife, etc.)	yes	yes	yes, but less than Gauri.	no
Demes	endogamous	endogamous	exogamous	exogamous
Rights transferred in marriage	(1) status of children (2) sexual services	(1) status of wife (2) status of children (3) alliance (4) sexual services	(1) status of wife (2) status of children (3) alliance (4) sexual services	(1) status of wife (2) sexual services (3) stability of system
Rights lost in divorce	(1) sexual services	(1) status of wife (sometimes) (2) sexual services	(1) status of wife (2) sexual services (3) alliance	(1) sexual services (2) stability of system

siblings. If information on the Maru and Lashi groups were available, we could see whether or not linguistic categories (structure or content) or political variables were determinant factors in the institution of marriage. Thus, the Maru and Lashi groups may resemble the Jinghpaw gumlao groups due to political similarity or they may differ from both Jinghpaw and Gauri groups due to linguistic (and the implied structural) differences; thus a solution might be possible, on a structural (as opposed to developmental) level, to the Leach-Lounsbury controversy about the effects of linguistic categories on social process.

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