Back to Square One:
A Re-Examination
of Tsimshian Cross-Cousin Marriage*

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RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est d'évaluer les différentes explica-
tions du mariage Tsimshien. En particulier, on examine deux
modèles opposés: les modèles matrilatéral et patrilatéral du
mariage des cousins-croisés. Étant donné que les modèles sont
structuraux, la validité de l'utilisation des données empiriques
devient une question de première importance. En plus des
taux des différents types de mariage, on examine la termino-
logie de parenté, les relations impliquées dans l'imposition des
noms, la position des participants au potlatch, les règles
d'héritage, la mythologie et les déclarations de préférence.

I

The Tsimshian have variously been described as having
matrilateral cross-cousin marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1967:24-28; Ros-
man and Rubel 1971:10-33), patrilateral cross-cousin marriage
(Ackerman 1973, 1974, 1975; Campbell 1973, 1974, 1975) and
marriage inconsistent with either form of exchange (Adams 1974;
Kasakoff 1970, 1974). In addition to the substantive problem, the
Tsimshian case is of interest at a more general level. The competing
representations have been expressed as mechanical models, which
raises the questions of verifiability and usefulness of such models
for understanding single cultures. In this paper, both issues will
be addressed by focusing on the Tsimshian evidence, and how it

can be used, to determine which model is appropriate to that context.

Any attempt to evaluate mechanical models requires an understanding of their purpose. As Rossi (1973:51) states, they are designed to represent the relational properties of systems. These properties *may* be manifested behaviorally, but the usefulness of that kind of evidence is restricted. Lévi-Strauss (1968:350) argues that "...a cross-cousin marriage rate of 20 percent is amply sufficient to imprint the society with a given structure". The reason for such potentially low correlations is that actual marriages are more likely to be made on the basis of contingent factors. Rates of marriage appear only to be useful when comparing mechanical models of the same phenomenon in the same society, where it can be assumed that the contingencies are constant. In that situation, a "skewing" of marriages in conformity to one set of properties can be expected (Kasakoff 1974:161).

The existence of a skewed pattern is, however, just one kind of fact. An underlying structure may be manifested through conscious models (Lévi-Strauss 1963:281-282), and in domains not directly referenced by the models employed. In using facts as a basis of evaluation, one should use all of them that can logically be connected to the properties of the models concerned (Rossi 1974:92-98). The best model will be the one to account for the widest range of evidence.

Before turning to the Tsimshian evidence, three qualifications have to be made. The first relates to the properties of the cross-cousin marriage models, which differ in terms of direction and duration of exchange. An MBD model represents asymmetrical exchange in which the position of each unit as giver and receiver is constant relative to other units. An FZD model represents a system of exchange which is symmetrical over time, due to generational alternation of those positions. The second refers to the units engaged in the exchange. On the basis of scale and parsimony, those units are matrilineal phratries — the largest membership units that are explicitly exogamous (Rosman and Rubel 1971:10). The final qualification concerns cross-cousins. At the phratic level, cross-cousin is a theoretical rather than ethnographic category. It neither refers to an actual first cousin nor necessarily to classificatory cross-cousins. It is the more general category of

persons of the opposite sex, who belong to the phratry of either ego's father or his mother's brother's wife.

II

One of the interesting features of the Tsimshian marriage controversy is the range of evidence that has been employed. In addition to actual marriages, inferences have been made from kinship terminology, preferential statements, potlach invitations, inheritance rules, naming relations, mortuary totem poles, and mythology. In this section, thoses bases will be re-examined to determine the degree of support for the competing models.

A. *Totem Poles and Actual Marriages*

Ackerman (1975:78-79) presents an unusual source of data on Tsimshian marriage found in the carving of mortuary totem poles. Using Barbeau's statement (1929:11) that the carver of the deceased's pole is a member of father's phratry, combined with the equation of the deceased's and his mother's phratry, Ackerman extrapolates to actual parental marriages in the Gitksan sub-division of the Tsimshian. That record, taken from Barbeau (1929), is shown in Table 1.[1] On the basis of the exchange relations, which

TABLE 1

Exchanges Among Phratries on the Basis of Barbeau's Data

		Deceased's/Mother's Phratry			
		Eagle	Frog-Raven	Wolf	Fireweed
	Eagle	0	3	0	0
	Frog-Raven	4	5	11	14
Carver's/ Father's	Wolf	0	6	1	5
Phratry	Fireweed	0	11	2	2
	Unknown/ Ambiguous	3	15	10	5

Source: Barbeau, 1929

[1] Table 1 differs slightly from Ackerman's (1975:80) due to separating out all ambiguous cases.

are predominantly symmetrical, Ackerman concluded that the marriage system is FZD.

There are reasons, though, why that symmetry may be more apparent than real. If Table 1 is examined closely, it is clear that the system is basically triadic since one phratry has a peripheral position. The Eagle phratry gives all of its women to Frog-Raven, and receives only from them. Barbeau (1929:156-157) states that the Eagles were recent immigrants to Gitksan territory and were only found in one village. If the data is re-presented as proportions of women given by each phratry in the basic triad, a slightly different picture of the exchange system emerges (see Figure 1).
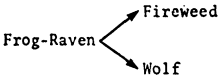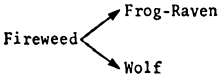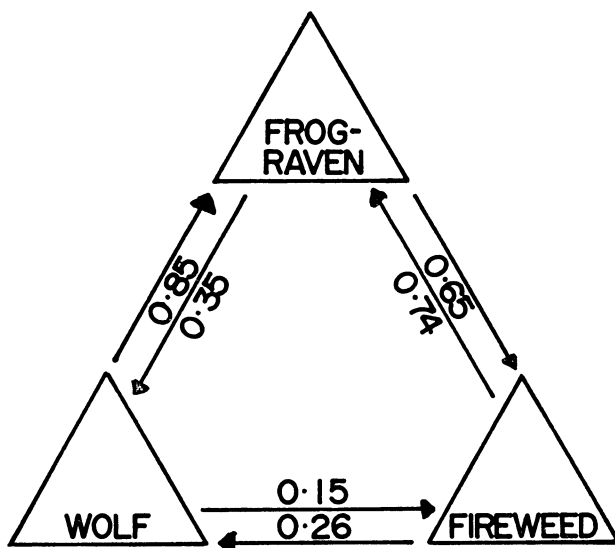

Figure I. Proportions of women given by phratries from Barbeau's data.

Although the *pattern* is totally symmetrical, the *proportions* are somewhat more ambiguous. Thought of in ideal terms, with no contingincies, the proportions would differ depending on the

underlying structure. In an MBD system, a phratry would give 1.00 of its women to one other phratry, and receive 1.00 of its women from the third. Over time, in an FZD system, a phratry would give 0.50 of its women to each of the other phratries, and receive 0.50 of its women from each. Given contingencies the notion of skewing can be substituted for these ideal proportions. Since any deviant case would shift the ideal proportions expected from one model in the direction of the other, the discrimination point for determining symmetry and asymmetry in a triadic system is 0.75. An FZD model fits the range from 0.50 to 0.745, and MBD is consistent with the range 0.755 to 1.00.

If each combination of phratic exchanges is taken separately, as given in Table 2, they can be classified as to symmetry or asymmetry. As the results show, it is difficult to make any conclusions about the overall system. At best, it is weakly symmetrical which is supportive of an FZD model. It should be noted that these proportions would be most compatible with a simple rule of exogamy.

TABLE 2

Phratic Exchange Combinations and Types of Relations

COMBINATIONS	PROPORTIONS	RELATIONS
Wolf → Fireweed	0.15	strongly asymmetrical
Wolf → Frog-Raven	0.85	
Frog-Raven → Fireweed	0.65	strongly symmetrical
Frog-Raven → Wolf	0.35	
Fireweed → Frog-Raven	0.74	weakly symmetrical/ inconclusive
Fireweed → Wolf	0.26	

The presence or absence of generational alternation of exchange relations between phratries is also important. Only four

unambiguous sequential marriages could be found in Barbeau's material (1929:66, 87, 90, 108), and three of them indicated non-alternation. This aspect of the totemic data is weakly supportive of an MBD model.

The only other systematic body of information on Tsimshian marriage, also for the Gitksan, was collected by Kasakoff. From a statistical analysis of actual marriages, using a nonphratic definition of cross-cousin, she concluded that neither form of marriage was statistically significant and that skewing was only slightly in favour of FZD (Kasakoff 1970:61, 1974:147-149). A re-examination of her summary data on phratric exchanges (Kasakoff 1970:203) permits a different interpretation to be made.[2] As Figure 2 presents, all of the exchange sets are strongly symmetrical which is consistent with FZD marriage.
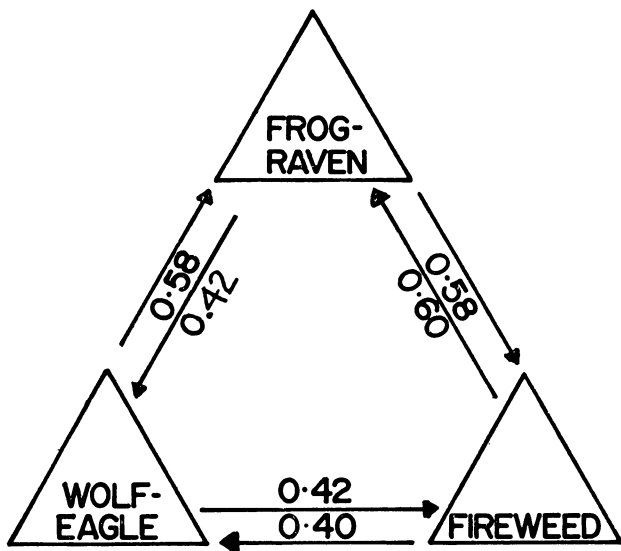

Figure 2. Proportions of women given by phratries from Kasakoff's data.

2 The triad is real in this case due to a fusion of Wolf and Eagle phratries (Adams, 1973:23).

A common feature of Barbeau's and Kasakoff's data is the triadic nature of the exchange system, which is important for the possibilities of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. As Needham (1958) has pointed out, there are inherent contradictions built into an FZD system when only three units are involved; which are only overcome by the addition of a fourth unit and avunculocal residence (Lane 1962:493).[3]

The number of phratries in the exchange system depends on the frame of reference adopted. Tsimshian culture is made up of three linguistically distinct sub-divisions: Gitksan, Niska, and Coast Tsimshian. If marriage is thought of at this level, the triad is appropriate. As is the case for the Gitksan, one phratry is peripheral in the other sub-divisions. For the Niska, that phratry is Frog-Raven, and for the Coast Tsimshian is Wolf.[4]

If the wider definition of Tsimshian is employed, a quadratic structure seems to be more applicable. Marriages do take place across sub-division boundaries, and no single phratry is marginal overall. More importantly, McNeary suggests (1974:74) that in native thought "...it is ideologically satisfying to have four phratries".

As Thomas (1976:155-160) points out, there is some controversy over the Tsimshian residence rule. There is evidence to suggest that it may be patrilocal, matrilocal, or avunculocal. The more probable rule is avunculocality, though residence does change through a male's life cycle. As a child, he will be raised in his patrilocus, but he is expected to reside avunculocally as an adult. After marriage he may live for a brief period of time with his wife's parents, though the couple will ultimately return to his avunculocus (Ackerman 1973; Drucker 1963:86; McNeary 1974:86; Rosman and Rubel 1971:182). Given a quadratic exchange system, and the predominance of avunculocal residence; the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for patrilateral cross-cousin marriage can be said to occur in Tsimshian culture.

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[3] Rosman and Rubel (1971:185) argue that FZD can be understood triadically, but that four units are needed to make the system work.
[4] The Niska and Coast Tsimshian pattern were taken from data on totem poles (Barbeau, 1959) and naming relations discussed later in this paper.

B. *Terminology and Inter-Tribal Classifications*

The use of kinship terminology to discover the form of marriage is problematic (Needham 1973:12-24). Predictions, however, can be made from the properties of the competing models as to probable equivalences and distinctions. The most basic, for either model, is differentiation of matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousins. Although the Tsimshian do separate mother's side *(wilnadal)* from father's *(wulaisx),* their cross-cousin term *(txaa)* does not (Boas 1916:493; Durlach 1928:124; Kasakoff 1970:152).

Ackerman suggests (1975:67) that there may be a special term for patrilateral cross-cousin *(kwutxa'w* or *gwuthra'w).* His conclusion is questionable since it relies on two specific usages (Durlach 1928:150; Barbeau 1929:150). Furthermore Hendel and Rixby (1973:58) and Sapir (1920:263) state that it is applied to both types of cross-cousin.

A second basic distinction, based on a structural identity or non-identity, is the existence of different terms for father's father and mother's mother's brother (Fox 1967:250). The Tsimshian do not make this distinction, the term *niye²e* is applied to both (Kasakoff 1970:24) which is consistent with an FZD model.

If just these two features of Tsimshian kinship terminology are used, the most probable system is bilateral cross-cousin marriage. Given greater structural similarities between bilateral and patrilateral forms, an argument could be made for FZD (Ackerman 1973; Campbell 1973:23-37).

A difficulty exists, however, at the level of social organization. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage is associated with moieties, and the Tsimshian have four phratries. Ackerman (1973) and Campbell (1973:35) assert that the Tsimshian do have an implicit moiety division on the basis of statements made by Boas about inter-tribal marriages (1916:521). The Haida and Tlingit, who marry with the Tsimshian, pair its phratries as shown on Figure 3. The argument is made more cogent by the fact that the three tribes share a co-tradition (MacDonald 1969:243-244), and that the Tlingit-Haida have FZD marriage (Rosman and Rubel 1971:34-68).

If internal marriages also conform to this moiety division, there would be grounds for assuming its relevance. Unfortunately,

MOIETY I MOIETY II

FROG-RAVEN	FIREWEED
EAGLE	WOLF

Figure 3. Moiety divisions of Tsimshian phratries.

the data is scanty and conflicting. Barbeau (1929:155) mentions that there may have been a marriage prohibition between Fireweeds and Wolves, which would fit the moiety division. Adams (1973:23) points out a more recent marriage prohibition, and merger, between Eagles and Wolves, which is contrary to expectations. Given the weakness of the evidence, the assumption of a submerged moiety system is tenuous. To further infer FZD exchange patterns from that division would be almost totally unfounded.

C. Statements of Preference

The most obvious conscious expressions of an underlying marriage system are rules and preferential statements. In the Tsimshian case, the expressions are preferential and the most common is for marriage to a cousin (Kasakoff 1970:24; 1974:148). The possible inference that *either* cross-cousin is acceptable is born out by informants. McNeary (1974:79) states the Niska view either marriage as proper, though the ideal for chiefs is mother's brother's daughter. In contrast, some of Kasakoff's informants gave a preference for marrying a woman of father's phratry (1970:25; 1974:148).

Other preferential statements are not phrased in terms of cousins or sides. To discover their implications, it will be necessary

to map their consequences through the logic of the competing
models. One such preference is for the marriage of persons whose
maternal grandparents were brother and sister (Garfield 1939:232).
As Figure 4 indicates, one set of grandparents could be siblings
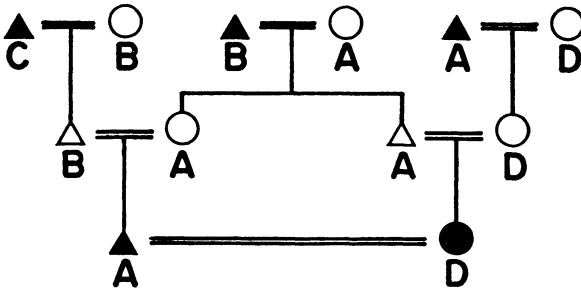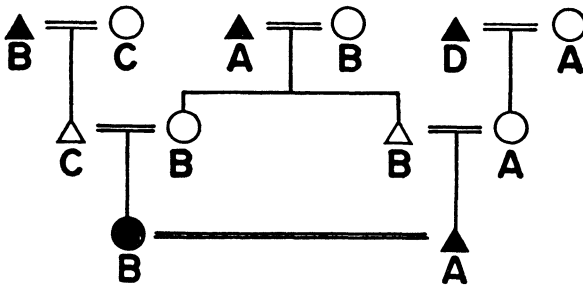under either system.

MBD
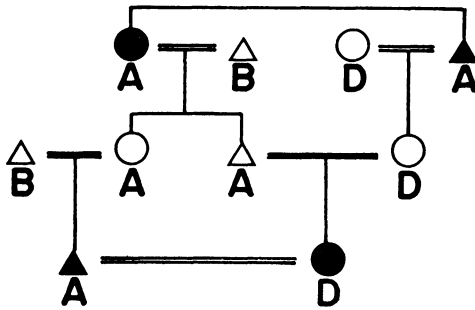
FZD
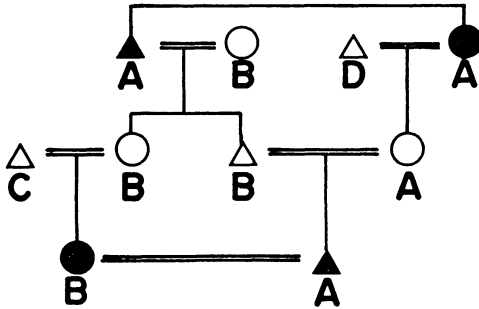
**Figure 4. Marriage of persons whose maternal
grandparents are brother and sister.**

A third is for marriage to a grandfather, who Kasakoff claims would be someone of mother's father's or father's father's phratry (1970:24; 1974:148). According to Figure 5, neither model is

MBD

FZD

Figure 5. Marriage to a grandfather.

appropriate if the preference applies to both sexes. If it is sex specific, then FZD would fit males and MBD females. Given the sex of the grandparent, the more plausible reference is to a female ego, which would support an MBD model.

The fourth statement is that a husband's father and wife's father should be of the same phratry (Kasakoff 1970:25). This preference is odd if it is assumed that both fathers married the same way, since the consequences would be incestuous for their offspring. It would only make sense if the fathers married differently, which could only occur if the system were FZD. The fathers could be of different generations structurally, though of the same generation empirically.

The final statement is provided by Adams (1974:171):

> ...the most general rule is that no two people who share rights to the same resources can marry each other... everybody in this culture has rights to resources from both his (or her) mother's and his (or her) father's group...

This rule is not explicit, but rather derived from an examination of actual marriages (Adams 1976). The rule cannot be applied to phratries since they are not the units which control resources (Rosman and Rubel 1971:10), hence it has no direct relevance for the models concerned.

The Niska comment cited by McNeary points out a factor that might account for the ambiguity in the data so far examined. Cross-cousin marriage, or a form of it, may be status specific. This notion is born out by other marriage rules. Garfield (1939:232-233) and Kasakoff (1970:14) state that marriage is ideally status endogamous; similarly, chiefs are expected to marry out of their villages and commoners within (Adams 1973:40; Drucker 1965:54; Kasakoff 1970:25-99).

D. *Inheritance and Succession*

The relation between marriage and inheritance was first raised as a query by Boas (1916:440):

> Very puzzling is the remark that a prince is to marry his mother's brother's daughter in order to inherit his uncle's house. This sounds as

if the recorder considered this marriage essential in order to secure the succession.

The remark is puzzling for Boas because he assumes that avuncular inheritance and matrilateral cross-cousin marriage are Tsimshian norms; which, if true, would make the above statement unnecessary. Two factors make this comment intelligible at a strategic level. The first is that although inheritance is *ultimately* avuncular, the preferred inheritor is a younger brother (Boas 1916:499; Garfield 1939:179; McNeary 1974:71). He is more likely than a sister's son to have some of those characteristics deemed necessary for chieftainship, such as age and experience (Adams 1973:33; Garfield 1939:180). As McNeary (1976:11) notes, "if a man's heir must come from his brother-in-law's household, a marriage of heir and daughter at least helps to bind the heir to the family". Similarly, it could be argued that marriage to uncle's daughter is a way of creating an additional bond that could influence his choice of a successor.

Beynon (1916:51) and McNeary (1974:78-79; 1976:10) mention that chiefly families are often concerned with establishing long term alliances which keeps wealth and knowledge within a restricted sphere. Boas (1916:510) gives an association between the holder of the names Legex and Dzebasa which was maintained, or reflected, through sister exchange. Over time, marriages of this kind would be bilateral and fuse mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter. Again, at a strategic level, the requirement to marry a mother's brother's daughter is intelligible; through only as an expression consistent with matrilineal descent, since the same person is also a father's sister's daughter.

There are grounds to suggest that MBD marriage is deviant. Since it involves an *actual* mother's brother's daughter in relation to the inheritance statement, there are conflicts with other marriage rules. If sister's son were residing with his uncle before marriage, it would conflict with village exogamy for chiefs. It would also make unnecessary the rule that a man live with his wife's parents for a period of time after marriage. The "remark" mentioned by Boas may be necessary since it is deviant, and appropriate to chiefs since they have the power to violate the rules in pursuit of their own interests.

Ackerman (1975:75-76) provides a less tenuous use of inheritance principles for evaluating marriage. He uses a comment made by Boas (1916:412):

> It is true that in the case of cousin marriage, as was customary among chiefly families, a man's property would eventually be inherited by his son's son.

Ackerman's analysis is based on the assumption that the above statement and that of avuncular inheritance are both valid. Although they obviously would be in cases of bilateral marriages, for unilateral cross-cousin marriage their validity has definite implications. As shown on Figure 6, father's father and mother's brother could only form a chain of inheritance under an FZD system in which father's father and mother's mother's brother are equated.

Before Ackerman's conclusions can be accepted, one issue must be resolved. There are grounds for querying the accuracy of Boas' comment about inheritance from father's father. Given that he tended to incorrectly restrict *txaa* to matrilateral cross-cousin (Ackerman 1967:67; Lévi-Strauss 1967:44), the same may be true for *niyeʔe* and father's father. The problem is compounded in that a successor ideally has four 'grandfathers' who were also chiefs — father's father, mother's father, mother's mother's brother, and father's mother's brother (Kasakoff 1970:24). Of these four, only FaFa and MoMoBr could be involved in inheritance by ego, as shown in Figure 6.

If MoMoBr is the appropriate grandfather in Boas' comment, then either model is plausible. If FaFa is correct, then only the FZD model fits. The only other evidence is ethnographic. Adams (1973:32) states that claims are put forward on the basis of a mother's mother's brother being holder of a title; and Kasakoff (1970:51-52) implies that a claim through father's father would only be used if the intervening inheritor were somehow improper.
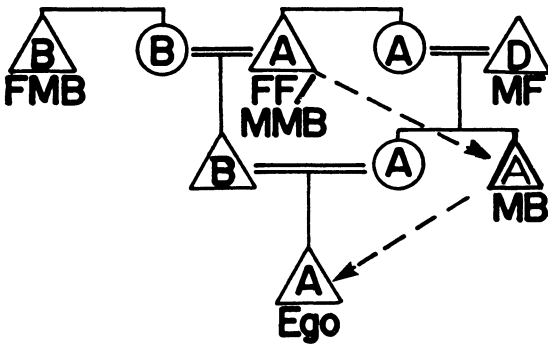
E. Potlatch Invitations

Rosman and Rubel (1971:10-33) and Campbell (1974:7-8) posit that the Tsimshian potlatch reflects the underlying structure of marriage, since the participants are hosts and their affines. Common

to both their arguments is that the guests stand as either wife
givers or receivers in relation to the hosts. The main criterion that
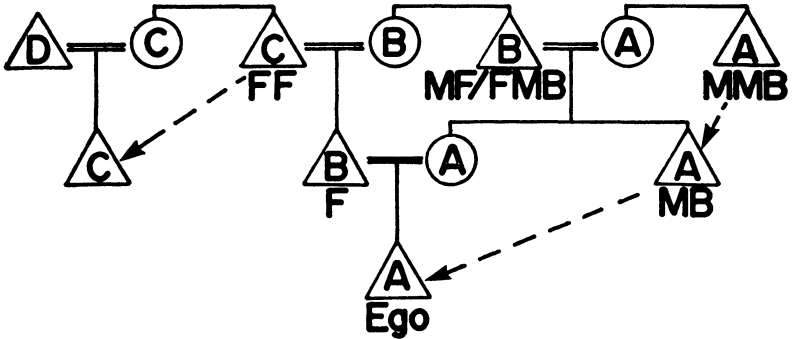
Figure 6. Four grandfathers and the lines
of inheritance.

could be used to determine the form of marriage is that of alternation of the guest's positions in successive potlatches by the same line of hosts, but such data is lacking.

Adams (1973:51-56) does mention one piece of information that can be used instead. He classifies the participants in contemporary Gitksan mortuary potlatches non-affinally. The categories used are members of the deceased's phratry who act as hosts, members of the deceased's father's phratry who perform burial services, and witnesses. If it is assumed that both sets of distinctions (affinal and non-affinal) are valid, some inferences can be made to cross-cousin marriage, as presented in Table 3.[5]

TABLE 3

Affinal and Non-Affinal Categorizations of Potlatch Guests

	Wife Givers	Wife Receivers
Fathers	FZD	MBD
Witnesses	MBD	FZD

Focusing on witnesses, they could be either wife givers or receivers. Rosman and Rubel (1971:26) hold that a distinction is made between father's phratry and the deceased's wife phratry, which would be consistent with the MBD combinations. This is supported by Adams (1973:73) who states that spouses, "...put in a contribution which is regarded as a ritual joke, and which is immediately returned to them in the distribution of cash to witnesses". The only qualification is that the triadic nature of contemporary Gitksan may have led to a fusion of witnesses and

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[5] Adams (1973:73-74) states that Rosman and Rubel's affinal categories are inappropriate. Since the problem addressed in this paper is marriage and not property rights *per se*, the two sets of categories were used.

affines which might not have occurred in a quadratic system, though this would not change the argument for MBD.

F. *Naming Relations*

Sapir (1915:27), Boas (1916:507), and Garfield (1939:221) discuss an important characteristic of Tsimshian personal names, which is their cross-phratric reference. Although names given to children belong to their matriline, they may contain references to their father's phratry. Rosman and Rubel (1971:18) use this feature to argue for "the continuing alliances of wife-givers and wife-takers".

Using the names owned by Niska and Coast Tsimshian phratries, Ackerman (1975:78-79) challenges Rosman and Rubel's conclusion that the alliances are matrilateral in type. Since cross-phratric references indicate symmetrical exchanges, Ackerman holds that the system is FZD. However, if the composite includes Gitksan as well as Niska and Coast Tsimshian (Barbeau 1915-1942; Boas 1916:507-508; Duff 1959; Garfield 1939:221-224; McNeary 1974:117-120; Sapir 1915:22-25), as shown in Figure 7, the pattern
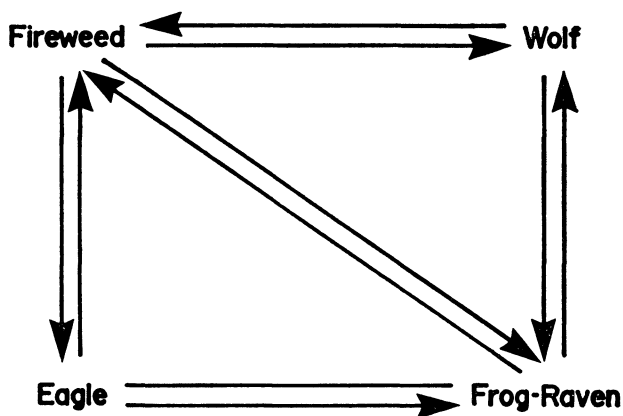

Figure 7. Phratric exchanges from naming relations.

is best expressed by the rule of exogamy since each phratry owns names referring to every other phratry. In addition, if names are nothing more than indicators of past marriages which remain in the pool over generations (McNeary 1976:7), and the marriages reflect contingent as well as structural properties, symmetry may be an illusion.

Campbell presents a second naming relation which can be used in conjunction with the earlier one (1975:89-90). This is taken from Boas (1916:507):

> ...ordinarily a boy would be given the name of his mother's mother's brother... a girl that of her maternal grandmother...

If both naming relations are valid, then it follows that a boy's father and his MoMoBrFa would be of the same phratry, and that a girl's father would be of the same phratry as her MoMoFa. As Figures 8 and 9 show, they would be appropriate in either system of marriage.

The final piece of evidence involves a preferential marriage statement (McNeary, 1974:79):

> ...it is good for a chief to marry a woman who holds the same name as his predecessor's wife, that is, the names A and B should be linked down through the generations.

The first part of this statement implies that wife's father will be from the same phratry as mother's brother's wife's father. This could occur with either form of cross-cousin marriage (see Figure 10). The second part of the statement refers to ego as well. If the generational linkage is taken to mean *every* generation, then the system must be that of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage.

G. *Mythology*

According to Boas (1916:440), "The normal type of marriage, as described in the traditions, is that between a young man and his mother's brother's daughter". The source of that tradition for Boas was Tsimshian mythology. Although five of the myths that he cites do discuss MBD marriages, two refer to FZD. Further, two versions of the same myth presents the alternate forms of marriage.[6]

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[6] Lévi-Strauss (1967:44) assumes that the FZD version is a mistake. Ackerman (1975:67) argues more cogently that it is not an error using the speaker's position and actual phrasing of the marriage statement.
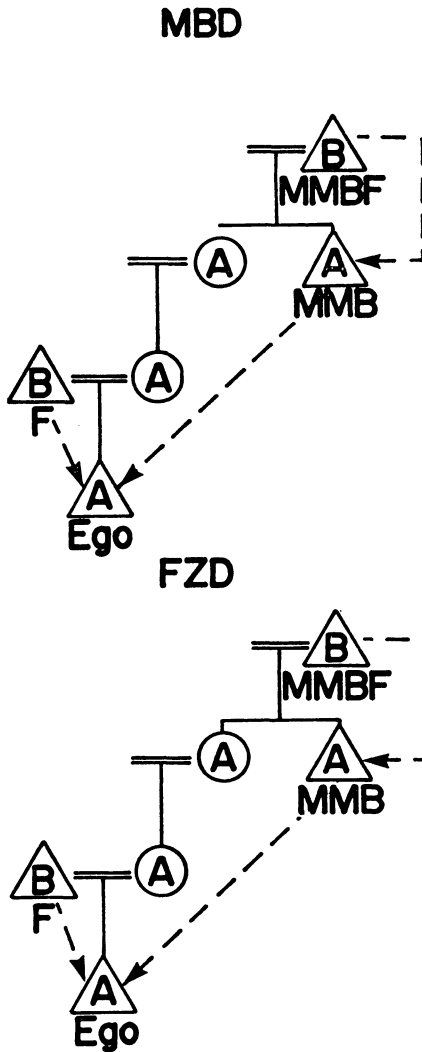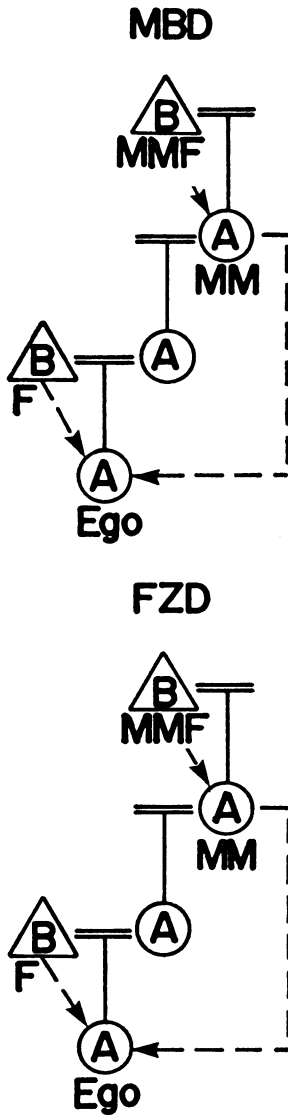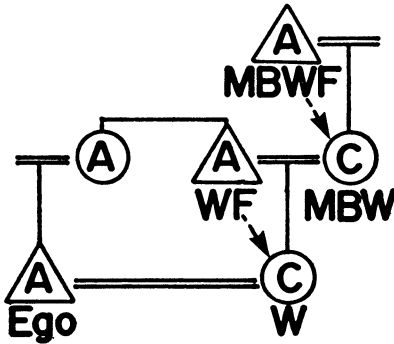
Figure 8. Naming relations for males.

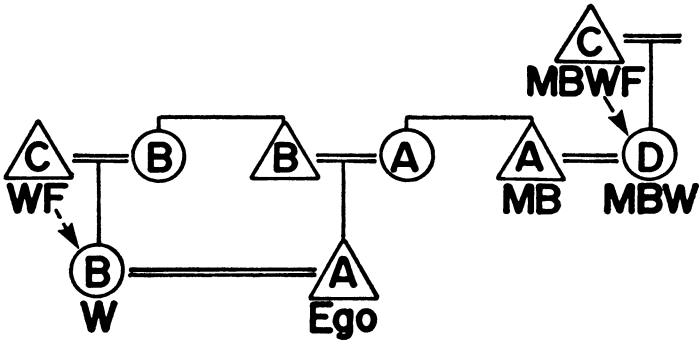Figure 9.   Naming relations for women.

Figure IO. Naming relations for wive·s and preferential marriage.

The co-existence of both forms of marriage in Tsimshian mythology creates a dilemma. Either both are acceptable, or myth does not accurately reflect reality. It is the second conclusion that is reached by Lévi-Strauss (1967:30) when he states that myths:

> ...do not seek to depict what is real, but to justify shortcomings of reality, since the extreme positions are only *imagined* in order to show that they are *untenable*.

If correct, mythological evidence about marriage can only be used if one can determine which form is "imagined" and which is "real". One method is to examine the consequences following from a marriage (Ackerman 1975:72-75, 83-84; Cove 1975:12-13). To communicate to an intended audience that a marriage is untenable would seem to require that the character in the myth be negatively sanctioned; while normative marriages should have neutral or positive outcomes. In Table 4, the consequences of the eight myths are provided.

TABLE 4

Type of Marriage Mentioned	Consequences
FZD	did not occur
FZD	positive
MBD	husband dies for marrying (not specific to MBD)
MBD	positive
MBD	did not occur (woman punished for not marrying FZS)
MBD	none
MBD	did not occur
MBD	positive

Source: Boas, 1916.

As Table 4 indicates, there is no clear pattern. This is not surprising if one holds that one of the major contradictions in

Tsimshian social life is between matri and patri affiliation (Ackerman 1975:71-75; Campbell 1975:105; Lévi-Strauss 1967:25). These mythological statements may constitute nothing more than idioms for expressing that which cannot be resolved.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The Tsimshian evidence is almost equally supportive of both models. That ambiguity is in itself of interest. Rather than assuming that the data is problematic in reference to mechanical models, it may be that the elements used in these particular models are inadequate. Whereas units such as clan or phratry may be appropriate to some primitive societies, where they constitute the sole basis for membership and identity, the same is not true for the Tsimshian. Minimally, phratric identity is cross-cut by status, and the two are to an extent mutually denying.

Status considerations in this sense are not contingent, but structural. Using chiefly status as a vantage point, there are two related problems for which marriage provides a partial solution. These problems are access to resources and control over labour. Cross-cousin marriage preference can be understood by analogy to other marriage statements. Village exogamy for chiefs has the consequence of expanding alliances and access to resources, while village endogamy for others is restrictive. Similarly, status endogamy maintains that differential access and inhibits changes in alligiance. If cross-cousin marriage is thought of in the same terms, then bilateral and matrilateral would be closer to endogamy in consequence; while patrilateral is more like exogamy (Lane 1962). MBD marriage would therefore be appropriate to those of non-chiefly rank, while bilateral and patrilateral would be consistent with those of chiefly status. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage would apply to those families of the highest rank interested in restricting access to their resources, and patrilateral to those families concerned with increasing their positions.

In conclusion, the ambiguity about which cross-cousin is actually preferred may be the most important characteristic of the system. It not only legitimizes a wide range of possible marriages, but avoids a number of potential dilemmas. It leaves

unrecognized inherent conflicts between competing principles of identification and interest (patri verses matri-filiation) (phratry verses status); and provides a degree of flexibility in keeping with a society that was highly competative and that was frozen between a primitive and intermediate form of social organization.

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