Introduction

When in the 1920s and 1930s gold prospectors, missionaries, and Australian patrol officers first entered the Highlands, they discovered that nearly half of the island's population, some 1 million people, lived on the slopes and plateaus cradled in the high mountains. It was at the close of World War II that anthropologists began to pour into the Highlands, their arrival and departure becoming as perennial as the torrential rains of the wet season and the sun of the dry.

Inspired by the writings of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, they set out to describe the social structure of Highland societies, somehow confident that while ritual, exchange, and land tenure were not to be ignored, the essence of the social order lay in kinship and descent. But in 1962, Barnes drew together the implications of the then published studies, and seriously questioned whether the models based on descriptions of corporate lineage structure made sense when exported to New Guinea. Twenty years of analysis have more than confirmed Barnes' suspicion, though no new candidates have succeeded to the throne. Indeed, left high and dry by the failure of descent theory, New Guinea analysts have leaned toward piecemeal approaches. Yet the difficulties that ethnographers have experienced in producing a comprehensive interpretation seem only to have intensified the hunt. There is an unspoken feeling that just as descent models from Africa and exchange models from India have permanently enriched our understanding, so an adequate analysis of a Highland social system will have a similar effect.

Even before embarking on the current project, I felt that many of the newer accounts remained trapped within the design of descent theory. Though they emphasized exchange, local groups, and ideology, and thus immeasurably enlarged our understanding, they still retained the distinctions between descent and exchange, ideology and practice, and kinship versus descent groups. All were basic presuppositions of

descent theory. Thus the content of the works changed more than their founding principles.

In line with tradition, the spirit and data of my analysis centers on the elements of social organization. It describes how the interaction of cultural categories, principles, and practices defines Maring social relations and groups. The express aim is to generate a theory which can account for both the structure and reproduction of Maring society. So, for example, I am interested in explaining not only how the basic opposition between male and female orients the division of labor, but how gardening practices reproduce this opposition in people's day to day experience. My argument is that the inseparability of the symbolic and material, norm and action, structure and practices, should be the basis of analysis.

There are three interconnected objectives which orient the study. The first is the making of an ethnography which accurately portrays Maring social organization. I seek to give an account which is adequate to its object because (1) it is constructed on the basis of cultural categories and generative schemes; (2) it is able fully to encompass the range of practices (e.g., food taboos and bridewealth) constitutive of the social system; and (3) it demonstrates how the society symbolically and materially reproduces itself. Accordingly, the analysis depicts social phenomena such as land tenure, kinship, clanship, reaffiliation, marriage exchange, and commensality in terms of their interrelationship. The unifying analytical thread is the local conception of social reproduction – embodied in the flow of substance through the reproduction cycle – and a structural understanding of group formation grounded in the opposition between sharing and exchange. The essential argument is that this is the primary generative scheme for the construction of the social system, and that it is only in practice that this structure is brought to life in such a way as to reproduce the clan and other social units. I am trying to develop what might be called a generative theory of Highland social organization.

My second objective is to identify some of the ways in which the situation of the ethnographer informs the production of ethnography and making of theory. The idea is to begin to understand how the ethnographer's relationship to his/her object of study shapes his/her explanation of kinship and exchange. Participant observation, much more than setting anthropology apart from other disciplines, grounds its interpretation of the Other. But only recently has anthropology begun to locate fieldwork and the ethnographic experience in the epicenter of its theoretical discourse (Fabian 1983). This issue is para-

mount, particularly so in New Guinea where there is a great epistemological and social divide between observer and observed. The practical interests of the ethnographer are far removed from the interests of New Guinea practice; the deductive and totalizing logic of ethnography is never the cultural logic of practice.

The interplay between method and theory enters the analysis from several directions. Most important, it enters through a detailed look at how Maring represent their own practices, and the social functions of these representations (ideology). Although ideology is just one moment of practice, it is that moment which impresses itself upon the ethnographer who, bearing no birthmark other than that of the stranger, and lacking mastery of the social process, frequently gathers information by asking informants to represent their own practice. In this sense, theory may follow method, the ethnographer reading into his object of study his relationship to that object. The issue of method implies that we need a theory of Highland ethnography, an explicit account of the epistemological and social conditions which make an ethnography possible. With this in mind, I try to indicate some ways in which the conditions of ethnography have misdirected the creation of Highland social theory.

The third objective is to develop through the ethnography an analysis of the relationship between structure and practice. My aim is to account for both the structure of the social system, and the way social strategies and practices reproduce this structure. I try to show how the opposition of sharing and exchange guides the formation of the clan, and how its embodiment in the clan fashions a generative scheme for practice. By turns, analysis centers on how practice, by animating certain generative schemes and practical strategies, reproduces the clan and the oppositions it embodies. I argue that the reproduction of the clan is based on a dialectical relationship between the power of structure – flowing from cultural categories and principles – to set the objective terms of reproduction, and the authority of practice to forge the production of the structure. This view confers no special privilege on structure or practice (ontologically). What motivates social action is a cultural logic of practical necessity. In this sense, the material concerns and strategies of clansmen (e.g., to acquire more garden land or achieve greater prestige) produce the structures which define their realization. So against mainstream interpretation, I maintain that the Maring social system – which bears a strong family resemblance to that of many other Highland societies – is "loosely structured" only in the shadows of those theories which separate (as exclusive) exchange

and descent, native model and statistical reality, symbolic and material. Successful ethnography overcomes these separations, theoretically and socially.

Structure and practice

By focusing on the specifics of production, this ethnography commits itself to a theory of the relationship between structure and practice. The issue is that if social relations have a true structure and are thus systematic how do they reproduce themselves under conditions which the structure could never anticipate, but must necessarily encompass. The two structuralisms, British and French, were both founded on an opposition to history and thus to practice. In the view of Bourdieu (1977) and later of Sahlins (1981), the individual actions and concrete practices which move reproduction were reduced to the execution of the system in place. This formulation is clearly inadequate for New Guinea, where the social structures do not march to descent and the cultural categories are embedded in practice itself. Indeed, each historical realization of the social system is that of a transformed form. I would argue that an adequate account of a Highland social organization entails a theory of how the reproduction of the structure is also its transformation.

Disabused of the notion that a social structural account was sufficient, and impressed by the power of practice, ethnographers opted for ecological or materialist accounts of Highland social systems. But they have been similarly unable to provide a good understanding of social practices and reproduction. Insofar as practices are dissolved and reformulated according to utilitarian interests, there is no vision of the organization of practices or of their coordinated reproduction. The social system is simply a result of the way people put resources into use.

What I want to establish here is that there is not only a received cultural order, and an organization to social relations, but a structure of reproduction. The interests and strategies of individuals and groups mediate the relationship between cultural concepts of the social order and the reproduction of this order in and through material production. That is, it is by illuminating the structure of reproduction that cultural principles (like the opposition between male and female) are brought into congruence with practical activities (of men and women).

It may seem that an account of Maring society, or for that matter, any Highland social system, is of limited relevance. My argument is the reverse: that New Guinea Highland social systems – by virtue of

their design – provide a special opportunity for coming to terms with the structures in practice and the practical reproduction of structures.

The direction of the analysis

The Maring social system is based on a fundamental opposition between the relations of sharing, exchanging, and commerce. These relations are the significant terms for the creation of different forms of relatedness. Sharing is the basic intra-clan relationship. This is exemplified in the sharing of land, food, and bridewealth, and is carried out daily in an infinite number of routines. Exchange is the primary relationship between clans. Thus affines exchange men, women, land, cultigens, and other goods according to the laws and strategies of reciprocity. The exchange defines the difference between clans and at the same time unifies them through the transfer of agnatic resources. Commerce is the relation between clansmen and outsiders, that is, those who do not participate in the kinship of sharing and exchanging. Insofar as the principal purpose of this account is to show the formation of groups it has only touched lightly on this latter category.

As one moves from the center of the system – the point of view of the clan – to the periphery, the economic dimensions of a transaction increasingly dominate the social. Paradigmatically, Maring share with their own clansmen, exchange with their affines, and see outsiders such as the Anglican mission in commercial terms. The ethnographer begins his stay on the periphery and then gradually, by establishing himself as a social person capable of employing the proper schemes and strategies, moves into the more social sphere of exchange. Local concepts about the purpose and truth of the gift, as given in particular contexts, are the pragmatic means of sorting out this relationship. Commerce beyond the sphere of kinship signifies a break with the other two categories insofar as it alienates and depersonalizes the objects. It removes the dimension of time, the essence of true reciprocity, by reducing the transaction to a simultaneity. There is a continuum and intergrade between the sociality of sharing and exchange and the economics of commerce.[1]

[1] Commerce as a social relationship antedates contact with the West. People have always engaged in trade with foreigners – *yindok ndemi* or wild people – giving and receiving kina shells, salt, stone axes, pigs, bird plumes, clays, and magic. What is now significant is that commerce is becoming more important with passing years and is part and product of the incremental commercialization of the Maring local economy. One of the reasons why Maring, like other Highlanders, have fared well in the face of political and economic development is that the possibility of a desocialized economy was already a dimension of the indigenous system.

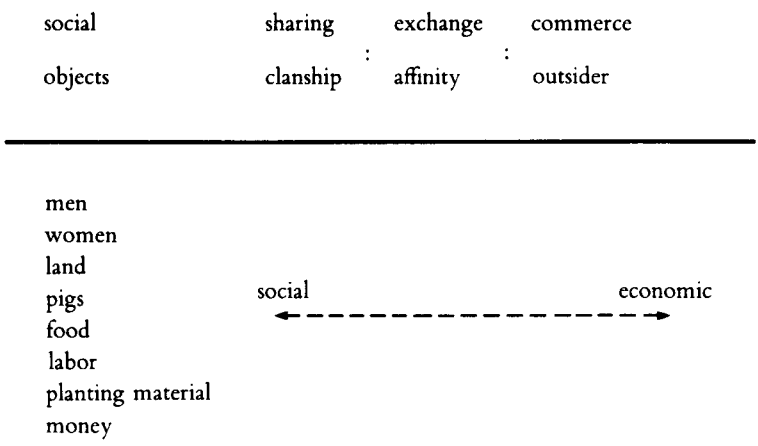

Figure 1 Primary social oppositions

For the Maring, the gift of kinship lies in the sharing and exchange of land, pigs, planting material, food, labor, and money, as well as the attributes of men and women (i.e., strength and fertility). These objects stand out as instruments of social relations because they are primary elements of the reproductive cycle of the clan. They are the material signs by which clansmen reproduce themselves as social beings, blessed with a sense of clanship, alliance, and self-identity. In and through practice, people combine these material signs with generative principles to produce social groups and relations. For instance, the pork which passes from wife-taker to wife-giver is an index of that relationship and a means by which it is reproduced.

The objects of reproduction are linked to a kinship system which is based on co-substance rather than pure genealogy (i.e., kin typing). An individual is related to his parents and to the larger universe of clan relations through transmission of male and female substances – grease and blood respectively. The substance of clanship is shared substance, and each clan member shares clan grease. Maring conceive this in both physical and spiritual terms. Within the realm of sharing, and thus within the orbit of clanship, the practices and actions of clan members transmit grease through a natural cycle of reproduction. Substance flows from the bodies of clansmen into clan lands, from there (through the use of labor and magic) into taro, pigs and other foods, and then ultimately returns to clansmen through eating food. This cycle defines the relationship between the elements, creates their values, and makes them the practical terms in which the culture regiments clanship. Land, food, and other material signs are where the kinship system

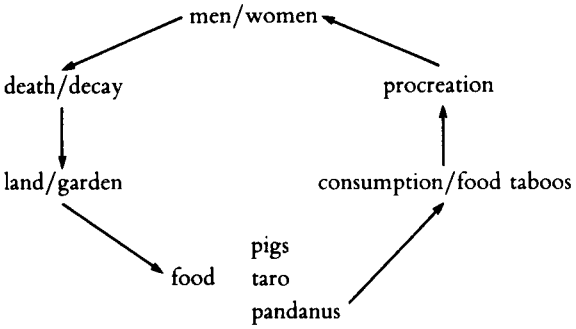

Figure 2 The cultural construction of the natural reproductive cycle

interlocks with the mode of production. Thus, it is in terms of land tenure, commensality, food taboos, co-gardening, and ritual sacrifice that clansmen create and define clansmen. It is the point where the social system expresses itself practically and openly, and thus where ethnography must look for its account of social organization. The Figure 2 outlines the natural cycle of reproduction.

Two modes of exchange complement the natural cycle; that is, the cultural construction of how nature is organized and operates with respect to human society. The first mode of exchange is the propitiation of clan ancestors (and occasionally, nowadays, Jesus Christ). The centerpiece of ancestor worship is the ritual sacrifice and communion of pig in return for which the ancestors assist their descendants in reproduction and (formerly) in the prosecution of war and peace. Ritual sacrifice explicitly defines the linkage between clansmen and their ancestors as one of total continuity. Moreover, ritual sacrifice is the functional analogue within the clan of the exchange of women between clans. Insofar as each subclan possesses its own sacred groves and conducts separate sacrifices, but to all of the clan's ancestors, the ritual both differentiates the subclans and specifies their unity.

Within the clan the terms of identity are the co-sharing of a clan substance, rather than descent from a common ancestor. It is participation in the same rituals and reproductive cycle which maps membership. Hence, Maring conceptualize clanship in terms of clan brotherhood, rendering the calculation of precise genealogies and biological connections irrelevant.

The second mode of exchange is that of marriage, including the attendant set of compensation payments. Successful reproduction demands that clans exchange men, land, labor, pigs, food, and, most of all, women – if they are to survive economically and politically. There is an interplay between the reproductive cycles of different

clans, for clansmen mobilize a variety of strategies to reproduce the clan against the odds of prevailing conditions and in accordance with their image of clanship. For the clan, marriage exchange serves two functions. In the external realm, marriage allies exogamous clans by transporting women (i.e., female blood, fertility, and labor-power) in one direction, while moving pork, money, and like prestations in the other. In the internal arena, marriage exchange and distribution of bridewealth defines the boundaries of the clan through contrast between sharing and exchange. The two modes of exchange in concert with the reproductive cycle determine the structure of social groups. The formation and dissolution of groups, as well as the processes of recruitment and reaffiliation, become intelligible on their own terms.

This constitutes a brief rehearsal of the basic theory which I develop herein. The ethnography of the Maring social system which follows is intended to pursue and elaborate this viewpoint within the context of the total system.

Theoretical framework

On several counts, the Maring material is significant for both the theory of social structure and structuralist theory. The richness of the ethnography as well as the diversity of ethnographers (at least eight) provides favored conditions for a theoretical assessment of the basis of social organization in the Highlands. Such assessment, I will claim, argues for the development of a revised theory: namely, a pragmatic structuralism.

Time and again, my analysis shows that agnation and affinity are linked at the level of practice. They are of telling importance because they are never simply affairs of kinship, but involve all of social reproduction. Elements of the economic, political, moral, social, and religious domains enter into the reasons and motives which impel people to act in a given way. In essence, it becomes evident that agnation and marriage concern the functional relationship between domains.

Consideration of social reproduction reveals that exchange links seemingly disparate practices. There is constant formation not only of lineal relations, expressed in the clan's history and continuity, but lateral relations which slice across boundaries. These generate kinship by way of practices which encourage the exchange of reproductive objects between non-agnates. For example, when affines exchange land or garden rights, they create kinship. There is a dialectical movement between structure and practice. On one side, cultural categories and principles organize the form and content of giving. The oppo-

sition of sharing and exchange, the principle which invites wife-givers to request land rights, and the cultural sense of how clans reproduce, all define the exchange. On the other side, it is in practice that a given relationship becomes salient and pragmatic. Though marriage may create the possibility of exchanging land rights, it is only actual gifts of land (as well as other material signs) which define the practical value of this marriage, bring to light the communion of interests, and therefore inspire clansmen to reproduce the alliance. The totality of such actions produce the Maring social system in a way that is both determinate and constantly changing.

As the union of kinship and economy illustrates, Maring practice owes no allegiance to the analytical segregation of phenomena. Ritual and religion, land tenure, territoriality, production and consumption, and marriage are all integral components of social organization. Their relationship is instrumental to reproduction of social groups and relations at all levels of social organization. This is manifest in the role of ancestors in the well-being and continuity of the clan and in the link between consumption and the renewal of male substance. It surfaces in the relationship between foods, land tenure, and reaffiliation, and in the ritual processes by which non-agnates are converted into *bona fide* clansmen. It appears in the concept of spiritual essences, in the model of vegetable growth used to envision agnatic identity, and in the making of gender and sex roles. It is inscribed in the principles, norms, and procedures which govern marriage relations, particularly the collection and disembursement of bridewealth and the interests realized in the marriage system. Analytical concepts of genealogy – such as those underlying Kelly's study of the Etoro (1977) and Meggitt's study of the Mae Enga (1965) – do not order Maring kinship or play a part in the determination of clan identity. While concepts of substance (deceptively) resemble those of genealogy,[2] they have markedly different implications for clan and subclan formation. That recruitment to the clan ignores the presence or absence of common ancestors and focuses instead on the consubstantial effects of sharing gardens and foods exemplifies this reality. These relations of co-substance support Schneider's view (1968; 1972) that kinship and descent enjoy no phenomenological status apart from native constructs. Specific to the Highlands, Maring concepts of substance and how they work show that it is not simply the empirical facts of living and working side by side which produce agnation, but a cultural logic of relationship and group formation. Hence I aim for an analysis which reveals how prac-

[2] This resemblance occurs at the egocentric level of kinship, although even here there are a number of salient differences.

tice integrates material and social (e.g., prestige) interests while recognizing that both types of interests are culturally constituted.

The sharing and exchange of substance generates social units bearing a recognized identity. It is the movement of substance within the social field which governs unit definition and unit relationship. The basic units of Maring society are of two types: exogamous clans constituted by a principle of recruitment based on the sharing of clan grease, and clan clusters constituted by a principle of recruitment based on the sharing of blood. However, the intergenerational passage of grease within the clan and the transportation of blood across clan boundaries ride on reproduction and exchange. Clan members are co-recipients of clan substance insofar as they have participated in the same reproductive cycle. That is, they have been conceived and/or nourished by substances from the same land. In the same vein, the alignment of clans into a named cluster that maintains and defends a common territory, arises from a pattern of restricted exchange that assures that all clans are related through women. In essence, at any given time, the clan appears to be organized in terms of patrilineality, when, in fact, the making of the clan is contingent on reproduction and exchange. This is the practical equation binding the substantive links of the social system.

My account of Maring social organization calls into question two of the founding presuppositions of Highland ethnology. The integration of clanship and economy undermines the common presupposition that analysis can treat them as independent phenomena. For Maring at least, there is literally a production of kinship and agnation. Principles of co-substance tie the formation of clans to the making of gardens and the husbandry of pigs. This rules out the anthropological thinking which separates the social from the economic, and then understands each as a discrete variable, most frequently by trying to show how production or ecological stress (the independent variable) command the formation of the social group (the dependent variable).[3] My account also challenges the presupposition that "descent" determines the composition of the patriclan while exchange determines alliance between patriclans. The hand of exchange in the construction of the Maring clan means that exchange and clanship differ only in that they represent different moments of group formation.

The revised theory, by reversing the entropy of received distinctions, brings to the fore significant issues concerning the structure of clan reproduction. The Maring case illustrates that the formation, development, and transformation of the clan lies in the integrated move-

[3] In the Highlands, this viewpoint is enshrined in the hypothesis that pressure on agricultural resources, such as land, leads clansmen to stress patriliny.